

# Like Dad, his Hart's set on being a Pro

Mike  
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## THE INTERVIEW

**T**HE trick, says David Hart, is to find an artist in early to mid-career, buy a big piece synonymous with them and keep it for 10 to 15 years.

He followed his own advice and bought his father's paintings, his father being Pro, a man who knew his way around an easel.

"Dad would have given me anything I wanted but I always paid for everything. I'd say to Dad, 'I'm interested in this, I don't want any special deals. Whatever you'd sell that to a dealer for, I'll pay you the same.'

"I wanted to stand on my own feet. I bought major pieces of Dad's out of the big collections that I knew would do well, like his Gallipoli series. It's all gone up hugely in value," says Hart.

Raised in the family home in Broken Hill, Hart and his family headed for the Sunshine Coast a little over 10 years ago where his own artistic expression found roots.

"We were involved in a lot of youth activities with our church in Broken Hill and we moved to Brisbane to continue that, and I opened a small gallery in Albany Creek. I've always painted and in Queensland I progressed a lot further into it. They were just starting to develop the strip here," he says nodding to the Mooloolaba Esplanade outside his beachfront gallery, the surf less than 100m distant.

"So we took this space. We wanted a change from the city and a better lifestyle so came up to the Coast.

"I've got this gallery and another one in Noosa, which has been running for about seven years, but I've got paintings hanging all over Australia."

Hart concedes that, even after his death in 2006, his father casts a significant shadow.

"I think being a Hart is an advantage in so far as it does draw people in but in the end, you have to be able to paint. People just won't buy it because it has a Hart name on it."

He says that, while people frequently try to compare him with his father, he's learnt not to be bothered. He says, to follow his father. "He didn't push me, which was a really good idea because you can't teach art. You can show people some techniques, and then the rest is up to them."

Pro Hart's love of art, he says, permeated the family home.

"It was great growing up in the house with Dad. I never had any painting lessons from him, but I guess whenever you went to talk to him, he'd be at his easel."

"You'd see how things were done by watching. I knew how trees went into a painting and how to start, that sort of thing, but never had a lesson. I suppose I'm self-taught."

Hart met his wife Christine courtesy of his father's art business.

"She was working for my dad's manager and I was picture-framing. I picture-framed for Dad for about 10 years and I never thought I'd ever get into painting."

"I had an interest, but not enough to want to spend the day doing it. I didn't really know what I wanted to do."

He ran a lawnmowing business and



**NATURE BOY:**  
David Hart carries on Dad's traditions.

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did landscaping before he felt the inclination to pick up a brush.

"I did a few paintings and put them in my aunty's gallery and they sold," he says. "I continued doing it and they kept selling. Then I'd paint for two weeks and frame for two weeks and, eventually, I gave the framing away."

Hart says his work has been influenced by the Sunshine Coast.

"I do a lot of floral pieces and I paint dragonflies. Dad painted them but when he died, no one else was doing them and I didn't want them to disappear. I thought of it as part of my heritage, so I carried it on."

Like his father, he feels an affinity with the bush. "I do some of the Outback stuff because I did grow up in the bush. I've done some scenes from

Silvertown, which is just outside Broken

Hill, and I like illustrating Australian history," he says.

Currently he is trying to finish a series of 55 paintings on which he has been working for four years.

"I've been painting a series called *The Arrival Series* about the arrival of the First Fleet and how it affected Australia and indigenous Australians. There were some really interesting Aboriginal characters who led resistance groups and stuff like that," he says.

The financial crises of the past few years have, he says, had an impact on the art scene.

"Art is a luxury item and when things tighten up, people don't buy a \$10,000 painting to hang on the wall. They figure the painting can wait, so it does slow up but we've found it's picked up in the last six months."

Hart says the great thing about art is that, in a worst-case scenario, a painting will always be worth what you paid for it.

"I tell people to buy a painting because they love it and the invest-

ment side of it is a bonus. It's a seven to 10-year hold. I've done very well out of art over the years. I had one piece by David Boyd I purchased for \$17,000 and I've had it for maybe 15 years. I just sold it for \$64,000," he says.

"It's a shame Dad's not here to see his grandkids carrying on the tradition. We've got three kids, Jake's 18, a graphic designer who's just moved to Brisbane, there's Chloe who's painting and got her own style and Harry who's 11."

I ask what Harry's doing and Hart tells me he's making a mess on the carpet.

"He just starred in a remake of a carpet commercial my father did where he put paint all over a carpet. They re-did the ad for the next generation."

The Hart name, it seems, will be with us for a while yet.

Pro Hart's works are on show at David Hart Galleries in Mooloolaba until June 13.  
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