

Whom for art thou?

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A monthly **Wai Art** column

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The most startling introduction I've ever experienced was a lecturer who stalked into our first year class, glared malevolently at the students for what seemed like an eternity then menacingly drawled "Giddyay. My name's Bob. And I'm a bastard. Those of you that know me know I'm a bastard. Those of you that don't, soon will."

Unfortunately for us he wasn't joking and effectively reduced the class to a twitching bundle of nerves that resulted in three quarters of the class failing and having to suffer the horror of resitting the paper the following year. Being a bit thick, and terrified of Bob the Bastard, I had to sit the paper three times. I retained absolutely nothing useful from that paper, other than breaking out in a cold sweat every time I accidentally stumble across a calculus equation. I even have heart palpitations working out the commission galleries take from my art sales, although that is probably more likely to be financial pain rather than emotional angst.

Exploring emotional angst within an artists' artwork is one of those subjects that I assume all artists deliberate and God forbid, angst over. I keep thinking that I should paint with at least some sort of narrative in my artworks and possibly try to convey something meaningful, thought provoking or at least show some insight to the way the world works. I hate to admit it, but I suspect I'm just too shallow and frivolous.

This appalling lack of emotional depth was painfully obvious when I was having my photo taken by a reporter for my latest exhibition (now showing at the Carterton Exhibition Centre till Feb 1st, I might be shallow but I'm not above blatant self promotion). The reporter wanted me looking out of the window due to my facial palsy, that makes me look, well just kinda downright weird if I'm straight on. So there I am gazing out the window holding a big painting of beer bottles and she wistfully asks, "Can you look like you are contemplating your art... does it have some hidden meaning?" "Arh," I murmur through tight lips in case she suddenly takes the photo "Nope, it's just a bunch of beer bottles". "Er, okay, can you just look thoughtful then?" Came the hopeful request. So in desperation for something meaningful to contemplate I tried to remember whether the milk in my fridge was past it's use-by-date.

I admire artists who can come out with a riveting, thought provoking artist statement. I admire them even more if I don't have to resort to a dictionary to comprehend it. Just sometimes though, I get the sneaky feeling some artists are either taking the piss, or are just making it up; maybe they feel that investors won't take them seriously otherwise.

So for all those decorative artists out there, I'm going to make a stand. I'm going to come right out and state that my art doesn't mean much at all. In a way it reminds me of my lovely husband, who in his well-muscled youth would always reply to a question requiring an opinion, "Dunno. Never really thought about it." Nowadays in stark contrast, him outdoors will give you an opinion at length, at great length sometimes, depending on how many beer bottle props he has been thoughtfully providing for my next artwork.

Anyway, enough twittering on, the whole idea of this column is to promote and showcase Wairarapa Artists. That's what Wai Art is all about, but more about that in a later column. Generally the artists will be currently exhibiting at the Carterton Exhibition Centre in Holloway Street. Unfortunately given a severe deadline due to the impending Christmas fracas, this initial column has to rather embarrassingly be all about me. I apologise for the overt self-promotion, but as we have already established that I have the emotional depth of a mosquito, I'm obviously not going to waste too much time worrying about it.