

{PROFILE}

Otto Schmidinger



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Otto's work manages to combine realism and humour, beautifully shadowed with great intensity and colour. This talented artist kindly delves into his process and experience in the industry, as well as his fine art and sculpture work.

Outline: We would love to hear about your career and education history, particularly your work as an airbrush artist in Australia.

Otto: I started my career as a junior in an art studio at 16. I learnt all the traditional skills of assembly, scraperboard, lettering and retouching. It was when learning retouching using the airbrush that I discovered it as a great tool for illustration.

At 17 I started doing freehand renderings of waves for my friends and entered a competition to win a surfboard from Hawaii. I won and this led to a commission for two surfing posters.

It was during my later career as a retoucher that I reworked some pieces to the extent that not much of the original photo was left. The client was happy with the results and I did the subsequent images as airbrush illustrations. That was the end of my career as a retoucher and the beginning of my Illustration career.

Christine Stead and I formed Otto&Chris and we went freelance. The 70's was the time of the airbrush as the style of choice. There were commissions for posters for the Commonwealth Bank, Scotch Tape, Moke, Qantas, Tooths Beer and many more through the 80's and 90's.

Outline: How did you transition to digital "airbrush" work? Was it a difficult change to make? What programs do you now use to create your work?

Otto: In 1999 Christine and I parted and I moved to Queensland. I started Studio Otto. I fought the transition to digital art as long as I could but I found that work started to drop off and deadlines and fees got shorter. Finally in 2000 with encouragement from other Illustrators in the association I bought my first Mac.

Luckily the interface for Photoshop is very intuitive and provides all the tools that I had relied on to produce realistic illustrations with the airbrush. Unfortunately in this digital age with the advent of 3D that is no longer as impressive as it used to be.

Outline: Your work is absolutely stunning, with an incredible attention to light. Could you talk us through the process creating your work, perhaps with an example image like Leon the Chameleon?

Otto: My work process to create a realistic illustration has not changed in essence, I start each job by getting as much reference together as I can with emphasis on lighting and





texture. Google has made this part so much easier and I no longer have to scour newsagents and libraries to source reference.

When I am satisfied that I have enough inspiration to get me started, I then use these bits of reference to draw up the image in pencil. Once it is approved I scan the drawing and start on the colour rendering. I use mainly the airbrush and the smudge tool. Highlights and shadows go on last, placement and intensity of these two are the most important elements in creating believable realism.

realism. I have seen amazing artists produce incredibly detailed works that lack depth because the artist gets caught up in rendering the texture and colour then can't face hiding some of that in shadow.

If you want to do realistic art you need to be aware of how different surfaces react to light that is the key to making it believable. That's really all there is to it.

The only online resource you need is Google images.

Outline: You've won prizes for your sculptures. What attracts you to this art form, and do you continue to create other work/artforms alongside your illustration practice?

Otto: I do have a love affair with Sculpture, it is so tactile and versatile as a means of expression. I find creating something that is tangible and can be viewed from various angles makes it more exciting. I have only had the opportunity to do a few sculptures but I hope to do more soon. Luckily I have had some wins in competitions with them and one controversial piece featured on the front page of the Weekend Bulletin. That is encouraging.

