

***The Portrait:  
Expressions and Memories of Humanity***

**Louise Simone**  
Master of Photography  
Photographic Craftsman  
API

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# **The Portrait: Expression and Memories of Humanity**

## Introduction

*I was born in Montreal, Quebec, from a French Canadian mother and a father of Italian origin. I am second in a family of five children growing up in a friendly and caring community although I was paralyzed by diffidence, against which I had to fight several battles to push my limits and achieve my goals.*

*My earliest childhood memories stem from a time when I would escape in my own mind, by projecting the most exciting movies I could imagine and by inventing scenarios where I was in a boundless universe. My mother, with her background as an haute couture seamstress and designer, taught me all of her knowledge with extraordinary patience. One of my favorite hobbies was to create unique clothing pieces with remnants of fabric my mother no longer needed. I simply loved to design exclusive dresses for my dolls. I began by drawing patterns and in the midst of letting my imagination run free, I developed a fascination for drawing, which quickly spread to the depiction of facial features that I would visualize...*

*The older I got, the more my enticement for drawing and painting was rooted within my being and defined the person I was becoming; art had become my medium of expression. In my late teens, when I had to make career choices, I naturally expressed my desire to pursue my development in the Fine Arts. It is with great disappointment that my father, from his logical “math teacher” standpoint, dissuaded me from travelling down that path and instead pointed to the road of Pure and Applied Sciences where, he claimed, all doors would open up to a promising career with my university diploma in hand. In spite of the choice that was made for me, in my heart, my dream of becoming an artist was alive as I was hoping to one day achieve it. Meanwhile, I was learning a life lesson in light of the difficulties lying ahead: I realized how challenging it proved to be to become who I really was and to remain happy, although I didn’t follow my true aspirations.*

*The purpose of this thesis is to draw a clear picture of the person I was and am today, through the variety of personal and professional experiences that determined my course and shaped me as a professional portrait photographer. One thing remains true, regardless of the path I have chosen, the path continues ahead of me. It continues to teach me something about myself as an artist and human being everyday...*

## When one door closes, another one opens...

*After completing my classical studies at school, I was accepted in the Pure and Applied Sciences program at a local College. Although passive to the daily responsibilities of being in such a demanding program, I worked well enough to perform satisfactorily but always had the world of the Arts in my mind’s eye. One day, my best friend at the time decided to quit school and was hired in a photography studio. Once school was out, I searched for a summer job and luckily, my friend gave me the opportunity to work at her studio, which I candidly accepted.*

Although my shyness was still prevalent, working with the public definitely became the best remedy to counter my timid side as this pushed me to perform. Little did I know that working in this studio would have a major impact on both my professional and my personal life. I met a young Italian photographer working in this studio, for whom I became completely enamored with. I did not have the slightest inkling 45 years ago that this man would become my husband, partner and the one that would open the doors to all those dreams I had held so dear. By the end of that summer in 1969, Joseph had become the most important person in my life. I nevertheless decided to return to school that September but two years later, even though I was not a trained photographer, I gave up on my studies to go work with Joseph across Quebec. While I was seeking clients for baby pictures and assisting him with school photos, Joseph photographed away as we were very busy being on the road. We literally lived in our car and stayed with my parents when we were in town. We eventually married in 1972.

### Peaks, Valleys and Life's Surprises

After personally enduring several health problems, I was determined to make a name for myself when an opportunity came about in 1974. Joseph and I became the owners of a photography studio set in an Italian community in northeastern Montreal. I could finally begin to build my dreams and achieve my ambitions.

The challenges were tremendous as the already established clientele was mainly comprised of immigrants who were much more comfortable in their native language. I had to learn Italian quickly and within three months, I was able to communicate relatively well with the customers. The studio was constantly bustling and the demand for wedding, communion and baptism photos simply seemed to increase. Needless to say, I had neither time nor expertise to change and improve what had already been established. It was at this time that my interest in retouching manifested itself. I could not bear to see another bride live with a pimple on her beautiful face, which appeared the night before her wedding. Retouching became my field of expertise. Although I was talented, I still did not feel fulfilled due to my eagerness to create. That's when I became interested in the camera itself and spent much time observing and understanding it, until news came of a professional photography convention in Toronto. This moment was the breakthrough, which would change the course of my professional life forever.

