

Glory on the battle ground



• **above:** Before artist Liam Downes started organising Art Battle events in Auckland, he competed in a one-off charity event in Christchurch that raised funds to support Just Peoples. In the first round, he completed a partial portrait of his wife. His winning painting in the final round, which featured half a chimp, was cheekily titled *Evolution of Wife*. Both were painted with Resene testpots, and Liam's winning piece inspired him to create an entire series of chimp paintings using Resene paints.

Artists go head-to-head in fierce tournament where the paintbrush is mightier than the sword.

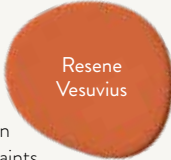
Resene
Umber White



These fierce fights may not come to blows, but for onlookers surrounding a ring of a half dozen easels helmed by some of the country's most talented artists, Art Battle is a nail-biter all the same. Since the idea was first conceived in 2001, more than 3000 events have taken place in cities worldwide. Each Art Battle competition puts the talents of 12 incredible artists on display who spar their way through three suspenseful timed rounds of live painting. Up-and-coming amateurs go shoulder-to-shoulder with seasoned veterans and winners are determined by an audience vote. From there, champions progress from local to regional to national tournaments before the best-of-the-best advance to the World Championships.

Frustrated with the gatekeeping that so many face when trying to break into the scene, New Yorker Sean Bono's brilliant idea paved the way for artists to come together on a far more even playing field. More than two decades later, Art Battle competitions continue to allow fresh talent to put their chops on display and have their work discovered. In a single season, a city might see as many as 100 artists as competitors, with fans and patrons gathering on a monthly basis to cheer them on. In the same vein, Sean's concept has made it possible for organisers who are passionate about their communities to take up the gauntlet, produce events in their own cities and see how their skilful locals stack up on the international stage. Once he



left: Liam painted a partial portrait of a chimp's face (far left) using a selection of Resene testpots during the final round of an Art Battle event in Christchurch under tight time constraints. He later painted *The Thinker* (left), part of his *Beholder* series, in his studio using Resene testpots, including Resene Black, Resene Alabaster and Resene Vesuvius.



	Resene Alabaster		Resene Black
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Liam says that the audience plays a huge role in making each event electrifying. "I love that Art Battle brings together 12 very different and diverse artists under one roof – which is truly inspiring – and that the audience decides who wins," says Liam. "Plus, there's upbeat music, food and drinks. The artists don't spend a cent, while all their work goes up for sale at the end of the night. It's a fun and magnetic platform. Pure magic!"

Since the first event was sponsored by Resene, the competition also opened Liam's eyes to using Resene testpots for his artwork. "I now regularly use Resene paints for my expressive works as it dries quickly and I celebrate the drips! I was inspired to use Resene testpots to create my *Beholder* art series of chimps following my winning piece at the Christchurch Art Battle."

Now that Auckland Art Battles are in full swing, Resene has stayed on as a primary sponsor of the events. "We literally could not have done this without Resene, who have been super supportive from the outset," says Liam. "The Resene team are true advocates of New Zealand and Australian art and artists, both emerging and established. The Resene Art Station has become a fixture of the Art Battle experience for visitors and Resene testpots are fundamental materials for the competing artists. Resene even supplies our artists with a voucher before the shows so that they can test out their colours with Resene testpots, stock up on supplies and arrive at the event well prepared and battle ready! Resene helps us to inspire creativity and embrace community."

got swept up in the excitement of competing in a charity Art Battle that took place in Christchurch, artist Liam Downes knew it was something he wanted to see happen on a regular basis.

After presenting his work at some of the biggest art shows around New Zealand, including NZ Art Show, Auckland Art Show and Art In The Park, Liam was approached at the Christchurch Art Show with an invitation to compete at a one-off Art Battle event. "I'd never heard of Art Battle, but it sounded like a bit of fun to me! One thing led to another, and

before I knew it, my wife and I were flying back to Christchurch," he recalls.

In the 20 minutes allotted during the first round, Liam painted a 'half portrait' of his wife out of worry that completing it would require twice the time. "I was excited to be voted through to the final round, where I painted half a chimp. For comedic effect, I called it *Evolution of Wife*. The live auction at the end was a thrill, where 50% of the proceeds went to support Just Peoples. Upon returning to Auckland, it struck me that there are not enough fun and immersive

experiences for artists in our community. It was a great platform to connect with like-minded souls and it brought with it a new audience and memories. Art Battle resonated with my past and present experiences as a gallery owner on Waiheke Island, painting live as the artist in residence at Eden Park, at my own open studios with a shared canvas for the kids – including big 'kids' – and countless other excuses over the years where I've been able to paint with an audience. Each allowed me to genuinely connect with art lovers in the moment," he says.

