

# ArtSpace

Wonthaggi

NEWSLETTER #10

OCTOBER 2015

We had our first AGM during the month. Many of you will know we were only incorporated late last year and have been operating on an honorary position basis over that time. After a presentation on how we had fared over the year, Louise Addicoat led us in formalising the positions.

Congratulations to Ursula Theinert who is now deservedly President of ArtSpace. Dennis Leversha continues on as Vice President. Deb Watson is the new Secretary and Kaye Hatton is the Treasurer.

With the support of these dedicated people, the rest of the Committee, which includes Karin Ellis, Susan Hall, Karen V Sandon, John Mutsaers and Aleida Jansen and all of you, our supporters we can only go from strength to strength.

## *Featured Artist: Kerry Spokes*



I am not sure what I was expecting when I met Kerry Spokes. Only recently introduced to the world of art I had been taken to the Gippsland 14 exhibition where I saw her work displayed and I wanted more. I loved the, what were to me, quirky representations of the world around us.

I tried to find meaning in the miniature-sized sheep in the kitchen with a set of barber scissors sitting on a chair above them. Did this mean that the sheep were to be shorn and ultimately end up on our dinner plate? I then I thought – “Don’t be silly – just have fun.” And I did.

The thing that amazed me about iphoneography is the incredibly clear resolution that the images have. This relatively new phenomenon of being able to take photos through your telephone has left the Nikon photographer in me smirking at these poor, ignorant ‘happy snappers’ whose images will be poor and blurred with massive pixelation whenever they are blown up to be any size other than a 6”x4” print. Well – how wrong can you be? Kerry uses nothing more than her iphone to capture her images.’



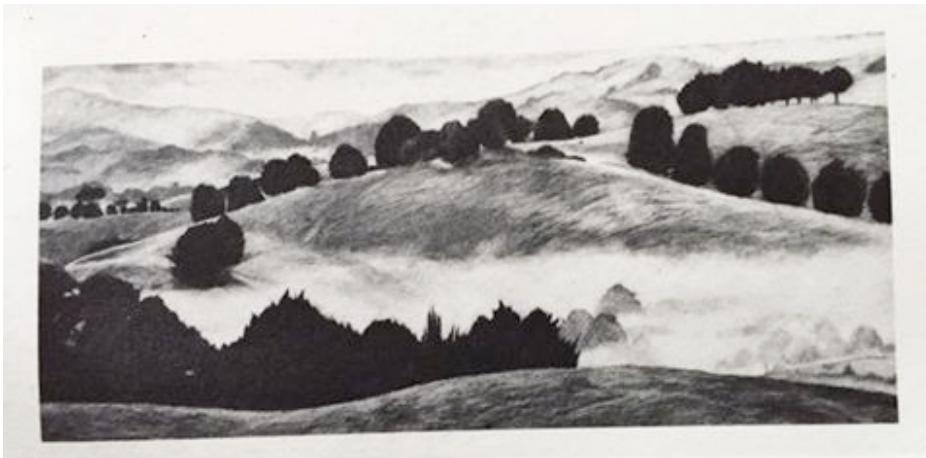
But as you can see from her work on this page it is more than happy snapping. Like any artist it requires innovation, inspiration and imagination. Kerry has transported her images into an art form that is now appreciated throughout the world. Already she has won several 'Highly Commended' in international competitions where iphoneography is more advanced in its art form than it is in Australia.

Kerry started her life in art when she was all of four years old when she admired the picture of her brother and thought she could do that. A passion from which she has never waivered, despite times in her life when the pressures of her environment made it impossible for her to so much as pick up a pencil.