Finally, a door of hope opened. The images on display gave me chills as I found them breathtakingly beautiful. My initial feeling was that of failure though, as my knowledge was evidently meager compared to the quality images I was setting my sights on. Still, the passion and vision that were born within me that day marked the beginning of a metamorphosis. I was now determined to become a professional portrait photographer and give my images the illusion of timeless paintings where I could produce much more than a "document", but rather reveal the subject in all his or her authenticity. With all of my creativity in tow, the only thing that would change in creating images would be the tool.

In 1976, Joseph and I decided to set up our laboratory and print our work on site to have better control over the quality of our work. In the spring of that year, I became a mom

after so many attempts to conceive a child. I received a phone call telling me that my prayers were answered and that the greatest gift that life could give me was just a day away: A pretty little girl of five days old with big, blue and curious eyes. This unconditional love was immediately transferred into a paramount energy dedicated to creating children's portraits with whom I felt an ease to communicate.

### Changes and Evolution

Along the way, I continued searching for opportunities to improve through professional development and therefore signed up for a workshop given by Don Blair, who unquestionably became the master of lighting and body language for me. Above all, I was fascinated by the magical connection that he had with his subjects. As well, Joyce Wilson, gifted with great creativity and spontaneity, brought me strength and assurance as a woman. I became increasingly captivated with quality of lighting, composition and attention to detail. My images changed as they began to mirror the vision I had conceived in my mind. In 1980, Joseph and I renovated our studio from wall to wall, transforming its appearance and atmosphere to a classical art gallery where beauty reigned. Everything was chosen with refinement, sending out a clear message through large canvases, that my vision was to capture the great moments of life that speak to us through portraiture.

With growing confidence, I decided to become a member of several Professional Photographers' Associations and decided to participate in competitions. In 1983, to my honor and amazement, I was named Photographer of the Year in Canada, becoming the first woman to ever receive this title. Following this significant event in my career, I began to receive several requests to give professional training, which I gladly accepted. Joseph and I continued receiving many requests to give workshops, especially from the United States, yet Joseph's language barrier prevented us to move forward so we decided to postpone this exciting project until Joseph felt more comfortable in English. During this same year, we met the president of France's Professional Photographers' Association, Mr. Arthur Plater, who invited us to France in order to offer training to professional photographers. This first professional European visit was to become one of many as we eventually travelled to share knowledge in Spain, Italy, Belgium and Greece, to name a few. It was an absolute delight to share my experience with international colleagues. I felt I was gaining as much as I was sharing, as my own human and cultural experience was enriched, which helped me grow as a photographer. Learning from each other on an international and boundless level not only exceeded my expectations and ability to create a well composed aesthetic image, but it also paved the way toward the creation of images with echoes of timeless immortality.

By fear of becoming stagnant, I discovered how I could create unique and exclusive images with strong composition after following a fascinating workshop with Frank Kristian. The image « Black Pearl », accented with an opened, bright turquoise fan is a clear example of this pivotal moment in my evolution as a portrait photographer. I was gaining knowledge from mentors that truly inspired me to progress in the field. I was discovering and applying a sense of rhythm, color harmony, balance and design in my images. I also became fascinated with

revealing the subject's authenticity through the use of body language and symbolism. The use of powerful lines and elements, as well as bringing to light the deepest expression in a child filled with wonder, touched my heart and revived the flame of my passion to create.

I was constantly in search of new approaches that simply breathed "different". In addition to graphics, I used other items such as fabric that took shape under the effect of a fan to give motion with the lines that blended with predominant colors. I liked to transition from a traditional style to a contemporary one, and from low key to more pastel shades, such as in "Petite Duchesse" which is more classical in style, and "Elegance", which is more contemporary.

I felt that all of my hard work, efforts and dedication were truly paving the way to a successful career. Joseph and I achieved a reputation that went beyond the borders of Quebec and Canada. Following the meeting of Mr. Terry Deglau in 1995, we were invited to join the Kodak Mentor Team, which we are still a part of today. Being a proud part of this team opened the door to teaching many more workshops in the United States. This path continued to be fruitful as I was honored with recognition and titles for the years to come.

### Crossroads

By the end of the 90's, the digital age was knocking on my door and was ready to take me on, yet I did not feel as ready as it did. Needless to say, its arrival and promises caused a great deal of turbulence. My relentless commitment to quality put me in a situation where I felt skeptical about digital photography more than anything else. Joseph and I decided to wait until we felt confident that digital technology's methods and processes could meet the same quality criteria we were able to produce with our 4X5 film camera before making the transition. It is in 2000, with the acquisition of a Kodak ProBack Medium format, that we made a complete transition. This automatically required long hours of training and management, however new possibilities were on the horizon; I could wave goodbye to retouching photo series or retouching the same image 27 times! Finally, here I was standing on the edge of a new world of limitless possibilities. I was introduced to digital painting which enabled me to spread my wings and fly even higher than before. I could create from the visions in my mind without touching oils or paints, such as in "Lily of the Valley", "The President" and "Amazon" found in my portfolio. I quickly fell in love with the way my painted images retained the imprint of impressionistic brush strokes. This new technology also allowed me to create what I imagined, what I had vividly envisioned for so long.