If bringing Art Battle to Auckland wasn't enough, Liam also produces events through a collaborative arts organisation, Meet The Artists – which he says has many exciting plans underway. “We are in the process of moving into our community space, with workshops and collaborations with Auckland Council in the works. Currently, we have 25 Auckland-based artists involved in our LIVE Art Collective, with solo and group exhibitions and pop-up galleries planned for the coming year.”

Liam's excitement about Art Battle has proven to be contagious. Like the person who first reached out to him to get involved in the event in Christchurch, he actively engages with local artists to extend invitations to compete. Logan Moffat, who was crowned this year's Auckland champion, attended his first event last year at Wynyard Pavilion at Liam's suggestion.

“Liam told me early last year that he was bringing this thing called Art Battle to Auckland

and asked if I was keen to participate. I thought it sounded cool and I like trying new things that are outside of my comfort zone. I was nervous, especially because my paintings usually take hours, so it was a good challenge seeing what I could paint within a time restraint. I also had fun experimenting with different styles and using techniques to create an effective painting in a short time,” says Logan.

For Logan, it's the unconventional environment and painting process that are his favourite parts of Art Battle events. “It's so different to the traditional perceptions of a painter in a studio and it's cool to see the paintings not as a finished product but as an evolving process, where people can see a blank canvas come to life in minutes.”

A week prior to the Auckland Grand Final competition, Logan says he was stuck for ideas.

“I had no clue what I was going to paint. I started doing some practice paintings while listening to some music. Nothing was really working. I turned to the two albums I had been listening to recently, using the album covers and songs as inspiration. Most of my paintings reflect my surroundings and feelings at the time. I took some reference shots of myself and decided on a monochromatic colour palette so I could focus on the lighting, form and mood of the painting. For my first winning painting, I used Resene Bright Red, Resene Cosmos and Resene Umber White. At the Grand Final, I ended up using Resene Jaguar, Resene Half Spindle and Resene Solitude.”

Logan says that he enjoyed working with Resene testspots for the competition. “It was fun using a diverse colour range and building up

the layers. The colours mixed together nicely and the consistency of paint was perfect to get a range of brushwork.”







The experience of using Resene during Art Battle has also inspired Logan to use testspots in his artwork and he is often inspired by Resene's colour names when choosing what to use. “Recently, my mates and I collaborated on some small paintings where we used Resene paints and I hope to do some mural work in the future, which Resene paints would be perfect for,” he says. “I think Resene Jaguar is my favourite hue right now. The colour has the feeling of sitting on a beach on an autumn night with a full moon floating above the horizon, and I can picture a family of dolphins dancing in the glistening moonlight over the water, and maybe the echo of a wolf howling in the distance.”

“It's great to see Resene's contribution to the art scene,” he adds. “I've participated in a number of art events over the years and Resene has always played a part in contributing to those events. Many people would assume Resene is just for house painting, but you can do almost anything with their paints.”

To learn more about participating in Art Battle as an artist or audience member, details about upcoming events are posted online as they are confirmed at www.artbattle.com, including the next Auckland Grand Final that will be taking place at Eden Park. Liam says his current focus is on making the events free of charge for attendees by pursuing funding through local boards, businesses and Auckland Council. “My push now is to make sure events are accessible to all, with 100% of the art sale proceeds going to the artists, as opposed to 50% at the previously ticketed events.” **BW**

For those interested in learning more about Meet The Artists, Liam encourages keeping an eye on their website, www.meettheartists.co.nz. To see more of Logan's artwork, check out www.instagram.com/logan.moffat. Liam's artwork can be found at www.rockitart.com/gallery-art.

right: Artist Logan Moffat says he began painting seriously at the age of 16 and was offered an exhibition at 17 in a gallery in his hometown of Pukekohe. His speciality is portraiture, for which he uses a wide range of mediums – including Resene paints. Logan also offers private and group art tutoring and completes commissions upon request as he works to build a new body of work for a future exhibition. When competing at Art Battle, Logan says he selected minimal colour palettes so that he could focus on capturing light, shadow and tone within the tight timeframes. His first winning painting, *Ventisette*, was painted using pink and red and features Resene Bright Red, Resene Cosmos and Resene Umber White. His second winning painting, *Blue Eyes* (pictured), won him the Auckland Grand Final and was painted with three shades of blue: Resene Jaguar, Resene Half Spindle and Resene Solitude. Image by Stellanova Photography.

	Resene Umber White		Resene Solitude
	Resene Cosmos		Resene Half Spindle
	Resene Bright Red		Resene Jaguar

