

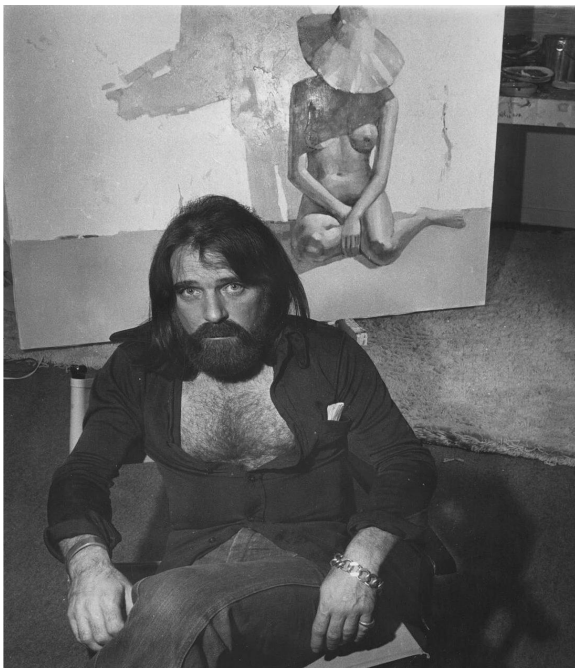


## ANDRE BERTOUNESQUE: AN EVOLUTION TOWARDS LIGHT

The global memory of art lovers sometimes tends to forget large parts of the history of some of their favorite artists. We forget how much Pablo Picasso mastered classical painting. We forget what Jackson Pollock did before the "drippings" or how much commercial work influenced Warhol and all of Pop Art....

From this perspective, it sometimes seems that an artist like André Bertounesque instinctively mastered the light and the colors he showed during the last period of his career but, obviously, such an understanding of art comes decades of research, hard work and patience.

Born May 11, 1937 in Sainte-Livrade (Lot-et-Garonne), France, Bertounesque arrived in Quebec in 1951 where he cumulated various small trades while cultivating a deep love of painting. A hairdresser, he would paint at his workplace and sell his paintings to his customers.



A talented amateur, he is quickly recognized for the atmospheres of the intimate scenes he paints. But Bertounesque soon develops the soul of a serious artist...

From the end of the 1960s he started a much more formal pictorial research and his work quickly took on a resolutely contemporary tangent. Indeed, he begins to explore non-figurative/abstract art and quickly garners a solid reputation with a certain intelligentsia of the "serious" art world.

His work of the time, as can be seen in the example presented below, is absolutely in tune with what is being done in Quebec and elsewhere in the rapidly expanding world of abstract art.

But Bertounesque is more than a painter, he is a poet...

This is why in the mid-1970s he returns to a more figurative approach where he keeps with the economy of means that he had managed to achieve with his non-figurative experiences.

The characters that populate his pictorial world are often reduced to their simplest form: soft geometric shapes are suggested, populating ethereal atmospheres more or less related to reality. In his still lives, fruit

and other elements are taken back to the essence of their form. His landscapes and seascapes are often only suggested, the skillfully arranged colors taking the viewer to imagine more than to understand the places represented. And always, the concern for light...

Throughout this period - which will last for nearly two decades - Bertounesque will develop this deep love of light (astonishing for an artist who was blocking the windows of his studio!), which he uses more and more as an omnipresent character in the many paintings he produces and who find takers immediately offered to a clientele already sold on the artist.

From the 1990s on, the artist, perhaps a little nostalgic for the South of his native France, starts painting the southern landscapes he had known in his youth.

He then begins to translate his memories into powerfully colored paintings and it is from this moment on that he becomes truly "the master of light" as he will be described for the rest of his career and beyond!

There is a real magic in the light that literally populates his paintings. Many times, a spectator looked at a framed painting to try to discover some subterfuge that could have artificially illuminated the landscapes of the South re-imagined by the artist who had left long before painting them. It is also interesting to note that some observers have sometimes commented how much these landscapes and their light were much more of the imagination of the artist than a servile representation of the colors and light of a region well-known for those same colors and lighting!

Man of great passions - women, collections and, above all, endless conversations, Bertounesque at the end of his career had acquired such a reputation that he was - and still is - considered as one of the modern Masters of figurative painting in Quebec.

This giant left us suddenly in September 2005 leaving an artistic legacy of inestimable value for both his fans and the plethora of artists he has influenced.

