

No Boundaries - Jervis Bay & Basin Arts Exhibition at Lady Denman Museum 6 June 2009

“No boundaries” is a great theme for an exhibition, a theme that should engage all artists.

Good art has always been composed of a number of basic elements or building blocks that are used to create art (line, shape, form, value, color, space, texture), and the different ways the principles of design can be used in a work of art (balance, emphasis, harmony, variety, contrast, movement, rhythm, pattern, proportion, unity).

Artists ignore the basics at a very great risk of producing bad art, but the practice of art is also like gardening. The artist and the gardener need to practice their art with no boundaries, knowing that some things will fail, others will provide background and experience and a few will provide beauty and depth.

I was reminded of this when I walking through the Denman’s native gardens. It brought to mind a book I am currently reading, by Robert Harrison on gardens and the human condition.

Art like a garden tries to satisfy a fundamental human need to change reality, to dress, to create illusion and to re-charge our day to day experiences.

Gardeners live through the soil and build a monument on a heap of compost. You must give more to the soil than you take away.

Life exists where giving exceeds taking and this applies to human culture.....It is not a co incidence that the word “culture”, has its linguistic roots in the soil.

What holds true for gardening holds true for all human activity, for nations, companies, marriage, friendship and for art – you must give it more than you take away.

When it comes to modern technology, companies and those governing them, the drive is to extract, deplete and remove rather than cultivate, enhance and foster.

If we are to put our trust in anyone it should be to those who are like artists and gardeners, those who are willing to invest in a future in which they are partly the instigator but will not always be around to witness the results. A gardener plants a tree and considers what it will be like in fifty years time. Artists, over

centuries, from cave painters to the present, have planted their cultural seeds and wondered what will still be around to influence future generations.

Like gardeners, artists should have no boundaries in their experiments with art. Alternation between styles... still life and portraits, abstraction and realism, between tonal and colour is desirable in any artist. It is merely a change in direction; the constant is the desire to create a coherent world of vital images.

Barbara Hepworth has said “Working realistically replenishes one’s love for life, people and the earth. Working in the abstract releases your personality and sharpens the perceptions”

“No Boundaries” is a great theme and I hope it encouraged you to plant a lot of cultural seeds. I know that in doing so, some works would have failed; others were a bit wild, like weeds, and some (like these around us) have blossomed and hopefully will bear fruit.

Max Dingle
6 June 2009

Max Dingle first arrived in the Shoalhaven in 1961 and started studying art at the Nowra TAFE in the evenings before being accepted as a full time student at the National Art School in Sydney. He has had a distinguished career in Museums over the last 25 years and is a Patron of the Shoalhaven City Arts Centre, having bequeathed them the *M G Dingle & G B Hughes Art Collection* of over 170 paintings and sculpture in 2008. Max is currently focusing on his own painting , sculpture and gardening at home in Sussex Inlet.