

ArtSpace

W o n t h a g g i

Newsletter #12

December 2015

We celebrated our Inaugural birthday in style. Delicious food was supplied by Karin Ellis and fantastic wine by local wine producer Mallani Wines served by Sarah Hopkins. Our artists of course provided a spectacular background of their art, and for our other sensory pleasure it was charming classical guitar and mandolin music by Carol Robinson and Judy John.



Featured Artist: Ursula Theinert



"We're f*#ked". It was Black Saturday. Ursula and Werner had escaped their burning house in Callignee when the smoke made it unbearable. They wrapped their faces in wet towels to protect themselves against the smoke and the molten laser light (transparent roofing) that had melted like licking streams of toffee from the ceiling in the strong winds and huddled in the alcove as the full fury of the fire passed their home. The contrast from the black of the previous hours as the smoke blocked the sun to the bright eyeball searing light as the fire passed was incredible. Trees exploded and windows shattered. The noise was like a jet taking off.

And as the fire miraculously skirted their home they redoubled their efforts to save the rest of the house. They went in search of the buckets filled with water they had left on the porch only to find the buckets had melted. Only one stainless steel bucket remained. Werner turned to the fire pump – but its hose had melted too. No electricity, no petrol fire pump and no getting back into the house! They were to find out later than even the underground watering system had also melted in the intense heat. Hence, Werner's statement. And then Ursula remembered the spa filled with water. Somehow they managed to save the majority of their home. They weren't expecting the fires to come to them. They were more concerned with fellow artists who lived in Gembrook and Warragul. But then a neighbour on the top of the Callignee hill rang to tell them that the fire was coming towards them. They decided to stay and fight the fire. They stoically avoided meeting each other's eyes for fear that it would weaken their resolve but just got on with it and put their fire plan into action.



The neighbour rang again – by this time it was too late to leave. "Goodbye – and good luck."

It was a tearful reunion when they saw each other again in the early hours of the following morning. Another neighbour and his son did leave – but too late – and they saw the ruined car the next day as they left their property.

What had started as a collaboration of artists to exhibit in several regional galleries now took a twist as Ursula, Werner, Peter Biram, Kerrie Warren and Leonie Ryan reworked their collection to display their reflections of the fires because the fires had affected all their lives. And so it was that the 'The Fire' series of works, the 'Fields of View' Exhibition went on display.



After two very busy years of re-building their home, garage, sheds, garden and much missed studio and workshop, Ursula and Werner decided to go for a drive to the Bass Coast. They serendipitously found a bush block in Wonthaggi – and impetuously decided to buy it. It happened to be next door to Dennis Leversha's son's place and it wasn't long before Dennis found his way to introduce himself. Ursula and Werner were asked if they would be interested in participating in a small start-up gallery. I guess as they say the rest is history! Ursula is now President of ArtSpace.



Ursula had always had an interest in art. Her father draws and paints and their home was surrounded with his work. She studied art at school but wanted to be a teacher. But suddenly Ursula had an urge to travel the world and decided to join the navy and was waiting to be called up when she met Werner. They fell in love and married when Ursula was only 18 and so cut short a life in the armed forces. They bought six acres of land and worked hard to pay it off and built their home themselves.

Ten years after they were married a beautiful boy was born and after a few years Ursula managed her dream of going to University and getting her teaching qualifications.

But life was not always blissful and after losing a mother to cancer and a baby girl to SIDS they 'ran away' to Bahrain. It was here, teaching in an International School, that Ursula rediscovered her love of art. She was encouraged to paint by friends there who were in the art scene. When they returned to Australia after the second Gulf War she undertook a Diploma of Art majoring in Photography and Painting and a Diploma in Ceramics. She loved it. One unit was particularly interesting as it focussed on the practicalities of art such as framing, how to hold an exhibition and how to enter art competitions. So Ursula decided she would enter the Archibald- no less. She has done so for the last 11 years. Whilst not being successful each of her portraits has been selected in the 'Hidden Faces Exhibition which is the Victorian Salon des Refuses that follows the Archibald. She has also been a finalist in the Portia Geach and a semi-finalist in the Doug Moran.

She has found painting portraits quite challenging due to the need to be so accurate. "You need to be very disciplined", she says. Her landscapes are her preferred style, representing the earth as 'Mother Nature', a living entity. She has learnt a lot over the years and is constantly seeking direction in her art. There are many times she has become dispirited and cynical and had almost given up painting. But then over the last 12 months she has taken classes with Ken Griffiths and she has learnt that it is ok to make mistakes and ok to paint over a work – something she would not have done before. As a result she reworked a piece, 'Fernery', and entered it into the Artist Society of Phillip Island The Cup Exhibition in Cowes. She wanted the piece to have an Oriental influence and create a sense of an intimate experience where one could imagine being in a special place. It must have worked as she won the Best in Show and is now an entrant into the Bass Coast YAC Award.



When telling me about the fire Ursula said, "I felt like I was a soldier in World War I. I was waiting, waiting, knowing that the storm would come. It was the waiting that was so hard." Who knows, maybe the wait for Ursula for her direction in art is over and she has found where she wants to be.

"The *earth* without *art* is just *eh*."

ANONYMOUS

PS Next year ArtSpace will host a number of exhibitions to which you are all invited. The first will be of the work of Ken Griffiths. Ken is an extraordinary artist, entertaining, witty and extremely skilful. He says that he is entertaining himself but in so doing he certainly keeps his audience interested. Every piece has its own visual language and every piece is so different. A multi linguist of the visual arts you will be fascinated from the moment you enter the gallery. Excellence in draughtsmanship, paint application, design and sensitivity for colour relationships all the factors that link together the most diverse exhibition you are ever likely to see by one artist. **14 January - 8 February 2016**



The Last Word

When the Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, the empty space it left on the wall attracted more visitors than the painting had.