In 2003, the most difficult challenge had become to balance family life, career, and teaching. We thought it wiser to pursue our work from home rather than the studio, as we were traveling frequently to give lectures and workshops. Our prolonged absences due to teaching abroad lead us to transfer our studio to our home in 2004. Regardless of these changes and a humbling success, my core value had always been, and still is, to treat the clients the same way I wanted to be treated myself; with warmth, care, creativity and an awareness of good service. No matter where the path takes me, this essential principal is carved in stone. I know that once we master the techniques of lighting, composition, body language and psychology, once they become

like second nature to us, our studio can be anywhere. Our knowledge and skills are the foundation of our work.

With the transition from studio to home, came another wave of creativity and motivation as I collaborated with Joseph to put together a book entitled “The Portrait: Miroir de l’Âme”, a collection of our most cherished images at the time. The book takes the viewer on a voyage of transitions from birth onward, each phase introduced by a beautifully crafted poem. The book was a great success as 4000 copies were printed, which sold to our clients and esteemed colleagues around the world. In 2009, with a goal in mind to create a document for photographers who were interested in learning our methods and improving their craft, we put together a DVD entitled “Classical Portraiture Design”.

To this day...

In the last two years, I have continued expressing myself through photography and am now directing my fine arts to galleries and exhibitions for the general public to see my creations. I have discovered new dimensions to digital photography and am developing my craft and skills, transforming photographic arts to pictorial arts, by using different media such as canvas, watercolor and aluminum transfers.

For as long as I can remember, I have been seeking to find meaning and purpose in my life. I firmly believe that what I am passionate about serves as a platform for me to become who I really am, leading me to the most profound questions. Keeping this in the back of my mind, I can develop a conscience of being, a concept beyond any human direction or rules. I was blessed to receive the gifts of creativity and love, which means I have the power to change anything with my potential and without any limits other than the ones I choose. Portrait Photography gives me a feeling of completeness. My human and professional evolution depends on the essential connection I share with the subjects I photograph. It is like a mirror, a constant reflection of who I am, leading me on the road to becoming a better person. I aspire to be a person in constant evolution, whose soul is always anchored to what really matters.

I am driven by two passions, which complement one another; photography and painting. In my opinion, there is no end to what can be accomplished. My two passions are in constant progress and generate a feeling of fulfillment without measure within me. I could never call it a day, as creation makes me feel alive. My goals are to continue evolving and sharing my experiences for as long as there are doors to open.

Life is a large canvas where we paint a masterpiece together. I believe we are as good as what we leave behind to be remembered, which is why I choose to leave the imprint of my soul and my artistic influence through photography and painting on the large, collective canvas of life.

## **Professional Resume**

### *Education and Training*

1977	Photique School Instructor: Helen Trotter	Retouching
1978	Photique School Instructor: Joyce Wilson	Environmental Photography
1979	Photique School Instructor: Don Blair	Portrait & Wedding
1980	Photique School Instructor: Gilles Poitras	Negative retouching
1982	Photique School Instructor: Linda Lapp	Outdoor Portraiture
1984	Photique School Instructor: Frank Kristian	Composition
1985	CMPQ Convention Instructor: Dean Collins	Commercial & Fashion Photography
1988	Photique School Instructor: David Zizer	Studio Portraiture
1988	Photique School Instructor: Charles Lewis	Marketing

1989	GNPP France Instructor: Peter Knapp	Commercial & Fashion Photography
1989	Photique School  Instructor: Laszlo Mezei	Studio Portraiture
1990	GNPP Corsica  Instructor: S. Giacobetti	Commercial & Fashion Photography
1990	Photique School  Instructor: Lisa Evans	Fine Art Portraiture
1991	Photique School  Instructor: David Peter	Portraiture
1992	Master Siaf Italy  Instructor: Roberto Bastianoni	Fashion Photography
2002	Private Course  Instructor: Eddie Tapp	Color Management & Photoshop
2004	Photique School  Instructor: Jane O'Connor	Painter
2004	Private Course  Instructor: Eddie Tapp	Color Management & Photoshop

