

Women artists on show at WAAM at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum

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Robert Crawford



Liz Cumming's work, Bundanon X, an oil on canvas painted in 1994

The 'WAAM! It's Women's Abstract Art Man!', exhibition, at Huskisson's Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, showcases the work of more than 30 Australian women abstract artists. The works are drawn from the MG Dingle and GB Hughes Collection, an extensive collection of Australian art amassed over 50 years by local artist, collector and patron Max Dingle, with his late partner Gavin Hughes. The exhibition will feature some well-known names such as Elizabeth Cummings, Bronwyn Oliver and Margaret Dredge, as well as other artists who are less well known but whose works show originality and insight.

The exhibition includes paintings, lithographs, sculptures, screen prints, and mixed media works dating from the early 1960s to now. The collection focuses on abstract art, in which, instead of portraying subjects realistically, artists use forms and colours to interpret subjects.

"The abstract artist views the world through an emotional or psychological filter, offering a deeper view of an object or a landscape and to me that's much more interesting than realism," Dingle said.

Dingle said his aim in exhibiting the artworks was to address the under-representation of women in Australian art.

"Of the Archibald portrait prize winners over the last 50 years, more than 80 per cent have been men," he said.

"In books about Australian art, women artists are usually either ignored or simply mentioned in passing as someone's wife or partner.

"It is fitting that the new exhibition should be held at the Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, since women have played an important role in the museum's history. The museum is home to the Lady Denman ferry, named after Lady Gertrude Denman who was a prominent 20th century suffragette and the first Australian Governor General's wife.

"Other significant women include the museum's founder, Vera Hatton, who developed many of the early exhibitions, first director Robyn Williams, and sailor Kay Cottee who officially opened the museum in 1988," Dingle added.