

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SUCCESS

When I was a little boy, I stood gazing at my aunt's art collection and said "One day I am going to be an artist!" The response was not positive at all. However, in later years my parents encouraged and supported me. They both loved to see my success and enjoy the fruits thereof. I did not know exactly what direction to take in an art career: comic artist, architect, portrait painter, illustrator?

In order to have a more secure future it was decided that I must study graphic design. This was a very difficult three-year full-time diploma course at the old art school in Johannesburg. Only eleven of us qualified. I never worked for an Advertising agency as expected. Instead, I got a job at the Medical University of Southern Africa as a Graphic Artist where I worked for eight years. This was far more relaxed compared to advertising and I had enough time to dabble in painting

After a few years at MEDUNSA I became a skilled medical illustrator and wanted to go to the USA to gain professional training and qualification. I did not get any co-operation from the university and realized that I was going to remain poor if I did not make a plan. At the age of 31, I took some of my best paintings to Galleries in Pretoria and Johannesburg, but my work was not good enough. My work was boring and too realistic. In the same year I had my first solo exhibition at my mother's consistent urging. I sold one large painting

I left MEDUNSA in April 1990 and my brother Leon and I started a close corporate and named it Rossouw Art and Design. For a year I continued to do private medical illustration which gave me a kick start. Leon is a very dynamic man with a flair for business and he got work for me: Commissions like the very large airbrush mural for the Science Museum in Pretoria. During this time, I continued to paint in oil, mainly scenes of the Cape. I tried to get into art in the park in Johannesburg which was a very popular way for young artists to get into the market. Never sold anything. Leon decided to travel for 2 years and went to the UK and work there. He was 22 then

My dad was retrenched and we had to move to an old house in the countryside north of Pretoria. He was a very good signwriter and I helped with the layout and design of his projects. I joined an art society and gallery in Warmbaths and

painted more. The gallery got me a few good commissions. November 1991 my youngest brother, Louis, lost his life in a truck accident. He was only 21. The family was devastated. It was a very difficult time, and I was down and out, not knowing what to do next

That December a Gallery owner contacted me and offered me a job as assistant. I started in February 1992 working at her gallery in Pretoria East. There for the first time I could paint every day and that was the secret of my success. By the end of 1994 my painting had improved to the extent that a top gallery in Johannesburg exhibited my work. Very soon top collectors and high-ranking businessmen were buying my paintings. Since early 1995 I was able to work from my studio at home without the need for an extra source of income