

Calgary People Making a Difference in Community, Business & Life.



CALGARY SUN

The Difference Makers

making a difference

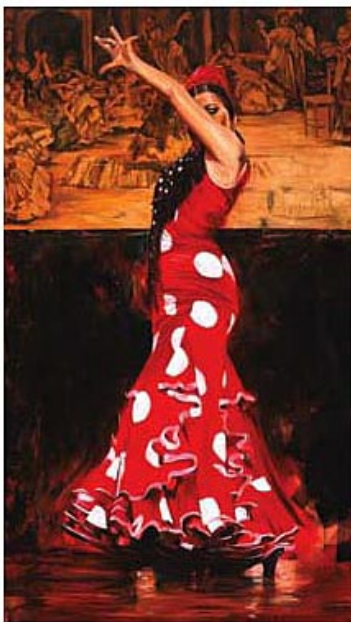
Paul feels a duty to give back to the city he calls home, which he does by donating roughly 150 prints and original paintings to local charities every year.

In conjunction with the Stampede Auction and the Indian Event Committee, he also established a scholarship where money raised through the sales of his work, and the work of fellow artists, was given to aspiring artists of Native ancestry to pursue their careers.

"I donate for a number of reasons, including my admiration for the volunteers who work so hard behind the scenes organizing the fundraisers," he says. "My job — donating — is easy. Their job is demanding. We are all responsible to do our part and contribute in a positive way to our community."

Paul represents himself and can be reached at 403-261-5061 or online at www.PaulVanGinkel.com





Paul Van Ginkel's life is all about the view.

And that view is breathtaking when you're standing on the balcony of his southwest home, at the edge of the city limits, staring at the Rocky Mountains not too far beyond the grazing horses and the spilling sun in the gently rolling hills.

Paul is widely celebrated for his unique Western-themed paintings, but his masterpiece of a home, designed by

up to 200 guests into their home to experience an evening of first-class food, drink, entertainment, art and, of course, the magnificent view.

"Our motivation is to show our appreciation to loyal patrons and encourage new collectors," Paul says of doing business in a low-key, social environment.

For example, a show last month featured a live Flamenco performance, while featuring Flamenco paintings inspired by a research trip to Spain.

"It's a soft-sell approach. During our home shows, one has the opportunity to experience the art and purchase directly from me."

After working as a full-time fine art painter for 18 years, Paul's view on his success in the art world mimics the ease of the scene beyond his balcony.

"To be successful in the art world, one can't be stressed by the unknown, for there are no guarantees," he says.

"I'm inspired by this because anything can happen."

Paul Van Ginkel

VAN GINKEL VISUALS LTD.

his architect-wife, Kristin, is a work of art of its own.

The house also doubles as Paul's studio and gallery, an element that was considered in the design of the plain walls, left open to display artwork, and the extra-wide hallways, allowing room to admire whatever is hung on the walls.

"Every wall is fair game in a gallery house," Paul laughs, at his painting-lined walls.

"Kristin and I designed and built our home to showcase my work in a very unique and stimulating setting."

And unique it is. Paul and Kristin's decorating began with a 55-ft. container of treasures, carefully chosen during a one-month trip to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, in 2004, and bearing items such as furniture, heavy 400-year-old mesquite doors, 45 light fixtures including an elaborate Mexican chandelier and a spiral wrought-iron staircase for Paul's studio.

Additional touches, such as a large collection of crosses, Mexican bowls that double as sinks and barnboard plank floors that create an excellent echo when struck with a heel, add to the rustic feel.

As a self-proclaimed small business owner, Paul knows the esthetics of his gallery and home are an important element of the job.

"First and foremost I'm an artist, but I also focus on the business side of it — marketing, selling, promoting and so on.

"I look at that as an artform in itself and a great challenge."

A challenge that he meets every four months, by inviting

If his veteran status in the field affords him some comforts, he got where he is by working hard and taking risks.

"I wasn't the best art student. However, I was one of the hardest working.

"A lot of people think you're born with talent, but I feel you're probably born with the inspiration and motivation to pursue it."

Paul, who moved to Calgary with his family at age 13, discovered his motivation through an interest in the cowboy culture.

"I was completely fascinated with cowboys and Indians, the Native culture and history, and everything they represent," he says.

"When it came time to choose a subject as a professional artist, it was natural for me to choose Western themes."

And it's a theme Calgarians embrace, evident by Paul's participation in the Stampede auction since 1987.

"The 14 consecutive years I exhibited at the Western Showcase of the Calgary Stampede was the most significant component to launching my art career," he says, of the event that draws an estimated 300,000 people each year.

While Calgarians embrace all his work, Paul embraces the opportunity to contribute to a thriving culture.

"My pieces don't just decorate, they command attention. People buy my work to make a statement in their home or office.

"When someone feels connected to a painting they purchase, there's a stronger sense of ownership and passion. They also want others to react and engage. When this happens, the art initiates a cultural exchange and interaction."