

Pauline Paquin

Living in a Children's World

One day, as children ran out of school, an aspiring artist happened to notice them. Their joy, their lightness of being, their carefree attitude captured her attention and this expression of pure joy became her leitmotiv.

Pauline Paquin's canvases are filled with childhood moments of daily life. Her colourful scenes, with their lot of naivety, are pleasing for the eyes and inevitably generate smiles. "Children colour my life," says the artist whose career spans three decades. It is the essence of the artist to marvel at mere details that are generally overlooked by the masses. She channels her inspiration onto the canvas, highlighting and sealing her final vision in full colours.

Born in the Laurentians, Pauline Paquin initially pursues a more practical career and becomes a nurse working in a CLSC. Although she has from childhood been quite adept at drawing, art does not present itself as a career option yet. She humorously recalls being quite surprised when a fortune-teller predicts a prosperous future for her as an artist. This anecdote does prompt her to enrol in a few art courses, but nothing more. As luck would have it, when she moves into new dwellings, she discovers that her neighbour is none other than well-known painter Marcel Fecteau. She paints alongside the renowned artist for a while and soon develops

her own artistic style and technique. This is when she finally chooses to follow an artistic path and gradually phases out her nursing career to become a self-taught full-time painter.

Ninth child of a family of twelve siblings, it could be assumed that a number of scenes she depicts derive from a treasure chest of family memories, but it isn't so. "I believe I am simply a little girl who never grew-up. My sense of wonder is still intact. The naivety and spontaneity of children are and will remain my main source of inspiration. I love painting them when they are left to their own devices, in their own world, unsupervised, carefree."

The singularity of Pauline Paquin's paintings lies in the fact that the colourfully clothed children depicted have no facial features. Their expressions and childish gestures are rendered through their postures and body language. Thus, spectators are easily able to appropriate the children's identity as they wish and concoct their own story. Touches of humour are also hidden within the paintings, surprises that testify to the jovial personality of the artist, to her sense of playfulness. Here figures are fishing on April fools day, there a sheep is wearing a Canadians jersey or an imaginary bird brings a touch of flimsiness to an otherwise serious painting. Art lovers can find enjoyment, as children would, in trying to find the 'error' in the painting.



C'est l'heure de la cueillette, 12 x 24 in, 2012



Après les classes, 16 x 16 in, 2012



Un classique, 24 x 30 in, 2012

A career that spans thirty years inevitably suggests an evolution in technique and approach. But, while being on the lookout for new techniques, Pauline Paquin remains resolutely constant and true to her style. "My painting is today more nuanced; less crude than when I first started. Brushstrokes, effects of light and colours are more refined as is the attention to details. Overall, I'd say my painting is more harmonious."

Often imitated, the artist endeavours to protect her realm by increasing the complexity of her visual signature. Delicate collages, subtler effects of shade and light and more detailed backgrounds are aspects she minutely works on. "My painting is inherently feminine!" This meticulousness, however, is not readily apparent in her figures' gestures. "I was told that a boy wouldn't hold a hockey stick in that way, but my feeling is that a child is often clumsy, so it's entirely possible that he does hold it as such. So, if a child can be awkward, so can a painter!" Taking such artistic liberty only adds more charm and authenticity to the depicted scenes.

She favours oil and has been using the medium since she first started painting. She appreciates the transparency of colours it allows as well as the possibility of retouching her work if needed. She exclusively paints in studio, under natural light. She uses photographs to construct her backgrounds and charcoal to sketch her

figures. A collage technique complements the figures' clothing, a process fed by her innate fashion sense. Brushes and painting knives are used to complete the rest.

Now managing her eponymous gallery in St. Sauveur, the adventure has taken another form. "I always painted in my home and I'm so happy to have been able to see my children grow-up and be master of my own schedule. I am acutely aware of the luck I've had in being able to live-out my passion; not many people are able to do so." Her presence in gallery is a relatively new experience for her, which she intends to further. She also plans to continue to travel and see the world. "I travel regularly and adore discovering other countries," says the artist who has already found a way to incorporate parcels of Morocco, Myanmar and Vietnam in her paintings which are otherwise definitely Québec oriented.

Isabelle Gauthier

Pauline Paquin is represented by: Galerie Pauline T. Paquin, St-Sauveur, Galerie Le Balcon d'Art, Saint-Lambert, Galerie 2000, Montréal, Chase Art Gallery, Beaconsfield, Galerie 88, Vancouver, Artym, Vancouver and Galerie La Pinsonnière, La Malbaie