

# Profile

## Late brush with fame

Sue Hoban

SOMETHING strange happened when Dutch visitor Jos van Lamoen decided the time was right for her to start painting. She had 10 lessons with an art teacher in her home town of Delft and produced a first painting that shocked both her and the teacher. “She said, ‘I really can’t teach you any more, you are doing great’,” the fledgling artist said

Ms van Lamoen, who is in Manly with her husband for a six-month house swap, has had plenty of similar endorsements since, but still seems mystified by the quality of her work after only six months painting.

“I still don’t believe this is coming from my hand and that it is good,” she said.

Clearly, however, there was a latent talent waiting to emerge for many years before she took up the brush.

“I always dreamt that someday when I finished my career in business, when I had seen enough exhibitions, visited enough museums, collected enough art books, there would be a moment that I could start working on my own artistic talent and there would be a right moment and a right place to start painting,” she said.

That moment finally came after her mother died and she helped clear out the family home. She said she was inspired by the nostalgic discovery of her mother’s old paintbrushes and hundreds of folk art works that revealed a dogged but modest talent. “That’s when I finally said to myself, this is the moment, I won’t wait any longer, I will make the decision and go for it,” she said.

Ms van Lamoen, who by then had been retired for four years from her corporate communications business, had never studied art at school and her only exposure had been short evening class covering all media in 1993.

But then, nothing. “I thought, OK, I’m not ready to do this, I need more schooling so I totally stopped,” she said. “I also wanted to be sure that if I was going to do this, I had to do it on a certain level because I’m a perfectionist.”

After living in Delft, surrounded by the works of Dutch masters, she started painting with a very clear idea of the style of work she wanted to do. “I try to paint with the atmosphere of the 17th century,



Delft touch ... Jos van Lamoen is living in Manly for six months.

Picture: SIMON DEAN KDR91160

using oil paint and a glazing technique, which means sometimes I go over certain pieces in the painting 20 or 30 times, every time adding a very thin layer,” she said.

Since arriving in Sydney she has done a week-long class at the Julian Ashton Art School and plans to enrol in more lessons as her confidence in her ability grows.

She paints for two or three hours every day, but, for the moment, she does not consider herself an artist. “No, it’s too soon for that,” she said. “I spoke to an artist here

in Manly and told her I was very satisfied with my first paintings and she said, ‘I am never satisfied. I always see things I could have done better’.”

Among the positive endorsements of her early efforts is one from fellow Dutchwoman, art historian Helene Manger Hofhuis, a specialist in 17th Dutch painting, who said she was amazed that someone so fresh to painting could produce such work.

“I was blown away by it – the colours she

has used, the composition and the ease with which she works,” she said. “There is lots still to be done, but I think it is a gift and I’m glad it has come out, even at this later stage of life.”

She was such a fan she offered to sell Jos van Lamoen’s paintings through Tokens of Living, her art, furniture and lighting shop at Mona Vale which specialises in combining old pieces with contemporary decor and now has four of the van Lamoen works hanging there.