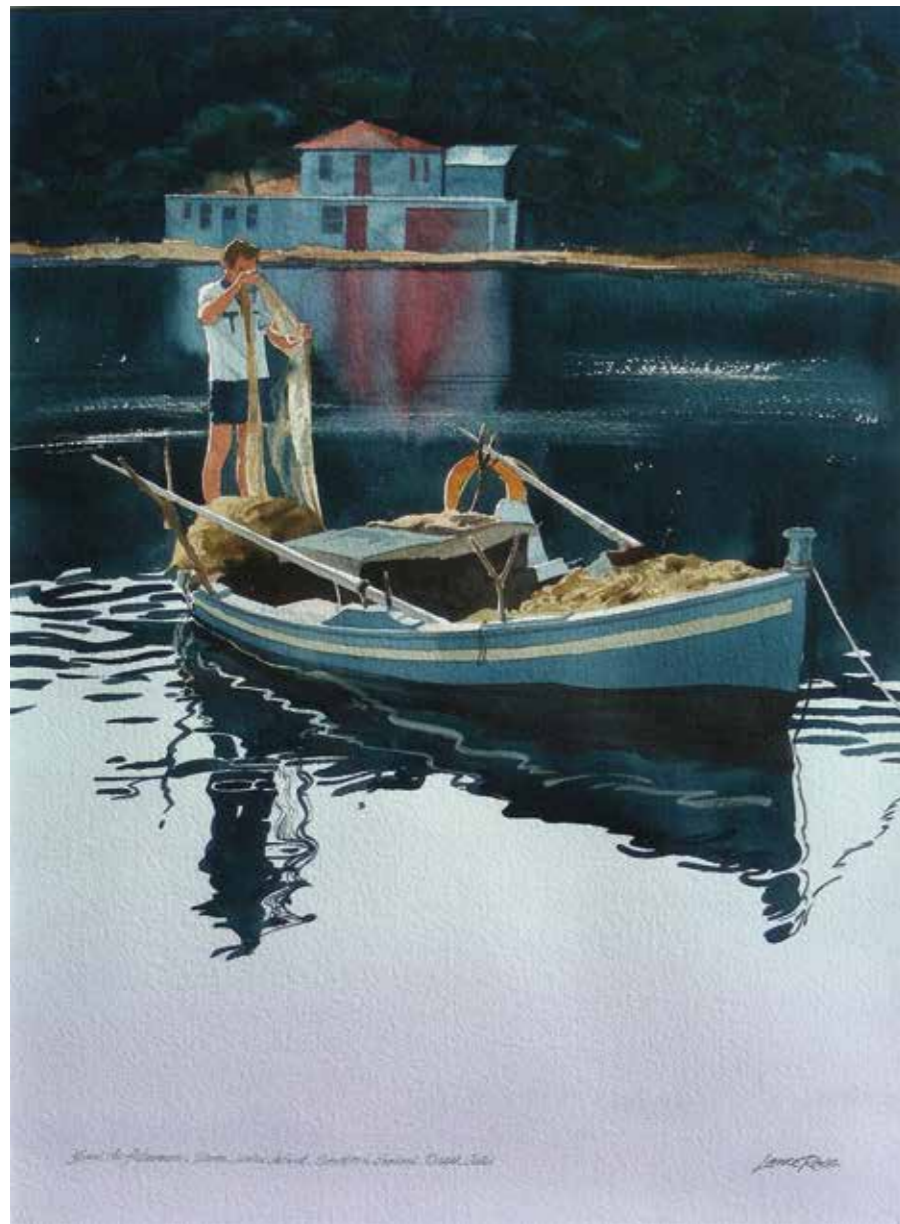


Lance Ross

# Pure Talent

A self-described “all-rounder”, this artist has forged a successful career having dabbled in many creative avenues



Lance Ross is an established artist with over 50 years of experience, specialising in fine art, marine art and illustration. Having always dabbled in the creative arts, the bulk of Lance’s working life was spent as a freelance commercial artist, writer and one-man advertising agency, working largely within other agencies giving him a continuous supply of work. Lance’s break into the advertising industry started at 17 years of age when he was a messenger boy in an advertising agency. Without having been to art school, Lance was moved into the art department two weeks later when his boss liked the doodles he created between deliveries. This opportunity kick-started what would be a stellar career for Lance. “Luckily, I was placed at a drawing board between two ex-students of Sir William Dargie who won the Archibald Portrait Prize eight times. In a telephone interview he told me, “Back in my time, paintings were judged by how natural they looked.” Both my workmates were keen landscape artists on weekends, so I took to fine art and sold my first watercolour Echo Gum at the Herald Outdoor Art Show for three guineas.”

In the 60s, 70s and 80s, Lance sold hundreds of paintings through the large number of suburban Rotary Clubs that ran successful art shows. “Back then, traditional works were keenly sought after by buyers, the most popular being Australian landscapes in the Heidelberg School style.” This inspired



Lance to solely organise Australia’s largest ever art show in Melbourne’s Royal Exhibition Buildings with over 1500 paintings on show and scores of art and craft demonstrations underway. To ensure high quality, all artists were personally invited.

