



portrait of the artist in her prime

ARTIST LYNNE BROWN PROVES IT'S NOT WHEN YOU START THAT COUNTS BUT CARING ENOUGH AND BEING DARING ENOUGH TO COMMIT TO CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR.

WORDS LIZ FRENCH / PHOTOS ROSS BROWN

When Lynne Brown announced to her husband, Ross, that she never intended to get a job, ever again, he was a bit taken aback. But Lynne had no visions of a leisurely life. She was entering her fifth decade and determined to focus on her art. Eight years later Lynne Brown is an established artist who has created genuine interest among buyers with ever increasing sales success. Vindication indeed!

Lynne showed promise in art as a student. Her sixth form Tauranga Girls College art teacher, Claudia Jarman, encouraged her to go to Elam. "I was extremely shy and my family had little money so I didn't even bother to mention it to my parents," Lynne recalls. "Besides, I had just met a lovely young photographer named Ross Brown!" She was 18 when they married. "It seems ridiculous now but a lot of the couples who married young in the seventies are still together." The Browns celebrate 41 years successful partnership this year, and have grandchildren. Daughters Hayley and Anna "went from chalk and cheese children to chalk and cheese adults". Hayley followed her parents' artistic path, rapidly making a name for herself as an international artist. Anna became a commercial pilot then recently retrained as a registered nurse.

BUSY BUSINESSWOMAN TO UNEMPLOYED GRANDMOTHER

In 1995 the Browns 'seized the day' and bought Harrison's Gallery in Tauranga from its originators, the Harrison family. "We were green as grass but the leap of faith paid off. It was a rollercoaster ride – hard work, great fun and we learned a lot about art, artists and running a business."

As Lynne's 50th birthday approached things changed dramatically for her. "We sold the gallery, my mum died after a long battle with cancer and our first grandchild was born. In a matter of months I went from self-employed, vibrant working mother to orphaned unemployed grandmother."

Lynne's first grandchild, Jakob, helped heal a rough time and she is now equally enamoured with daughter Anna's second child, Michaila, and Hayley's Elliott Rose, but she does not regret the announcement to her husband that started the next chapter of her life. "I knew it was time."



"IT TOOK ME FIVE YEARS TO
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FINDING HER STYLE IN FEELINGS NOT FACTS

Lynne began painting seriously in 2006. "It took me five years to find my own style." Nine years as a gallery operator had exposed her to a myriad of media. Art classes and workshops had focussed her mind on what sort of art she did not want to do, "but not precisely on what I did". The transparent layering of acrylics became her preferred method; as seen in her early paintings of dresses and dressmakers models which she thinks had their genius in the sewing she did for her family. They proved irresistible to women. Lynne is the first to acknowledge that her paintings are feminine and soft in style. "I am not a confrontational person so I was never going to produce confrontational work." Lynne's subject matter has now evolved to her confident but gently evocative paintings taken from landscapes and interesting buildings. "I paint to express the feel of somewhere but not a factual interpretation," she explains. "Colour use and mixing are instinctive and the layering of transparent glazes adds richness and depth. When I think a painting is finished it sits in our living room for a while and after critiquing from Ross – surprisingly helpful with his photographer's eye – and a bit of fine tuning it is signed and varnished."

Lynne paints mainly in acrylics and while canvas has been her preferred material she is finding paper provides more freedom. Framing adds a new dimension and value to the piece.

Despite the fact that Lynne has found her place in the art scene and exhibited in over 20 solo and group showings, and was recently selected as a finalist in the National Molly Morpeth Canaday Awards in Whakatane, her paintings are remarkably affordable. "I put conservative values on my work," she says. "By keeping them reasonable I can keep painting without filling our house with my own art!"



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"...SELLING A WORK IS A BIT LIKE MARRYING OFF YOUR CHILDREN."

POPULARITY VALIDATES PASSION

Lynne is grateful for the patronage she has had locally, in the region and overseas. Her revolving exhibition in the Tauranga's Trinity Wharf Hotel foyer enhances its waterfront ambience. "My large pieces fit the scale well and I've had the thrill of selling five works to a guest from London."

She appreciates support from Sally Morrison who has hosted three Lynne Brown exhibitions in her home with another one planned for later this year. The showing will include a series of paintings she is working on now, inspired by a European holiday spent cruising the Mediterranean and Croatian coastlines and on the Canal du Midi in the South of France. She has sold through galleries in Ohope, Whangamata, Tauranga, and Rotorua and has had work commissioned via a friend in Abu Dhabi. "It is surprising how well my paintings seem to sit in most homes, whether traditional or ultra modern; something interior designers are realising too." A solo exhibition at Steiner Interiors in Rotorua sold eleven paintings. Lynne describes exhibiting as, "Like opening your heart; then selling a work is a bit like marrying off your children. You've done your best and now you want someone else to love and cherish them."

Lynne also appreciates the way painting has made her really see. "I became aware of the changing seasons, colours and tides. For 50 odd years I had been too busy to notice." Her cure for artist block is to go for a walk. She is a down to earth artist, not driven to disappear to a garret where she forgets the world outside. There are grandchildren to look after, family commitments and, "I hate to admit it but I usually make sure the housework is done before I pick up my paintbrushes."

Lynne's advice to anyone trying to paint is, "Let yourself play. Be prepared to paint over things, but don't give up. Self doubt is a killer." She says she sometimes starts a canvas and, if not happy, takes it outside and hoses it off. "The residual paint is often the start of a better painting."

She has no regrets about being 'a late bloomer'. "If I had started earlier I would be less focussed. I figure I've got 20 good years and I intend to paint for all of them. It's now or never!" ■

www.lynnbrown.weebly.com

