

SHARON MARK

BIOGRAPHY

Sharon (Somerville) Mark grew up in Hemmingford, in southwest Quebec, where she still makes her home. She was interested in art from a very early age, influenced by her grandmother, who painted landscapes in oils.

Sharon started painting in acrylics in the early 1980's. A self-taught artist, Sharon was always attracted to the landscape. She enjoys painting tranquil country scenes, often with people and animals, in a naive style. She is highly influenced by the area around where she lives, the farmlands, apple orchards, old stone houses, historic barns, fields and streams. Her close proximity to the eastern townships is evident as well in her work. Visits to the Charlevoix area and the Maritimes have also inspired her.

Her paintings evoke a nostalgic emotion, and portray an innocent world free of troubles and worries. She likes to paint happy, sunny scenes with children at play. Sharon's work also depicts a romantic view of family life, a time where chores and responsibilities are shared with free time to pursue one's hobbies and playtime. She prefers to work from her home studio, especially in the long winter months.

Sharon started showing her work locally in the 1980's and exhibiting in galleries in 1992. Her work appears in galleries across Canada.

When she was young, Mark watched her grandmother paint the pictures that decorated the family home. She still has many of these paintings from her childhood and continues to draw inspiration from them. That she has eclipsed her grandmother's talent is evident but we can see the source that has nurtured her self-taught career.

Sharon Mark has never formally studied art, though she has been painting for over four decades. Her technique has matured through constant application over the years. She has broadened her scope to reflect a vision that is less detail oriented but more harmonious in its totality. Her style is now more realistic and her palette has grown richer and deeper. She prefers to paint invented rather than real landscapes, sticking to a style with which she feels at ease. Among her favourite artists are Grandma Moses and Maud Lewis.

Mark's painting is almost childlike in its simplicity. She follows the tradition established by "le douanier", Henri Rousseau. She finds herself identified as one of Quebec's naive artists, in the company of others such as Yves du Poirier, Genevieve Jost and Arthur Villeneuve. The beauty of her native southern Quebec countryside feeds Sharon Mark's passion to paint. Her subject matter is drawn from the association of a happy rural childhood. Houses, barns, children at play, cats and dogs, snowmen, sleighs, are common elements, all set in pristine landscapes. Viewed as a whole rather than with the eye focused on detail, her paintings exude a sense of comfort and well being. Summer scenes do not figure prominently in Mark's oeuvre. She prefers to depict the cooler, more muted seasons: autumn, winter, early spring. This preference is reflected in her palette, which is dominated by blues, browns and white.

Her art is notable for the delicacy of its brushstrokes. Mark achieves the serene effect of her work through a painstakingly methodical approach. Using fine brushes, not a leaf or a brick escapes meticulous representation. She favours the effect of a foreshortened perspective and her preferred medium is acrylic on canvas.

Sharon Mark's studio is unique among those of the artists we have visited. Everything is impeccably organized. The

tubes of paint are capped, there are no rags in sight, no empty pots, and not a stray spot of paint to be found. The studio is neater than most houses and its floor is covered with quality carpeting. There is no sense of creative cataclysm. This orderliness and sense of calm is mirrored in mark's painting. Her art hangs on the walls, echoing her grandmother's influence.

Her work was first exhibited in the early 1990's at Galerie Jeannine Blais in North Hatley, Quebec, and at Galerie le Balcon d'art in Saint-Lambert, Quebec.

Her canvases, depicting idyllic rural settings, are very popular with the general public. She produces roughly one hundred paintings a year, in various sizes, and most of her work finds eager buyers.