Throughout his career, Lance was commissioned to provide thousands of illustrations. The gaps allowed him to create scores of sidelines, including designing artists’ materials, publishing top selling magazines, best-selling books and contributing illustrations and stories to other magazines. In recent times, Lance’s ‘sideline time’ has been spent creating products to sell, which can be viewed on his website. He encourages any artists who have illustration and writing experience to use those skills to earn an income, whilst improving their fine art ability until it can support them. “The saleability of fine art is very different these days, due to computers,

Above: The Rip in The Rip  
Right: Serendipity Ahead

Opposite: Greek Fisherman





and very cheap splodges and smudges/so-called art coming in from Indonesia and China, being rented out and hung in houses put up for sale and appearing in the advertisements for the houses, thus resulting in un-art-educated people assuming that style must be trendy and the in-thing. Bother."

Most of Lance's work has been sold through art shows, commissions and a few online. He states he has never had a solo exhibition. "I've worked as an all-rounder, painting landscapes,

Top left: Royal Botanic Gardens  
Top right: Kathleen Gillett sails the Whitsundays  
Middle left: Ormiston Gorge  
Bottom left: The Kis...

portraits, figures, buildings, boats or whatever, with traditional techniques. Last week I painted a ballet dancer, the week before a horse and girl in landscape, and before that an Ormiston Gorge landscape." This year, being the anniversary of renowned sculptor Auguste Rodin, he painted a scene of Auguste working in his studio, with maquettes of some of his sculptures such as *The Thinker*. "He is chipping away at *The Kiss* (being only part way through the sculpting, I entitled it *The Kis...*) and working from a pair of live nude models kissing. I still practice life drawing regularly."

At a previous marine art show, Lance's entered painting subject was a large sailing yacht spearing through rough water. During the opening night

a gentleman said to him, "But you did it from a photograph?" Lance said, "Yes," neglecting to point out that almost every piece by the other artists had also been done from photographs. "I can only guess that mine looked more realistic than theirs. I refrained from saying, "I was unable to have them pose for me." The main sponsor bought it for \$2000."

His recent paintings titled *Bombora* came about because he was determined to paint something this year that could definitely not have been painting "from a photograph". In order to complete a realistic painting, Lance says that one can rarely work entirely from memory or imagination. "Most artists openly state that they refer to photographs. I used many shots of

waves and rocks. I saw many photos of longboats, AKA whaleboats, and worked from a photograph of a model boat. So I had to draw and paint the crew entirely out of my head. Having a lifetime of boating experience and life drawing helped with that exercise."

All his life, Lance has taken part in many forms of boating and specialises in marine art. "Many commissions have been completed for yacht owners, people who just love boats, and girlfriends of men who own yachts, given as birthday presents." Lance was accepted by the Royal Society of Marine Artists in London and was a Foundation Member of the Australian Society of Marine Artists based in Sydney. His work hangs in an Admiral's office in Canberra, the



Australian Gallery of Sport and the Olympic Museum. He also publishes yachting greeting cards, limited edition prints, and markets a range of nautical graphic products.

Although Lance's niche is marine art, he is equally at home working on figure and fashion illustration, mechanical and architectural illustration, cartoon and caricature; all in many techniques and in any medium. "Pencil, pen and ink, pastel, watercolour, oils, acrylics,

charcoal, crayon, coloured inks, paper sculpture, clay sculpture, model-making and scraperboard are all used from time to time."

As for design, Lance has designed logos for scores of large and small companies and won awards for some. His design experience extends to many forms and materials including television storyboards, funny cards, calligraphy, exhibition design, labels, clothing design, industrial design. Interestingly, Lance has also won

multiple awards for swimming pool design and town planning. "My illustrations, writing and photography have been published in all manner of media including commercial advertising publications, children's books and various types of magazines in Australia, New Zealand, America, Great Britain, Asia and South Africa."

Lance studied life drawing at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School and won prizes for life drawing. He says that one



interesting exercise was teaching watercolours to Aborigines in the outback near Alice Springs. Writing and illustrating monthly how-to-draw articles for a children's magazine, illustrating cookbooks and many children's books have added to Lance's colourful resume.

Lance finishes on an interesting note. He refers to a quote by Matthew Collings, "It has become fashionable for people not to understand art." Lance explains that Collings is referring to the public, but it applies to artists too. "I use as an example Mark Rothco's work. His roughly brushed rectangular panels of colours have soared into the stratosphere of high prices. At a 2012 auction of his White Centre (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose), the selling price including buyers' premium was US\$89.5 million!" "The National Gallery of Victoria has a similar Rothco entitled Untitled (Red). I stood and looked at it for a while, a couple of weeks ago. No one else even slowed up as they walked past it. Then I noticed it was hung upside down! Up in the top right hand corner, there are dribbles running upwards. Oh, maybe 'they' may say, "The artist said to hang it that way," but I wonder how he came to work that out after he had finished painting it?"

There is no doubt that Lance's successful career comes down to raw talent. This is true, however Lance states that he "cannot change myself from wanting to paint realistically and cannot understand much of the art world."

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Top Right: Lorne Surf  
Right: Up Rode the Squatter

Opposite:  
Top left: Drover  
Top right: Exhilaration  
Bottom: Home Soon

