

Stroke of Genius!

Tony Gibbs Truckwriters

Tony Gibbs has built a reputation of providing excellent custom signwriting for the transport industry for close to 40 years. Australian Custom Trucks catches up with Tony to find out more about his life in the industry where old skool is very cool.



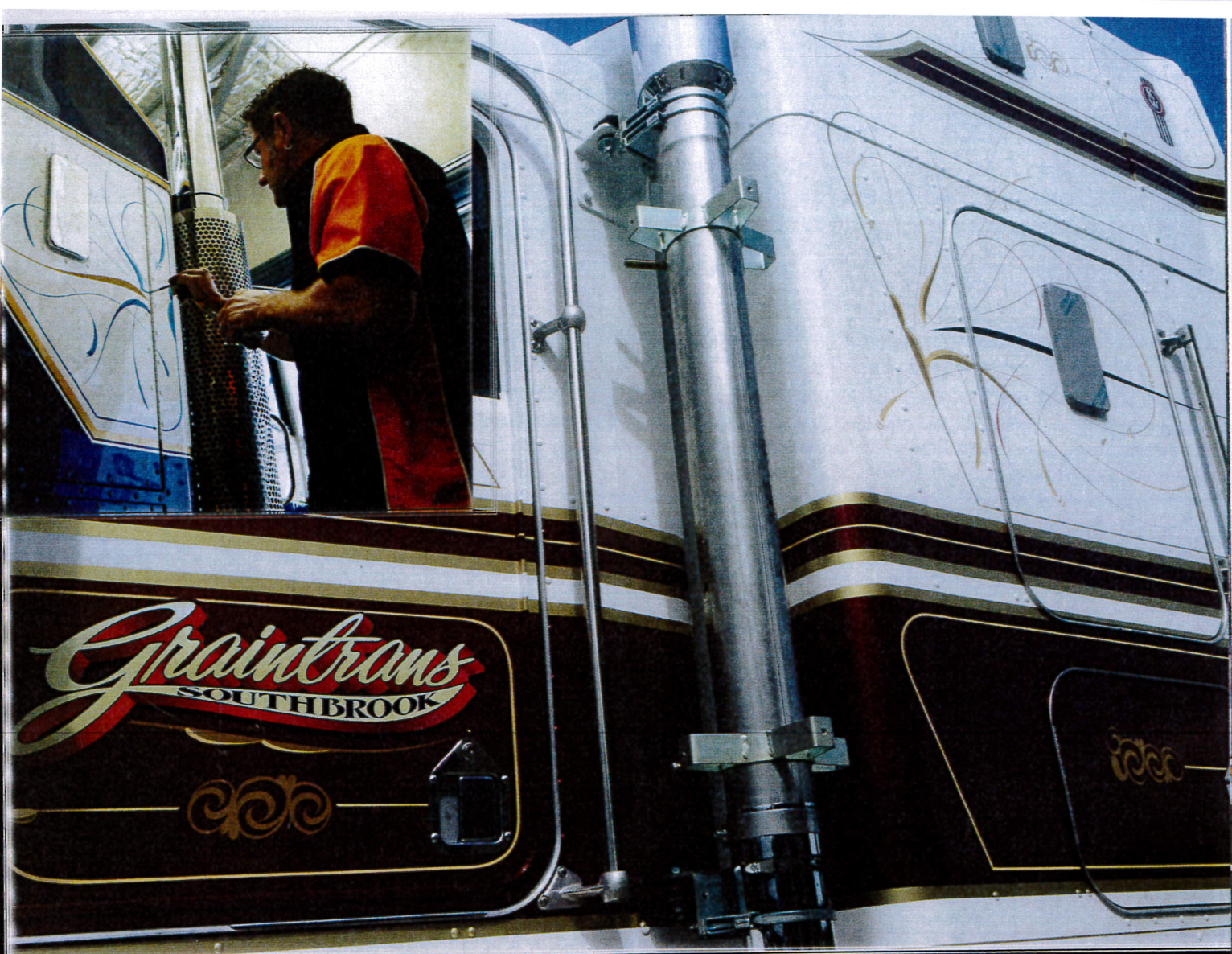
It's Thursday afternoon and I'm making my way to the North side of Brisbane to Caboolture Business Park to meet with legendary Signwriter Tony Gibbs. Tony has built a reputation of providing excellent custom sign work for the transport industry for close to 40 years.

