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André Desjardins in California: an atypical success story

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Painter and sculptor André Desjardins in Masterpiece Publishing's foundry in California. With his sculpture *With You Until The End*.

Photo: Pénélope Fortier, special contribution



[Nicolas Bérubé](#)
La Presse

(Los Angeles) Quebec artist André Desjardins launched his own career by financing a showing at the New York Art Expo in March 2008. Art Business magazine has since named him as one of the 10 most important new artists. Our journalist met him in Los Angeles.

André Desjardins' eyes look tired but a smile lights up his face. "In sorry, we haven't slept in two days. We have three children in Montréal, but that's nothing compared to what we're living during this week-end in L.A." We're in a restaurant in Laguna Beach, one hour south of Los Angeles. Desjardins and his girlfriend, Hélène Bélanger-Martin, were driven here by David Winn, owner of Masterpiece Publishing, one of the leaders in the fine art publishing industry in the United States.

While we're talking, Mr. Winn is entertaining thirty or so guests at another table. They're the most important collectors and private gallery owners of the continent.

The day before, Desjardins was a tremendous success at the 2010 Masterpiece Publishing art gala evening. He sold ten or so paintings. And four bronze sculptures.

"I also booked some showings," Desjardins says. "In Texas, Colorado, Florida... it was a complete success."

André Desjardins' life turned upside-down during a week-end at last year's New York Art Expo. [In her column, Nathalie Petrowski recently described](#) the incredible story of André Desjardins, Montréal painter and sculptor, who hoped to sell six paintings in New York. He finally sold 26, became the highlight of the trade show and was recruited by Masterpiece Publishing who offered him a ten-year contract on the spot.

This was in 2008. Today, Desjardins is enjoying his new notoriety to do what he loves most: create. “I don’t have to take care of clientele, public relations, administrative matters. I paint and I sculpt, that’s all. It’s awesome!”

Desjardins shapes the first stage of his sculptures in his Montréal studio, on De Gaspé Street. He then sends everything to the Santa Fe Spring foundry, near L.A. Once a month, he flies to California and works at the foundry, where he’s on a first-name basis with everyone.

His paintings show very realistic pensive or tortured faces, which almost occupy the entire canvass.

Desjardins works closely with girlfriend Hélène Bélanger-Martin who directed a short 10 minute film on his work. The film can be viewed on the Website of Galerie Roccia which represents the artist in Montréal.

He says that, ironically, the American market is more receptive to his art than the Quebec market, where artists often have a hard time getting noticed.

“It’s difficult to make a name for yourself in Montréal. A gallery can easily receive 100 portfolios. They often don’t even have the time to open them. To stand out, you have to be known, to already have some notoriety... In Montréal, my name is commonplace. In Los Angeles, people find it sexy.”

These days, Desjardins, paintings go for around \$12,000; some more important works can fetch up to \$50,000. Amounts that some art lovers will spend spontaneously: something that astonishes him every time.

“In New York, a woman bought a \$7,000 painting in three minutes, like she was buying a t-shirt at Gap’s. It’s dumbfounding to witness.”

When asked to reflect on his journey, Desjardins notes that he didn’t adapt his artistic style to make a name for himself in the United States.

“I’ve done the same style of paintings for years now. I’ve always done that. If I can give a bit of advice to budding artists, that’s the one. Don’t give up. If you have a unique style, cultivate it. That’s what will draw attention. It’s what art lovers are looking for.”

Information: www.galerieroccia.com