

Chantal Julien

Leaving the Viewer his Part of Dream



Powdery Snow on Charlevoix/Poudreuse sur Charlevoix, oil on Massonite, 2006, 8 x 12 in.

Although painting is today the only avenue through which she can fully blossom, Chantal Julien did not start her professional career on an artistic path. Born in 1965 in Donnacona, Québec, she was first and foremost attracted by science and worked in the field of microelectronics research at the University of Sherbrooke for ten years. Yet her passion for drawing is manifest at an early age.

As a child, she constantly sketches in

notebooks that her father makes for her using scrap paper he brings home from the mill where he works. As a teenager, she discovers oil painting, the scent of which appeals to her. She buys an array of paint tubes which she stores in a box her father builds which can easily contain all her material. She first practices oil painting by reproducing pictures taken out of magazines. Later, she starts painting from her own photographs that she enjoys taking as she roams the countryside.

At some point, her research work occupies much of her time which leaves her very few occasions where she can indulge her passion and just paint. In 1997, she finally decides to dedicate herself fully to her art and starts painting full time. In 2002, she joins the artists' cooperative ArtAzo which means she can share studio costs with other artists as well as enjoy greater visibility. Exchanges among co-owners bring an added bonus to the advantages of this formula as artists mutually profit from one another's expe-



Geraniums, oil on canvas, 2009, 18 x 18 in.

riences as they solicit constructive criticism to further themselves.

Essentially self-taught, Chantal Julien proceeds through experimentation, guided by her instinct. She enjoys facing new challenges and does not hesitate to advance towards the unknown and follow new paths. "I have no wish to remain idle, I want to go forward!" energetically declares the artist. An eternal optimist, she doesn't shy away from adversity. She rather perceives obstacles as occasions to surpass herself. Due to her scientific training, her work process is ingrained with rigor and discipline and has progressed overtime from a mostly figurati-

ve style towards one of soft abstraction.

Her great love of nature is the inspiration for many of her works, where intense colours are dominant. For Chantal Julien, everything stems from a heart-stopper moment, a memorable first impression of the panorama she is admiring and that she will express on canvas. Usually painting on site, she works rapidly and will often complete a painting in one session. Using large brushes, which give the impression that she uses painting knives, she applies the paste with loose gestures and ample movements. She then scratches or wipes some specific areas to create various effects. "I seek to

represent what I see while simplifying the subject and making it mine," she says.

She believes her work must give the spectator leeway to complete some segments of it in his own mind, per his interpretation which may differ completely from her own. In other words, she wishes to keep some figurative reference in her paintings, but everything in it doesn't need to be scripted so as to leave open areas that can be appropriated by someone else's personal fantasy.

Painting is for her a very physical process. Indeed, she moves as she works with both hands, often driven by a sentiment of urgency and excitement, as if



First Lights/Premières lueures, oil on Massonite, 2005, 10 x 15 in.



The Great Garden's Secret/Le secret des grands jardins, oil on canvas, 2009, 20 x 30 in.

she couldn't paint fast enough to be able to express every thought in her head. She welcomes fortuitous happenings and accidents that often become magical moments as she integrates them in her composition. "If an idea comes to mind, I must immediately get to work. There suddenly is an urgency that I am driven to act upon." During the summer, she will row her canoe on a quest for new imagery, rediscovering light and colour in nature. Or, she will start on a painting trip, a sort of marathon of creation where the

excitement of painting generates an accelerated rhythm to her quest for new horizons.

She has slowly progressed towards an ever increasing abstract treatment of her subjects. She now wishes to create animated scenes where the same technique is applied to her figures. Overtime, her goal towards simplification becomes more and more attainable as her newfound self-confidence helps her venture even further, fear no longer impeding her desire for freedom.

Completely dedicated to her passion, Chantal Julien still has many more avenues to explore. "I live to paint. It is my vocation and I will never do anything else!" Her current dream is to someday soon visit Latin America. We can readily assume that these new panoramas will become great sources of inspiration that will make her grow even further. **I**

Lisanne LeTellier

Chantal Julien is represented by ArtAzo Gallery, Sherbrooke; René Richard, Baie-St. Paul; Pierre Séguin, Île Perrot, Québec; Vigneault, Repentigny, Québec; Le Luxart, Montréal; Koyman, Ottawa, Ontario; Harrison, Vancouver, British-Columbia; Pilar Shephard, Charlottetown, Nova-Scotia; Art Côté, Percé, Québec. She is listed in the *Biennial Guide to Canadian Artists in Galleries* published by *MAGAZIN' ART*.