

The Little world of Pauline Paquin

Every artist works within his or her own creative world. Pauline Paquin's is one of playful, carefree little people. The enchanting universe of children is a limitless sources of inspiration for her, and she'll turn anything children love- a visit to a farm, a day of skiing or a hockey game- into a painting.

Natural talent

Pauline Paquin was born on a farm in Sainte-Monique, a rural community now part of Mirabel. ' I had a very happy childhood as one of the twelve children in the family ' . She says. Happy, yes but in a fairly art free environment. ' We never went to museums or galleries ' . The little I learned about art I picked up at school.

Her artistic talent was quick to develop, however. At the age of five, she won first prize in a drawing contest organized by the children's show Maman Fonfon. Throughout childhood, she drew and painted constantly, to the delight of her parents and teachers. But in those days, a career as an artist was out of the question. So Pauline studied nursing and set aside her art for a while.

Back to her first love

While working as a nurse at the CLSC in Saint-Jerome, Pauline met the painter Marcel Fecteau, who happened to live right near her. Her contact with the well-known artist revived her interest in painting and she began to learn new techniques. Most of the first works she produced in her new studio were landscapes – brilliantly coloured luminous canvases.

One particular day, she watched as a friend created a painting of children coming out of school. Although the figures were only roughly sketched, Pauline felt a pang in her heart. ' I knew right away that, from then on, I would paint scenes with children in them. ' she recalls. ' I adore the colour, the energy and the exuberance of the world kids inhabit.' As expected, her work began to vibrate with the happy shouts of children.

A style of her own

Pauline painted incessantly while raising her three sons and a distinctive style began to emerge. In 1983, she had her first solo show at the reputed Michel-Bigué Gallery in Outremont, and it proved to be the first of many successful exhibits. Art collectors from Quebec and elsewhere couldn't get enough of her work: before long, she was showing her paintings in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver, followed by Japan and Europe.

Pauline Paquin's passion for painting is equaled only by her love of children. They are everywhere in her work; uninhabited landscapes are no longer for her. A typical Paquin canvas features a half-dozen tykes running, skiing, sliding, roughhousing and playing hockey – often wearing the familiar Canadiens sweater.

An avid Habs Fan

Pauline has been a hockey fan since she was younger. ' I was always fascinated by the game' she says ' I followed the Canadiens on the radio, since we didn't have a television set. I would have given anything to see a game live at the arena, but my parents were supporting twelve kids on a farmer's income, and there wasn't much money for luxuries like hockey tickets.

' Those were the days of the six-team NHL, ' she notes, adding, I must have been one of the Jean Béliveau's most ardent admirers,' Pauline ultimately got a chance to experience the thrill of the game from a closer perspective when her three sons laced up their skates.

By Michel Julien
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