

Film sculpts detailed image of Winnipeg artist

Documentary examines Tascona's life

HERE'S an old piece of advice that has been handed down from generation to generation among folks who juggle nouns and verbs and try to compose interesting sentences and paragraphs for the amusement and enlightenment of others:

Write what you know.

The sentiment might be applied with equal fairness to other creative realms:

Paint what you know. Sculpt what you know. Draw what you know.



Watching TV

Brad Oswald

Local near-legend Tony Tascona was an artist in every sense of the word, and his route to creative fulfillment ran straight through all the other experiences that shaped his life.

"Working for Air Canada was a boon for me," Tascona explains, in an interview — taped not too long before his death last May — which is part of the locally produced documentary *Transitions: The Art and Soul of Tony Tascona*.

"I learned a lot about materials, about metals, about shapes and forms. It just opened a whole new world for me. I got to be an authority on different materials for different products. That's why I'm able to do what I do today."

Indeed, it was the ambitious, innovative use of aluminum shapes and lacquer-paint layering — a direct offshoot of his day-job experience in the airline industry — that became Tascona's signature style, and that made him one of



Director Linton (left) with the artist during the making of *Transitions: The Art and Soul of Tony Tascona*.

Manitoba's most successful and recognizable artistic talents.

Transitions: The Art and Soul of Tony Tascona, which airs Sunday at 6:30 p.m. as part of CTV's *Manitoba Moments*, was written by E. Anne Dawson and produced and directed by Michael Linton. It's a pleasantly detailed but mostly linear examination of the artist's life and career, from his birth in St. Boniface in 1926 through his local education, a flirtation with a minor-pro sports career and his even-

tual transition into the world of art for a career that spanned more than half a century.

The film includes observations from a few of Tascona's contemporaries, including National Gallery of Canada director Pierre Théberge and local arts-media personality Robert Enright, but it's the artist himself — through interview clips which appear to have been recorded during his final few months — who provides most of the insights that give life to his engaging

story.

Director Linton also draws upon a wealth of photos from Tascona's family collection, and offers lingering images of many of the unique sculptures, paintings and drawings created during Tascona's remarkable career.

Even if you count yourself among the I-don't-know-a-lot-about-art-but-I-know-what-I-like crowd, there's much to like about this competently constructed tribute to a wildly artistic Winnipegger. There's even a rather

concise and practical explanation, from Tascona himself, of what it means to possess the sort of vision that can be translated into real, tangible, appreciable art:

"Some people can go through life never perceiving anything. Fortunately... the artist who has that gift can see what other people can't see, can go where other people can't go. That's what it amounts to."

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