

Eulogy by Shannon's mother Leonie Bourke, presented on December 4th 2020

Shannon was much loved by many people as shown by the many calls, messages and facebook posts when he was ill and when he died. Throughout his illness, fundraisers were done and recently his good friend Lisa organised artists and loved ones to paint a picture each of Shannon with incredible results. He received blessings and prayers from friends and family all over the world, even people he had never met- we would like to thank those international friends and family, from Ireland, from England, from Tonga- he and Stephanie even received bracelets blessed by the Dali Lama. He was touched by all the support and love shown to him and Steph throughout the last 18 months. I would like to talk more about him now.

For the past 33 years and 9 months, I have been privileged to be the mother of Shannon John Keane. Right from when I found out I was pregnant with him, both his father Jack and myself couldn't wait to meet our new baby. When he was born the nurses wanted to put him with the other babies to sleep so I could have a rest- I said no, as I wanted him by my side at all times, and in many ways he has been with me ever since. He is with me now.

I have had the pleasure of watching Shannon grow from the shy, young person he was into the caring, sensitive, funny, creative, supportive friend to all, mentor, persistent, man that he became. He always looked out for others, made sure people felt included, and reached out to those who needed support.

It was not easy becoming this person as he had his own struggles to work on, but he knew the type of person that he wanted to be and actively sought help when he needed it. It was this lived experience that made him the person that many people took guidance from in their own lives. In fact, the most common phrase I have heard about Shannon in the last few days has been 'what would Shannon do?' It is a way that I'm going to continue living my life, thinking about his response and acting accordingly. Even though I am the mother and he was the child, I learnt so much from him about life and how to navigate it.

Shannon was blessed with natural talent. Any sport he tried, he did well in.

He won many awards for basketball and football- as a young football player, he was named as person most likely to excel in AFL when he got older. As we know art became his passion, not sport. Shannon developed a love of nature throughout his childhood, spent living in places like Daylesford, Mallacoota and Castlemaine. His early years were spent bushwalking, playing on the beach, hanging out with neighbourhood friends and playing sport.

When we came to Melbourne he quickly dropped the country boy image for an inner city skater and graffiti artist, hanging out with his friends skating and painting, with his good friends from Princes Hill.

When Shannon got to year 11 he decided to leave school and work in a factory making frames for houses. He quickly realised that was not the life for him, and returned to school, studying year 12 and then 13 to establish his art portfolio. He then spent a further 2 years at NMIT studying illustration. These courses helped him realise what he wanted out of life, to be a self-employed artist. Shannon put in an enormous amount of hard work, dedication and persistence to become the artist he was known for today- creative, unique, inspiring, collaborative and flexible. Shannon not only enjoyed doing art for himself and others, for instance through White Night, commissioned murals in restaurants and private homes, L'Oreal fashion week and Luna Park. He was often asked to go back to NMIT and talk to current students about his work, which he did with pride.

Shannon supported and encouraged other artists. He organised a monthly art event at Grumpy's Bar by giving people a wall to paint and learn new skills. He even helped teach the well-known outback Australian artist John Murray how to spray paint.

During the period before he became unwell, Shannon worked with Hume Special School running art classes for students every Friday. He did talk about becoming a teacher in the future, as he got a lot of pleasure passing on his skills to others.

As a young man Shannon shied away from physical contact with me or expressions of love, but as he became an adult this changed. Right up until he passed away last week he constantly told me he loved me and gave me the best hugs. He told me how grateful he was for all the support and care I gave him.

Shannon and I enjoyed doing a lot of things together such as playing golf, going to the movies, going to the opera, holidaying in Bali, and sharing a laugh like recently through watching Schitt's Creek together. Shannon always kept me included in his life, sending me photos and updates of where he was and what he was up to, or videos he thought I'd like. He was great at buying gifts, always thoughtful and generous- his last present to me this past mother's day was a battery powered lawn mower so that he knew I could take care of the lawn when he was gone.

