

# muswellbrook regional arts centre

Newsletter Vol 2 No 2 March 2006

## Utopia - A Picture Story

from The Holmes à Court Collection, Heytesbury



Tammy Petyarre *Bush Tomatoes* 1988 batik on silk  
(Holmes à Court Collection)

**Utopia - A Picture Story**, is a collection of 88 silk batiks works by artists from Utopia in the eastern region of Central Australia. Conceived as a thematic project and completed in the first quarter of 1988, *A Picture Story* evolved into a collection that has become a major cultural document as well as an outstanding group of individual works of art, featuring those by **Emily Kngwarreye**, **Gloria Petyarre**, and **Ada Bird Petyarre**, who have since entered the lexicon of great Australian painters.

The works in this exhibition represent the turning point for the Utopia women artists as they heralded the changes which have firmly established them, and Western Desert art movement, in the contemporary arts scene. These works convey the knowledge of and respect for country, and use imagery of their ceremonial designs to encompass the perspectives of the women. Apart from two images, *A Picture Story* presents its themes and imagery from an exclusively Anmatyerre & Alyawarre perspective (the exceptions are works by the Waramungu & Kaytetye artists). And, with the exception of **Lyndsay Bird Mpetyane**, they are all women.

The Utopia Community takes its name from the Utopia Station. In the 1970s the Anmatyerre & Alyawarr people began moving back to this traditional land, eventually gaining title. In 1977, the women from Utopia, attended a bush workshop to learn about batik. This was their first experience with materials that were not traditionally their own. The following year they formed the Utopia Women's Batik Association, and over the next decade earned a reputation for their beautiful, fluid designs on silk featuring imagery based on ceremonial Awelye.

*A Picture Story*, was completed during Australia's Bicentenary in 1988. While this project evolved independently from this national celebration, it nevertheless expresses an important symbolic message about cultural autonomy and survival.

The significance of this project is a powerful collective statement by the members of a traditional community, continuing to exhibit within Australia and internationally, and is presented by the **National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery**, Sydney, 20 August-25 September 2005.

Accompanying the batik works are portrait shots of 44 of the artists, taken by photographer, **Nick Adler**. These

## Utopia: A Picture Story continued...

striking photographs capture the relaxed mood of these usually shy women and the austerity of the background focuses the attention of the viewer on the individual artists.

The exhibition comes from the **Holmes à Court Collection**, Heytesbury Pty Ltd, Perth and a book illustrating all works in full-colour, with photographs of the artists and explanatory texts is available on order for \$40. *Utopia: A Picture Story* will be opened by Caroline Adler (on behalf of Nick Adler) at 6pm on Friday 31 March.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people are warned that this exhibition contains images of deceased persons.

## Selected works on paper from the Max Watters Collection

An exhibition of works on paper from the Max Watters Collection which demonstrates both diversity of subject matter and a wide range of techniques including:- drawing, printmaking, photography and painting will be on display from 31 March until 21 May in the Max Watters Gallery

Artists represented include such leading names as Jenny Barwell, Euan Macleod, David Rankin, Rew Hanks and Robin Wallace-Crabbe. There are also some excellent examples from artists of the region including Roger Skinner and Alison Hodges. Together they support Max's goal to collect artworks which express diversity whilst having a strong educational and entertainment base.



Ross Woodrow, Senior Lecturer, Art Theory School of Fine Art, University of Newcastle, opening the *Primavera 2005* exhibition



Susan Ransom, art teacher, with her Year 12 art class from Scone High School at the *Primavera 2005* opening

## Miniatures XI

Miniatures have been a regular feature of the Art Centre's exhibition program for almost two decades. This exhibition, by an invited cross section of artists of the Upper Hunter, presents small scale artworks in a wide variety of styles, subject matter and choices of medium.

Originally thought of as an art form relating to the portrayal of the figure, in particular the portrait, it now encompasses landscape, still life and abstract themes. The important element is that the artwork is miniaturized and not just a small object.

