

Frijters, Henk

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P.C.1 By Jeremy Ashley  
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Interior designer, preacher and now artist.

It would be safe to say that 59-year-old Belleville resident Henk Frijters has led a colourful life since moving to the city in 1968 from his native Holland.

"I intended on only staying for about a year to study art ... then I met a girl from Belleville and the rest is history, I guess," he chuckled.

Most recently, Frijters was asked by the City of Ottawa to participate in the annual tulip festival by painting a five-foot-high tulip as part of a new attraction, the Tulip Art Garden.

In celebration of Ottawa's 150th anniversary of its creation as a city, the Canadian Tulip Festival is creating the 'Ottawa 150 Tulip Art Festival', which will be centred at Ottawa's city hall and festival plaza in early May.

In addition to art exhibits, performances by buskers and outside concerts, the festival will also feature two gardens: the Tulip Art Garden, which will be made of five-foot Fiberglas tulips painted by Ottawa-area artists and the Tulip Community Garden, which will feature several 50-centimetre wooden tulips painted by school children.

"I was really quite honoured to be asked to participate," said Frijters, a former Pentecostal pastor. "There was a call earlier this year for artists ... and my kids asked me to enter."

Art has been extremely therapeutic, the father of five explained, as he has been afflicted with a severe heart condition that limits his mobility since 1998.

"In 1991, I had a quadruple-bypass surgery ... and in 1998, I was told I was all plugged up again. I found it extremely frustrating ... and I missed getting out, talking to people — and I especially missed the preaching."

He began painting, published two books, drawing a cartoon series for newspapers and sending out a weekly sermon to an e-mail list of what today is about 1,000 people.