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Local artist marketing his work in creative ways

Art no longer just shown in galleries

BY MARIO TONEGUZZI, CALGARY HERALD JULY 12, 2012

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Artist Paul Van Ginkel is displaying his art in the downtown restaurant Gypsy Bistro.

Photograph by: Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

CALGARY — Artists are increasingly using different venues to sell their art.

No longer are they solely on display in galleries. From restaurants to homes to luxury home sales centres and coffee shops, art is being shown in a new wave of marketing as the business side of the creative pursuit has taken off in popularity.

"In the art world, it's no different than any other field where one is selling a product. Creative marketing and thinking outside the box is critical in being successful," said Paul

Van Ginkel, a well-known Calgary artist. "I feel I need to be as creative in my marketing as when I'm actually painting a piece.

"Historically, the standard way of exhibiting and selling art is through galleries. This continues to be the most acceptable method, however, I feel the art buyer appreciates alternate opportunities to view and purchase art."

Currently, Van Ginkel is exhibiting a series of dance paintings at Gypsy Bistro, 817 1st St. S.W. His work is also on his website at [www.PaulVanGinkel.com](#).

Van Ginkel used to be represented by commercial galleries but for many years now he's chosen to represent himself.

Van Ginkel and his wife Kristin designed and built their home so the couple could have first-class, private exhibitions at their home gallery that include live music, food and drink.



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"We've had 15 of these exhibitions over the last six years and they've proven to be very successful," he said. "In addition to these home exhibitions, I have private viewings and also look for exhibition opportunities in our community."

Within the last year, these opportunities have included exhibitions at a \$6-million show home in Bearspaw, at The River sales centre for a luxury condo project, and at the Gypsy Bistro.

"In addition to making direct sales at these shows, they're always beneficial primarily because they open my art up to new audiences," said Van Ginkel. "Determining the success of an exhibition by the bottom line sales is only one aspect, the larger benefit is the ongoing exposure of the brand which always results in expanded name recognition and future business."

David Finch, assistant professor of marketing at the Bissett School of Business at Mount Royal University, said artists are connecting with potential buyers in unique ways these days.

"Art is an interesting category because it's almost entirely a very emotional purchase," he said.

"It's impulsive and emotional. It's about connecting a seller to a buyer. Galleries have traditionally done that relatively effectively. The challenge from an artist's perspective is that the commission rates can be excessive."

More non-traditional approaches are also targeting clientele, he said.

"Our entire team at The River is very passionate about our new development and Paul shares that same passion and it's evident in his work," said Anne Clarke, director of sales for The River. "You can feel it and see it. The River is about setting a new standard of excellence in our city. Something again Paul can relate to and has proven in this beautiful work. We are all about quality and detail and so is Paul."

Doug Levitt, an artist specializing in western art who is showing his work at the Calgary Stampede's Western Art Show, said galleries are struggling because of the advent of the Internet and the proliferation of shows like the Stampede and elsewhere.

"Artists are starting to really realize, especially with the economy crashing, (that) we're nothing but a complete luxury item. There's no necessity to buy our stuff except from the soul. There's a necessity to feed your soul with culture," he said. "Artists are becoming much more creative about how they market the work because the galleries are struggling."

"The galleries are trying to be more creative about how they do it. They're introducing more auctions. More event-based things that take people out of the gallery and put them into a different setting where they can be exposed to art and discover it. Traditional clients can find a different way to the art and that kind of behooves the artist to follow that pattern and say 'OK, what can we do to get ourselves out there a little more'."

For Levitt, that's meant a market in places like hotels, restaurants and coffee shops. And also doing demonstrations for potential clients.

"I'm still in the process of trying to think outside the box because it doesn't come as easily to me as it might be to somebody like Paul who I think is equally talented in business as he is in art," added Levitt.

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