

EXOTIC GARDEN, AN EXHIBITION OF ARTWORKS  
BY ANDREA JORDAN AND SIMONE PFISTER  
OPENED BY MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD  
HANDMARK GALLERY, HOBART, FRIDAY 29 MAY 2011

Good evening everyone and welcome to this wonderful gallery and the launch of a joint exhibition by Hobart-based artists Andrea Jordan and Simone Pfister.

I hope that you all noted that I'm sticking rigidly to protocol and, like the Handmark invitation, naming them in alphabetical order! But, as you can clearly see from the walls around us, this exhibition is a collaboration of equals; and highly talented equals for that matter. You know it is often said that when two different styles are put together a comparison is inevitable. Well, for myself I see a terrific union of contrasting techniques working towards the same end, which truly is an exotic garden, a lush and verdant abundance of nature.

This exhibition is not a collaboration in the formal sense of the term for the artists have worked independently of one another. But it is a collaboration that has arisen out of shared interests in subject matter, particularly flora and fauna; an awareness of what each has been working on in recent times; and, of course, an appreciation of each others' work.

Andrea put it this way, and I will quote her. She said:

“I have known Simone for many years and have always thought her work delightful and very feminine. As her work deals with flora and fauna, I thought it would be well suited to exhibit with my rose paintings. Simone and I both share a love of roses.”<sup>1</sup>

The rose, of course, is central to this exotic garden, which also features moths, cocoons, hummingbirds, eggs, nest, hearts as flowers, and deer. The rose has no peer as a symbol of love and beauty and I have no doubt that down the ages artistic and for that matter poetic renditions of this flower have played a part in this. Remember that Keats, in his poem, “To a Friend who Sent Me Some Roses”, says of the roses:

“My sense with their deliciousness was spell’d:  
Soft voices had they, that with tender plea  
Whisper’d of peace, and truth and friendliness unquell’d”<sup>2</sup>

But what we see in Andrea’s paintings is not just reproduction of the organic form and she tells us that these paintings have evolved towards abstraction and stylisation in exploration of traditional oil painting techniques and by which she means the techniques of the Renaissance master painters. It’s a technique that requires patience, because it is time consuming. I understand that some of Andrea’s paintings take several months to complete.

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Jordan Artist’s Statement April 2011.

<sup>2</sup> “To a Friend Who Sent me Some Roses” in *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats*, London, Random House, 1951.

And that word "patience" most surely applies to the work of Simone Pfister. I can only imagine how long it took her to create the dozens and dozens of exquisite tiny hummingbirds and moths now in this room!

The lithographic process that is at the heart of Simone's work – which in recent years has expanded to include jewelry – is also a traditional art form, in which the image is initially drawn directly onto a ground stone and ends up as an inked image printed on paper.

In this way she makes an edition of, I believe, some 20 to 30 prints of the image. But that for Simone is often just the beginning. She says, and I quote her:

"As well as producing edition prints I use the printed image in multiple, cutting and stitching to create new images. Stitching has become integral to my art practice. The involvement of stitching, another traditional technique, though this one traditionally female, brings an interesting dynamic to the finished artworks. Usually the stitched pieces take the form of a dress, a reference to the feminine, to presence and absence but also exploring the idea that the spaces at the surface of our body are those which tell our stories."<sup>3</sup>

But as we all well know the creative process is not only about skill and technique. Creativity requires imagination, and the ability to think

---

<sup>3</sup> Simone Pfister Artist's Statement April 2011.

deeply, and critically, synthesizing disparate fields of knowledge and experience. Creative insights come from seeing connections and similarities between things we haven't noticed before. Refreshingly, in contrast to the fast and frenetic pace that characterises the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, creative work is often slow, thoughtful and reflective, drawing on the intuitive and the unconscious mind and heart to say something of value.

And so it is that Simone's delectable works on paper, having gone through three or four processes to reach their end point, use fine technique to say something reaffirming about us, about not just nature, but human nature. About what's in our hearts, perhaps – just as Andrea's roses are about more than mere depictions of roses.

I had the pleasure of visiting this exotic garden last week and listening to its creators Simone and Andrea talk about their work. They talked about what inspired them; the natural world and the beauty and interconnectedness of nature, femininity, love, individuality, diversity and harmony. They spoke about approaching each work with preconceived, but not predetermined outcomes. They touched on our need for beauty in our lives to counteract the ugliness in the world.

The human spirit is nurtured by imagination and sensitivity to truth and beauty, and nourished by experiences that directly touch the mind and engage the emotions. This is evidenced by the fact that a new economy is emerging around the world, known as the 'neo-economy'. This neo-economy is driven by design, beauty, aesthetics, creativity, and imagination

instead of by features, function, price deals and discounts. The spending of consumers, known as NEOs, who fuel this economy, springs from a passion for more beauty in an increasingly ugly world. In fact, come to think of it, I am sure that I can see many NEOs here tonight! <sup>4</sup>

Seriously though, listening to Simone and Andrea that afternoon reminded me of something that Pablo Casals, musician, humanist and perhaps the greatest cellist of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, had said;

“Beauty is all about us, but how many of us are blind to it? People take little pleasure in the natural, the quiet and simple things of life—music, the sea, the flowers, the leaf, the act of kindness—there is so much beauty we forget everyday”<sup>5</sup>

There was a time when art was part of daily life; like gardening, playing a musical instrument, sewing, telling stories, and relating to animals and nature’s seasons. But the world has changed, so we are fortunate to have artists, who have direct and immediate contact with the natural world: who through their art are able to remind us of the beauty in nature. By successfully marrying technique with subject matter, their art notes, and takes us, to a greater appreciation, of the order that exists in the natural world, of which we are a part and out of which beauty is born.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ross Honeywell, research director of the Social Intelligence Lab, quoted in *The Mercury*, 16 February 2011.

<sup>5</sup> *Joys and Sorrows; Reflections*, by Pablo Casals as told to Albert E Kahn, London, MacDonald and Company, 1970.

This joint exhibition of distinctly different works, successfully shares a common language and a common philosophy. The artists, Andrea Jordan and Simone Pfister are to be congratulated, individually and jointly, on this wonderful collaboration and Allanah Dopson and her Handmark colleagues, are also to be congratulated for continuing to promote the high standard of contemporary Tasmanian art.

It is with real pleasure that I declare the Exotic Garden Exhibition open.