Whenever he had an exhibition he always invited me and introduced me to his friends. I loved this part of our relationship. He always loved coming with me to see his cousins and joining in family events.

Shannon and Bridie met their half-sister Jenna and her other siblings Megan and Paul when he was about 13, and he embraced them fully, thinking of them straight away as family and including them in all aspects of his life. Before Shannon passed away we were on a family holiday with them, their mother Maryanne, Bridie, Stephanie and myself. When Jenna asked the common question 'which famous person would you invite to our dinner party?' Shannon replied 'no-one else, I love everyone here'. That made us all feel very humbled and special.

As you know, Shannon lived for at least 18 months with cancer before it finally took his life. He accepted the cancer diagnosis, then the terminal diagnosis as he lived his life- with deep thought, humour, resignation and finally acceptance. He never once said 'why me?' In fact, when I said that I would swap with him in a heartbeat he said no, he would rather it was him as he couldn't bear to see other people suffering.

Shannon met Stephanie about two years ago, not too long before it

became clear that he was ill. Right from the beginning it was clear that she was to become the love of his life, as he was to her. Together they lived what many people would spend years doing- travelling, hanging out with friends, loving each other completely. Although many obstacles were put in their way there was never a time that Stephanie complained or resented what his illness meant to them or the restrictions that it put on their life. In fact she just dug in deeper with her love and unwavering support for him.

Thank you Stephanie, you gave Shannon so much love, happiness and made him feel that no matter what, he was loved. He was so happy with you and your life together.

We cannot thank enough the support and care that we have been shown throughout Shannon's illness and his death, by all the people who loved him. Like me, you will miss him forever but one thing I do know about Shannon is that he would not want any of us to suffer at his loss, but instead feel joy that he knew him. That is a 'what would Shannon do?' moment and we all know the answer to that.

Thank you



As an example of the type of person Shannon was, and his strength and resolve throughout his treatment and illness, we are including below some samples of Shannon's writing, as well as posts from his friends and loved ones following his death.

Facebook post from Shannon- December 4th, 2019

Heya, Facebook fam. Just wanted to let everyone know the latest with my health. I would have liked to have been able to tell everyone in individually, but it's quite tiring having this conversation over and over again. So here it is. In short, the liver cancer has spread to my lungs. This is terminal.

The longer version is this - in a check up after the liver resection a doctor found a couple of spots in my lungs. They re-scanned me, took bloods, had a meeting with all the other docs, specialists, etc, and determined that the cancer had spread. There are also some small spots left on my liver. When HCC (liver cancer) spreads, it means that it is incurable. The treatment available is very poor at helping to extend a patients life.

I received this news over a month ago. I waited til now to go public because there is some good news. I am currently taking part in a new trial for terminal HCC, involving imuno therapies. Basically, they inject living antibodies into me every three weeks, and I take chemo pills every day. The antibodies mark the cancer cells so that my immune system attacks them and hopefully kills them all. I will be receiving this treatment for the rest of my life. The chemo isn't as much as a patient normally gets, so I won't get as sick, and I'll keep my hair. I am very thankful to be on this trial.

I am getting the best treatment available, and am in the best care when I'm at the Austin for treatment.

I wanted to wait til I found out if I was accepted onto this trial, and to see if I got the imuno therapy treatment, before telling you all the news.

Because it is a trial, they have to put some patients just on chemo to be able to prove it's the imuno therapy helping us and not just the chemo. While I am obviously very thankful to be getting the best treatment, I am aware that some patients didn't get assigned to it, and are just on chemo. My heart goes out to them, and I hope that the trial is approved asap so that we can help as many people with liver cancer in the future.

