

Wai Art Column December 2008

“Look Mum, I got my socks on all by myself and in the right way out.” Said an exuberant Small. Then very seriously before disappearing out the door to play in the sandpit; “Now I’m a grown-up.”

Hm, I think, looking at my socks on inside out; some things take time and lots of practice. Likewise it can take a while to find your artistic muse. You can pick artists who are still trying to find it, their portfolio has a little bit of this, a little bit of that, nothing that is really definitively them yet. I spent three years trying to be everything to everybody with my artwork getting smaller and smaller before bursting out onto large canvases with bloke art. Yes it is an infinitesimally small market of women who will allow the dearly beloved to hang a large picture of taps on the wall, but the market does exist. My theory is you only need one buyer per painting and they will be out there somewhere it is just a matter of getting your art out there and in front of them.

Having said that, I was rather surprised to hear an artist tell me that she has been advised not to “over expose her artwork”. I must have missed the “Hide your fantastic product under the bed so no-one knows it exists” chapter in the Marketing 101 handbook. Obviously having a painting gathering dust for three years in the front window of a gallery isn’t a good look, but ask Ian Chapman if could you get any more or better exposure than having his artwork featured on the front of the phone book. New Zealand is a reasonably big country artistically speaking; currently there are almost 50 national exhibitions you can enter your artworks into. Having enough work to send around the countryside to all the exhibitions you have marked with your wee highlighter pen for the year is actually quite hard to keep up with, so don’t worry about running out of places to exhibit. I think Mandy Emerson’s approach to marketing art is just fantastic and also extremely successful; be everywhere, in the big national exhibitions and the small community shows – just get it out there.

There is something else to marketing though, it’s about producing something that is uniquely identifiable. A fascinating example of this is the Little Jewels exhibition that was on in Aratoi. When you looked at the artworks that sold first it was the artists that had the recognizable style and subject. You could walk into the exhibition and start pointing out the artists. And the artists you could point out were also the successful ones. It’s that recognition of colour combinations, style and subject. Being in lots of exhibitions helps with artist recognition and you won’t get that all important exposure if your artwork is hiding under your bed.

Wairarapa Art Scene

Carterton Exhibition Center: “It’s all relative” an exhibition covering three generations of an incredibly talent family, featuring Viv Walker, her mother-in-law Carol Anne Bauer, daughter Caitlin Bauer and sister-in-law Evelyn Bauer. This is a cash and carry exhibition that features some gorgeous pottery if you

are looking for a lovely Christmas gift. Mark Telford and John Garrity are also continuing their photography exhibition. These exhibitions continue till mid January.

Wai Art Portrait Awards open 7 February. There has been a lot of interest nationally with this exhibition so it will be fascinating to see what comes in the door on receiving day. I've been watching some of the portraits developing as our local artists paint them and am hugely impressed with the diversity and quality. Remember to get a copy of the Portrait Awards entry form and check out the rules (from either Vanessa at the Village Art Shop, or the Carterton Information Center, or you can download a copy from www.waiart.org.nz). It pays to check what is acceptable as a "portrait". Just your dog isn't acceptable, but a portrait of your child and your dog together is great. It also needs to be a portrait of a New Zealand citizen and not contravene copyright issues, for example a portrait of an old chap from Inner Mongolia copied from the National Geographic isn't okay. Don't forget to get permission from your model as well. If you are in any doubt please phone me on 06 379 9177.

Katz Gallery

The next exhibition at Katz Gallery (opposite Wild Oats in Carterton) is entitled 'Synthesis'. It is a group exhibition with art-to-go and it runs till mid February.

Aratoi

There is lots on at Aratoi over the Christmas season. Mikala Dwyer from 19th December, multi media installation. Angels, Saints, Clocks & Lighthouses. Mexican & Guatemalan artists and Ian St George Ian St George. Queen Elizabeth Park: *A Very Publick Reserve* continues through April. Ian Chapman's fabulous artwork features in the windows gallery.