

# ArtSpace

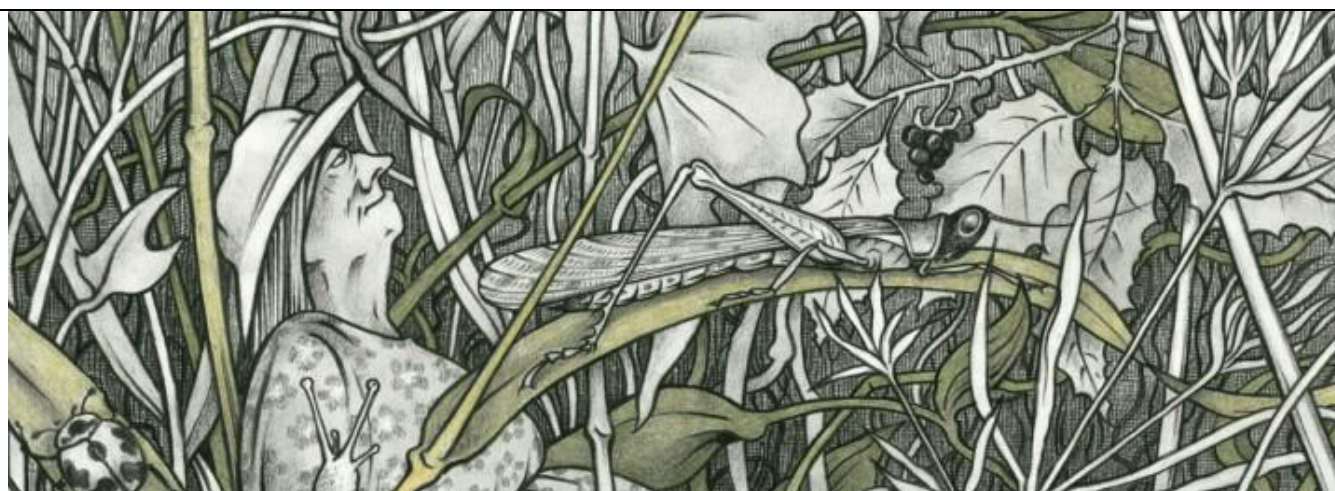
W o n t h a g g i

Newsletter #11

November 2015

It has been a great month for attracting new artists. Joining the fold of exhibiting artists are :

- Heidi Rolfe who brings with her some exquisitely drawn, charcoal, pen and ink printed cards which are based on her drawings of old Australian huts, and animals.
- Alex Reardon who is an accomplished artist who has recently moved from Cairns. His charming traditional paintings can also be bought as limited edition prints.
- Sue Robertson brings to ArtSpace her intricate and detailed Scratchboard artworks. Her eye for detail and skilled and delicate colouring stirs the subject matter into life.
- Leanne Aitken's abstract work is both moody and very decorative.
- Sharyn Madder's other worldly and evocative landscapes are skilfully drawn, and along with her subtle use of mixed media, beguiles the viewer



*So be sure to come and have a look at their works – if not before at our Inaugural Incorporation Birthday Party. See the invitation at the end of the Newsletter for details.*

## ***Featured Artist: Karin Murphy Ellis***



Can you imagine a childhood where you were made to stand in the corner and watch your school mates drink the precious milk that you had been denied and all because you had a German mother? A post war Britain where you had to stand in the queue for hours clutching your ration book hoping that a piece of fruit would still be there when you got to the front. Where your parents believing in the health effects of nudity took you along to a nudist colony. A frightening place where neighbours murdered your cat because your family was a little out of the ordinary.

Such were Karin's early memories. Born of the Irish Guard and his Prisoner of War German bride, Karin's life was interesting to say the least. The family settled in London after the war and Karin's mother became a well-known artist's model, modelling for the best teaching schools. Her diary was full. She was also a skilled dressmaker and pattern maker and she and Karin would spend many hours sewing. Her mother would sew garments for the family and Karin would sew costumes and hats for her teddies. Karin's dad was somewhat artistic himself and painted murals up and down their staircase at home to add life to a council house. He was also a gifted embroiderer and transformed Karin's grey corduroy jacket into a fire breathing dragon covered in gold threads.

Growing up in this artistic household found Karin wanting to dance. But her parents wouldn't let her travel alone to London's ballet school. Too many young girls went missing in those early years after the war. It was only after the family immigrated to Australia that she was allowed to attend the local ballet school.



By this time Karin was 11 – and as she puts it, “long and gangly”. She went to be auditioned and got told to strip down to her singlet and knickers and perform. Given her passion for swimming and netball, her young frame was already developing musculature that was not suitable for a ballet dancer and she was told that she had to stop all sports if she was serious about dancing. She agreed and started at the beginning with a class of five year olds. She became besotted with dancing and even on a trip back to England on a ship she would be doing her bar work on the ship's rails.

She flew through the exams and her dance teacher gained permission from the Department of Education to take on the now 14 year old for full time study. Every day of the week Karin would dance. Finally she was good enough to gaining a small part in Giselle when the Australian Ballet toured Queensland. Her ballet teacher sought advice from the Director as to whether Karin could gain entry into the Australian Ballet School. The response was not heartening. Not only was Karin thought to be too tall, but too boisterous. The Director feared that in a ballet scene where the four swans were looking ethereal she couldn't trust Karin to not pull a face. “Why don't you suggest to her that she do musical comedy?”



And so she did. She joined the cast of Sweet Charity in the first Australian production and spent her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday in rehearsals. And it was here that she cemented her love of sewing and took on the challenges of costume design. Costumes not only need to be robust but they also need to look exquisite. Karin still recalls making G strings for the boys whilst sitting in the back of the theatre. She insists she did it without any measurements!

In Godspell she rummaged around op shops and found denim materials to remake into jeans, tops and bikinis. And it was during this production that she met and married the bass player, moved to South Gippsland and had two children.

A knee injury put paid to her professional dancing career so in order to get some income whilst the children were small she sewed toys – hundreds of them for Billy Thorpe. That's right Billy Thorpe from the Aztecs set up a soft toy company (remember the Puggles) and asked Karin to sew them for him.

The passion to dance had not left Karin and she taught dance and performing arts at the Leongatha Secondary College. Concurrently she was approached to set up a Ballet School and she jumped at the chance. After retraining for the Royal Academy of Dancing she set up the school which required a 94% pass rate for accreditation, Karin ran the school for 10 years. She would hold biannual productions and so it was back to op shops this time ransacking them for autumnal colours to create the costumes for the 7 dwarfs. Or bras – because they are perfect to suggest the scales of a lizard.



Karin now makes one off pieces that would make the haute couturiers of Paris proud. Each one is matched with a millinery piece and hand covered shoes. She knits jewellery out of the copper wire of alternators – just because she likes the texture and the colour. She creates beautiful Cossack style hats that make you wish for the cold so you could wear one. Karin is probably the most creative person that I know – I can't wait to see what she is making next.

ArtSpace

W o n t h a g g i

5-7 McBride Ave, Wonthaggi, Victoria, 3995, Australia 5672 1415

# Invitation

You are invited to join us to  
celebrate our  
Inaugural-Incorporated birthday  
and to thank our artists, volunteers  
and sponsors.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2 – 4pm  
ArtSpace Wonthaggi

RSVP. Monday 16 November. Text or ring Mary 0478 255 803

"The state of female artists is very good. But the very definition of art has been biased in that 'art' was what men did in a European tradition and 'crafts' were what women and natives did. But it's actually the same."

**GLORIA STEINEM**

## *The Last Word*

Picasso could draw before he could walk. His first word was the Spanish word for pencil.