I know that this is all incredibly heavy news, but I am honestly thankful to be here now. The fact that I survived the first tumour and surgery is

miraculous, according to my GP. The tumour was so large, and connected to so many vital parts on my liver, that most liver surgeons couldn't have successfully completed the surgery. I lost 30l of blood during the surgery, which is roughly 6 persons worth. It was a two day operation. I am so thankful to Dr Graham Starkey and his team at the Austin, as well as all the nurses and staff who looked after me while I recovered. It feels like every day from then on has been a bonus, and I am not taking any part of life for granted.

I'll wrap up this post now by letting you all know that I'm in good spirits. I've been given an extension on my time here with you all. And upon all the reflecting I've done about the person I am and how I spent my time, I'm happy with everything I have attempted and achieved. I am proud of how I handled all of the adversities in my life. And all of the relationships I have with all of you, my family, and of course, the love of my life, Stephanie.

Meeting her has been the best part of my life, and I'm so thankful for everyday we spend together.

And in a funny turn of events, Dr Starkey told me at the last post surgery check up that my liver is fully functioning. So I'm looking forward to having a drink with you all at some time soon! Sláinte!



Facebook post by Shannon's sister Bridie- 26th November 2020

Tonight, 12.10pm marked exactly one year since my big brother Shannon Keane gave up the ghost and left this mortal coil. His loss has taken me so long to fathom, one year seems like both a second and a lifetime, and yet in so many ways it feels like he's been here all along, hiding in the shadows of my mind.

The loss of a sibling is something incomprehensible: it's akin to having a part of my soul missing. My first friend, my playmate. My challenger, taking the first steps just ahead of me, always giving me something to strive for and try to reach next.

He was a gentle soul, sensitive in nature and spirit; a mixture of youthful boyishness with naturally high empathy. He grew from his shy boyhood self into a man known for his integrity and generosity of spirit. His positive nature and quirky vision of the world. Like a true artist, he took on a vision of the type of person he wanted to become, and he crafted himself like he crafted his skateboards, into works of unique beauty.

He dealt with his diagnosis and illness with such strength, courage and bravery, while still remaining focused on those around him and making others feel seen. He kept his love of life with him to his last day; he even managed to climb to the top of a mountain lookout the day before he died. Smiling the whole time. Laughing. Self pity, he had very little, for he loved himself and he loved his life and those in it. And we loved him. And despite the pain, the despair and the utter void that he has left behind, those of us who share in the grief of his loss are all so much better off for having had the honor of knowing him.



Facebook post by Shannon- November 23rd, 2019

Warning! Happy, sappy, love filled post. Read on at your own discretion... I just want to let everyone know how much Stephanie means to me. She's the most caring, lovely, funny, beautiful, intelligent person, with just the right amount of weird thrown in. I'm so happy that we met when we did, and took a chance on each other.

Guys, I couldn't even begin to tell you how amazing she was while I was at the Austin for a month with the surgery and complications. She was such a huge support, and made her way down after work everyday. Sometimes just to be with me for half an hour, then she'd head home. Having her by my side made me feel like I could take on anything. And that's how I still feel.

Thank you for all your support, Steph.

Thank you for all the laughs.

Thank you for all the unconditional love.

Thank you for being you.

And lastly, thank you for saying 'yes' to marrying me!



Facebook post by Shannon's wife Stephanie- 23rd July, 2021

This time 2 years ago I was in an Uber clutching a piece of paper...written on it were 3 songs and all of Shannons passwords.

I'd just left him in the hospital alone, I had to leave, it was 2am and visiting hours had finished at 8pm. I prayed to any god that may exist that he would wake up after the huge operation that he would have a few hours later.

"This can't be it".

He woke up 3 days later, on our 9month anniversary ❤️ we had the most amazing next 18 months together.

We walked in rainforests and swam in waterholes. We Cruised through the back streets of Melbourne and sat on secluded beaches and on old bridges.....talking about everything, getting lost in each other's company. We fed kangaroos and wild parrots, and travelled for 100s of kilometres across beautiful country to visit our loved ones.

The opera, the orchestra, driving over the Bolte bridge and getting
iceCream at 1am.