I walk into the immaculately clean building and immediately I see Tony deep in concentration, working

freehand on a customer's truck. Watching the master at work is something special, all the experience and patience built up over time seems to manifest on the door of the truck he is working on. The signs on the wall tell a very long and passionate story, it's a collage of some of the big names in the industry. Although his story is intriguing, Tony has a very simple message.

"I want people to know you can still get traditional old skool signwriting done," he says.

"You don't have to go the sticker route, you can still get the old style signwriting done, that's what we do, from freehand signwriting, pinstriping and scrollwork. You have to remember that many of the good signwriters that I looked up to and admired are retired and unless they had someone to pass the



trade on to it just dies with their retirement," he adds.

It's the attention to detail and the love of the work he produces that really sets Tony apart.

"How many people can say they love going to work and can't see themselves retiring (don't tell my wife that) as they enjoy what they do too much," he says.

He is a perfectionist, which is a major contributing factor to the growth of his reputation and success throughout his career.

Customers can feel confident when they leave their rig in Tony's capable hands. The greatest pleasure he gets from it all comes from seeing the delight on a truckie's faces when they see what he has done to their truck.

"I like turning a blank canvas in to something that the bloke is rapt in," he says.

He spends a lot of time with the owner to see what they envisage and he adds his magic to that picture.



his way up from sweeping floors. He says everything back then was hand painted from the base to the finished product.

When Tony branched out he spent a lot of time away from the family home making a name for himself travelling to smaller towns and doing a lot of work out of Canberra where there were a few big transport companies at the time. He used to travel all over and spend a week at a time doing all sorts of line work, signwriting and scroll work on trucks.

The only regret he has is the time spent away from his young son Damian and daughter Jenna in the early days of making this name for himself. Back in those days computers weren't used in the signage industry so everything from designing the artwork in pencil to the finished product was achieved by hand. He says the work was labour intensive because of the complexity as he opens up his old photo album showing me some of his work from the 80's through to the present day.

There is a myriad of pictures from the past few decades from



He also provides a lot of pictures from old jobs and his website www.truckwriters.com.au, to help stir a potential customer's inspiration. "Each new job is unique and this is where the creativity comes in to it," he says.

Technology is a huge part of any business nowadays, so whilst Tony is well versed in the old skool freehand techniques of signwriting, he has also moved with the times having up to date computer equipment for vinyl signage as well. Don't let us fool you into thinking that Tony only does signwriting for rigs, he basically covers everything, trailers, buses, boats and any other

vehicle signage.

Computers have sped the work time up for him but he's always said "it's not my tool box, it's just a small part of it".

To use a cliché, transport is in his blood and his passion for the industry is unwavering, this is probably due to the Gibbs name going a long way back in the transport industry. Tony's father Anthony and Grandfather Wilfred had their own transport business but sadly Tony's father and Grandfather as well as a young nephew were all tragically killed together in a fatal trucking accident in 1959 just before Tony was born.

The family connection with trucking continued with Tony's uncle Harold "Bully" Gibbs spending a lifetime driving his own truck until he retired recently.

Another Uncle, Des, is a signwriter. Tony says he loved watching him work when he was a youngster and that's probably what got him started in the industry.

Des offered Tony the opportunity to help him out, and that's where it started.

He stayed with Des for nine-years perfecting his craft before branching out on his own.

Like all apprentices he started at the bottom rung and had to slowly work

all around Australia, which is a testament to Tony's work, that owners are prepared to travel just to know the job is being done by one of the best.

This is my first time meeting Tony but it's almost like we had to meet, I have met Tony's son Damian who is following in his dad's footsteps and making a name for himself in the truck signwriting business.

"Damian had worked for me since he'd left school, we worked together for 17 years and he is now out there making a name for himself at Master Art Designs," Tony makes a point of saying.

There is no doubt he is very proud of

what his son is achieving, carrying on the old skool art.

"This means our traditional work will carry on in to the next generation," he says.

Before his seachange up north to QLD Tony traded as Auto FX Signs in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

He admits it was tough moving from somewhere everybody knows your name to somewhere new. Moving midlife was no easy task. He didn't know very many people but thankfully the Gibbs name got him work early on.

Tony must be good at what he does as he's managed to retain his earlier customers based down south that

either drive their vehicles to his premises in Caboolture or fly him down so he can work his magic. Tony says vehicle advertising is your best form of advertising if you are out on the road every day, you are showing yourself off. Because of this you need to present yourself properly. If your truck is tidy and you take pride in it, its going to show. It's your pride that can put you above the rest, securing you that job.

So next time you are looking for a real signwriter to make your rig stand out from the rest contact Tony Gibbs at Truckwriters for a stroke of genius!



