

# Joseph Muscat

St. Mary's College was to me an introduction to Canada. Since I had only been in the country a few months when I landed at St. Mary's, I had more or less concluded that Canada was St. Mary's College and vice-versa. A community of generous, open-minded, lighthearted, hockey crazy, tough individuals living in a beautiful country setting flanked by a majestic river, surrounded by an abundance of trees and fields and sandwiched between the Trans-Canada Highway, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Canadian National Railway. Such a perfect setting I thought - the only thing missing was the female factor, but then we were all celibates in training.

My departure from St. Mary's, though academically successful was not altogether smooth. I had discovered my place in the Canadian conundrum thanks to my colleagues from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, PEI and Ontario. Instead of Holy Redeemer, I chose Glendon College, the Bilingual College of York University, a direct influence of the college's embrace of Canada's second language. After two years of so-so education and numerous experiments, I went to France with Jerome Lee, Peter Cudahy and John Texeira, supposedly to hone down our French at the Université d-Aix Marseilles. In France, my life took another sharp turn. It was there that I decided to change my career plans where I joined the Faculty of Fine Arts of Aix-en-Provence and it was there where I met my wife Kathy Boschen to whom I'm still married. We have two teenagers: Saara who is seventeen, is in Grade 11 at Earl Haig Secondary School and Trevin, who's fifteen is in Grade 10 at the same school.

My continued education took me from a B.A. Hons. at York, an A.O.C.A from the Ontario College of Art and Design and a B.Ed. from U of T. My plan worked like clockwork: For the last 28 years I have managed a very good balance by teaching Art in High School in the morning and working in my studio in the afternoon, with ample time to travel at Christmas, during the summer and during two sabbaticals. I have traveled (with my wife and later my children) all over Europe, China, Japan, India, Central America, Canada and the US.

Last year I built a brand new studio and gallery in the heart of North York. It is where I spend a good part of my day working with a variety of media including painting and drawing, sculptural constructions, printmaking and photography. I market my work through public and commercial galleries, art consultants and the internet and over the years, my paintings have been bought by private, corporate and public collectors throughout. I also belong to a francophone artist collective which organizes exhibitions and symposia in Canada and other french-speaking countries. As a Visual Artist, I have had many opportunities to travel in Canada and the U.S as I have exhibited my work in many cities in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, New York, Rhode Island and at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Malta, the country of my birth. As Malta has just recently joined the European Community, I have reclaimed my Maltese citizenship as a dual citizen so I can travel freely in Europe in the years to come.

I guess it is fair to assume that our character is shaped by the numerous events and people that we come in contact with during our lifetime. In light of who I am today, I often reflect upon my years at St. Mary's College with fondness, warmth and a naughty smile. The highlights of my three-year stay at St. Mary's are too many to mention. Among them I recall the caring direction of the staff at the College in particular that of Fr. Bedard, Pere Davis and Brother Ed. More salient are the intense activities at the college from sports to sing-songs, from musical and theatrical productions to excursions and retreats. Most memorable are the mischief and pranks that bonded us; these include parachuting a freshly baptized antique doll out of the third floor dormitory window (a failed science experiment), a dive in the St. Lawrence among ice floes, an unscheduled trip to Messina NY, midnight cake raids, curfew violations, a scary chase at the Brockville arena which landed me in the penalty box and a near tragic fire along the train tracks in the woods trying to smoke out some poor unfortunate gopher.

I am grateful of my life so far. I've been blessed with a comfortable and exciting life, a wonderful family and health. I owe a great deal to this country which welcomed me and my family forty years ago and I have a special place in my heart for everyone at St. Mary's College that touched my heart, my mind and my soul between September 1965 and May 1968.