

Leigh Arnold and Rodney Sharpe – Two recent exhibitions at the Nimbin Regional Gallery



by Stephen Wright

The Nimbin Regional Gallery (that's the rainbow painted building at the Neighbourhood Centre) hosted two solo exhibitions recently, which are worth being reminded about: work by Leigh Arnold and Rodney Sharpe. Both exhibitions took radically different trajectories and both demonstrated something we might want to look at twice, if we were so inclined, something we could call commitment. More on that later. First to Leigh Arnold.

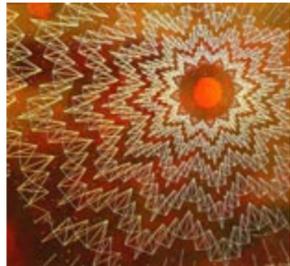
There's something to be said for a visceral response to a piece of art. Likewise there's equally something about allowing yourself to be stalked by something, to be taken by surprise as it were. After all, if you think you are someone who has seen it all, why are you still here? I first saw Leigh's work at the Nimbin Art Gallery, late last year, a couple of pieces hanging in isolation, and was at first somewhat puzzled and mildly unsettled. The late great Joe Strummer once said that you have to listen to reggae a million times before you get it, and then you really get it. When I entered Leigh's solo exhibition at the NRG I finally got it. Or was given it.

Leigh's work in-toto has tremendous and unforgettable impact. In a bare room his paintings hung side by side

one after another I finally got something of the sense of vision, absorption and insight which Leigh's paintings so patiently try to show us. Describing a painting in words is a bit like trying to build the blues with lesser blocks.

The best I can do here is say that Leigh's work is like taking some of the experimental music of the BBC Radiophonics Workshop and zapping it with a few neurones borrowed from God. It has an intensity and single-focus which you could mistake for repetitiveness, if you didn't have the patience to wait it out.

Rodney Sharpe's solo exhibition might have invented the idea of art gallery as a kind of magical weird junkyard, as opposed to the standardised urban idea of art gallery as a kind of church with interiors by Jamie Durie. In the centre of his exhibit Rodney had indiscriminately piled a couple of



decades worth of his personal journals and notebooks and in a sense the whole exhibit erupted from this.

Rodney paints with whatever he can get, on whatever he can get and the paintings on bits of old junk (or 'found objects' if you prefer) have the imagery of a kind of interior biblical apocalypse, as though you suddenly found a forgotten door to your soul and opening it, found Jackson Pollock acting out the Book of Revelation. Rodney's axiom of work is "repair and compromise" and it's not a bad motto for any attempt to stay sane and maintain integrity in this schizoid world.

We could call Rodney and Leigh – or at least I could – painters of the Suspended Moment. There's no time in their work. There's no going from here to there, there is no narrative, no abstract discourse. What you get is that complete commitment to the process of working, that jumping into the void, which everyone needs to find at some time and which maybe some artists have to look at every day.

If we as a community had any brains and any funds we'd commission Rodney and Leigh to each do a painting the size of the Emporium, and install them on either side of the road into Nimbin, to show people exactly what kind of town they are coming to.

In the meantime, and until either of them mount another solo exhibition, you can catch some small samples of Leigh and Rodney's work at the Nimbin Artists Gallery in Cullen Street.



Tattoo Show



Photos: Chris Harris



This year's Nimbin Tattoo Show at the Bowling Club attracted a large number of entries. The event was seamlessly organised by Space (above, with some of the judges), and local rockers, The AntiBodies amply provided the entertainment. Results will be posted on the website in due course, but really everyone came out a winner.

Fibble Fable Fibre

In June, Blue Knob Hall Gallery will once more be flaunting and frolicking with some fantastic fibre, felt flowers and fabulous fashions, not to mention some frightfully forceful... workshops (ran out of big "F" words).

Yes our annual exhibition of fibre works by local and interstate artists is about to open. Entitled *Fibble Fable Fibre*, it runs from 11th June to 9th August, Thursday – Sunday, 10am – 4pm.

This year's curators, Polly and Myfanwy Stirling and Sachiko, have invited artists to tell an *unlikely story* in the medium of fibre – Fibble Fable translates as an "unlikely story", which may unleash other interpretations and insights. Artists can tell some unlikely stories through the diverse and often personal expression of fibre.

In telling stories, we keep little deaths at bay. Folklore, beliefs, life's daily labours, connections and personal journeys are all saved from oblivion by the power of story. Often anonymous, told by word, symbolic reference, or the power of visual association, they are the human links to our time on earth, personal gifts to those who receive them.

The official opening is on Friday 12th June at 6:30pm with a *Felt Wearable Art*



Sachiko

Show featuring some of the area's most colourful creations, followed by dinner at the veranda café if booked (Dinner \$15/ Dessert \$4, 6689-7449) – and we offer a 15% discount on all artworks purchased at the official opening!

Workshops

Several fibre workshops are on offer during the exhibition.

In June, Wendy Bailie (right) is running two one-day workshops at Blue Knob Hall Gallery: *Fabulous Felt Flowers* on 29th June, 9am - 4pm and *Exotic Felted Jewellery* on 30th June, 9am - 4pm. Each costs \$95 per person including materials. For more info call Wendy: 07 3289-1352; email: bailie@ozemail.com.au

In July, Polly Stirling (right) is running two two-day workshops at the Wild Turkey Feltmaking Studio, Lillian Rock: *An Introduction to Feltmaking* on July 4 & 5, 9am - 4pm; *Nuno Felt for Blankets and Other Things* on July 11 & 12, 9am - 4pm, each costs \$150. Materials will be available for purchase if needed. For more info call Polly: 02 6689-7409; or email: pollyfelt@earthlink.net.

On 21st July, 10am - 4pm, Enid Taylor (right) is running a one day workshop at Blue Knob Hall Gallery: *Kantha Stitch* – a traditional method of Indian embroidery that converts pre-loved garments into quilts. Cost: \$75 plus \$10 for materials. Bring scissors, thimble, pins and sharp HB pencil. For more info call Enid: 02 6680-2669; email: geetayl@bigpond.com



Robin Moore



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