

NURTURE

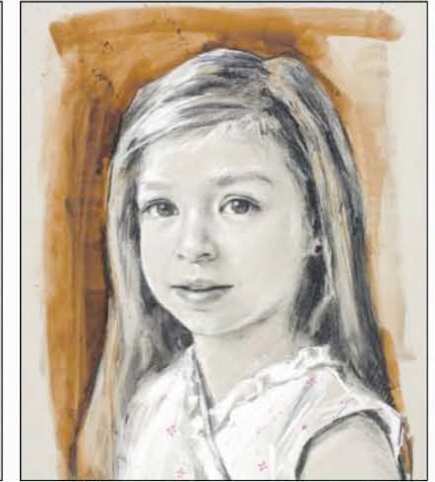
P A R E N T I N G



Evert Ploeg with his daughter Aurora, 2. He captures the essence of children on paper. Picture: ANNIKA ENDERBORG -PP2/2004

NURTURE

P A R E N T I N G



Two of Evert Ploeg's favourite subjects are his daughters. Here he has captured Aurora (left), 2, and Paloma, 5.

Pretty as a picture

Wendy Kay

EVERT Ploeg is used to making people cry. His work has that effect on people, especially parents. The Dee Why portrait artist is always prepared for an emotional reaction when mum and dad see the finished sketch of their child.

"It's not like seeing your child in a big photo," he said. "People think, 'This guy's actually scratched away and created an image on something which is basically a

piece of paper.' When you see the finished thing it's representational, something else you don't normally see, an original. If I had to do it again, it would be different."

The multi-award winning artist first captured the public's attention when he entered his portrait *Bananas in Pyjamas* in the Archibald Prize in 1997. Since then he has won three Archibald awards, two for the People's Choice, Deborah Mailman (1999) and George Ellis (2007), and the Packing Room Prize in 2004 for his portrait

of Jana Wendt. And although Evert still paints or sketches adults, the demand for children's portraits is increasing.

Evert commands a unique style, "not really stodgy, old-fashioned", with his portraits of children, 60cm x 45cm, sketched with charcoal, graphite and white chalk, with splashes of watercolour in the background. They are dramatic but sensitive, capturing the essence of the child on a toned neutral board of various shades.

"It's just the head and shoulders, no

hands," he said. "You want to inject something else with kids, they've all got their own personalities. Obviously, I have to take several photos to get an expression," he said. "Sometimes the child will walk in and you get the hero shot straight away. Other times, it takes more, and sometimes I have to suggest taking the photo another day."

Three of Evert's favourite subjects are his wife Ivana and daughters Paloma, 5, and Aurora, 2.

"There's something to be said for having a portrait on the wall that is not a piece of landscape, a picture of yourself growing up.

"I had one done when I was a kid, it gives you a different kind of sensibility, a different way from seeing yourself in a photograph."

"Paloma understands a portrait is different and special. I think it impacts on her, and she's always drawing, always scribbling away at something," Evert said.

A former student at Cromer High, Evert has spent nearly 20 years on the northern beaches, moving across the bridge to

Bondi for just a few years before returning to set up his Dee Why studio. He admits he spent most of his school life drawing and his career paths into advertising and publishing always involved illustrating.

"I don't know any better, I've never done anything else than draw, paint or colour in and in

advertising and book publishing I only ever did anything by hand."

Which is why portraits remain his passion.

"I'm drawn to the human face, the landscape of someone's face, and capturing it on paper." ■ For more information, visit theportraitsketch.com.