

Braidwood's art, art and more art

Robyn Wallace-Crabb knows what he likes

BRAIDWOOD IS TURNING into late 19th century Paris. Art everywhere, galleries squeezing in amongst the cafes and cake shops.

LITTLE FINCH has moved to larger premises on the corner of Lascelles and Wallace, THE WOOD GALLERY is sharing space with FYREGALLERY, and so it goes.

Wait a minute, go into THE SERRATED TUSSOCK on a certain day and pretty much all you will hear is French being spoken. And there are many artists. Ceramics has been shoved off stage by Aussie art definers over the past few decades.

So around Easter it was worth discovering fresh variations on the cylinder, sphere and cone at THE LEFT HAND on Lascelles Street. You could focus on the forms, consider the axis about which the clay had been formed, lovely stuff. The artists included two locals, Lisa Maddern and Julian Davies plus Anne Langridge from faraway Canberra.

Then you could wander up and check out Leah-Kate Hannaford's multimedia works on paper at FYREGALLERY. There fish, flesh and fowl were richly penned into collaged compositions where meaning extended into longhand notations. A very rewarding show.

The same was true of Olivia Bernardoff and Surya Bajracharya show at Zac's PAYDIRT EATERY. These two long-term local artists connect with a certain silent magic: Olivia simply and directly by working paint on scraps of old plywood and rusted iron while Surya's pieces – 'Tree,' 'Bee,' 'Bear' etc offered brilliant, detailed 3D illusions from inside small glass-sided boxes.

Olivia's paintings are so simple, so direct in their communication that it would seem offensive to attempt a remake through language. They didn't need it. Still, the titles read like some ultra modernist poem: 'Ghost Dog/ Heavenly Creature/ Canis Familiaris/ Maid in China/ Meat me later/ Prime Time/ PC not JC/ Wot if?'

Oh yes, a big plus, the art prices at PAYDIRT placed the works well within the range of below national average income earners who, after all, may challenge the affluent when it comes to absorbing the ambiguities of what we get from all that there is to see.

Reporting on a mixed exhibition with a lot of artists taking part it would have been unwise to refer to particular works by particular people. That was certainly true of this year's BRAG exhibition at the Community Arts Centre on Braidwood's Wallace Street. Items on exhibition ranged from a table, the top of which was the polished burl of a tree, to small flower studies on paper

by school students. On the way people encountered a lino print of a tiger's head, a number of landscape paintings in which artists came at the subject from a range of directions, also there were designed clothes, photographed nudes, smaller still life studies, flower paintings, a knitted top, pictorial rugs, woven cloths, imaginative collages, photographs of the town, of country, people, neglected machines. A jewellery piece adorned the neck of a decapitated shop model, another cameo-esque one celebrated Vermeer, a fine crafted wooden box sat open-lidded as though demanding content. So the list went on.

Such a collection of works challenged those stiff-upper-lip notions of art being one thing and altogether different to craft, to photography. For too long Australian arties have locked onto some very narrow definition of 'art', missing the point that whatever the word 'art' might mean (and that's never been decided) each of us own our sense receptors and that 'art' is going to finish up what we as individuals reckon it ought to be on whatever day we take such a decision.

Yes, all the town needs now is a Red Mill with wild people partying inside.



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AUTUMN 2013



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