

AN AUSSIE RENAISSANCE MAN

by Fredge Baker





Naked valkyries recline on rubbish heaps and Pubesque goddesses emerge from red convertibles in a startling marriage of ancient myth and modern reality



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"The first business arrived from Australia and 11 people showed up. That was the first group. I've been contacted a few times for various things," says Carol, recalling that she and Neil were able to buy a refrigerator from the profits of the first tour.

Three years later, Long Day is still introducing visitors to the death and heights of Italian culture, slowly introducing them to Italy. With his business expanding, daughter Marie now married and living in Queensland and older son Claudio attending boarding school in Brisbane, Neil is rethinking his long-term plan to travel once again to his art.

"I've just completed an addition to the house that will be my studio," says Neil. "I'm completing what I started six years ago and now painting is my final job. I'll be there every year in complete. I've started work on what will be my most ambitious work yet."

Neil has also been working on a series of portrait commissions. The first portrait, of Australian journalist Brian Tobin, hangs in the National Portrait Gallery

in Canberra, including a series of official portraits for the University of Sydney as well as private commissions.

"I feel as though I am finally in the studio of my dreams," says Neil, "in the place I want to be."

For further information on Neil's work and how to commission a portrait, visit www.neilandcarol.com.au. For more information about Long Day, visit www.longday.com.au or email info@longday.com.au.

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Thousands of Italian immigrants and their descendants have ingrained so-called traits on Australian culture since the mid-19th century. Surely, however, does it work the other way around. Thousands of Australians couldn't but be drawn here permanently, finding the experience and what Neil Moore and his wife,

Carol Spinks, who moved to Cortina in 1988 and set a restored medieval town in the tiny hillside village of Colle del Marchese near Spines, home.

Neil's immersion was nearly 20 years in the rich history and artistic heritage of Cortina is reflected in his art: delicate, detailed drawings and prints. References inspired by paintings in a style he describes as "loose realism" in Neil Moore's words, subtle, delicate watercolor sketches and abstract patterns emerge from his compositions into a shifting heritage of ancient, high and modern reality.

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But how did this Fine Arts graduate end up in Renaissance Italy? In 1976, Neil began doing black and white illustrations for Australian newspapers, winning a Sydney Award in 1980.

The same year he made his first life-changing trip to Europe, touring Germany, France and then Italy. Over the following years he moved back and forth between Australia and Europe, supporting himself with illustration work while establishing a reputation as a free artist, with exhibitions in France, England, Germany and Italy.

In 1988, three months before he was to leave Australia for a permanent home in Italy, Neil met music teacher Carol Spinks in Cortina. "Neil had bought a house in Italy and wanted to escape the bounds of it to work abroad and being encouraged and convinced by his art," says Carol. "I had to convince him that I could do it with him. He offered a former girlfriend at the time but I told him."

The couple settled in Italy, along with Carol's daughter Anna. They spent time in the tiny mountain village of Meriscola, occupied by the other couple, all year long but living a traditional suburban lifestyle. "As soon as we arrived our neighbor, Eulenia, took me into the forest to show me how to collect fungi, perfume in a woods and take them back to the house," recalls Carol. "We had no common language, so all relationships depended on gestures, exchanges and generosity. Eulenia came and sat in the kitchen every morning for a year to help me understand the rules of the village responsible for the mobility of young girls. If Neil was only one word closer into the bathroom in the morning and check the bathroom to see if anyone was there?"