

Christchurch Art Show opening

Thank you.

It gives me great pleasure to be a part of a new initiative for Christchurch, The Christchurch Art Show.

In a new environment, post Christchurch earthquakes, everything appears to be 'up for grabs' in the sense of new opportunities for old. And it is without doubt that the art community has suffered as have all others through the loss of working premises, exhibition facilities and often support networks over the past 4 years, the earthquakes exacerbating an already fragile marketplace still trying to cope with a global economic downturn. It is indeed within this continually difficult environment that the Art Show initiative has eventuated and my hope is that this inaugural show is the springboard for further shows, enhancing and stimulating the art market, and providing communities the opportunity to interact with a sector of society often thought to exist only in hidden garrets and dilapidated studios. Nothing could be further from the truth.

My thanks go to those organising the show, especially Kate, Hannah and her team for making the experience of judging a memorable one.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of those artists who entered work into the art award. For non-artists it may appear as if a simple transition from the creation of an artwork to it appearing on a wall for assessment by a judge, arbiter and stranger. However there is a wealth of uncertainty, doubt, and hesitation when presenting such works for the gaze of a critic. The decision as to whether the work is worthy for exhibition or sale, and then to decide on an appropriate value for the work to be retailed, to give both a working

income to the artist and a lifelong asset to the purchaser, is a task full of complexities.

So thank you to all the artists who chose to enter the award section, and be assured that in the compiling of the finalists group I was impressed by the variety and skill of many other artists work I was unable to include in a finite number of works on the finalists wall. As a judge, of course I will now be judged on my selections, and there lies the faithful old adage about art: Art being in the eye of the beholder. I am certain that each and every one of you will have an opinion with regard to which work pleases your eye the most. And during your visit you can have that say as those who have been selected will have the audience of the art show select The Peter Yealands Wines People's Choice Award. To those who made the last 11, congratulations.

Judging was a flurry of viewing works as they were gently removed from their veil of packing material. A little like the excitement felt when opening a ceremonial gift, seeing it for the first time. In this situation often smelling the sweetness of new oil paint, or spotting the fresh luminosity of recently applied watercolour pigment is a startling yet rewarding experience. There's always a thought in my mind about where a particular work might sit best on a wall, sometimes even in my own house, as art is the only thing that consistently changes in our house, and through the earthquakes, of recent times, decided to do some of that relocating on my behalf more than a couple of times.

To the Finalist they are;

'Estate' by Tania Bostock which is a work with an alluring textural depth of patination that will seek out those of you with a weak will who will feel the need to touch the intricacies of the surface.

‘Subterranean Outlet’- Bee Doughty Pratt – an abstract expressionist work where life’s everyday ebb and flow are characterised through emotional colour references and moods

‘Perception & Illusion’ – Cindy Flook – a multi-layered photo manipulation image on aluminium which explores the conduit between nature and culture

‘Compassion’ – Larisse Hall – Larisse manipulates forms in her individually shaped canvases, questioning the special yin and yang relationship of connections and interactions.

‘Global Communications’ – Margaret Johnston – is a technically beautiful telecommunication wire quilt referencing cultural historiographies of NZ and women.

‘Forest Of Jade’ – Katrina Lilly – Forest of jade is a “drawing with light” painting using photography. This surreal image with the light bouncing off the forest foliage captures the image as if with blazing brushstrokes.

‘Yellow Beach 1’ – Stephanie McEwen – A referencing to both the crowds of swarming humanity at the beach and Japanese scroll paintings gives us time to bask in the light from holidays of memory.

‘Ponder on This’ – Asheley Elizabaeth – is an outstandingly well crafted wall mounted sculpture where the intention is clearly to push boundaries of the art through material metaphors.

‘Waterman’ – Judy Stokes – captures in an impressionist style the transparency of form and presence in an uncertain landscape/river-scape

‘Blue Mountain’ - Svetlana Orinka. The artist presents us with a synthesised and lyrical landscape of changing tones, the light penetrating and enhancing a subtle tonal register.

‘Rosewater Fall’ - Jane de France – Built on a very strong technical skill the artist enables her emotions and responses to the subject matter to layer spaces and heighten our understanding of nature and light.

So now that we know the 11 finalists, the winner of this inaugural Christchurch Art Show Award is

Yellow Beach¹ by Stephanie McEwen

In this work we find aggregate human forms and umbrellas stacked and crowded in a distorted figurative space, rather like an oriental painting, with muted tones. Suggestive perhaps of something hitherto inexperienced, an image exuding a hint of exoticism or novelty, or perhaps merely referencing long traditions of paintings of bathers.

The tiny depicted human forms crammed together, allowing us time to reflect on beach holidays, we have all loved and even alludes to some 50’s beach bach curtains, which we think we might remember.

Repetitive patterns of humanity and recursive storing and grouping of figures, chosen by random selection. Arbitrary choices which have arrived at this outcome of a cluster of rendered figures on a yellow beach. The chances are as unlikely as the likelihood of us all being here now at this place at this time.

Thank you. Enjoy the show.