



Artist Svein Koningen and dog Rennie at the Noosa home that doubles as his personal art gallery

Pictures: SHARYN ROSEWARNE

How Svein became a household name

I don't wait for inspiration to come to me. I start to paint and inspiration comes from the process of painting



SVEIN Koningen's art may be abstract, but his attitude to artistic endeavour is all business. "I don't wait for inspiration to come to me. I start to paint and inspiration comes from the process of painting," the 56-year-old abstract expressionist and former stockbroker said.

His "disciplined" attitude to his art obviously works. In just five years, he's made a considerable splash in the artistic pool at Noosa on the Sunshine Coast.

Buyers from the US, Europe, Asia and in Australia have paid up to \$10,000 for his works.

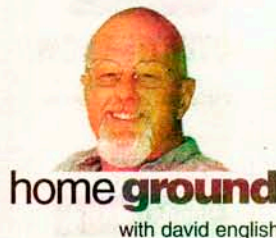
Svein and wife Dianne know that without good marketing, good art can be left mouldering in the storeroom.

Marketing and advertising is Dianne's domain, while producing the product is Svein's role.

Their home in Noosa plays an integral part in Svein's work — it is also a gallery that's open to the public for four hours a day.

"It is two storeys with white walls, lots of walls, and two of the four bedrooms are used to stack and store works," Svein said.

"The house is very much a living gallery. It's something people increasingly are wanting to see, works displayed this way." For Svein art is a



home ground with david english

labour of love. "I have always painted and drawn. I started doing it as a kid in Amsterdam and my parents and my grandparents encouraged me."

Norwegian-born Svein came to Geelong in Victoria with his family in 1953. He studied art and design before his father convinced him there was a "quid to be made" in insulating oil refineries in the Caribbean.

That started the aspiring artist down the business path — a path he stayed on until he turned 49.

"I simply had this urge to do it, to paint full-time. I must say I certainly wasn't prepared financially for the change. The first three years were a struggle."

But life as a full-time artist is no longer a struggle. Svein and Dianne have just returned from a successful exhibition in Hong Kong and Svein has been invited to attend next year's Florence Biennale.

Svein paints most days in a studio he rents at Noosa Harbour. But he is working on plans for an art space at the back of his house as the existing studio is about to be consumed in a redevelopment.

His style is distinctive. He works on canvas stapled to a table and uses large pots of acrylic.

"My stuff is all about colour and texture. I use a lot of trowels these days rather than a brush. Most of my work is intuitive."

He's not afraid to be experimental.

"Being an experimental artist, you do sometimes end up with a flop," he says.

But the flops are few. The average price for his work is \$4000.

Svein and Dianne have to make some difficult choices about the future and where they will call home.

"Noosa has been very good for me. I've made great progress in the past five years but it lacks that certain buzz that Melbourne has," Svein said.

He recently spent time with art colleagues in Melbourne and said his artistic side craved what the city had to offer. But his practical business side tells him Noosa is a good base.

"Maybe we split our time between the two," he said.