



a life engrained with the love of art

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FOR BRYAN L'ESTRANGE, being an artist is all about passion and living the life you want to live.

This is instantly apparent as soon as you walk into L'Estrange Art Gallery in Sumner, near Christchurch. And, what you find is not some shop assistant dressed to impress and make a sale, but instead you find an artist at work, building up layers of ideas and thoughts, projecting them with love and precision onto a large canvas. It's a complex composition; a work in progress, in much the same way that Bryan's gallery has evolved over the last five years.

"The gallery is like a sculpture to me; it's a part of me, a continuation of who I am," enthuses Bryan over a cup of coffee, expertly made on a coffee machine that sits unobtrusively in a corner of the gallery. It is in itself almost a piece of artwork with gleaming chrome and cups stacked in a casual, haphazard manner.

It's easy to understand why Bryan has chosen to follow his preferred profession and lifestyle; he has a natural empathy for his artwork and, indeed, with the artists who bring their work to his gallery. Bryan has created a holistic space where he and other artists can display their works of art and enjoy the 'organic' atmosphere.

New Zealand born and bred – a 'kiwi kid' at heart, Bryan always knew that creativity would shape his life – even as a young primary school student when other children would crowd around him to view his masterpieces. His calling was so strong that he decided that art and everything associated with it would become

an essential part of his world. Over the years, Bryan has spent time working towards creating an ethical business, and improving and developing his own individual style.

Individual style is a subject on which he has strong ideals; Bryan firmly believes in allowing individuality and creativity to come from deep within and does not allow other people's opinions to influence his work, nor does he project his thoughts onto other artist's work.

Painting and printmaking are his greatest passions coupled with the desire to live a fulfilled life that also involves his family. His wife Kerri, also an artist, is fully supportive and with his home close to the gallery, valuable time can be spent with his three young children (soon to be four).

Bryan enjoys succeeding at the challenge of creating works of art and while he doesn't map it all out before he starts, he does work with ideas that often come from feelings and memories of the past. By allowing his memories to surface, he can make a natural connection to his paintings. And it's this deeper level of connection that also attracts just the right people to purchase his work.

"I'm not a commercial artist, so when my work sells, it's really lovely." Bryan is unpretentious when it comes to selling his work; he is adamant that he doesn't paint for a market.

For Bryan, it's all about communication; he likes his art to speak for him – allowing his creativity to come through naturally. And, it's not just about what's on the





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canvas but also about the experience he can give his customers. He enjoys painting while they wander around the gallery, allowing them to become an essential part of that organic atmosphere that he has strived to achieve.

Encouraging other artists is something Bryan is also keen to do and he has just recently opened up another section of his gallery as a free exhibition space for both emerging and existing artists.

Over the last five years Bryan has progressively renovated and enlarged each area of the gallery; and with each new stage of development, it has become a diverse series of spaces, allowing room not only for paintings but for sculptures as well.

Not only is there a lot going on within the gallery itself but Bryan’s website has been updated to reflect this vibrant atmosphere and encourage online viewing of artwork.

Bryan has a huge energy for his work and gallery; the natural, earthy organic feel is the result of this and is reflected in Bryan’s heartfelt enthusiasm and dedication to creating a special place, not only for artists but for visitors to Sumner as well.

“I’m really geared for the love of art and have such a passion for it,” he says and adds, “It’s imprinted into my daily life.”

To find out more about Bryan, his artwork and the L'Estrange Art Gallery visit www.lestrangeart.co.nz. ■



EXHIBITION 25 September – 8th October, 2007
Look out for a selection of Bryan’s latest work in his upcoming exhibition at L'Estrange Art Gallery, 53 Nayland Street, Sumner, Christchurch.