

Painter tells stories of human emotion one brush at a time

By OCTAVIAN LACATUSU (mailto:news@sookenewsmirror.com?subject=Sooke News Mirror - Painter tells stories of human emotion one brush at a time)

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Jean-François Mincet with one of his many paintbrushes. / OCTAVIAN LACATUSU/SOOKE NEWS MIRROR

As June slowly draws the curtain, July is around the corner with one of the largest art events in the region – that’s right, the Sooke Fine Arts Show is back.

This year, the Sooke Mirror will feature a local artist of a different style every week leading up to the show, showcasing the Sooke region’s rich – and wonderful – collection of talented creators.

The Sooke Fine Arts Show (July 22 to August 1) is a regional exhibition of fine art presenting 375 works by artists from Sooke, Vancouver Island and the surrounding coastal Islands.

As in recent years, the SEAPARC Leisure Complex hockey arena is converted into a 17,000 square foot art gallery, attracting thousands of visitors through its 11-day run.

This week we kick off with Jean-Francois Mincet, a local French artist whose lifelong passion is to tell the stories of people and the world through expressive (and intimately vivid) paintings and sketches, whether they are oil, watercolor or crayon-based.

“I can’t live without painting, it’s my calling,” Mincet said in his Sooke home, of which virtually every wall is covered in paintings he’s done over the years, top and bottom. “It’s not for money, but for pleasure.”

Born and raised in Paris, France, Mincet showed a strong affinity towards art by drawing and painting of his surroundings and those in them at just six years old.

It wasn’t until he was 10 when he met renown French author Maurice Genevoix, that Mincet’s unique ability to visualize and paint what he saw was recognized. Mincet admired Genevoix for telling real-life stories in immense detail, a trait that would later be seen in many of his later works.

Regardless of whether it’s written, painted, or sketched, Mincet said it’s all about visualizing and making sense of the emotion that comes from within.

“Art must be moving and genuine, it cannot be fabricated.”

In his 20s, Mincet worked for a small Parisian publication creating watercolor artwork for “miniatures”, a type of medieval-era French literature, including illustrations for *Le Petit Prince*.

Like the olden days, each book was individually produced by hand, art drawn to the tiniest detail.

“It was fantastic to work on something that is considered a long-lost artform,” Mincet said, adding that he would first read the text, then imagine it “with heart.”

Even in their day, they were not for the proletariat, as these one-off books were commissioned by kings and queens with an often specific purpose, usually telling a love story, or depicting a battle.

But Mincet’s paintings often tell stories that go beyond the canvas, depicting people in an spiritual, meditative state, such as his collection of works based on his numerous trips to India.

Despite some of his works having a religious look, Mincet said his works have no religious undertone, but more of a “beyond the infinite” kind of feel.

“They are simply spiritual ... it’s a representation of humanity’s endless search for the divine,” he said, noting that his style is mostly interpretive realism, rather than abstract surrealism.

“There has to be emotion and a real important meaning in what you are painting,” Mincet said.

Classical music helps him visualize what he’s painting and what the subject matter really is, though what’s happening in the real world today – both good and bad – is more than enough inspiration.

“Inspiration cannot be taught, it has to come from within,” he said, adding that all an artist really needs to constantly work at is technique and a keen observation.

Mincet’s featured piece at this year’s Sooke Fine Arts Show remains to be a surprise, though he has revealed (massive) piece is “vivid and realistic representation of nature.”

His work was featured in art galleries throughout Europe, Canada and the United States.

For more information on the upcoming go to sookefinearts.com.

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