We watched every sunset with wonder and Shannon pointed out his
favourite colours while we ate the best snacks.

We got married knowing that “to death do us part”, wasn’t so distant and
vague, but certain and soon.

It’s like I’ve gone with you Shan, wherever you are, but somehow I’m still
here.

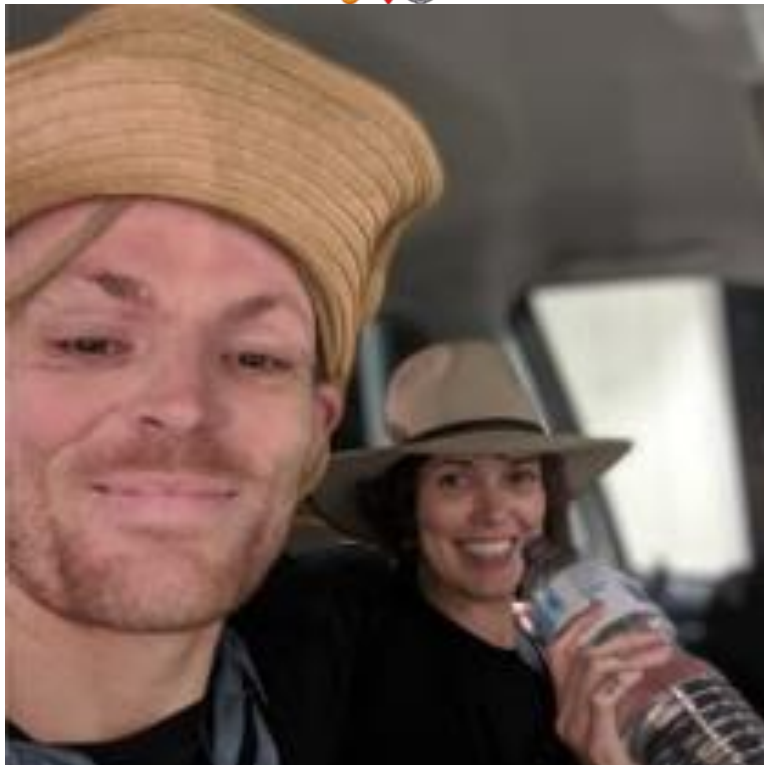
Still breathing, still alive.

Some days I don’t want to keep going, but you fought so hard for your life
that I have to make the most of mine.

Of what’s left.

Thank you for loving me hard and tremendously, and for making me your
wife.

I’m so proud of you.. everyday.



Facebook post by Shannon’s aunt Jill, December 5th 2020

I have been wanting to write a suitable tribute about Shannon Keane our
cousin and nephew, but have struggled with finding the right words. So
that's it, words are enough.

Kind, generous, giving, thoughtful, comforting, creative, inclusive, protective, artistic considerate, loving, funny, honest, and handsome (he would have insisted that was there)

Our thoughts are with you Stephanie, Leonie, Bridie and Jenna and all who knew and loved him. He left behind his much loved cousins Cindy, Anita, Josh, Toby, Lauren, and Ryan.

We love you Shannon KeaNeen
FUCK CANCER 33 is far too young.

Facebook post by Shannon's friend Savannah, November 27th 2020

I just want to be in Melbourne right now holding the hearts and hands of everyone who knew your brightness.

You were so gracious and gentle and caring and generous. You were also a cheeky chicken, and never said no to a party. And Man, I thought you were so damn cool!!

