

FINALIST

MARTIN BLANCHE, Quebec, Canada, *Bruine sur l'île d'Orleans*, oil, 30 x 30" (76 x 76cm)

MY INSPIRATION

I have chosen to live in my place of birth, the small town of St-Émile-de-Suffolk, in Quebec, Canada, as I have a deep affection for its nature and the emotions it offers. I've always wanted to share that happiness, which often exists for only a moment. My goal as a painter is to share the beauty of the moment, describing an ambience and the experience of the location, the climate, the moment of time.

In this painting, we are in November; it's a drizzly day with colours blending together. The grey is so pervasive that the eye must capture and appreciate the important subtle tones.

When arriving at this location, the scene impressed itself on me. I was eager to take a few reference photos of the tones of the mist, which caught the intense dampness, creating the main characteristic of this scene.

MY DESIGN STRATEGY

During my process of inspiration, time is my ally, as it transforms the image seen into an impression and helps me eliminate unnecessary details.

Strangely enough, if you go to this spot, you will find only part of the subject matter as I romanticised it, by removing the existing road and several other components. I also reduced the background, making the foreground come alive.

I reworked the perspective by adding trees and middle-ground, thus enhancing the sense of moisture. I play with nature's elements, keeping the aesthetic objective of retaining the mood.

I use photos as references for locations, but my main tool remains my memory, permitting me to reproduce my feelings at a certain time and place; to be revisited at another point in time.



MY WORKING PROCESS

Before the canvas sits on the easel, I must be able to visualise the painting clearly, scrolling through my mind, even if most of the time it is only as a flash or for an instant.

Starting with a thin grey-brown background followed by a few strokes, I simply put the important elements together, and then from a focal point, I expand outward in a circle while establishing colour values. For this painting, the blues, browns and carmine established these values. Using the mirror technique, I correct myself as I go along.

When the painting is sufficiently advanced, I set it aside for a few days, only resuming and working out the details as they reveal themselves, with hindsight. Also at this time, I realise if I have succeeded in keeping the gist of this story I am communicating. In this case, I managed to recreate the initial emotions, so I was pleased with the result.

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