

# WHERE GERARD PARAGHAMIAN STANDS

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By **Amanda Storey**, [Novella](#), 21 October 2015

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"I moved from a 3,000 sq. ft. house to a space that's less than half that," says Paraghmanian. "And I plastered all my paintings on the walls, everywhere, and there's still about 75 of them in the storage. And I'm freaking out — originals in storage!"

Stepping away from the window, Paraghmanian walks with difficulty over to the couch. He's one of the most decorated Canadian artists of the modern age, having been the official artist for some of the country's biggest names and brands — among them Expo '86 and the SkyDome (back when it was actually the SkyDome) — and he's even been nominated for the Order of Canada. But since March of 2014, he's been out of commission.

As we settle in in his bright den, his many paintings keeping us company, Paraghmanian tells me what happened two springs ago. It was the final snowstorm of the season, and he was driving to his photographer's house with some paintings to shoot when a family of raccoons appeared in the middle of the road. He swerved, the raccoons got away unscathed, but Paraghmanian's car slipped off the road and crashed.



"My vintage Corvette left me," he jokes, although the artist himself was severely concussed in the accident. "I didn't think it would last this long. I'm in pain everywhere, but I'm handling it. Just, as a result, I can't really paint too much."

Paraghmanian hands me a large book from his coffee table: a four-and-a-half pound, 385-page collection of his personal favourite works he's done over the years. As I flip through the chapters — categorized as Canada, the U.S., the Mediterranean, the south of France — Paraghmanian divulges that he plans on releasing the book this fall. It'll be like his "greatest hits:" a visual exploration of a Canadian icon's most cherished works. And hopefully, he says, it will push him to slowly segue back into painting.

In the meantime, Paraghmanian and his wife fills his schedule with "little travels" — while he couldn't, say, backpack up Mount Kilimanjaro like he used to, he can still go back home to Nice, France, or take a leisurely trip somewhere warm.

"I just lay low. I don't do heavy-duty trips, since I couldn't walk all day anymore. I couldn't climb mountains. But in a sense it's okay, because I've done it all in the past. I went around the world."

Paraghmanian caught the travel bug when he was fresh out of the Ontario College of Art (today OCAD). He landed a job as an artistic director at the second-largest advertising agency in Canada and that job had him jet-setting everywhere. It wasn't until 15 years later that he finally decided to abandon his career for his true passion: creating art, not directing it.



Apparently it was a solid move, since he's now, well, Gerard Paraghmanian. And after a long, well-deserved hiatus, he's just about ready to step back into that role. Upon asking what his plans are for the rest of the year, Paraghmanian tells me he plans to pick up his paintbrush again.

"Whether it's easy or not, I'm planning on starting to paint," he says, taking the book in his hands and flipping through his life's work. "I plan on doing some more traveling and, if I feel better, I'd like to do a whole slew of new paintings. And I think it's really going to be something."

***Click on the below link to view an assortment of Paraghmanian's works***



Joel Levy, [Toronto Guardian](#), 10 January 2018

### ***"A Day in the Life" of Toronto artist Gérard Paraghamian***

Gérard Paraghamian has established a well-earned reputation as one of the most talented and innovative illustrators in commercial art today. In addition to creating commemorative representational and promotional illustrations, for leading international corporations, Paraghamian was the official artist of the Toronto SkyDome and Vancouver's Expo '86. His 'Neighbourhood' painting donated to UNICEF was Canada's top selling artcard for the United Nations Children's Fund. His extensive philanthropy work for worthy causes has resulting in his being nominated for "The Order of Canada".

Paraghamian's mixed media combines watercolour, pencil, pen and ink, opaqueing and felt pens to create representations, which combine an evocative palette with a remarkable level of detail. This union of mood and material generates more than a sense of place, it conveys through an ever-changing bouquets of colours a senses of community and of belonging. Such a diverse style is ideally suited to corporations and organizations with a story to tell and moments to remember. He has garnered a loyal following within the corporate community. His distinctive style is ideal for a broad range of applications, from limited edition prints, posters and artcards to premiums such as T-shirts and tableware.

