

In the Galleries

Western painting, Eastern antiques and uncovering the history of Gainsborough Gallery *By Melanie Jones*

WESTERN SPIRIT

The walls are lined with paintings. Wild horses, the faces of Native chiefs, graphic expressionism surrounding striking realism. Shelves are filled with Mexican Day of the Dead statues, Venetian theatrical masks and bronzes of cowboys. Old, worn saddles, Afghani blankets, Indian headdresses and bustles—Paul Van Ginkel is surrounded by inspiration.



WHITE BEAUTY, PAUL VAN GINKEL, 2003, OIL, 40" X 50" (ABOVE).

He paints in the southeast corner of his loft, using broad, sweeping strokes to render evocative western imagery on his large, imposing canvases. Van Ginkel captures the resonance of a Native chief in portrait with sensitivity to texture and a keen sense of physicality. "The most important part is the face," he says. "It's where the character, history and power are."

Born in Manitoba, Van Ginkel moved to Calgary in 1973. At 13 years old, the romance of the west wasn't lost on him, and he still recalls the impact of his first visit to the Stampede. "I was drawn to the rugged Western lifestyle," he says. "The simplicity and realism." Inspired by the faces of elders and chiefs at the Stampede, Natives

have become one of his most painted subjects.

While his body of work includes exotic imagery from Marrakesh and the streets of New York, Van Ginkel's focus is on western subjects. His canvases are large, averaging 40" x 50", due in part to the larger-than-life nature of his subjects. "A horse is not a small symbol," he says. "I want people to stand in front of the painting and feel that power."

His technique is loose and expressive—sweeping strokes to form the bodies of horses, a depth of realism rendering the faces and hands. Working from photographs and inspired by representational artists like Velazquez and John Singer Sargent, his works also include elements of abstraction, with blocks of gold leaf in the backgrounds of some of his newer paintings, splashes and streaks of bold colour in others.

Paul Van Ginkel is represented by several galleries in Santa Fe, New Mexico—a hub of southwestern-style art and the third largest art market in the US. In Calgary, he shows annually at the Calgary Stampede's *Western Art Show*—a huge event with an auction, gallery and salon showings by individual artists throughout the ten days of the Stampede.

The *Western Art Auction* is a large gala event with buffet dinner and the auction of more than 100 pieces of original western-themed art, on July 10 this year. The Western Art Gallery exhibits about 20 artists, from emerging to established, and adjacent to the Gallery, The Artists' Window is a small studio where painters, calligraphers, bronze and wood artists work on pieces in public view. About 40 artists are invited to participate in the Salon shows—kiosks with a larger representation of the artists' work. The kiosks are generally artist-run and are an opportunity to meet the artists and potentially commission work.

The *Western Art Showcase* is in the Round-Up Centre on the Stampede grounds throughout the Stampede (July 4 - 13), call 261-0101, or call Van Ginkel's studio at 261-5061.

EASTERN TRADITIONS

Zuhin Gillespie, co-owner of Buhran Gallery, travels through India, Afghanistan and Pakistan on a 1959 motorbike once or twice each year, going to places where few North Americans have ventured. An experienced