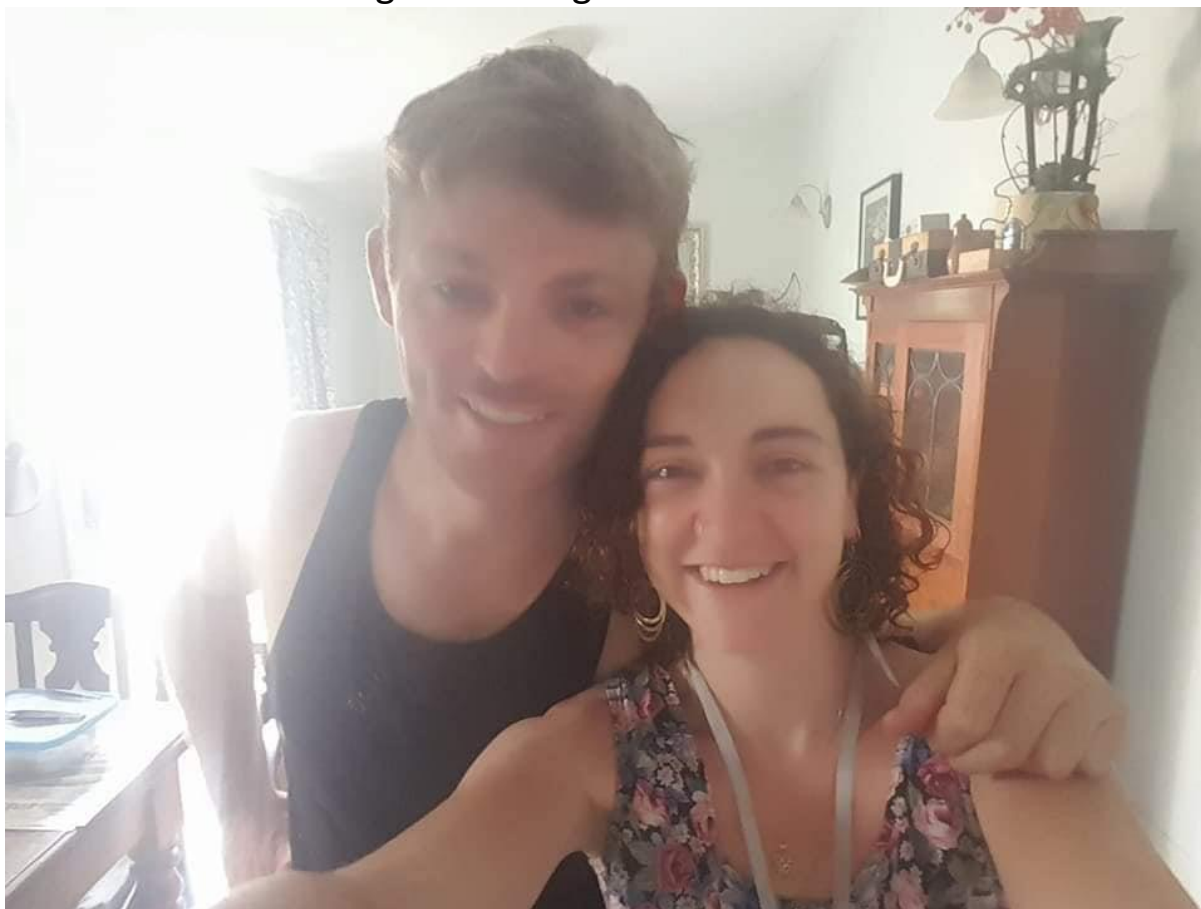
You gave me my nickname, said it was my tag - SODA. Now people who've never even met you call me Soda every day. You inspired my love of NB shoes and 'sick stylez', and introduced me to the streets of Footscray. You were always welcoming and open. Even my parents remember you fondly from the times they met you - they say goodbye my lovely one.

You were a true artist - so bloody talented and passionate. I've still got the 'business cards' you earnestly gave me - you were always so keane (😊) to share your art and passion. It was one of the very first things I noticed and loved about you, as you unwrapped artworks to show me, the random girl in your room looking for somewhere to live.

And living with you was the best choice I ever made. Thankyou for all the love and support (can I ever put into words how much support you gave me?), for the moments you showed your vulnerable side, the scary movies, Rick and Morty, the cuddles, fried chicken and potato gems 😊 and oh the ridiculous party times. 🍷 There are pivotal moments and memories in my life that you're a part of and those will never change.