Conforming to the recognized size restriction of no more than 10cm on any side, it becomes possible to show many works by a number of artists in a relatively small space in an atmosphere which allows for the close inspection and attention to detail that such an exhibition requires.

*Miniatures XI* will open at 6pm on Friday 31 March in conjunction with *Utopia - A Picture Story* and a selection of works on paper from the Max Watters Collection. All of these exhibitions will be on display until Sunday 21 May.



David Dolahenty *Still Life With Flowers No. 7* 2005 watercolour (Miniatures XI)

# Artists Profile - Max and Pat Brown

A home filled with many interesting examples of woodturning and embroidery demonstrates Max and Pat's combined passion for the traditional crafts and skills associated with their hobbies. Like many people living in rural communities, they belong to clubs and groups which do much in fostering an ongoing commitment towards maintaining traditional skills, promoting them both within the immediate community and to a wider audience through displays, demonstrations and workshops. The high quality of their work, combined with a willingness to explore new techniques and materials, has seen them regularly featured in the exhibition program of the Arts Centre.

Max has been a keen member of the Upper Hunter Woodworkers club for the past 15 years and he has a particular interest in working with a wide range of different timbers. His commitment and interest is very apparent in the example portrayed in this article.

This large wooden bowl, made from ironbark, utilises the inherent flaws in the timber as decorative elements. The piercings and natural aging cracks give a sense of lightness and delicacy which belies its considerable weight and chunkiness.

"I like the immediacy of wood. It's a challenge to work with a piece of timber to create something useful or decorative", says Max, also adding that "Initially working with wood provides an interesting diversion to my usual day to day life. I also enjoy the social contact with like minded people".

Pat has a real passion for surface embroidery techniques. Using wool, cotton, silk and artificial threads, she creates surfaces of great textural beauty in a myriad of techniques from the simplest outline stitching to the richness of laid and bullion stitching. Stumpwork, which has its roots in ecclesiastical embroidery dating back to the Renaissance, is a particular technique in which she excels. Her interest in embroidery has been over many years, and, like the other members of the Muswellbrook Group of the Embroiderers Guild of NSW Inc., she enjoys sharing her knowledge of needlecraft and sense of comradeship with them. The group has been meeting regularly since 1982 for a whole day of stitching, sometimes



Muswellbrook based artists, Max and Pat Brown

with a guest tutor, sometimes on a particular group project, but always with a sense of willingness to promote and share its interests with its wider community audience.

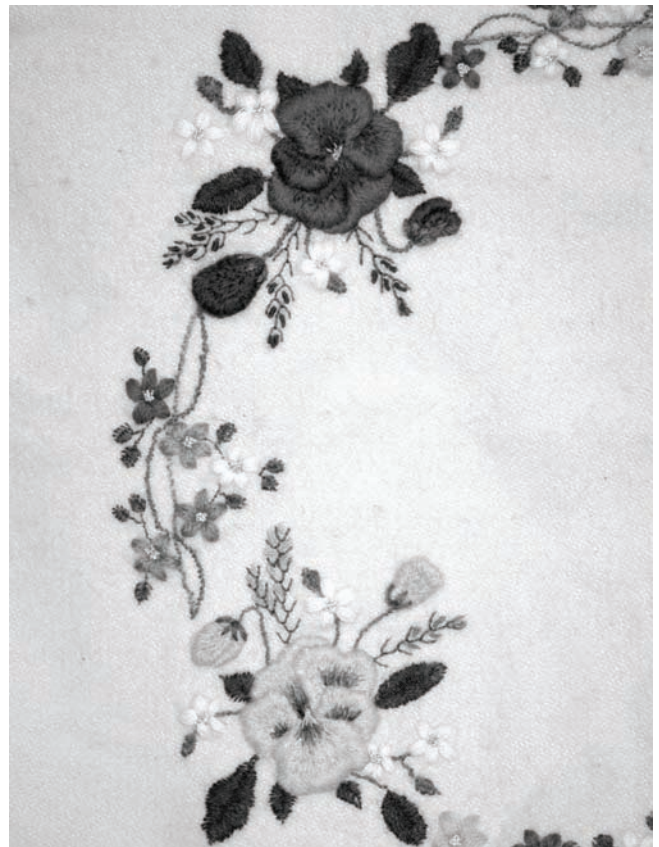
A woollen blanket features an embroidered central floral garland motif. Pat uses a variety of traditional stitches to portray lifelike studies of recognisable individual flowers.