Paraghamian's sophisticated and detailed representations of the city waterfronts such as, Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Miami and San Diego, have emerged as evidence of his unique and widely recognized talents. They are a reflection, perhaps, of his childhood years on the French Riviera. Born in Nice, France – surrounded by the beauty and excitement of the Cote d'Azur – Paraghamian and his parents immigrated to Toronto in 1955. It was here that art, which has always been his preoccupation, became his consuming passion. Following a four-year program at the Ontario College of Art, he enjoyed an award-winning career as a commercial artist. In 1983, the exceptional demand for his limited edition prints enable him to become an independent illustrator, which allowed him to pursue his second great passion: travel. He has traversed six of the seven continents, an experience which as given him both and appreciation of Canada's outstanding qualities and a global comprehension. He trekked Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro, climbed to the base camp of Mount Everest in Nepal and photographed the Andes in South American. While in India, Paraghamian painted a canvas of the Taj Mahal, a life-long dream.

### **WHAT DO YOU DO?**

Basically, I'm an art director turned fine artist, why? Because I got tired of the ad business, got tired of art directing things that I ended up not believing in anymore. If a campaign didn't increase sales

for the client, the creative department and the account execs took it on the chin. Years ago, I found out that I could paint, (as a kid, really) so I took up my brushes, left my lucrative free lance ad business and became a starving artist until I designed a poster that I called "On the Waterfront-Toronto", the thing went nuts, went into 3 printings, as a result did major cities in North America, got a major publisher and became the official artist of a few venues. By now some good corporate commissions were coming my way. Lucky should be my name, most art directors do not know how to paint. They farm things out to studios and get wined and dined at times. I sort of doodled since I was 10 in France, my beloved country of birth. I don't have shows, very, very few anyways. Because I do corporate stuff, the client gets the original and the licensing that goes along with the deal. So my art gets published in pretty well everything, posters, giclees, limited edition prints, art cards and all the gift industry items, coasters, mugs, t-shirts, calendars etc. etc. there's nothing like art. I'm also a musician with 16 ads under my belt, after 30 years of playing in bars and night clubs I like the quietness of just me and my keyboard.

### **WHAT HOOD ARE YOU IN?**

About 8 years ago I sold my house that I had reno'd just the way I wanted it in the Mt. Pleasant / Eglinton part of town. I thought 50 years under the same roof was enough... miss my studio though, nice and big and airy, 2 skylights and a door that took me to my private terrace on the flat roof where I would sketch in the summer with a few racoons looking on. Moved to the waterfront by the ferry docks, to me that's the only place to live, nothing like being 'by the water', I go to the islands quite often and walk, sometimes I take my bike but I really love walking, I trekked around the world, (really I did), that's why I love walking. The waterfront is taking on a different 'allure', too many condos, too many cars, too much congestion. Toronto is not a well planned city as a result we are paying the price today. I prefer to be here than anywhere else in the city mind you.

### **WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?**

Not a lot really. About 4 years ago I lost my beloved corvette in an accident. Trying to avoid a family of racoons, I swerved and hit a pole. This left me with a concussion and some problems with my neck and shoulders which prohibits me from sitting in front of my drawing table for long hours. With lots of physiotherapy and exercise and an open mind I started painting again, probably lost a few of my contacts but what the heck, your health is more important. We're going to make a youtube and will start the interviews and the commissions should start rolling in. With all these portfolios it should be ok.

### **WHERE CAN WE FIND YOUR WORK?**

Well, because I am primarily in the art publishing industry, you would find my work in some living room, dining room, someone's high end washroom, restaurants, condos, corporations etc. I donate the 'rights to use' to many non-profit orgs. the biggest one being Unicef. I've seen the incredible poverty in my world travels so I do it with my heart, as a result I was nominated to the order of

Canada, I also received a medal from queen's park. My website is a good start...

[www.theartofgerardparaghamian.com](http://www.theartofgerardparaghamian.com)

