

IslandLife

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DAN TULLOCH/RICHMOND NEWS

Allow me ... Raymond Chow (green shirt) has teamed up with David Hay (left), Teyjah McAren (second from right) and Mike Hughes (right), on a project to create large colourful paintings.

Collaborative collection

By MICHELE HOPKINS
Special to the News

Apply the old saying two minds are better than one to a group of artists and the result is some impressive artwork.

In an unusual move, four artists have teamed up to work on several paintings, two artists at a time. What makes this creative collaboration so unique is that both artists interact simultaneously to create the artwork from start to finish.

Raymond Chow, a fifties something artist and gallery owner, wanted to increase the number of artists represented in his gallery, and decided the best way to do this would be to collaborate with artists he respected.

Hence, the artistic ego was set aside and the stereotype of the solitary artist was debunked.

"By combining two different styles into one painting, we have succeeded in creating a new artist," he said. "And unlike other collaborations, both artists' signatures are on the artwork."

Combining the free-flow artistry of two artists is not new; in fact, the genre goes

back to the late 1800s when the grand master Peter Paul Ruben brought together artists to join him, and then along came Andy Warhol who brought it to a pop culture high in the sixties and seventies.

However, unlike these bold new adventurers, Chow and fellow artists Mike Hughes, 51, Dave Hay, 67, and Teyjah McAren, 47, Ruben and Warhol worked on separate parts of the painting.

Getting together every couple of weeks, these artists, who combine such mixed styles as: realism, art nouveau, classic, romantic realism, semi-abstract, and semi-representation, bring to life bold pieces of art.

Working on the floor as opposed to an easel, and working only with acrylics, Hughes, a corporate media producer, describes the process as "kind of like playing twister."

All four artists agree that this partnership has broadened their artistic visions by allowing them to constantly recreate themselves.

Hay, a retired professional engineer, describe his style as meticulous and

tight, but adds that when he works on a collaborative piece, he loosens up considerably.

"I'm much freer, and when you are working with another artist there's a great exchange of ideas."

McAren, art teacher and full-time artist, agrees. "What was exciting for me was the bouncing of ideas, and the energy conveyed by two people working on one canvas."

From pianos to frogs, nudes to motorcycles, these artists let their imaginations go free, unhindered by preconceptions they might have when they start off.

"We pick up visual cues from each other, and often end up changing our original idea of what we decided we were going to paint," McAren said.

"I started a nude and suddenly Chow decided she needed clothes," said Hughes.

"Yes, and for me I started painting a flower and Chow turned it into a frog," McAren added.

The paintings are very detailed, depicting movement and fluidity, with the use of bold, brilliant, and

fluorescent colour splashed across large canvases, anywhere from three to four feet in length.

What the group has gained from this unique medium, varies.

"I've taken some of the techniques learned here and applied them in my painting at home," Hughes said.

"It's very easy to get into a rut, the exchange of ideas has brought me more artistic expression," McAren said.

Another collaboration has grown out of this one - the artists have chosen certain non-profit organizations to fund raise with.

Donating one of their prints, they have been able to broaden their exposure and do something good for the community.

The public is invited to view the paintings at an exhibit beginning Friday, Sept. 29 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Raymond Chow Art Gallery in Steveston, 5-3500 Moncton St.

The show runs until October 8.

To RSVP the opening call 277-4887, or you can visit their web site : <http://skybusiness.com/raymondchowgallery>.