Thankyou for showing us all how truly wonderful a person can be. You are truly a legend and one of the bestest chickens there ever were 😭😭 I'll never stop missing you Shan, Naws 💔 I love you ❤️💙

And oh my god thankyou Stephanie - when Shan first started posting about you... I'd never seen him SO in love! I was awed by his love for you 💜😍😘
I'm so glad you found one another, what a brilliant brilliant gift. Thankyou
for being such a bright star in his life ❤️💜❤️



Facebook post by Shannon's friend Chris, November 27th 2020

What can I say other than your passing has left me completely devastated. It's been on the doorstep for some time now, but it didn't seem real up until yesterday.

When we lived together in our younger years, I learnt enthusiasm and confidence to create. I stole that from you Shan. You were an artist through and through and I loved every second spent watching you develop new ideas totally execute them through your works.

For a humble young dude, you had too many amazing qualities to list. I just couldn't understand how one person had the ability to relate to everyone and anyone. You were always in the moment, no matter what the situation was. If your name ever popped up in conversation, I would say how amazing you were, and I can't recall anyone ever responding with anything less.

This message also goes out to Stephanie- what you've done is surely the kindest thing somebody could do for another person. You held our friend's hand right to the very end, and let him leave us with an extraordinary amount of love and care. As I said to you yesterday Steph, you've clocked life. I'm thinking of you and the fam.

Adios Shan, I love you my man. You lived for your art, which lives for us!
Xoxo

Facebook post by Stephanie, January 1st 2021

I've been reflecting about what I want to say about 2020.

And here are some thoughts....

Is 2020 a year I want to forget? No.

I want to remember to never take my health and freedom for granted ever again.

I want to remember that love is our superpower, and the strength of the human spirit is beyond anything I've imagined.

I want to remember to keep being vulnerable and listen to my heart. To not let fear pull me back and rob me of the life trying to make it's way to me.

To know the deepest love is to risk feeling the deepest pain. Waking up to another morning without you is physically excruciating, but you know what, if someone had told me this was going to happen I still wouldn't trade it for anything.

"I still believe in paradise. But now at least I know it's not some place you can look for. Because it's not where you go. It's how you feel for a moment in your life when you're a part of something. And if you find that moment, it lasts forever."





Facebook post by Shannon's friend Lisa, November 28th 2020

This is a long one. Sharing some words about my dear friend Shan 🧡

I pause on the walk home to look up and notice the clouds and feel Shan's mark in all the coolest-looking formations. I feel him too when I light an incense stick and crouch down to watch the smoke gently curl and dance up towards the ceiling, the sky.

I appreciate the reverence and curiosity Shan always had for Earth's beauty and aesthetics — on a carpark rooftop pointing out how the orange and pink mix together in a sunset, or documenting the trippy accidental paint drips in his palette, or staying up to admire a rare blood moon at 2am.

A few years ago I was struggling with nightmares and would sometimes call Shan in the middle of the night. I always knew he'd pick up and he never showed any annoyance that I'd woken him. How incredible that is! Having a friend like that. He'd just groggily talk to me for a bit until I felt okay to go back to sleep. I'll always appreciate and hold onto that feeling of safety he gave me.

And I know I'm not the only person that Shan sat with in their darkness, without judgment or expectation, and gently opened a window for us to let some air in, to remind us of the outside. He was exceptional at being a friend. And a human in the world too, because his kindness and unwavering decency always included strangers.

Shan kept his centre too though. He worked hard on being the man he wanted to be. He had a knack for relating to all kinds of people, but still being completely true to himself. He was singular in that way — I've never met anyone that really reminds me of him.

He knew how to keep the mood light and fun, to cut through any tension with playfulness, to make everyone around him feel welcome. He was the opposite of self-deprecating, he had this jokey boastfulness— the most handsome man with a glorious moon-like noggin!

