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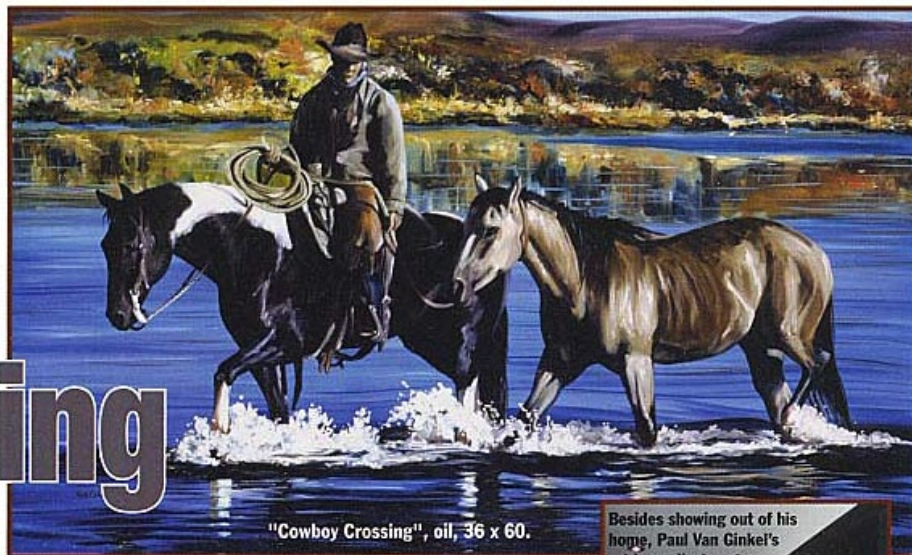
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VAN GINKEL



# Fever Rising



"Cowboy Crossing", oil, 36 x 60.

*Striving for magic, Paul Van Ginkel creates awe-inspiring paintings that make the pulse quicken.*

BY MARTI WEBSTER

**A**n afternoon with Calgary artist Paul Van Ginkel is a lesson in how far inspiration, discipline and a positive attitude can take you – sort of like being injected with a motivational drug that should be legal.

"What inside you is going to move you enough to do it?" He's talking about art, or writing or anything that requires infinite creativity. How to get inspired is what he'd teach people if they wanted to know, not oil painting techniques.

The Van Ginkel home which commands a hillside in southwest Calgary, is a gallery for objets d'art, furnished with Mexican artifacts from San Miguel de Allende that he and architect wife Kristin amassed after eloping there in 2004. It feels medieval and modern and supremely romantic. A tour reveals sixteenth century doors, a collection of crosses grouped on the wall of a stairwell and 125-year-old saddles slung over the railing of an ornate spiral staircase – likely out of an ancient church – that leads down to his studio. A hydraulic easel is designed to accommodate large canvases to showcase intensely evocative subjects. The lower-level gallery exhibits the contemporary artist's versatility: vibrant portraits of seductive belly dancers, moody pugilists in monochromatic color schemes, and a series of rose paintings

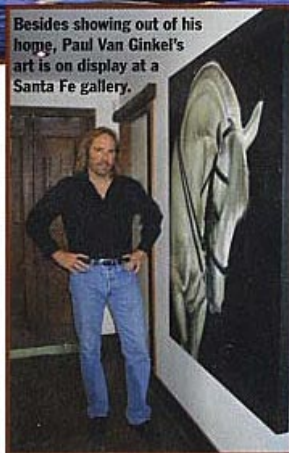
inspired by the birth of his daughter Isabella are powerfully feminine.

But western themes dominate.

He paints the kind of horses one would expect to see in heaven, if they had been good. By combining cadmium red or terre verte, with linseed oil and passion for the subject on his mind, a kind of alchemy occurs. Over-sized canvases of wild Spanish mustangs exude the horses' inner life force, as if their atoms were moving perceptively. Horses are somehow seraphic-like, transporting cowboys through saturated blue rivers and Native women over flaxen-colored prairie.

"I treat every painting differently; as if

Besides showing out of his home, Paul Van Ginkel's art is on display at a Santa Fe gallery.



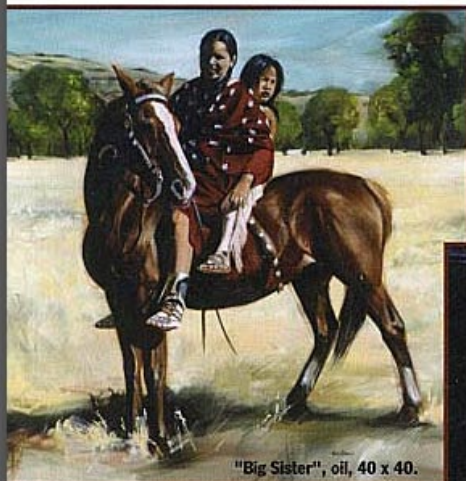
"I was giving birth to one of my babies," says Van Ginkel, who takes his role as an artist seriously.

The studio painter with shoulder length blond hair enjoys golfing or reading art books, like Van Gough's letters. He travels on location to snap photos of Spanish



"Long Walk", oil, 30 x 60.





"Big Sister", oil, 40 x 40.

mustangs near Sundance, Wyoming, or the ranch where *Dances With Wolves* was filmed. He jets to Morocco or hikes the trails at Machu Picchu and attends Flamenco festivals in Spain. How does he find time to paint? At first he seems like the kind of super-human who has more hours in the day than the rest of us, but he confesses that most of his paintings take less than a day, often only a few hours. However, the preparation work is intense. "How long does it take Pavarotti to sing a song? How long does it take for a baseball player to hit a home run?" he asks. "When I paint I don't answer the phone... nothing is more important."

"It's got to be fast and aggressive."

Van Ginkel's big break came while he was featured in the Western Showcase at the Calgary Stampede between 1991 and 2005.

"That show almost single handedly made my career because of the exposure," he says. Previously he had attended the Alberta College of Art, and worked as an illustrator for the Calgary Herald for seven years, but resigned to become a full-time painter.

For him it was natural to make western themes one of his foremost subjects. Though Van Ginkel doesn't own a horse, he's been captivated by iconic western imagery since his first Calgary Stampede. He points to a small piece hanging on the gallery wall that he did when he was still in knee socks: a pen and ink of an Indian on horseback shooting a gun.

Recently, the Canadian Supreme commissioned him to create a trio of original paintings which would represent their annual event for the next three years. The images

**"Gypsy Stallion" [right]**

**Realism and abstract qualities commingle and create a frisson. "I don't want to be so literal that I give the viewer everything in one look,"**

**Van Ginkel says. Instead, he wants viewers to use their imagination. Paintings are a trigger, to enhance someone's life.**

will be used on posters and marketing material for the event (also on this issue's cover). The original paintings will then be auctioned off during the Canadian Supreme.

"I'm very honoured. To be associated with them is great," says Van Ginkel.

It's all about attitude. "You have to be an optimist in the art world," Van

Ginkel says wisely. "You can starve or make a really good living."

"I think the most important thing about art is the way it's painted, not what it is. It might be a picture of a banana, but it could be beautiful."

To view more of Paul Van Ginkel's artwork visit [www.paulvanginkel.com](http://www.paulvanginkel.com).

