

Rusdi Genest, Subud Montreal, Inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

By Elfrida Shragen, Canada SICA rep

Rusdi Genest, long time Subud member of Montreal, Quebec (50 years) was inducted into the very prestigious Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA) this June 2013.

This Society was established by Queen Victoria of England in 1880, has 700 plus Canadian artist members of renown (deceased and living). Each proposed member must be presented by five other RCA members, and his portfolio is submitted to a twelve person jury of RCA members, architects, designers, sculptors, painters, etc... To then be approved by their board of governors. It is no small feat to be admitted into the RCA!!

Rusdi's biography is long and his successes are numerous. To view his artwork, techniques, biography and other activities visit his web site at www.rusdigenest-sculptures.com or 'Google him' as he says.

His work is in collections all over the world including the National Library and the National Archives of Canada. Here is a man with stories to tell experiences to share, and philosophies to guide the creative endeavours of others.

As a child Rusdi modeled with plasticine, given to him by his father. He made small figures of peoples, animals and comic book Super Hero characters like Flash Gordon and Tarzan.

As a young man, from 1958-1964, he attended the Beaux Arts in Montreal and subscribed to the hard edged plasticiens technique, modeled after the work of Mondrian, a style in fashion at the time. He was one of the 450 artistic bearded bohemians living in Montréal as were beatniks in New York.

He moved to Los Angeles where he was introduced to wax modeling by his neighbour sculptor John Pennapolous. This led him to working and actually living in a foundry where he learned the process of lost wax casting in bronze. In this foundry as 3rd apprentice he slept first in a sleeping bag under a workbench in the bronze finishing room. As his skills improved, so did his sleeping arrangements, moving up to a bunk on the porch, then to a sofa in the living room and finally promoted to top apprenticeship... a mattress chucked onto rugs which thrown over linoleums covered the dirt floor in a little broken down cabin in the middle of the foundry's scrap yard. It's what one could call true dedication to one's art. Rusdi confided that at the time he also had the dubious honor of eating eleven cent hamburgers in the very first MacDonald's restaurant, a small shack, yes with the 2m sign up above, near the foundry on Washington Boulevard in Venice California.

While teaching in Carmel Valley in California in the late sixties, Rusdi saw a French movie called Zazi dans le Metro that showed street scenes of people running here and there in the city of Paris. He was drawn to Paris to explore what it might have to offer his artistic talents. So he moved to Paris. He became 'Stagiaire' in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts; des

Arts Appliquées et Métiers d'Arts. In different studios, he trained under prominent the masters. While in Paris, Rusdi was accepted into the Syndicat National des Sculpteurs Créateurs Professionnels de France and exhibited in different Art Salons, Automne and Comparaison, he won an Award at the Salon de Juvisy-Paris Sud.

But like many artists, then and now, he had to supplement his income by doing work for professional sculptors, by tutoring or by selling some of his own art works. Living in Paris was an intense time. The works of Rodin, Bourdelle, Lachaise, Zadkine, Picasso, Miro, Lipchitz and Giacometti were inspirational for Rusdi, thusly with Volpi and César which were amongst his class patrons. The Gates of Hell were intensely studied by Rusdi.

At the Bourdelle Museum he spent so much time studying the masters' small sketches and models that the guard, when he would see Rusdi come in, would automatically bring him a chair to sit on, shaking his head in amazement that Rusdi was basically ignoring the enlarged works and big monuments in the main room. Rusdi explained, "It is within these usually spontaneous first gestures in the media that one see and feels the true inspired creativity of an artist. In this manner, I would so much love to spend time with Michelangelo's tiny terra cotta models hidden in a Vancouver Museum which I heard once belonged to a Subud member".

He was a fan of Gustave Doré but also very much of Gustave Moreau... "It is said of the latter that in his paint teachings, colors schemes search sketches inspired the art students of the time to begin working in the expressionistic manner of painting which we now so much admire".

In 1974 Rusdi returned to Montreal. Since this time he obtained his Master's degree at the University of Québec in Montréal and taught at the University of Québec at Chicoutimi, then at the Saidye Bronfman fine arts institute.

Working in wax, clay and with paper pulp, relying on visions from the past and present, he has been developing his own unique way of expressing his visions. He continued to sculpt figures, fragments and found objects imprints that he would assemble together to create larger sculpture.

For Rusdi, trying to make a living through his art has been extremely challenging. In Quebec, his figurative work was openly ostracized for many years by main stream galleries and critics, and fellow artists during times when conceptual and abstract art were *'the fashion'*. Success in the world of art is unfortunately reliant upon connections, critics and exposure. The talent and skill in creating the art work is time consuming and of the essence and being a business person is often antithetical to this process.

Rusdi greatly appreciates the constant support of his wife, Marguerite Françoise, who encouraged him to stick with his unique figurative form of sculpture, saying that figurative work would return in popularity and garner that respect it deserves, and thus he would be ahead of the game.

Rusdi has developed a theory that he calls his Phoenix theory. He believes many artists before creating or searching for new ideas to express, can go into a type of depression. They might try to push through this emptiness and depression by a variety of activities such as drinking, taking drugs, withdrawing or becoming overly social. Through some epiphany latihan, Rusdi realized one day that by going all the way into this feeling he would reach “the bottom of the pail” and then the feelings, for him, of troubled artistic lost, distraught by blindness towards new inspirations, of general discouraged yuckiness burnt themselves out and transformed into a feeling of warmth that came about deep within his insides and infused throughout the body. Like the phoenix rising, out of this warmth comes the viewing of renewed visions and innovative concepts. While practising the latihan of Subud, Rusdi came to realize that this “downloading of the holy spirit” became part of his creative process.

Regarding his art Rusdi has this to say, “Whilst becoming aware of my art, it must be seen as symbolic poems, exotic concertos or enigmatic symphonies and ludicrous plays. Witnessing our inponderable humanity, its eccentric or humorous moments, I create by an intuitive automatism, juxtaposing randomly sketches, fragments and textured imprints which I combine in numerous intriguing attitudes and complex postures where space itself becomes form. Most art works, bronze or cast paper are one of a kind and it is only when a work is finished that its understanding reveals to me a title”

A friend collector of Rusdi’s work has decided to pay for the casting of a rather substantial work called “La Parade Festive” composed of six sculptures which is now exhibited in the Bronze Museum of Inverness near Quebec. These sculptures of around 20 inches Rusdi considers them to be models which he hopes to enlarge at 8 to 15 feet in height this time with his art foundry’s support. He plans to exhibit these larger versions in his upcoming Solo Show in the Cultural Center of his home city of Verdun part of greater Montreal.

Things are looking good for Rusdi... Is this the result of his being inducted in the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts or to the Latihan Kedjiwaan or very probably vice versa he says smiling?

To learn more about Rusdi Genest and his Art, [Google him](#) to check out the suggested viewings.

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