

# Colour her successful

By Irene Seiberling, Leader-Post  
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## Saskatchewan-born artist Sheila Kernan.

**Photograph by: Troy Fleece, Leader-Post, Leader-Post**

Who says you can't make a living as an artist?

Certainly not Saskatchewan-born and -raised artist Sheila Kernan.

Despite attempts to steer her in another direction - her mother suggested becoming a dental hygienist might be a better career choice - Kernan persevered.



For the past four years, she's worked full time as an artist in Calgary. Now, at age 28, Kernan has already enjoyed more commercial success than many artists do in a lifetime.

Kernan's first solo show in her home province is currently on display at Regina's Assiniboia Gallery. About half of the 22 paintings in the exhibit - a combination of cityscapes and landscapes, including night time cityscapes, local prairie scenes, as well as Canadian waterfalls - sold within the first week, pointed out gallery owner Mary Weimer. Prices range from \$900 to \$5,000.

"This is the first time that we have had a solo show with an artist that is younger than us," said 34-year-old Weimer, who runs the Assiniboia Gallery with her 35-year-old husband, Jeremy.

"To be so successful at this age is phenomenal," Weimer said.

To meet the cross-Canada demand for her work, Kernan paints close to 100 city-scapes and landscapes each year.

"I do contemporary urban scenes, as well as landscapes," Kernan said. "It's a multimedia painting. So they're generally a mixture of oil and acrylic and other little tidbits, consisting of airbrushing, washes, stencilling and layering of textural components - whatever gets the job done if I want a specific look."

It's the unique combination of how she uses the materials together that make her work so different, Kernan suggested.

By adding textural layering to a prairie landscape, Kernan creates a piece with "a very fresh, modern look to it," Weimer said. "A landscape done in this technique feels completely different. I'll often hear that people will buy a piece and they'll notice something different in it all the time, because there's about five to 10 layers on every piece. So there's always something new and fresh when you look at it."

Kernan is disciplined when it comes to creating art. Not only is it her passion; it's her job. So she works in her home studio from about 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. daily, putting in up to 15 hours a day when necessary.

"I'm very ambitious," she said. "I just love doing what I do. It's just amazing that I have been able to realize my dream so quickly."

The cities in Kernan's art are often combinations of multiple places. The same is true for her landscapes.

"So I'll take a shot from a Calgary building and maybe combine it with a Toronto area, or New York, and create my own new cityscape," Kernan explained. "Or landscape. I'll invert two waterfall together and make up a new place . It's not a direct translation; it's more of an interpretation."

"I started out actually in photo realistic portraiture. And then it became more about an experience for me," she explained. "I always have my camera near me when I'm out hiking or travelling. So the images are based on my own personal experiences. And then I can add something new and fun to it by combining different places together to create something new."

Because so many people travel nowadays, when they see her city paintings, a piece will often remind them of a place they've been. "Even though it may not specifically be New York or Las Vegas, if you've been to those places, there's probably an element in the painting that makes you think of that. It's a good reminder of a place that you've visited," Weimer said. "Ten years ago, we would never have carried or shown any work that wasn't Saskatchewan themed, because we thought that people just want to see things that they're familiar with. But I think over the years as people's horizons have broadened, that's just not the case at all anymore."

Today, Weimer said her gallery's most successful artists are ones that tend to branch out and travel quite a bit themselves.

Travelling on the silver screen also influences the work of artists like herself, Kernan said. "One thing that people notice about my work are these stencilled circles. And that actually came from me watching a movie one day, and the opening credits of that flash photography that goes in focus and out of focus, and the big circles that overlap. So that kind of influenced what I was starting to do in my work."

The key to being a successful artist is no different than any other career - dedication, luck and hard work, Kernan insists. "I think it's all about how hard you work. Obviously talent. And dedication. And just determination to be able to do well or do what you love."

Kernan said she always knew she would pursue a career in art. "It was just ingrained in me. It just seemed like a great fit."

Weimer nodded in agreement. "She's a natural. She's amazing."

Kernan's solo show at the Assiniboia Gallery, at 2266 Smith St., continues to June 24.

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