

BONNIE PARKINSON



BIOGRAPHY

Bonnie Parkinson was born in December 1941 in London, Ontario. Her father, Harry Cluff, had shown promise as a young art student at H. B. Beal Secondary School in London, Ontario, but had unfortunately had to leave school to help his family financially. Parkinson's father took a great interest in her early artistic talent and was very supportive when she entered the Special Art Programme at Beal, where she showed an innate artistic ability.

Parkinson won the Eva Bradshaw Award and a summer scholarship to Meinzinger Art School in Detroit, Michigan at the end of Grade 12. In her last year of the Special Art Programme, she was chosen by *The London Free Press* art department manager to work in the paper's art department part-time after school. After graduation in 1960, she was hired by the paper as a full-time fashion artist. Still very interested in painting, Parkinson was featured in a show entitled "Artists of our Region" at the Crouch branch of the London Public Library and was chosen to be in the juried Western Ontario show at the library system's Central branch (then located on Queens Avenue). She was noted as "a person to watch" in *The London Free Press* art review by art critic Lenore Crawford.

Bonnie married Ron Parkinson, a fellow Beal Art graduate who was also employed by *The London Free Press* advertising department, after which she left *The London Free Press*, since at that time a husband and wife were not allowed to work in the same department. Bonnie Parkinson was immediately offered the position of fashion artist at T. Eaton Company (Wellington Square, London, Ontario), where she began work in 1964. She was responsible for all fashion illustration, daily ads, full page ads, and layouts.



A fabulous chance came in 1967 to work with Canadian fashion designer Marilyn Brooks at The Unicorn in London, Ontario. Parkinson and her husband had just purchased their first home, so she worked full-time at The Unicorn and did her fashion art freelance for Eaton's in the evening. Her husband would pick up merchandise and return finished art in the morning for her.

Parkinson left The Unicorn in 1968 when she became pregnant, continuing to do freelance work for Eaton's plus numerous other fashion clients. Her daughter Tascha was born in December of that year; Parkinson worked up until two days before delivery of her and was back doing freelance art two weeks after giving birth. In demand for her illustration and commercial art for many clients, Parkinson continued freelance work.

From 1973 to 1974, Parkinson worked full-time as Creative Director at the Total Marketing Advertising Agency, London, Ontario, while also doing freelance art. A few years later in 1979, she was offered a position with Fanshawe College to teach fashion illustration as well as life-drawing to fashion design students. The next year (1980) she began painting when time allowed at home, plus teaching oil painting at Fanshawe College.

In 1982, at the age of 40, Parkinson decided to leave the hectic life of commercial art to paint full-time. She gave herself a year to see what she could accomplish, and within that time had her first one-person show at Womanspirit Art Gallery on Dundas Street in London, Ontario. She painted in her home studio, enjoying her art life, and took part in many juried shows.

In 1985, Parkinson developed a serious, life-threatening blood disease, Thrombocytopenia, an auto-immune disorder. Several different medical procedures, surgeries, and high doses of Prednisone were tried for quite a length of time. She kept an illustrated journal and painted most days. She also experimented with cut-out plywood paintings during this time. That same year, Parkinson held a one-person show, "The Prednisone Paintings," at the Landon branch of the London Public Library, with her journal entries bordering the gallery under the paintings.

Voted into the Ontario Society of Artists in 1985, she exhibited with them in Toronto, Ontario. She went on to take part in her first juried



Western Ontario Exhibition at the London Regional Art Gallery (now Museum London) in 1986, and a second in 1988, where she won the London Regional Art Gallery Purchase Award for her work *Studio Window, North Wall* (oil on plywood). Parkinson continued painting, her subjects focusing on what was going on in her life. In 1989, at the 42nd Western Ontario Exhibition at the London Regional Art and Historical Museums (the successor of the London Regional Art Gallery, and another precursor to Museum London), she exhibited *Communion on Simcoe Street*, a painting of her late mother created after her passing, painted on plywood using three levels.

Parkinson visited the home and garden of impressionist painter Claude Monet in Giverny, France. She did two one-person shows on her interpretations of Monet's subjects, both held at Gibson Gallery in London, Ontario. The first show, "Giverny Revisited," was in 1991. A year later in 1992, the show "I see London, I see France" concentrated on showcasing the similar beauty found in London, Ontario as in Monet's subjects. France and Paris have been a lasting theme in many of Parkinson's paintings. She has visited France seven times over the years.

Parkinson has endured many illnesses throughout her painting career including rheumatoid arthritis in her hands and in 2019, cancer. She continues to paint, full of ideas and working towards recovery.

Biography Courtesy of Bonnie Parkinson