He also thought deeply about issues and was stubborn when he wanted to be. He didn't bend himself to make others comfortable, he just welcomed us to be ourselves too.

Shan always showed up for the people he cared about. That seems to be a thread between all the people who knew him. He showed up for our gigs, our exhibitions, to catch up, to support us. He was a constant even when we weren't able to show up for him in the same way. He was very well-loved and he made so many people feel special and loved too.

Shan has long been my favourite person to open the door to. I won't use the past tense there because the feeling is still vivid. He'd rock up with a basketball tucked under his arm and — come to think of it, it wasn't a smile he greeted me with, it had the feeling of a smile, but it was more like this big comfortable energy and always a warm hug. If I was in a heavy mood his knock at the door would lighten it — when I was in a playful mood it was amplified by his being right there with you in the moment.

One time we were walking to the basketball court and I asked "what's different about you? What's changed?". He was floating a little and his hair was pushed back in this new way. Then he told me about Steph. He had this sweet smirk at the corner of his mouth. As we rounded the corner back to Leonie's he talked about wanting to ask Steph to be his girlfriend and I could see his daydreams were already reaching out even further than that. He was all in from day dot. It was a beautiful thing to witness.

The past few days I've been making a list of all the random things that remind me of Shan — kebab pizza, Coburg basketball court, Big Lou's donuts — silly things that are suddenly precious because they hold a memory and hazy details I don't want to forget.

I hesitate to post this because it feels incomplete, but it doesn't feel right to keep these thoughts tucked away in my diary either. I know we're a big community of people who love Shan and feel pretty lost without him right now.

I'll finish with this text I sent him before his first brain surgery, because this kind of mythology hangs easily on a legend like Shan and I seriously believe it to be true:

"Good luck for the surgery tomorrow Shan 🍀 You're an excellent snoozer with a brain they'd be lucky to dig around in and see what wild shit is popping off in there. Maybe they begin surgery and a truly loud hip hop beat spills out from your skull and they're like — what? That's weird? Who's playing that? But it helps them concentrate so they continue on and all goes well. And the second they stitch you up safely, the music quietsens and you're rolled into recovery and all the surgeons are like: damn... did you hear that? 😎 And it goes down in hospital mythology for all eternity, the boy with the hip hop brain."

Rest easy Shan. Love you always ❤️



Write up from Zest International:

Shannon Keane was a young and inspiring contemporary visual artist. Like many of his peers, his artistic capability has its roots in the world of graffiti, tagging and street art as a youth on the streets of 'Burn City' (Melbourne). Such was his progression that over the last decade he has worked for quite a number of corporate clients such as L'Oreal, Nike, Flight Centre and he has exhibited widely in Melbourne and Sydney.

In 2008-9, with some foresight and ambition, Shannon decided formal education would provide the best platform for a career as an artist, so he completed design and illustration courses respectively. 2017 saw more study having enrolled in a communications design course with a focus on graphic design, branding and corporate needs in general.

In 2017, Shannon added to his growing repertoire by curating the skate deck exhibition 'Varial' at No Vacancy Gallery in Melbourne exhibition in Melbourne and continued to curate further themed exhibitions for Melbourne artists.

Shannon joined Zest Events International in 2016 as a very accomplished visual artist skilled with Murals, Live Art, Art Workshops and Visual Graphics. His breadth of capability grew quickly through working with Zests team of highly awarded, world class 3D artists and graphic scribes and with the highly experienced marketing and events management team.



Some of his artwork can be found at:

[Instagram.com/evilkeanevil](https://www.instagram.com/evilkeanevil)

[Instagram.com/keanestagram](https://www.instagram.com/keanestagram)

Much more can be seen across the streets and laneways of Melbourne, under various tags such as Naws/Nas/Evil Keanevil/ Evil K/ Narow