

the art of Living

Svein Koningen is a Noosa-based artist whose work is all about abstract expression and he is being recognised internationally for his vivid canvas creations. Sarah Jane Chalk takes the grand tour.

Walking into the prominent Noosa artist's gallery, which also happens to be Svein's home, is a bombardment of visual ecstasy. Gorgeous paintings cover wall surfaces and some are stacked in creative candour in spare rooms. His home is not only a reflection of superb artistic taste; it reveals Svein's passion and verve for his profession. "My work is abstract expression," Svein explains. "Abstract allows my subconscious expression to unfold without the constraint or inhibitions of the conscious mind. The conscious mind then completes the canvas, combining colour and balance. The place I live in, surrounding environment and my music are the external factors that influence my work. The advantage of exhibiting from home is that you get more time to talk to people. Visitors can stay for a drink, so you get to know your clients and their feedback on the work."

Svein has painted all over the world and has an international style that is evidence of his popularity. "I was born in Norway to a Norwegian mother," Svein says. "She met my Dutch father during the war whilst he was stationed in Oslo, working with the Dutch underground, giving me a Norwegian first name and a Dutch surname. I should probably fly the United Nations flag, growing up in Amsterdam until the age of seven, and moving to Geelong. Then I married an Australian with a Caribbean-born daughter and an English-born son."

Svein's decision to live in Noosa was spontaneous. "Originally we came to Noosa for five weeks while looking after another artist's home. When we were on Noosa Sound one day, I said to my wife Dianne 'why don't we try it for six months and here we are more than five years later.'"

Becoming a full time painter didn't happen straight away for Svein. "I've been referred to as 'doing a Gauguin'," Svein says. "He too was a stockbroker before becoming an artist. I left my suits and computer screen for brushes, paints and canvases. It took me nearly 30 years to realise that I should be using my creative right brain rather than just my left brain for facts and figures. Over the years painting and drawing part-time gave me such a buzz I came to realise that to become a 'real artist' I had to eat, drink, sleep and think paint."

Svein approaches his painting style openly and with a confidence that is expanded within his pieces. "My work is about brilliant colour, light and sensual movement," he says. "Spontaneity of raw energy is how I approach my canvas. I want my work to immerse the viewer, take them out of their everyday life, giving them a stirring experience of colour and energy. Some of my works are expressions of our connectedness to one another and our soul's journey in this life, past life and future lives. Other works are more aesthetic, geometric in design with vibrant simplicity. These works are more directly influenced from my training in art and industrial design. Willem De Kooning, Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock would be the three most influential painters, although I was introduced to Rembrandt and Bruegel as a very young child whilst growing up in Amsterdam. In recent years, there has been a trend back towards abstract, which is good because that is my passion."

Svein's work is indicative of his willingness to work using varying techniques to be thoroughly expressive.

"I am constantly exploring applications, using different tools and techniques to stimulate my compositions," he says. "My canvases continue to evolve - each theme evolves and completes, then I move on to the next expression of myself. But the one constant in my work, I believe, is my expression of vibrant colour and energy. And my main desire is to bring joy into people's lives. The great thing about abstract art is that you can see something different in the painting every day."

As for future plans, Svein has boundless dynamism and ebullience and continues to paint with zest. "There is a lot of energy in paintings, I am currently moving into the political arena - the degreening of Australia and water problems are a few of the themes I am working with at the moment," he says. "However, in the long run, I want to be recognised as an international artist because of the greater population exposure. I want to continue to paint from Australia but become an international artist." Both domestic and international art lovers alike are collecting his paintings. And with an increasing demand for his canvases overseas, his work is being shown in Hong Kong, Florence Biennale and Melbourne in 2003. Svein's artistic pursuits are bound for global recognition.



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