"I love working with colours and different textures", say Pat. "I also find it relaxing and challenging. Working with people with the same interest is inspiring".

"Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful" – William Morris



Max Brown *Bowl* turned ironbark



Pat Brown *Baby blanket* woolen embroidery

## Manager's Report

Welcome to the March edition of the Arts Centre newsletter. Our 2006 program is well under way with very positive responses from the public about the *Primavera 2005* exhibition. *Primavera* brought insight into bold contemporary visual arts practice, showcasing the efforts of nine young Australian artists.

The Arts Centre has been working quietly on our marketing strategy and the website has the full 2006 exhibition program listed, along with other useful information and the current edition of our newsletter. The Council website located at [www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au](http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au) also provides links to other useful sites, such as Upper Hunter Tourism.

The Regional Galleries Association of NSW has also just released their new publication *Art of New South Wales - A guide to Regional Galleries*. This booklet is produced in partnership with Tourism NSW and features short descriptions and contact details for all the regional galleries in the state. Copies are available from the Arts Centre, Council Administration, library branches and Tourist Information Centres.

The Arts Centre is pleased to announce that we have secured Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Status through the Australian Tax Office. The DGR Status allows the Arts Centre to receive gifts of art, appropriate to the permanent collection acquisition policy, and allows the donor to receive a benefit through the Australian Tax Office. The Arts Centre does not have an acquisitions budget and most recent new works have come to the collection via the Open Art Prize, so this addition will help in building up the collection and particularly in filling in some important historical gaps.

Congratulations to Kelleigh Parker on her wonderful exhibition in support of the Westpac helicopter and held recently at the Muswellbrook Workers Club.

On a more poignant note I will be taking 12 months leave without pay from early April to pursue some study and travel opportunities in the United Kingdom. During this period Council has appointed Tricia Flanagan to act in the position of Manager. Tricia is a practicing artist with a great deal of experience in community arts projects and a high level of academic achievement behind her and is currently involved in projects with Arts Upper Hunter.

Council will also be appointing a new casual position to assist with the Arts Centre operations.

Bruce Tindale  
Arts Centre Manager

### ART CLASSES WITH MAX WATTERS

Fridays - Scone Youth Club, Susan Street 3  
- 6pm Tel: 02-6545 2203.

Tuesdays - Aberdeen Community Hall  
7 - 9pm.

Saturdays - Aberdeen Community Hall  
2 - 4pm.

Mondays - Wybong Hall 6pm contact Judy  
02-6547 8189

**Moving Art Exhibition & Auction**  
ENTRIES NOW INVITED  
FROM REGIONAL ARTISTS  
TOURING NEW ENGLAND  
25 MAY 2006 TO 30 JUNE 2006

**ENTRIES CLOSE: THURSDAY 20 APRIL**

**Contact: Tricia Donovan - 0427 22 00 17**  
**[tricialawsonmenzies@yahoo.com.au](mailto:tricialawsonmenzies@yahoo.com.au)**

## SCONE ADFAS Lectures for 2006

11 April

**The Australian Art Market:  
Collecting and movements of taste and art  
fashion within the market over the last decade**  
Mr Michael Reid BA BL

6.30pm Arts & Craft Hall, Kingdon Street, Scone  
Visitors are very welcome at \$20 (includes supper)

Membership details and information available  
by contacting 02-6545 1156

## EMAIL?

**Would you prefer to receive the Arts Centre  
newsletter and invitations as a pdf file  
sent by email?**

**If so, please contact us on  
02-6549 3880 and we will amend our records to  
allow this to happen.**

## muswellbrook regional arts centre

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Opening hours: 10am - 5pm Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 1pm Saturday, 2pm - 5pm Sunday  
(closed Mondays and public holidays)

