

Littorio Del Signore

A Tribute to the City of Montréal
Source of Inspiration for 40 years



Place Jacques-Cartier - Montréal, oil, 40 x 70 in, 2014

With his usual pleasant, jovial and generous disposition, Littorio Del Signore welcomes me to his home, having accepted to share with us chapters of his well-rounded life. Despite the sum of his accomplishments and distinctions garnered throughout his artistic career, he remains modest when discussing his countless achievements. He never sought the prizes he was awarded, he simply created paintings resplendent with light that caught the attention of a quantity of juries. Artist through and through, he is prepared to randomly recount a myriad of stories highlighting the main aspects of his 40 years of creation. "I've been able to live from my art ever since I came here, says the artist, I've never done anything else."

As we enter the home, it is readily apparent that painting and sculpture are inherent to the identity of the occupants. Each part of the décor reflects love of art, a passion that has driven Littorio Del Signore ever since he left his native village of Sulmona, population of 800, to become a full-fledged painter. After having lived in France for ten years, where he worked as a graphic artist, he returns home and soon discovers that he must have access to greater opportunities than those Italy can offer him to successfully carry-out his plan. Since France's socioeconomic climate, rather tense at the time, appears unfavorable to his ambitions, he heads for Canada where he had already had the opportunity in 1976 to test the

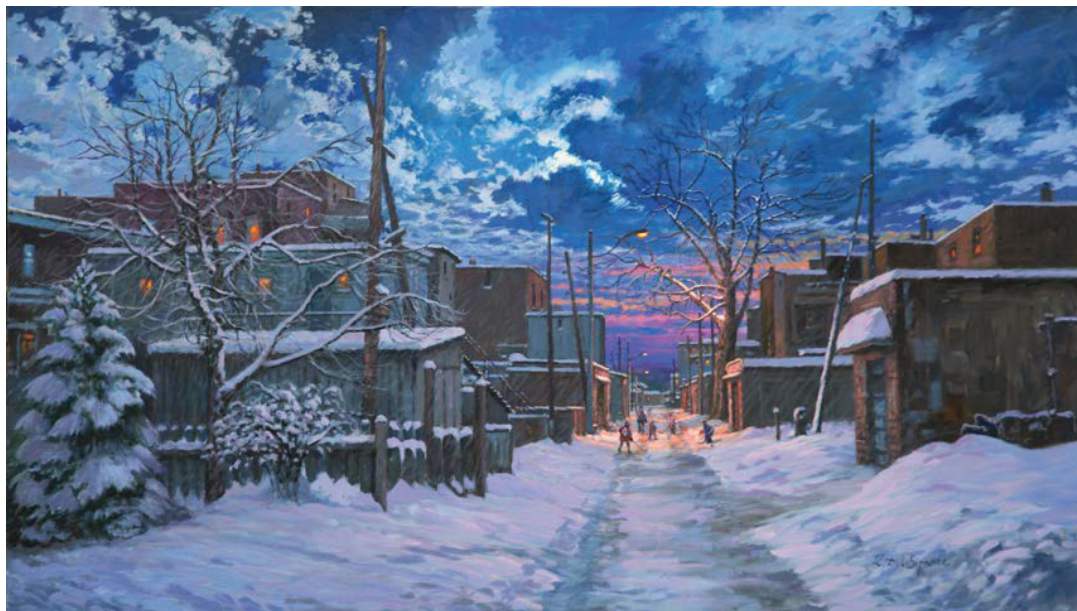


Le Parc Angrignon - Montréal, acrylic, 36 x 48 in, 2016

waters, so to speak, and had observed and effervescence and an openness that were quite seductive. Having often imagined, in his youth, the great Canadian open spaces that were depicted in comic strips he read, he essentially fulfills a childhood dream when he settles in Montréal in 1978.

