

## A eulogy for Denis Beauchamp, 1943-2004

"During my father's funeral, after the eulogies had been said, people I didn't know would come to me and say the same thing, people who knew my father slightly wished they had known him better and wanted to shake his hand and congratulate him for what he had done," Natalie Beauchamp. Natalie worked with her father at Multi Art.

I am one of the many who didn't have the chance to shake his hand and congratulate him.

Although I did meet him briefly during vernissages at Balcon d'Art it was always in the middle of a dozen other people and we never had a chance to really talk. I was supposed to interview Beauchamp and his wife Bonnitta the Thursday after he died. The interview was to center on the 30 and 20 year histories of Multi Art and Balcon d'Art.



I already knew that Beauchamp had made a unique contribution to the Quebec art world. Although this was flattering, I came to the conclusion that it did not do justice to the man. I went on to discover a legend.

I learned from his funeral eulogies and from what was said by people who had been close to him, just how grand a man Beauchamp was, and how he, his family and his collaborators had built an original efficient business around figurative art.



*Fay, Denis, Bonnitta and Natalie Beauchamp*

Success did not come easily for Beauchamp. He had to work hard. Beauchamp loved the arts and wanted to democratize them by making them more widely available to the public. He started off by selling art materials and then operated a network of galleries where he tried, as he always wanted to, to make art available to the largest number of people while maintaining the highest standards of quality. Beauchamp noticed that when it came to selling their work artists often felt powerless and preferred to leave that side of the business alone to concentrate on their work.

These observations led him to launch Multi Art and put it squarely at the service of art and artists.

From the beginning, along with his then partner, Guy Joncas, he insisted on the highest standards. Almost single handedly Beauchamp invented the profession of artist's agent in

Quebec. He dedicated himself to making Quebecois artists known throughout the rest of Canada and to do this he approached the most prestigious galleries in Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Beauchamp had more than just daring and tenacity as allies. He was warm and generous and in love with life. He placed the greatest importance on people. His family to begin with and then the artists who formed his extended family. For them he became a father figure, advising them, encouraging them and supporting them in their difficulties. His daughter Natalie told me that Fridays became a rendezvous for artists when they delivered canvasses to the gallery. Then Beauchamp's extended family would meet to exchange news, break their isolation and share a glass or a good meal. Through the magic created by Beauchamp any sense of competition among the artists disappeared and strong friendships were forged.

He was an honest man of his word. In business and in life Beauchamp believed you had to have both faith in people and show good faith. A man from the old school, he believed that all you needed to seal a deal was a hand shake.



*Paul Tex Lecor and Denis Beauchamp*

Beauchamp knew how to share his dreams with the artists around him and in return they gave him their confidence. He knew how to share his dreams in the art market and became well known for them. He also knew how to share his dreams with those who were close to him and make sure that his work would continue.

He wasn't ready to leave the foreground, like any great builder his mind was overflowing with projects. Projects that would once again demonstrate his love for art and his consideration for those who made it.

Beauchamp's dreams won't be extinguished. His family has said that Multi Art and Balcon d'Art will continue in the same spirit and sense of partnership established by Beauchamp and that both the public and artists will be treated with the same respect and consideration they have always received.

If I were able to interpret what many people have said about him after his death I would say: "Mr. Beauchamp, all of your friends and those who were close to you, and their tears, have testified to your numerous accomplishments and your life among us. Rest in peace with the knowledge that your work is done."

As for myself, I would like to shake his hand and congratulate him even more.