Born on King Island to a Wonthaggi mum she has never been too far from home. Studying for her Diploma of Art at the Gippsland Institute at Churchill she was encouraged to go out and see the world before completing her studies. And so she decided to head to Adelaide. But all of that conservatism was swept to the side when she started to really discover her own country and travelled throughout the top end ultimately taking on jobs as cook/deckhand going out to sea for four months at a time on prawn fishing trawlers. It was a challenge in so many ways, not least of which was the fact that she was vegetarian at the time and discovered that the erstwhile fishing crews like nothing more than a massive cooked steak, or meat carved off the side of a lamb to sate their hunger after a long day of fishing. After six boat trips she had enough saved to start to see the world and travelled to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Back in Australia,

she decided after the birth of her first child to come back home. She got a place at University to continue her studies and started a degree full time in visual arts. At the time single mothers were being encouraged to be retrained and not only were the studies subsidised and childcare provided, but she was given enough money to live on. The course lecturers were all practising contemporary artists, and students were encouraged to gain an understanding of contemporary thinking through a whole raft of art forums, visiting artists, critiques and excursions.

As she went on to have other children, Kerry says she, "went into recess." "With two kids in nappies, and a young boy, there was no time for art." But then as the younger ones became less dependent on her, she started to look at ways she could create art as well as contribute to the household budget. It came in the form of menu boards for pubs and restaurants.



She moved to Sandy Point and was inspired by a meeting with Kim McDonald who also had her own brood – the difference was that Kim was finding time to paint. Kerry says, "If she could do it – I thought I could do it." Kerry decided to move to Fish Creek in 2001, where she bought a house in the same street she grew up in. Being the ever practical she worked as a cleaner at the local hospital before she went onto become a carer working in aged care. She realised she couldn't rely on art to support her.

But she did start to enter Art Shows and started to win. Kerry joined Prom Coast Arts Council, a non-profit community arts organization based in the prom coast area. The organization presents art exhibitions, classical and world music events and auspices group and individual art projects. She was President for 11 years and has only recently stepped down to become Vice President.

One of the Prom Coast Arts Council auspiced grants which Kerry and two other local artists were successful in gaining funding from Regional Arts Victoria for, was the Millennium Resolution Project. The money was to go towards a celebration of the turn of the century – and celebrate they did. The three artists created a giant fish in the style of the Chinese Dragon and had it wending its way to a fiery metal cauldron complete with a whirling dervish. Kerry has been involved in many community arts projects, including the Flower Tower Project for the Moss Vale Music Festival along with fellow artist Susan Purdy.

Around 2003, Kerry and a couple of friends rented out a working space in Fish Creek on a peppercorn rent. There were no set opening hours – but when it was open she started selling some of her work, and this was where she first met Michael, her partner in the business and life. He had a ceramic tile business and asked her, "To come up and see my work." Oh yeah .... Anyway, together they bought some framing gear, stock and cutters and decided to open Gecko Studio Gallery. That was nearly 11 years ago now. Kerry and Michael have kept their commission on sales low, with the aim of supporting artists in the venture – including selling affordable art materials rather than artists having to make the trek to Melbourne.

Gecko started running workshops in etching and print making with a number of guest tutors and has now added iphoneography to the list of options.

And now the circle completes itself as Kerry uses her iphone works to inform her current drawings, etchings and paintings. She is looking for inspiration in the landscape around her. She has now done a series of landscape works, deriving from the iphone photographic exhibition Kerry had in 2014 called 'Out There' - of the countryside around her from Foster North to Fish Creek. It is one of these carbon and graphite pencil drawings , 'Mist' that won the recent Bass Coast Shire YAC Award.

There is no stopping Kerry Spokes as she is about to have a show in Melbourne at the Tacit Gallery in Johnson Street, Abbotsford from November to December. It will certainly be something worth seeing.



PS ..... Maureen Loughran's exhibition "**a visual journey**" will take place at the Victorian Visual Artists Society at 430 Albert Street, East Melbourne from 22 October to 26 October. Come and meet the artist between 2 and 4pm on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> of October.

"If you hear a voice within you say, 'you cannot paint', then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced."

VINCENT VAN GOGH

### *The Last Word*

Vincent Van Gogh produced more than 2,000 works during his life: 900 paintings and 1,100 drawings and sketches. He only sold one painting while he was alive. That is some serious persistence

