

Aurora artist finds passion and creative outlet in leather



By Brock Weir

Growing up in Colombia, Chole Vargas always had a need to express himself.

With a passion for art, he attended a theatre arts school looking for an outlet for his body and emotions, but somewhere along the line his passions found a less likely path to expression.

He took to drawing as a high school student and a designer was born. It shouldn't have come as a surprise as design is a common thread running up the trunk of his family tree.

‘Three of my brothers are designers, one is an interior designer for kitchens, my sister who lives in Spain is a jewellery designer, and another brother is a graphic designer,’ he explains. ‘My dad was a dentist, but he also designed all the dentist equipment like tables for the instruments, the arms dentists use with the lights, so it is all in the family and is something I can't explain.’

His passion is not confined to pen and paper, however, but in no less natural a material.

From his east Aurora home which he shares with his wife and young son, Mr. Vargas pores over a worktable building models out of paper that will soon come to life in leather.

‘I feel an emotion and passion for the leather,’ he says. ‘When I go out shopping, I love to smell it.’

His work with leather has lead him on the path to designing purses and handbags featured in a handful of Aurora boutiques, and also take pride of place in his growing online business. Products have extended to accessories, bracelets, hats and fascinators, all the while continuing to source the best quality leather and materials and hand-making them right in his home, and in a growing business in Colombia.

‘I like to make everything by hand,’ he says. ‘You pay more attention to the details. I started my company eight years ago in Colombia on my dining room table where I started to make purses from scratch. I tried to do everything by myself.’

‘I believe in my creativity, and I believe what I am doing is beautiful. Some people can appreciate this kind of art and others don't, but I feel a passion for Degas, Picasso, and abstract art.’

His ‘art’ is not limited to function, but you can judge for yourself when his works go on display October 17 at the Aurora Public

Library's Colleen Abbott Art Gallery. Once again featuring leather, he hopes the abstract pieces will spark the imaginations of everyone who walks by.

?I see different things and different points of view,? he says of the inspiration he finds from abstract art. I imagine what the artist was thinking in the process, so that is why I wanted to create something abstract of my own and [challenge] what people see, and appreciate, and mix feelings with my art.?

His passion for his own art and products have paid off. Through dogged determination, he has sold his products to boutiques across Aurora and York Region, convincing store owners one at a time to give his garments a shot. He says you can't let one rejection get you down, but you have to insist, follow your dreams, and believe in yourself.

?Believe you have something really good that someone is really going to enjoy and appreciate,? he says. ?I am following the big guys like Chanel, Vuitton, Gaultier, and Alexander McQueen. I think everything is possible. I want my designs to be in a magazine. I want to open stores in Canada, go to fashion events in Miami and start selling in the United States.

?I want to get people to appreciate what I make. I can order 10,000 pieces of these from China and can put my label on them, but it is about people buying my designs. People now talk about brands, but they just appreciate the logo, not the art, not the passion of the people, or the artists who experienced the passion and the happiness making it.

?Sometimes I just sit here and play my music and when I am done one of my designs, I am just so happy. I just jump with happiness when it looks amazing. I love what I do and this is not work for me. This is enjoying my time.?