

# Horse Sense of a Different Kind

Van Ginkel is a painter for all of the senses

By Sherry Shaw-Froggatt



"Tidal Wave", 48"x72", oil on canvas by Paul Van Ginkel

**H**e can tell you exactly when he became enamored with the images of the west. He can accurately and passionately teach you to understand his paintings even if you were bereft of sight. He attributes his success as a contemporary artist of western images directly to the Calgary Stampede. He is Paul Van Ginkel.

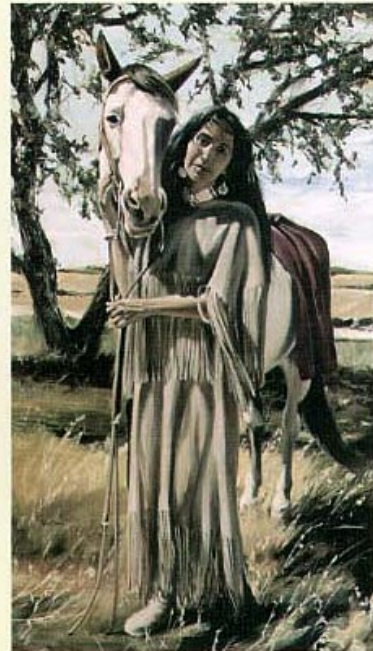
"My main objective in creating art is to do something for me, create something to show my eyes, that I've never seen before," Paul explains. "I've been inspired by many things but this becomes brand new. I'd like the viewer to see in the painting my commitment and passion for that subject that I'm expressing."

A modern day cowboy at heart, he may not own a ranch or even a horse but never has a man been more passionate about the subject of horses. On Paul's oversized canvasses, horses have never been portrayed so dramatically, so powerful.

"The horse is a symbol of the history of civilization. It changed the Native American

way of life," he says. "Quite frankly the sheer shape of the horse inspires me with the muscle groups, wild manes and tails. My natural style of painting is very conducive to painting the horse. The horse is full of strong big shapes and I like to think my brush strokes convey that."

Drawing on his impressions as a teen at his first Calgary Stampede, "I was in awe of the Indian Village and the rodeo," he turned to the western themes when searching for a point of reference to explore after attending the Alberta College of Art. His fast and bold brush strokes in oil bring the images to life, the canvas barely containing the energy that rushes forward to the eye.



"Stormy", 60"x36", oil by Paul Van Ginkel will be in the annual Calgary Stampede auction, July 15th.

"I generally don't put frames on my paintings because I want the paintings to go beyond the borders, especially the horses."

Besides the equine imagery, which represents about 75 per cent of his work, Paul finds inspiration in the cowboy himself.

"The cowboy is masculine, sexy, rough and rugged, but also quiet and humble – all characteristics which are quite admirable. Aesthetically, he is quite fabulous to paint."

Paul's style is representational, which means he gives you a definite sense of what the image is he is portraying, but he also chooses to be loose and free often adding abstract elements in the background. However, he doesn't limit himself to western

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*With every brush stroke,  
Paul Van Ginkel breathes life onto  
a blank canvas.*



Calgary artist Paul Van Ginkel poses with "Stormy."



Paul's loft is his studio, home and personal gallery of art like this John Cloutier ceramic body cast and camel saddle from India.



The high ceilings allow Paul to showcase some of his favourite pieces that he has chosen to keep for his own viewing.



Paul's shelves hold memories of favourite travels. The knife is actually a WWII bayonet.

images. Paul has painted gritty street scenes, nudes, and exhilarating images of dancers. On the road, when inspiration strikes, he works with watercolors.

In his extensive travels, he photographs images that later may make it onto a canvas. During the Stampede Trail 2000 event he gathered hundreds of images that captured the historic ride. On one photo shoot in South Dakota, Paul had the chance to photograph many of the Native American actors who had appeared in *Dances with Wolves*. One such photo became the 60"x36" oil canvas "Stormy" which he is placing in the Stampede Art Auction July 15th. Paul is also a frequent visitor at the Glenbow Museum.

The Calgary Stampede Art Show gave Paul his first major break. While working full time at the *Calgary Herald* in 1987 as an editorial illustrator, he was accepted into the art auction. It was nerve racking; he feared no one would bid on his work. He

planted friends and family in the audience hoping to avoid such an embarrassment but it wasn't necessary. He laughs about it now – in that auction a 22"x30" Native portrait sold for \$800 and a 26"x31" portrait of a rodeo clown sold for \$650. "I was absolutely thrilled." Today, Paul's paintings start at \$3200 for a 20"x30" oil.

In 1990 Paul's oil of a stampeding herd of horses won 'Best of Show' and from then on, Van Ginkel's became a must-see exhibit. In 1991 Paul became one of a few select artists to receive a complete salon during the Stampede Art Show, which allows him to showcase over twenty pieces at a time.

"The exposure is amazing. The Calgary Stampede has made my career. Ninety per cent of the calls I get start with 'I saw your work at the Stampede.'"

This year marks the fourteenth consecutive year Paul has showcased his work, routinely selling out and making valuable contacts that often result in commissioned

work. Paul also makes sales through his website [www.paulvanginkel.com](http://www.paulvanginkel.com) and will be on hand for the duration of the Stampede Art Show talking up as many people as he can.

"At an exhibit I hope the subject gets more attention than the artist," he said. "I want to be a trigger for people to open their mind to the subject. I mean the whole point of having a painting in your environment is to influence or inspire you on a regular basis."

And the blind scenario?

The first thing Paul would have you do is touch the canvas to get a sense of the scale and then run your hands over the surface to get a feel for the texture of each brush stroke. Finally before he would offer an oral description, you must smell the painting for according to Van Ginkel, "the smell of oil paint is part of the seduction of oil painting." 