## Professional Experience

1971-1974	<b>Photo Studio Louise</b>	Photographer's Assistant
1975-1978	<b>Napoli Photo Studio</b> (First studio)	Photographer / Owner
1978 to the present (Name changed)	<b>Simone Portrait</b>	Photographer / Owner
2012	<b>Simone Arte</b>	Fine art Photographer & Painter / Owner

## Accomplishments

1975	OPENING OF THE STUDIO
1983	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, CANADA
1980	ITALEXPORAMA EXHIBIT IN MONTREAL
1985	MASTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN QUEBEC
1985	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, QUEBEC
1989	"MAISON DES ARTS" EXHIBIT IN QUEBEC
1990	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, QUEBEC
1992	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, CANADA
1992	4 CANADIAN LOAN COLLECTIONS
1995	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, CANADA
1995	4 CANADIAN LOAN COLLECTIONS
1995	BECAME MEMER OF PPA
1996	1 PPA LOAN COLLECTION, 1 EPCOT CENTER
1996	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, CANADA
1996	BECAME KODAK PRO MENTOR
1997	PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR, CANADA
1997	2 PPA LOAN COLLECTIONS
1998	M.P.A., PPA CERTIFIED
1998	1 CANADIAN LOAN COLLECTION
1998	TROPHIE (FIGURE STUDY) CANADA
2001	PPA LOAN COLLECTION
2004	PUBLISHED A FIRST BOOK
2008	BECAME CAMERACRAFTSMEN OF AMERICA

2011 CANADIAN REGIONAL CITATION AWARD, QC.  
2013 INTERNATIONAL DESIGN SALON OF MONTREAL  
2014 PPA WARREN MOTTS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE  
AWARD  
2014 CANADIAN SERVICE AWARD CITATION, PPOC  
2014 MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS OF  
QUEBEC

AS WELL, OVER 20 TROPHIES FROM CMPQ, PPOC, KODAK GALLERY  
AWARDS AND OVER 30 LOAN COLLECTIONS IN QUEBEC, CANADA AND  
THE U.S.A. COMBINED.

## **Biography**

Louise has been working with her husband, Joseph Simone, as a professional photographer in the field of portraiture for over 38 years. Upon leaving her college studies, she joined Joseph and assisted him in starting his business. In 1975, the couple acquired a studio with an existing clientele composed mainly of Italian immigrants. This first studio could best be described as a high volume production studio, where clients did not seek quality, positioning Louise and Joseph Simone at the same level as the neighboring competition.

In 1975-76, Louise attended her first Professional Photographers' Convention where she discovered the art of photography for the first time and set her sights on a vision of quality and not quantity. In 1979, she decided to follow this vision and headed toward her true passion.

In 1980, with the firm belief that success and fulfillment would only be possible through the realization of her passion for portraiture, Louise undertook major changes by renovating her studio from top to bottom according to the image and design that she aspired to. Education had become primordial to achieve the objectives she had set out to attain. Through this new direction, her artistic expression took shape and her growing motivation enabled her to create her own signature, which would become internationally recognized.

In the late 80's and early 90's, after being honored with several regional and national competition awards and titles, Louise gained a reputation for excellence in portraiture and became a renowned speaker in North America, Europe and Asia. Searching for the highest quality and attention to detail in her portraits combined with innovative visions, secured Louise on the path of constant progress. The quality of her lighting, natural body language and gestures as well as seeking to capture the soul of her subjects, allowed Louise to create timeless images.

By the year 2000, Louise had made the transition to digital photography. Always seeking to improve her art and despite great technological changes, she remained unwilling to sacrifice quality for anything.

Louise holds numerous awards, merits and titles. She has taught in many countries and is constantly in demand to share her knowledge and expand her vision of portraiture as an art and profession. Today, in addition to expressing her passion for portraiture, she has turned her lifelong dream into a reality: Painting. Louise can express herself on large linen canvas with oils and brushes, as well as when using the latest virtual technology. She masters technique and design when it comes to creating works of art that take shape on a metallic support for rendering avant-garde, three-dimensional images. The mastery of this medium and her trademark signature has paved the way for Louise's success in this field.

Louise lives in Laval, Quebec, Canada. She has been married to Joseph Simone for 42 years. They adopted a little girl named Sophie in 1976, whom in turn filled their lives with happiness with three young children; Christian, Emma and Justine.