



Art from the Hart



Photos: Brad Filippini

by Alii Grant

Artist David Hart's Tanawha property is more than the family home. It's the centre of his business, the location of his studio and a showcase for his and his father's work.

Approach the gates of artist David Hart's home, and you know you're in the right place, thanks to the bronze dragonflies that adorn the entrance. Dragonflies are one of David's trademarks, along with bright flowers, outback scenes and abstract works.

David, wife Christine and their three children Harrison, Chloe and Jacob have lived on the lush 1.5-acre Tanawha property for seven years, completing significant renovations on the small original house two years ago. The result is a spectacular, modern family home that boasts five bedrooms, a stunning outdoor area and pool, and plenty of spectacular artwork inside.

Behind those impressive gates, the property also houses David Hart Galleries' head office and warehouse, and David's studio. The business is doing well, despite the challenging financial times, thanks to forward-planning and preparation on David's part. "Twelve months ago I realised that we had to be more innovative in how we go about our business if we were to survive and continue to grow," he explains. "We sell luxury items so you tend to see the downturn sooner as luxury items are the first thing people cut back on."

"We have put a number of new systems in place and looked at what we can do ourselves, rather than outsourcing. We are also promoting the business Australia-wide and have developed smarter products that enhance what we do and don't devalue our other products like signed digital reproductions, sketch books, journals and kitchen products like linen tea towels."

With so many business pressures associated with running the two galleries in Noosa and Mooloolaba, it's a wonder he has time to paint. "The business is doing very well but having the two galleries is enough for me

right now," David says. "All I want to do is paint and you can get caught up in the other stuff."

Luckily for him, he has nine staff to help him realise his vision, so he can indeed concentrate on his art and his family. "On an average day, I'll take the kids to school then come home and go straight to the studio," David says. "Sometimes I'll read for a while as I get inspiration from reading. I'll get the canvasses ready and decide what I want to work on for the day and paint

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until about 3pm. I'll then catch up with staff, check my emails and look at new products. I'm pretty structured."

David's painting space has a number of different pieces 'under construction'. The walls feature positive, loving messages painted for him by his three children.

"I just paint and I don't tend to worry about timelines," David says. "I don't get too stressed. The best thing is that now I can paint what I want to paint. When you start out you have to paint what people want to buy. I do look at what sells though."

"The kids will come in and have a go. My daughter is working on a few abstract pieces at the moment," he says, showing off the impressive canvasses.

But it was a different story for David growing up with his famous father, artist Pro Hart. "Dad used to get annoyed if I came in [while he was painting]. He came off the land – he was tough and grumpy at times, and he was always so busy. But he would sometimes throw some paints on the table for me. I only ever really painted with



David's family home is also his studio and gallery

him once in my twenties. Pro always had different stuff around – pottery and scrap steel for sculptures, so we'd be able to have a crack at different things."

David's focus is a historical series two years in the making called *The Arrivals*, about the arrival of the First Fleet, as seen through the eyes of the indigenous people. When he finishes the series it will feature 55 pieces.

"I started off wanting to paint Captain Cook and the arrival of the First Fleet. Part of the way through I decided to get input from some of the traditional owners and thanks to input from an incredible lady called Anita Heiss, I realised that I was painting completely from a white man's perspective, so I decided to ditch half of what was painted and start again."

David has also taken to picture framing and photography, recently purchasing a set of impressive studio lights. And he is master of the family's impressive garden. "It's a great yard as there's plenty of space for the kids. It does require bit of work but I like to do it myself," David explains as he walks over the perfectly manicured lawn from his studio to the house. He strolls past the stunning pool and expansive entertainment area, complete with outdoor kitchen and barbecue, and wanders into the house where Christine, is busy on the phone running the business.

The Hart house is a gallery itself, as the walls are adorned with many of David and his father's works.

In the pool room is one of Pro's famous Gold Coast beach scenes. Directly opposite is the same scene, as interpreted by David. "I wanted to have a go at painting the same scene as dad and see how it turned out," he says. While their styles are different, it's clear that David has been blessed with his father's same gift – of beautiful storytelling through art. ■



The Hart home in Tanawha