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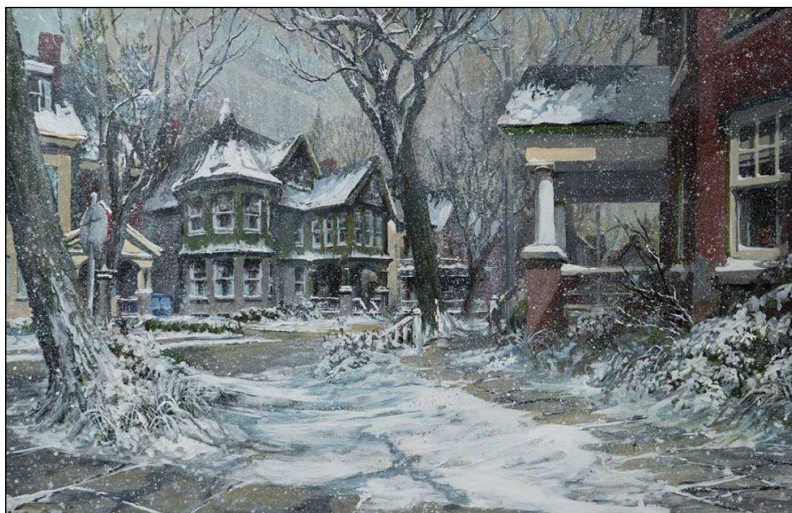
# Joy in my life

## Tony Batten, 2020



Even after the numbing atmosphere of 2020 it is not an overstatement for many to say that we have a more tearful and saddening realization in the passing, December 27, 2020, of our dear and constant friend Mr. Anthony J. Batten, more familiarly known to all his many friends as 'Tony'. A man heavily steeped in British and Canadian traditions, originally an 'immigrant kid' from Oxfordshire, his life in Canada became the model of an intellectual and humanitarian existence. After École des Beaux Arts, and Concordia, and beginning work in Montreal, Tony arrived in Toronto in 1968 and embarked on a teaching career. And yes, of course, he was an artist foremost, but his prodigious list of other interests were not far behind. He could in fact hold an audience enthralled in many fields with spicy stories and colourful details, not the least would be 'I shouldn't really mention this'. Ha! Ha! Which of course he would, with resonating peels of laughter and an audience begging for more. This perhaps in the middle of a lecture on the history of British miniatures, or the importance of Fundraising for the National Ballet.

He was a leader with vision. As president of The Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour from 1993-95, with our 100 Canadian watercolour paintings included in The Royal Collection at Windsor Castle to his credit, this will stand as a permanent global monument to his lifetime. Of course that was not all, and the thousands of members of our national societies will be forever in debt to his efforts for inclusion and success at the highest professional level. He was not only a remarkable painter himself, a 'Casson Medal' winner, but also made notable impressions in The Federation of Canadian Artists, The Society of



*Anthony J. Batten, Visual Harmony, a Side-Street study (Foxbar at Avenue Road, Toronto), 40" x 60" acrylic on canvas*

*Juried into the 2020 N3XT exhibition that took place at Toronto's historic Arts & Letters Club from November 16th to December 18th, 2020.*

Canadian Artists and the Ontario Society of Artists. He was regularly juried into national exhibitions with his award winning works, proudly owned across the world. He was in fact the very first artist permitted to roam the houses of Parliament sketching and painting its architecture and atmosphere, and, held in mind at his death, a similar unique mission for the Supreme Court of Canada.

It is hard for all to imagine he has left this realm for a better place. What will we do without his foresight and guidance delivered in a uniquely non-judgemental manner? How will we pursue the greatness of the future without his scholarship and guidance?

“The PORDS”, a long-lived painting group consisting of Heidi Burkhardt, Kim Atkins, Maurice Snelgrove, and Tony, have



*The PORDS: Heidi Burkhardt, Tony Batten, Kim Atkins and Maurice Snelgrove*

been painting together for 45 years, travelling to many places, including the Canadian Arctic, and mounting shows every year to the delight of their admiring entourage. To them we offer our very special condolences. To Robert Rash, his devoted friend and lifetime confidant, we also extend our fond condolences. And to all of us others, we send our sincere empathy, and remember that Tony in his most positive way, would expect us to spend little time on mourning but instead to press on to life’s great adventures, making the most of every day, with our painting, our ambitious, and our help to others.

It is difficult to sculpt an appropriate monument of words to in any way define this great life lived. After years of teaching at Steven Leacock and Sir Oliver Mowat Collegiate there are many students who will credit Tony for their very existence. There are colleagues who would professionally fall in the same boat. There are “Art Camp” students who would have ‘forever’ memories of good times and the help and encouragement they received from Mr. Batten.

For two or three decades Tony has been a mainstay in the hallowed halls of the historic Arts & Letters Club of Toronto. We remember Tony often stepping up to the mic with resourceful and entertaining introductions, events, and lectures. Annual General Meetings held for all our art societies will never be the same without him. Head and shoulders above his audience in most ways, his clever quips and serious comments will light the way for coming generations.



A medal has been suggested. How does one mark such a highly acclaimed and remarkable person? In this tragic loss what will we individually remember the most? His paintings deemed for Canadian history books, paintings of Venetian and Roman Architecture, intimate cafes, Montreal's splendour in the snow, colourful Toronto neighbourhoods? his great example as an inspiring teacher? his leadership and reputation in provincial and national art societies? his wise but quiet nudges to move things forward? his sincere friendship? or perhaps riotous stories about viewing four-hundred-year-old art works in HRH Prince Charles personal bathroom? Ha! Ha! I think we will remember all those good things, but most especially the joy he brought into our lives.

An especially fine and dear fellow. Rest in Peace Tony.

- Peter Marsh,  
with contributions from Rayne Tunley

