

Tess Moffat - written by Steve Campbell,
Photos by Peggy deWitt, County Magazine

Tess Moffat has always been an active person. Perhaps that's why she is particularly attuned to motion and colour - the things that led her to try to capture her world in paintings.

"I started painting in 1998," she said, "and I'm self-taught." "I believe that people often have a potential that goes untapped," she said. "I saw a scene when I was out walking with my daughter, and I just started painting it when I got back."

Tess' background helped her develop her eye for art and the details of the world around her - particularly flowers and landscapes. "I was always encouraged artistically," she said, "but I was also encouraged to get a good education."

"I had two uncles who were a great influence on me," she said. "One was an oil painter, and he was always doing artsy and crafty things. I got most of my art exposure from him." "The other uncle was a gardener, and I'd always go over in the morning to help him garden."



Her mother shared the love for gardening and painting, so the die was cast for Tess' interest and talent. She still loves gardening to this very day, and says, "I had my hands in dirt from an early age."

She also started using a camera at a young age. "I've taken thousands of photographs over the years," she said, "and now they're resources for my painting."

Her lifestyle brings her into contact with the wide outdoors around her, and what she sees is translated into her paintings.

"I run daily," she said, "and my husband and I love to canoe and backpack... it provides a lot of fuel for my paintings."

"I see the colours and shades around me... I see the grass moving... that's what I try to capture on canvas. It brings the active side of my life out. But I still take photos for reference."

"I paint everything from miniatures up to really large, wall-size canvases."

Tess paints in acrylics and oils, and mostly on canvas... and in a variety of sizes.

continued...

"I paint everything from miniatures up to really large, wall-size canvases." The large ones are my favorites... I paint one each winter."

When she started painting, her husband - Michael Moffat, a financial advisor for RBC Investments - was her biggest fan. But other people quickly took notice of her warm, impressionistic style.

"I got into juried shows, and then it sort of snowballed. The canvases got bigger. I started painting in the kitchen, then the basement, then people started to ask me if they could visit my studio, so we made a studio."

Now her home, west of Ameliasburgh village on County Road 19, doubles as Windswept Studio, and was one of the featured artists on last year's County Studio Tour.

Art slowly took over Tess' life. Though she works part-time as a language teacher, she can't wait to return to her painting.

"I have different jobs, but the two work well together," she said. "When I come back from the school, I hit the ground running!"

"People ask me how I mix a job and family and my painting as well," she said "But I don't really have any downtime."

"I have no interest in television, so I don't spend two hours a night in front of the TV."



"When I get into the groove of painting, I don't hear anything else. I eat, sleep and drink it. I get up in the morning thinking about it."

Her daughter Emilie now accompanies her to paint on location with her own easel and paints.

"I do six to ten shows a year," Tess says, "and Emilie has some of her work in the shows. She was asking \$65 per painting, so we have to talk to her about that."

Many artists start with realism and work their way into the kind of impressionistic style Tess started with.

"Well, I've always been nearsighted," Tess laughs, "so my vision was blurred anyway. I love the movement and the mixture of colour... and people have said that about my paintings, that they can 'see it moving'. I don't go much for realism," she said, "it has too much crispness. I like impressionism... you get caught up in the colours. It's pleasant... it has a 'feel good' thing."

(Reprinted with permission - County Magazine Summer 2003, written by Steve Campbell, Photos by Peggy deWitt)