

couleurs du Québec... inquiète Deux peintre

ANDRÉ BERTOUNESQUE I.A.F.

Son of a meat merchant in a small French village, André Bertounesque received a rather strict education and no wonder: he was forever getting into trouble.... "At the time, you got a good licking when *you were caught, unfortunately, that's no longer done*". There were eight students in the one class of the village school... "*Generally, I was the eighth.... Out of the right, not that I was a dummy but because I didn't like school. I got my quota of lickings there too; you see I lived right next to the school and only had to jump over the fence to be in the school playground so that when I got a licking from my father, I also got one at school and vice-versa because they'd call each other by telephone. I can laugh about it now because I know it was for my good. The only time I ever came first was when there was a measles epidemic... and I was the only one left in the class. I showed my notes to my father who said – I hope this is only a beginning... but there wasn't another epidemic and I fell back to eighth place. Now, I recall, I came first twice also, in the canton...drawing.*" Little André was interested only in natural sciences, drawing and fun at recess, nothing else. Nevertheless, he did get his school leaving certificate at fourteen, again because of the quality of his drawing. His parents emigrated to Canada at that time. In his teens, André tried several trades... "*I worked in a jeans manufacture... jeans were selling for two ninety0five, then I had a job as a delivery man for a clothes cleaner. Oh yes, I also studied electricity and after being an apprentice for two years, I worked at the Vickers shipping-building plant. I didn't like it, I was so lazy that I had built a bed for myself in a chimney and even equipped it with an alarm clock to leave but, one day, and the boss found me and had me fired. I think I was then seventeen.*" André finally discovered a trade he liked; he went to a hairdressing school to learn that

trade. He was a men's hairdresser for ten years, an all time record for him. Since the age of fifteen, the only pleasure he ever had as to draw and to paint, so he had put up his easel at the back of the hairdressing parlour and, when things were quiet, would paint pictures which he exhibited in the establishment, to his surprise, he sold several pieces... "Hey, not for much ... twenty of thirty dollars. Oh I liked the hairdressing trade but... I really wasn't crazy about working, I didn't chase after customers. At that point, I was painting all the time. All of a sudden, I decided to stop working as a hairdresser and to paint only. I served my apprenticeship by working for someone who supplied me with the canvass; I would begin the pictures, he would finish them and then buy them from me, for a pittance, but I did all right. One day, I started to work on my own. I gave up the hairdressing trade completely to devote myself exclusively to painting. I began to sell my work and that's when I met Denis Beauchamp with whom I have remained ever since". Painting is probably the only profession which André Bertounesque practises with pleasure and confidence. "My apprenticeship was rather depressing but just the face of having a bit of success fired my enthusiasm to go on further. Actually, at fourteen, I already wanted to paint and had told my father that with drawing I could perhaps starve earn my living but, at the time, he had answered that I would surely starve and had to find a proper trade. So, I dropped the idea, No, I never studied anything, I Never went to school for that. I learned by trail and error, by dint of not showing what I painting, of scraping my canvasses to use them again, also of kicking a hole in them when I was angry. I kicked in several, yes, I'm *bad-tempered*, and I *can't stand to have something disturb my life. I'm also very stubborn*, you know and I plan for the coming months and if things *don't turn as I planned, I'm in a bad mood...*" André Bertounesque is a sometimes complicated, sometimes straightforward individual, often racked by anxiety, intellectually honest to a high degree, as sentimental as they come, whose armour is not always impervious to emotions.



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