He spends the first four years roaming the city at all hours of day and night, by foot or by bus, to capture its essence on camera. "I wasn't ready to purchase a car as I much preferred to wander everywhere and imbue myself with all the sites, while I also gathered a bank of thousands of pictures which is still useful to me to this day." A photographed image may procure the initial starting

point of his works, but Del Signore quickly disengages from it and transforms it into a true painting. He invents a world of his own by adding or removing elements to achieve a balanced composition in a unique palette that one could qualify as 'sentimental'. From this process emanate paintings that are simultaneously simple and grandiose, that lure the eye through a powerful enchantment of colours into entering a half-fictitious but entirely plausible environment. "Creating atmosphere in my paintings is my primary concern and, I believe, it is what characterizes my artistic signature," he proudly says.



Une ruelle de Montréal, acrylic, 40 x 70 in, 2013

Littorio Del Signore quickly notices that no-one seems to be depicting urban scenes or neighborhood alleyways that are so typical and full of life. He will be one of the firsts to illustrate these themes in lighted scenes where snow often glistens under end of winter tinted skies. "Childhood memories of many Québécois were generated in such alleyways, where a number of them have played hockey. I wished to bear witness of this particular reality by featuring it in my work." Thus arose his natural affinity with some members of the Montréal Canadiens hockey team, notably with Jean Béliveau who became a great friend and later signed a foreword to his book.

The list of milestone events along his journey is so extensive that it is difficult to choose a few to mention. For instance, for 8 years he participated in the Québec Carnaval as part of a select group of 10 invited painters. Then there is the twice played role of Honorary President of the Baie-St-Paul Rêves d'automne symposium. An important retrospective of his work was also held at Château Ramezay following the invitation of its director. He also founded the Baie-Comeau symposium in 1987, a genius idea inspired by a similar event being held in Italy, where he convinced a few friends to come and paint live with him. We should add that because of this symposium, the largest of its genre in the province welcoming more than 16,000 visitors each year, Baie-Comeau was awarded the Tourism Grand Prize four years in a row. It would be difficult to not also mention the Canada Post stamp that featured one of his paintings, the National Assembly Medal he received in 2011 as well as the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Medal that recognises the achievements of individuals who, during the last 50 years, have helped to create the Canada that we know today. On a different note, after having been invited to write a testimonial for his colleague Umberto Bruni's book, he also feels the urge to publish. His own book is launched in 2012 in the André-Laurendeau college media room where more than 400 people, including the mayor of LaSalle and other dignitaries, came to support his initiative in a typically Italian ambiance with *spumante* and *pasticceria*. More than 1,100 copies of the book have been sold to date.

Though having been awarded first prize in abstract composition among 900 participants in Deauville in 1969, he favors a figurative style. His paintings are rather traditional in technique and radiate a certain air of idealistic romanticism. "To be classified as a work of art, a painting must demonstrate a unique personal style that rests on a mastery of the basic rules of drawing such as anatomy, proportions, perspective and chiaroscuro. Otherwise we should speak of decorative works, which also deserve a place but should never be construed as true works of art," adds the artist. Del Signore regrets the fact that cultural reporting in the media generally treats visual art events as being of less importance while all efforts should rather be made to support them. "Why couldn't the media increase their covering of painting exhibitions and events in news bulletins to help increase public awareness of the richness of this discipline and thus prevent the loss of a precious part of our cultural inheritance? Why are performance arts getting all the attention, as if only they warranted support?" Del Signore is of the opinion that if more energy was invested in the promotion of pictorial art, more people of all social classes could participate in its growth.

Being plagued with chronic pain for many years following major surgery, he nevertheless retains a positive attitude and a great sense of humour, seizes every good moment that presents itself and dramatizes others. "When I paint, I am able to forget my body and its limitations. Once absorbed in my creative universe, I don't see time go by. It's purely magical! I need to paint as I need to breathe. As long as I am able to paint, I will go on." His rhythm may have slightly slowed down and he no longer deals with galleries, but he remains active. He is presently preparing a major exhibition of some forty large size works with Montréal as their theme, the opening of which will take place this year. Watch for it!

Lisanne Le Tellier

To contact the artist: littoriodelsignore@hotmail.com



Le port de Montréal - Circa 1875, acrylic, 30 x 46 in, 2005



Vers Le Moulin Fleming - Lasalle, acrylic, 24 x 30 in, 1996