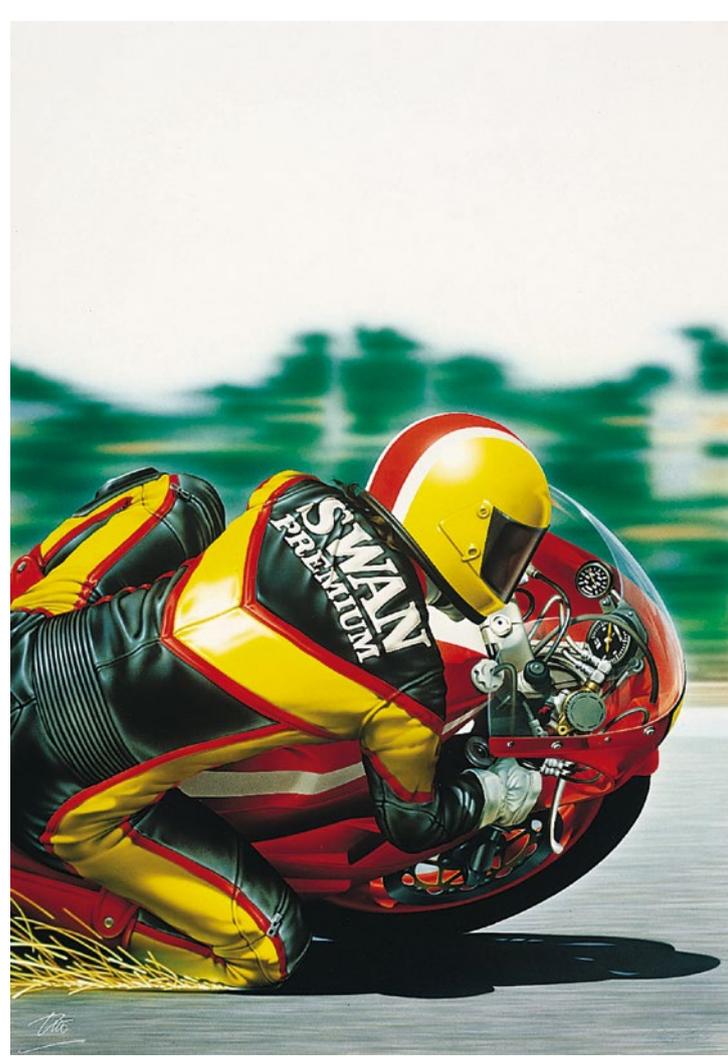
Outline: How was your experience being involved in the Archibald and Doug Moran portrait competitions?

Otto: As work for me is drying up I find myself with more time to pursue painting which has been on my to do list for many years. I got accepted as a finalist in the Doug Moran and Archibald with my first painting 'Flacco/Paul Livingston'. Work was plentiful then and I did not follow it up with more paintings. Over the years I did sporadically



Outline: What skills do you think an illustrator working in a realistic style needs to possess? Are there any courses/online resources/or tips you can pass on to illustrators hoping to develop skills in this area?

Otto: Lighting is the most important element in



do a few more works that won the open prizes in landscape and portraiture at regional shows.

I have started painting again recently to try to establish a profile in the fine art field and have been a finalist in a few shows and the winner of the D'Arcy Doyle art prize for landscape in 2013, Finalist in the Gainsborough green, Border art and Gold Coast art awards. This year I won best oil and acrylic at the Brisbane Rotary art awards and 2nd prize in the D'Arcy Doyle awards for landscape and also 2nd for portraiture. I hope to enter the major Sydney shows when I feel I have something good enough to get hung.

Outline: What artists, based in Australia or abroad, inspire you?

Otto: I really cannot pick any artist as being a main

influence, I am impacted by all of them and admire too many to mention here. Like gathering reference for my commercial work, inspiration can come from a gleam or a rendering of texture or light and I get pleasure from seeing how that artist has made it work.

I have found that amateur artists too can teach you a new way of seeing even if the overall work may not be considered accomplished. Sometimes the mood it expresses is more important than the technique.

Outline: What projects are you working on now - or upcoming?

Otto: I am illustrating some milk splashes for a packaging company, some images of a cow, udder and buckets that will be animated for a game and working with a group of local tech heads on a new app for mobile phones.

I also have a painting in the Noosa art awards and one going in the Devonport art award this month so I will see how I go there.

Who knows, illustration work may pick up and my fledgling new career as a fine artist will be put on hold again. 🍷



{ **CLICK!** } **Otto Schmidinger**

Website <http://www.studiootto.com>