



David Clark — The Province

Artist John Ferrie with dogs Keefer (left) and Bandit, stands before paintings for a show opening this weekend.

An artist from Day 1, with the angels' help

By Paul Luke
Staff Reporter

JOHN FERRIE, 40
Vancouver-based artist

■ His first job

Paper route delivering *The Vancouver Sun* when he was 12 or 13.

■ What he learned

"You learn some organizational skills, you learn some people skills, you learn some responsibility and a work ethic," Ferrie says.

"What I liked most was having my own money and getting to spend it as I wanted. I didn't have to bug my parents for stuff."

■ How he became an artist

Since he was a small child, Ferrie has considered himself to be an artist — it was never a question of whether to become one. When he was five, his grandmother bought him an expensive set of oil paints for Christmas.

He never looked back.

■ Where he studied

Ferrie graduated from Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1988. At

My first job

Emily Carr, he sold his first paintings — a series of windsurfing prints.

■ How he survives

Ferrie never knows when another painting will sell. Ninety per cent of the population won't like his work, he says. Of the rest, only five per cent can afford it — and even for them it's a luxury.

To help pay the rent at his residence/studio/gallery he waits on tables four nights a week at Bridges Restaurant in Vancouver.

■ What is his work like?

Ferrie loves bright, bold colours. His subjects range from flowers to drag queens, celebrities and found objects. He paints with enamel and acrylic paint, latex, urethane and powdered pigments.

His work has wound up in the Governor General's office in Ottawa, on Robson Street banners, in the Children's Health Centre of Surrey Memorial Hospital, on actor Robin Williams' chest (a design for a cycling jersey) and on his website at [johnferrie.com].

His prices range from hundred-dollar prints up to \$10,000 paintings.

"I always say to people 'only buy what you love and don't let a gallery talk you into something you won't be happy with.'"

■ How he sells his work

Ferrie works hard to market himself, often taking unorthodox approaches. Earlier in his career, he exhibited in hair salons, coffee shops and restaurants in Vancouver. To promote one opening, he recruited a bevy of drag queens.

He currently has three solo exhibitions each year at his own gallery. His latest began yesterday and runs to April 20.

■ Why he's successful

"I feel I've lucked out. I've got some angels and I've got some gumption and I've got some momentum as well," he says.

"I don't necessarily want to be famous and I'm certainly never going to be rich but I think I'm a success because I paint every day and I do what I love."

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