



PROUD PARENTS: Ken and Mary Tonkin reflect on the success of their expat son, Roger.

PICTURE / GRAEME MITCHELL-ANYON 230109WCGMAARTIST

Painter's brush with success

by Fiona Jarden

It was the pencil sketch that Roger Tonkin did for a Mother's Day present when Mary Tonkin first realised her son was gifted.

It was a thoughtful gift because Roger could not afford to buy Mary anything for Mother's Day — being that he was a typical student on a tight budget in Palmerston North, studying to be a teacher.

The sketch still hangs in the Putiki home of his parents Mary and Ken Tonkin, but has been joined by five or six other vibrant paintings of Roger's.

The rest of Roger's paintings — mostly oil, acrylic and mixed media in his trademark bright colours — hang in galleries

around the world and adorn the walls of countless homes, a true sign that Roger has made a name for himself as a highly respected and popular artist.

Roger was born in Wanganui in 1949 and educated at Wanganui Boys' College.

After training to be a teacher he took up a post at Wanganui High School for a number of years.

Roger went on to teach in London for his OE in the '70s and there he met his future wife, Jane. Several years later he and his wife returned to New Zealand where they raised three children, but then returned to Dorset, England in 2001 where they live today.

On Roger's personal gallery

website, he explains his recent works — both paintings and photographs — were inspired by the south coast of England.

"This has developed into a special love for the unique Dorset coast, the beaches, the Purbeck Hills, Old Harry Rocks, Durdle Door and Corfe Castle," he said on his www.artzyzone.com website.

"I love working with oils but also really enjoy acrylics and especially mixed media; many types of house paints, sand, fillers, spray paints, sawdust and much more have ended up on my canvases," he said.

His mother said she was "thrilled" that Roger has pursued his art, "otherwise it would have been a waste of talent," she said.

"I'm very proud of our eldest son.

"And Ken should have carried on with it too . . . but he didn't," Mary said about her husband's gifted painting ability, which he never pursued as a career.

Roger's 28-year-old daughter, Amy, has also inherited the gift of painting, Mary said.

Along side painting and photography, Roger continues to teach challenging and disadvantaged secondary school students in south England, and has introduced art into the syllabus, which Roger told Mary had "made a difference to their lives".

Roger is commissioned regularly and participates in art festivals and exhibitions in Britain.