

# ArtSpace

W o n t h a g g i

Newsletter #8

August 2015



At least two of our artists entered the Archibald this year – Ursula Theinert and Ellen Hubble. Neither are strangers to entering this most prestigious of events. In Ursula's case she wanted to capture the calm and quiet charm of Lenore Taylor – the political editor of the Guardian. Ursula says, "One of the hardest things about starting a portrait is what sort of composition you choose. You want the portrait to capture the essence of a person."

In Ellen's case the reason for entering the Archibald was much more poignant. Her portrait is of Australian photographer, Andrew Chapman. Andrew has been severely affected by haemochromatosis which resulted in a liver transplant. Ellen has haemochromatosis in her genetics. Her children, Tom and Tessa, now in their twenties, have the genes and now Ellen has found that her husband David also has the disease. It was haemochromatosis which claimed the life of her father.

Ellen's portrait is titled 'Ironic'. Metaphorically the corrugated iron, inclusive of rust and corrosion, parallels the symptoms of haemochromatosis. Many of the buildings Andrew photographs are constructed in iron. Undetected iron overload happens over time in the human body. This can allow the assumption that all is well until it 'corrodes' the liver. The portrait reflects and symbolizes the strength and resilience of Andrew Chapman.



Haemochromatosis week is from 5th - 16th August. [www.haemochromatosis.org.au](http://www.haemochromatosis.org.au) - Info line 1300 019 02. If you want to know more about Ursula's entry here is a link to the Star newspaper. <http://thestar.com.au/blog/artist-enters-archibalds>



## *Featured Artist: Phil Henshall*

As Phil strode towards me as we met for this interview, I couldn't help but be struck about how much like a Quaker he looked. Quite a formidable presence with his face topped and tailed with a shock of grey hair, shaven around the mouth and embedded with sharp blue eyes.

So it was no surprise when he told me that in his early twenties he had found God and courted a religious vocation as he travelled into an inhospitable Western Australia to be a missionary.

But it was a career thwarted when as he puts it, "I met a chick and that changed everything."

But surely you could be a missionary and be a husband as well I countered. "Not if you're a Roman Catholic." (Note to self: do not judge a book by its cover!)

So it was as a young man and newly engaged that Phil first came to our Coast. Driving in his old Cortina he searched for a vantage point that would provide a great view of Westernport. They found a road that took them up to a ridge and whilst they had "afternoon tea" (I did ask if that was a euphemism) enjoyed a spectacular view all the way to French Island.

After they were married and Phil started to make some money, he made a couple of offers on a property on that same road – but to no avail. And so instead he bought a property near Mt Baw Baw with five other families, built a house and used it as his holiday home.



In the meantime he ran a very successful business. He hadn't enjoyed his high school years where lessons were less than inspiring but he had enjoyed art – and interestingly he was good at maths. When it came time for him to consider what tertiary studies he would undertake it was a choice between art and architecture. He chose architecture and loved the environment of studying at RMIT which he says was like, "coming out of a darkroom into the light."

He started work as a labourer for an Italian concreting company. They loved him as they found that he was able to read plans, and because of his studies in architecture was able to create in his mind a three dimensional frame to a two dimensional drawing. It wasn't long before he was put in charge – and it wasn't long after that he went into business with a mate and created a very successful company in steel fixing.

What started off as, “Just come and work for four days a week and then you can paint on Fridays,” became a 6 day a week commitment.

With the hard work drawing in some money, Phil sold his share of the holiday home and bought some land in Icy Creek where he used his architectural skills to create a cluster village of fifteen houses, and chose a home for himself in his words, “Paradise” –

surrounded by bush and a land that has no foreign birds visit. And yet he still craved for a bit of land on our Coast.

After bringing up a family of five children, Phil’s marriage was over. He contacted a real estate agent and asked him to find a property which had exposure to the west which might make a good winery. He got taken to four properties – the last right next door to where he had had “afternoon tea” all those years ago. And so it was meant to be that he purchased the property. It was at this time, with his parenting responsibilities limited to every second weekend that Phil picked up where he had left off – he started to sketch and then to paint in oil.

He developed skill and technique. Due to his training where he learnt about space he is able to distort perspective spatially. He says he is almost haunted in a way about space. He prefers a modular system of painting with different perspectives of the same scene – be it from a different aspect or a different time of the day. It takes him time to produce his pieces as he first considers what he wants to express and then uses charcoal until he gets the composition just right.



Baw Baw Council acquired five works of his and he found in the process that the works came together into what he refers to as "Aspectivism"<sup>TM</sup>. In essence this means a scene which contains an unusual aspect and is then developed into an aerial or a moving view.

Phil recently re-discovered the first painting he ever did. He had given it to his aunt as a 16 year old – and as she passed away she bequeathed it to him. So now – 55 years later he is still painting and says he can still improve as an artist. Three panels he thought finished in 2003, found a new life as he added the snow of Mt Baw Baw to them in 2015.

His dream is to create two works that people would be able to remember him by in 300 years. "Not tomorrow – but in the future. I want to be able to offer something that is unique and that no-one else has done." Phil says he is blessed with being able to have homes in two Paradises – one in the mountains and one at the Coast.

His work is often on display at ArtSpace Wonthaggi – and his next exhibition "O.M Gippsland" jointly with Graeme Myrteza is at West Gippsland Arts Centre, Warragul from 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015 to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The official opening will be on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> of August from 7.00 to 8.30pm.

**PS ....** For those who like a G&T as they watch the sun go down and those with a discerning palate for the Sapphire Blue variety of gin – please keep your empty bottles. Marlene Abela of Artfusion Studio and Gallery at the Anderson Roundabout uses the wonderful coloured glass of these bottles in some of her creations. So – please drop them off to her when you can – and go and see what she can create with them. ....  
Cheers!!

"Art is the only way to run away without leaving home."

## **TWYLA THARP**

### *The Last Word*

#### **A Face In Old York Minster**

Friends have drifted to a different transept  
In Old York Minster Cathedral  
I am alone, I hear a voice  
Gentle like someone I know  
John, John. I look around  
There's no one there  
John, John - I hear it again

Is that you Lord?  
I ask, (after all I am in his house)  
Where are you?  
I am here John  
Where?  
Here beneath your feet.

First I see the face of a gentile lady  
But it's not her I hear  
Then I recognize my *voicifer*\*

In the stone beneath my feet  
Not God, rather the head of a philosopher or poet, I fancy  
Hello, I say, is it you?  
Expecting an admission or revelation  
Some imperative principle set in stone  
But he doesn't answer

In a blushing moment of self-conscious mortification  
I called him a Bastard and hoped no one was looking!

©John Mutsaers 2014 on a visit to old York Minster Cathedral

\*Voicifer is a word I made up meaning "the one who spoke". I like it!

