

by Janet Haney

Vincent Concepcion Sees The Relationship Between Both Activities

GOLF HELPS FUEL ARTIST'S PASSION

Vincent Concepcion set his sights on being an artist when he was just a young child. At the age of 5, the Hawaii native began drawing and sketching using colorful crayons, pencils, pens and markers.

Today, Vincent has aligned his artistic talent with his love of golf.

"The game of golf and art both share imagination and precision," he said. "This makes the two worlds come together for me. Golf is such an artful game."

Early Years Hold Creative Promise

The sport wasn't always on Vincent's mind, though. After moving to the San Francisco Bay Area when he was in grade school, Vincent continued to use art as a way to escape his shyness. He drew inspiration from comic books, magazines and television and soon found himself drawing on anything with a blank space, even creating images on paper grocery bags when drawing paper wasn't available.

When he was a teenager, Vincent's uncle gave him a simple, single-action airbrush, an air-powered tool that applies color in condensed amounts. The act further ignited his passion, and Vincent then saw a way to move his talent to a new level by taking art, color and design to fresh surfaces and locations. This self-taught artist spent several years airbrushing T-shirts, signs, walls and vehicle murals for people and businesses. As a result, Vincent's work was seen by thousands of people at popular malls, West Coast car shows, local flea markets and California-based amusement parks.

Retail Market Allows for Creative Exposure

His airbrush and design experience soon led to a job with a national T-shirt company responsible for designing pre-printed apparel for retail outlets such as JCPenney, Anchor Blue, Mervyn's and more. As the main artist at the company, Vincent was asked to design a T-shirt for musical icon Carlos Santana's 1999 Supernatural tour.

"It was easy to design for someone who has so much out there as an artist," Vincent said. That highly recognizable T-shirt design was a top-selling item among Carlos' diverse fan base, and it's still being sold on the legendary guitarist's Web site.

During this time, Vincent began to adopt digital airbrush wisdom from Southern California art veterans who showed him how to bridge the gap between hand art and digital technology. Soon, he was motivated to make a career shift.

and soon established his latest career chapter.

Career Break Leads to Golf Game

"I first became interested in golf when I wanted to get away from commercial design," Vincent revealed. "I stopped doing art altogether and started going to art galleries and museums for inspiration."

Conversations with art gallery dealers and curators allowed him to discover that many art collectors also play golf. Vincent had always been curious about the sport and decided to take it up five years ago.

"Golfing became a surprise obsession. Being a life-long artist, it didn't take long to recognize a wonderful connection between golf and art," he said. "Both require concentration to create the 'shot.'"

Soon after his Gamma Canvas business, based in South San Francisco, Calif., took off. Vincent is now operating an artist-owned studio and creative online outlet, focused on golf-themed T-shirts, stickers, posters and fine art with plans to expand the product line. As his career has progressed, so has his trademark artist's tool. Nowadays, Vincent uses a sophisticated airbrush system. His artwork starts out with a simple sketch which he then re-touches. Once his composition is just right, he scans it into the computer and uses a digital drawing tablet with an airbrush function to make the image come to life. He calls it "hand-drawn digital art." Once he's satisfied with the image, he takes it to a specialist who then applies it to a canvas using a special technology.

Front 9 Images Hold Hidden Golf Innuendos

Vincent is fast at work on a series of artwork called Front 9 available through Gamma Canvas. His clever images depict a male and female golfer in a certain city setting. Front 1 and Front 2 are complete with the golfers in San Francisco ready to tee off at the 18th hole from 415 (San Francisco's area code) yards away.

To further entice the art spectator, Vincent weaves hidden gems of symbolism into his Front 9 art. For instance: the Golf Today cover art includes sand traps in the shape of an "S" and "F" for San Francisco; the golfer's shirt depicts a sea lion common to the Fisherman's Wharf area; the golf bag has San Francisco 49er football tickets tucked into the pocket; and an eagle flies over the Golden Gate Bridge. There are 10 such hidden gems in the image. Can you find them all?

Vincent will keep drawing the golfers until he reaches Front 9. Next up, his golfers will be traveling to Hawaii, Las Vegas, Pebble Beach, Calif. and St. Andrews Links in Scotland.

For now, Vincent, who said each Front 9 piece takes approximately 100 hours to complete, will continue marketing his artwork through his Web site and trade show participa-

"As an artist, everything around you becomes a tool, and you look to different mediums to express your art," Vincent said.

Vincent delved into the children's market when he began patterning hundreds of images that were printed on stickers made available via coin-operated vending machines. His work was then in front of millions of sticker-loving children across the United States. Despite his ongoing love for art and expression, Vincent decided to take a break from art

while sticking to the links in Northern California with family and friends. Vincent wouldn't mind taking a step back in time, though, and playing with golf greats Ben Hogan and Gary Player.

"I'm fascinated with where golf came from rather than where it is today," he said.

For more information and to see more of Vincent's work, go to gammacanvas.com/