

Megan Vun Wong **From Tuxedo to New York**

by
Brian Campbell

Megan Vun Wong is very proud of two things in her life; her daughters and her art.

Her daughters are: Delaney, 29, who is an attorney at Fillmore Riley; Zephyra, 27, who has an Architectural degree and owns her own design firm, AnArchi Design; and Everett, 21, who has applied for Medical School at the U of M for this fall. “I feel blessed that my daughters are very close and supportive of each other,” Megan says. “They are always happy to be together.”

Not only is Megan the proud mother of three very successful young ladies, she is also an acclaimed artist who has not only been featured in galleries across Canada and the United States for the last 25 years, she now has the rare opportunity to show her work at Artifact Gallery in Manhattan, New York in 2017. Megan says, “They approached me to do a solo show for three weeks in their gallery. Quite unheard of, really.”

Megan was born and raised in Winnipeg and has been living in Tuxedo since 1999. She has always had an interest in art and painting and, in fact, the only thing that took her out of Winnipeg was to obtain her Master’s Degree in fine arts from York University in Toronto. It was while she was living in Toronto that Delaney and Zephyra were born.

Her husband, Edward, began his career at Investor’s Group while they were in Toronto. He stayed with Investor’s Group for the next 20 years and rose to Division Director at the Winnipeg Downtown office. Unfortunately, Edward suddenly suffered a brain aneurism on Mother’s Day, 2005, passing away three days later. This was a dark period in Megan’s life and it was reflected in her work. But with time, brighter canvasses returned. She says, “I always instill hopefulness in my work.”

Her first experience in art school was a revelation for her. She says, “I thought that when you go to art school, they will show you how to do things, but they don’t. They allow you to develop your own style and teach you how to source artists that you have an affinity to.”

Megan majored in painting at York University. She also received a teaching assistantship and taught art there for two years. Upon returning to Winnipeg, she taught at the Winnipeg Art Gallery and Forum Art Institute.

Working on her art hasn't always been easy and she has had to alter her lifestyle accordingly. When her children were younger, Megan's time to do art was late at night, after the household went to sleep.

"I would work until 3:00 a.m. then go to sleep, but then I would have to be up at 7:00," she says.

During that time her children were quite busy, involved in ballet, jazz, piano, gymnastics and more. She says, "There was a year or two when there were 19 activities every week that I had to drive them to."

Now that the girls are grown, her work has come to the forefront of her life and she is involved in creating new work and having solo art shows every 12 to 18 months.

Megan's art has always been abstract. Even before she left school she believed that abstract was her form of expression.

"My idea of art is not to have a painting that is very realistic, but to have the viewer bring his own history and his own soul to it," she states.

Megan feels that her work is meant to be experienced. She believes that we react a certain way to a type of art because, "We may be different people but we have a collective unconscious."

Megan is a very serious and philosophical artist and her work is constantly evolving.

For the last 20 years, her work has focused on the lack of spirituality in contemporary society. She says, "We are so involved with advanced technology, that there is a degree of isolation. A sense of community is gone."

Megan originally worked with acrylic paint on canvas. Then, in 2004 she started using enamel paint as an accent to her acrylic work.

"The enamel paints held a gloriousness about them," she says. "They are so brilliant and so vibrant and sensuous."

After her husband passed away, she felt the desire to paint entire canvasses in enamel. "It was like a gift from him," she says.

The first showing of her enamel work was at the Ken Segal Gallery, a contemporary gallery that, unfortunately, no longer exists. This was a very significant show for Megan.

More recently, she has switched from painting on canvas to painting on Plexiglas. This added a new dimension to her work. She says, “It is a result of my loyal clients who said, ‘we love your work but we are running out of wall space’.”

Her new work was developed from these comments and to accommodate open concept homes and offices, with lots of space, but not much wall space. Megan says, “I pour my enamel on the Plexiglas and allow the paint to guide me, then I allow it to semi dry, then put layers on it.”

The end result is that one side of the painting will look completely different than the other side. This created a new style of art; one that could be hung from the ceiling, displaying both sides.

From there she decided to take her work to a new level by adding layers of Plexiglas to her work. This created both a new look and a new problem. Megan says, “I thought, oh no! I’m going to have to put them on the wall again!”

Her layered design involves painting the main picture, then attaching smaller pieces of Plexiglas to it, one on top of the other and painting them. The final product is stunning.

One of her layered works won an award at a 2014 International show, ‘Limitless Expresssion’ in Toronto. The title of the award is “Timeless Award for Excellence and Creativity in the Arts,” by Art Tour International. Megan says, “The award is so beautiful.”

Megan was also selected for inclusion in the ‘60 Masters of Contemporary Art for 2014’, an ArtTour International Publication featuring abstract artists from around the world.

Megan has a number of very faithful clients in Tuxedo and she is very appreciative of them. She loves her life in Tuxedo. She says simply, “It is the best.”

Megan has developed close friendships with a group of ladies in Tuxedo who she says are very supportive of her and her work. She laughs about how they originally connected. “My Jewish girl friends taught me how to play the Chinese game of Ma Jong,” she says.

Megan has also contributed to the community. When her youngest daughter, was in École Tuxedo Park, Megan painted two murals in their foyer for their 75th Anniversary. The murals, one on each wall, depict the school, then and now. This was much more traditional art than her normal work. She says, “I wanted to do something that the kids would see and understand.”

The following year she went back and painted their lower level in a “Fantasy Forest” theme for their music department.

The year after she returned to instruct an art project with the students. She says, “It was an ambitious project where the students from every grade each created a unique piece. For example, the grade three’s each made dragons; the grade five’s made masks; and the grade six’s each created an abstract painting.”

Megan’s work can be found at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Art Sales and Rentals. Her work is also represented by Artblend Gallery in Florida. Her next solo show will be her last one before she heads for New York. It opens on June 18th of this year at her own studio, The Purple Door Studio, at the corner of Lanark and Grant, and all are welcome. Megan says, “Of course it has a purple door.”

Then she starts working her big New York show, at Artifact Gallery, Manhattan, which opens in November, 2017. “Ample time to create!” Megan exclaims.

For more information about Megan’s work, please go to her website at www.meganvunwong.com.

Megan says, “I’m very fortunate to be able to pursue a career that I love. I feel even more fortunate that others appreciate and enjoy my work.”