

Parker: Van Ginkel capitalizes on artistic talents



DAVID PARKER, CALGARY HERALD

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Artist Paul Van Ginkel in his Inglewood gallery. *CHRISTINA RYAN / CALGARY HERALD*

Too many artists make too little money. Whether they're painters, dancers, writers or actors, many must get a "real" job to supplement their talents.

Paul Van Ginkel has managed to realize a satisfying return on his talent thanks to a strict work ethic, a solid business plan and being relentless in identifying marketing opportunities.

Passionate in his belief that an artist should be able to make a decent living, Van Ginkel is one of our most successful and admired painters. He continues to develop his skills to allow him and his family to enjoy the good life thanks to the “fire in his belly” to be a full-time sole proprietor of his business.

Van Ginkel studied at Alberta College of Art from 1979 to 1983 when he joined the Calgary Herald as an illustrator. Completing sometimes three illustrations a day, he estimates around 1,000 pieces were published before he made the decision to be a full-time gallery painter on Jan. 1, 1990.

His primary focus was on western themes, particularly horses. After winning best of show at a Calgary Stampede competition he took a booth at the Western Showcase in 1991 during Stampede Week.

Van Ginkel said he worked those shows for 15 years, where he sold many paintings and made many good contacts. One of those contacts suggested he take a trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Since his first trip there in 1992, he has been represented at McLarry Fine Art in the city that has become the third-largest art market in the U.S.

Van Ginkel chose not be represented in local galleries, preferring to sell through his own staged exhibitions that have become ‘must attend’ events. He started these exhibitions while living in The Slopes, simply hanging paintings over the walls of his home, accompanied by live music, good wine and fancy foods.

Van Ginkel, his wife Kristin, a retired architect, and nine-year-old daughter Isabella have since moved back into Calgary. He works out of his Inglewood studio and gallery — next door to Spolumbo’s — where he paints during the week and opens for visitors on Saturdays.

His latest exhibition was on a Flamenco theme with live Spanish music in the raised window of the former shop.

Horses still appear predominantly in his work, but native Canadians, Mexico, dancers and flowers are also themes he has become well known for, as well as commissioned pieces that feature other subjects.

He is currently busy completing a large 42-by-96 foot painting commissioned by the largest law firm in Fort Worth, Texas.

In 2007, he met Pat Ward after the Painted Pony Petroleum chief executive called to learn more about Van Ginkel's paintings he had admired on the walls of Gypsy Bistro wine Bar. Not only has Ward become a collector but he has also sponsored a calendar of Van Ginkel's paintings in support of HOPEthiopia.

To date, five calendars have raised more than half a million dollars for the charity and the 2016 calendar has already realized \$65,000.

Another promotion is the publication of a retrospective coffee table book of his work. It features 117 pieces from close to 1,700 paintings that Van Ginkel said is really a great marketing tool and wonderful business card.

Van Ginkel said he spends half of his time with the business side of his art. The result is an artist who deservedly does make a good living.

News and notes

- Cecilia Villanueva, consul of Mexico in Calgary, and Miguel Cortines, president of the Canadian Council of the Americas — Alberta, are organizing a breakfast conference at the Calgary Petroleum Club on Friday, Dec. 4. The guest speaker is Pedro Joaquin Coldwell, the Mexican Minister of Energy, who will present an update on Mexican energy reforms.
- On Thursday and Friday, a Sustainable Supply Chain & Transportation conference is being held at the University of Calgary's downtown campus. The event will also offer a chance to participate in a site visit to an internationally acclaimed cold storage logistics distribution centre.

David Parker appears Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Read his columns online at calgaryherald.com/business. He can be reached at 403-830-4622 or by e-mail at info@davidparker.ca (<mailto:info@davidparker.ca>)