

Desson

Forging his own style

At Denis Chiasson's studio there are paintings everywhere, from the basement to the bedroom, from the bath tub to the kitchen. One's first impression of Chiasson, also known as Desson, is that he is prolific, especially considering that only yesterday 20 canvasses were shipped off to a gallery.

Born in 1968 in Montréal Desson now lives in Old Boucherville, about an hour outside of Montréal on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. His house is minutes away from the banks of the river. Although he only gained gallery representation in 2003, his star is bright enough so that he now has his work hanging in galleries from Newfoundland to Alberta.

He is one of the new wave of Québec painters and he has an audience. His work is angular and representational. His subjects are usually women. His palette is made up of muted colours broken by bright ones. He uses red, yellow, ochres, marine greens and blue greys. His work looks as if it would feel right at home in the 1930s.

Desson has always drawn. It was an avocation he picked up from his mother who was a painter and encouraged him. He has a college degree in graphic arts and a fine arts diploma from university.

His work is intimate and in some cases narrative. He has worked in computer graphic design, illustration and silk screen production. Like many of those who come to painting from a



BREAKFAST WITH ORANGES/Déjeuner d'orange, oil, 36 x 24 in. Exclusive Art Forms



BIG RIVER, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in. Webster Galleries



MODEL AND BLACK BIRD/Modèle et oiseau noir, huile, 48 x 24 in. Exclusive Art Forms

graphic's background he is concerned with composition.

Desson's favourite occupation when he isn't painting is reading and at one time he fancied the thought that he might become a novelist. It could almost be said that he paints in order to tell stories, which also explains why he sometimes puts in words or phrases in the background of his paintings.

"I practiced a lot of different trades before deciding to become a painter," says Desson. "While I was watching my friends settle down and start families I decided to settle down and devote

myself to art, regardless of the material consequences. Now that I am having some success my friends envy me because I do what I love, paint. But they have to realize that my choice of career wasn't dictated by the market. Nobody can tell me what or how to paint."

Over time Desson has forged his own style and now he paints naturally as if it were second only to breathing. For him painting is living.

Desson's angular paintings are born out of solid drawing skills. He doesn't want to produce a perfect reproduction of human anatomy. Instead he wants to

produce an interesting painting that will draw you in.

For him a painting starts as he picks through sketches to decide which one will become a canvas. When this is done he draws the outline on the canvas and then starts to fill in the design with paint.

Often his subjects have their eyes closed. His favourite themes are easels, cats, women and artists' studios. Like a writer writing about what he knows, Desson paints his daily life. An essential part of his style is to compress his principal figure within the framework of his



WOMAN WITH KNIFE/Femme au couteau, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in. Webster Galleries.

canvas. It is very rare in his work that a foot or hand will disappear outside of his painting. Everything is compressed as if he wants to put his model inside a box.

And this, just may be the cornerstone of his style. Legs and arms are often folded. Heads are often held at an angle to keep them within the frame and the body is often folded against itself to create marked angles.

His principal figures are usually outlined with oil crayons. This provides a certain sense of movement and life to his figures. With the eyes closed and

their heads on angle his subjects give off an air of calmness, self sufficiency and introspection. Desson explains this by saying, "It's an unconscious transposition of my state of mind while I paint.

Desson has two shows coming up in the near future, one in February at the Webster Galleries in Calgary and another in May at Exclusive Art Forms in Lancaster, Ontario. █

Robert Lafontaine



THE READER/La lectrice, oil, 48 x 24 in. Exclusive Art Forms



SCREEN WITH FLOWERS/Paravent à fleurs, oil, 48 x 24 in. Exclusive Art Forms

Desson is represented by the following galleries: Galerie Yvon Desgagnés, Baie St. Paul; Galerie Le Lion D'Or, Québec City; Galerie La Corniche, Chicoutimi; Galerie Le Castelet, St. Sauveur; Galerie Courtemanche, Magog; Exclusive Art Forms, Lancaster, Ontario; The Layton Gallery of Fine Art, St. John Newfoundland and the Webster Galleries, Calgary. He is listed in the *Biennial Guide to Canadian Artists in Galleries*, published by MAGAZIN'ART.

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