



EVERY-
ONE
HAS
A
STORY

An art exhibition by Wellington
City Council housing tenants

Tuesday 22–Saturday 26 November, 2011
Thistle Hall, Wellington

Everyone has a Story

Everyone has a Story is an art exhibition by Wellington City Council housing tenants. The show has more than 40 pieces of art, each responding to the theme – ‘telling a story’. There are a wide range of stories and the artwork isn’t necessarily autobiographical, some are myth or fantasy.

Everyone has a Story is the sequel to the *Complex Creative* exhibition that was held at Toi Pōneke Gallery in May last year.

To complement the art, there is a listening post where you can hear 10 artists talking about their life and art.

Artists were interviewed by the Voice Arts Trust. Listening to them, it’s clear how diverse each of these artist’s stories are – also reflected in the range of artworks.

A key group of Council housing artists has emerged over the past year, including

Bruce Hurley, Justin Tate and Kay McCormick. The group, now known as Wellington Association of City Housing Artists (WACHA), was responsible for organising the show, coming up with the theme and promoting the exhibition. WACHA plans to produce more shows in the future.

The artists say working on *Everyone has a Story* has been a great experience.

“With help from Council staff and Pablos Art Studios and also Vincents Art Workshop, we’ve organised a show from start to finish in a high-profile community gallery space. It’s given us the opportunity to collaborate with both arts professionals and grassroots artists at every stage of developing an exhibition.”

Wellington City Council would also like to thank Nicola Pauling and Voice Arts Trust for documenting the artist’s stories and The French Art Shop for gifting art supplies.

Eric Dyne

Eric Dyne comes from a family of artists and discovered at the age of four he too had a talent for drawing. With the support of his parents he left school at age 15 to study fine arts at Wellington Polytechnic under tutor Fred Ellis. While his peers were learning algebra, Eric was painting nudes.

He went on to work as a commercial artist, becoming Chief Artist at the Government Printing Office and then Art Director of the National Publicity Studios.

In 1987, after 20 years working in government, he started his own business as an illustrator and print broker. In 2004 Eric had a serious stroke that significantly changed his life and left him unable to hold a paintbrush. After months of rehabilitation, he decided to return to art school and relearn his craft.

He now works independently as a commissioned artist and as a tutor at the Wellington Art Club. Eric specialises in portraits and also finds inspiration in the landscapes of Wellington, particularly the geography of Seatoun, where he grew up and still lives today.



WACHA
Wellington Association
of City Housing Artists



Kay McCormick



Kay McCormick was born in Dunedin and drew from an early age. She drew faces and caricatures of her teachers that got her in trouble on more than one occasion. She has no formal art education, apart from art lessons at Colenso High School in Napier. Kay trained as a nurse at Wellington Hospital and then lived for more than 30 years in Europe, mainly in London. She returned to New Zealand in 2007.

While in London her professional career was health-related. For 10 years she worked as medical secretary to the Royal Opera House doctors in Covent Garden. During this time she made many sketches and paintings of dancers, singers, musicians and conductors. She also worked as a graphic designer creating logos, book covers and greeting cards, and studied part-time for a degree in Art History and English Literature.

She first submitted work to the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in 1968 and continues to have her work selected for shows. In April 2010 she was invited by the academy to present a solo exhibition. She was also a finalist in the 2008 Adam Portraiture Award.

In 1980 Kay suffered a serious head and neck injury that left her with a permanent headache. The smell of oil paint became intolerable so she started with water colour pencil, then took up water colour painting when she returned to New Zealand. She says watercolour is ideal for capturing the freshness of New Zealand.

Kay's drawings and paintings are in private and public collections in London and Paris, Scotland, Denmark, France, England, Lebanon, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Thomas Davey

Thomas Davey is a self-taught artist who works in sculptural assemblages and, from time to time, he paints. He works almost exclusively with discarded materials, particularly abandoned electronic equipment, computers, TVs, radios, cameras, appliances – anything with screws.

He thoroughly deconstructs these materials. A label on a device that warns, 'Do not open under any circumstances', is an invitation to do the opposite. He boasts that he has only had two electric shocks. The parts are then mixed, matched and reconstructed, creating new life and new meaning. It is a process that involves gluing, screwing and drilling – a process that Thomas has loved since he was a child obsessed with building Second World War model aircraft.

The military is a strong theme in his work, as is science fiction. In 2008 he held an exhibition of robots that drew the attention of collectors and sci-fi enthusiasts. Thomas admits he was uneasy with the attention and has now turned his back on sci-fi to explore other avenues. Thomas works between home and a shared studio in Dixon Street.



Sam Conrad



Born and raised in South Auckland, **Sam Conrad's** passion and talent for drawing developed at a young age. At school he would draw intricate images on his desk, only to be forced to scrub it down. Undeterred he would start again – the clean surface was like a fresh canvas.

But Sam's skill went unrecognised and as a young adult he worked in a number of different jobs before he was hospitalised with depression. As he slowly recovered he regained his interest in art and enrolled at NatColl Design School in Wellington.

Sam describes himself as an improviser. He draws in pen, any mistake is an opportunity to change the story, to develop a new idea and move the drawing in a new direction. He endows each of his works with details that are intricate and intimate. He likens the process of drawing to a parental relationship, based on nurturing, care and deep understanding.

There is little colour in Sam's work, he is inspired instead by shapes and curves. Much of his early work reflects his interest in graphic novels and is an expression of aggression and darkness. His latest work is a move away from that and seeks to honour his Māori culture. It is a challenge he welcomes as he explores traditional Māori art themes, swapping the pen for a paintbrush. Sam is currently studying at the Bowerman School of Design in Newtown.

Gordon McArthur

Gordon McArthur enjoyed drawing as a young person but was never encouraged – nor did he consider following an artistic path. Instead he studied to be a civil engineer but dropped out before completing a qualification. It was the 1970s and he was drawn into the drug culture.

While working as a house painter he decided to see what would happen if he took those skills and downsized them. It was a success and he sold his first painting. The practicalities of that work have flowed into his art. He considers himself a worker undertaking a very practical task rather than an artist. He is conscious to keep his brushes and workspace clean and not to make a mistake.

Gordon is self-taught; he turns to books on painting and art to inform his work. His journey through the psychedelic age of the 1970s is a strong influence on his art. He also plays with abstracts, allowing colour to inspire him.

He starts by sketching out his ideas on paper, carefully planning the colour scheme, size and dimensions. But he says the work inevitably takes on a mind of its own when the sketches are transferred to the board.



David Fraser



David Fraser was born in Scotland and immigrated to New Zealand with his parents when he was seven, first to Waikato before settling in Invercargill. He decided he wanted to work as a commercial artist and when he left school he began training at Southland Technical College. He then moved to the Capital to study graphic design at Wellington Polytechnic under graphic techniques tutor Kate Coolahan, photographer Bill Main and printmaker John Drawbridge.

After graduating, David worked at Claude Neil Lights as a visualiser and electric sign designer, working mainly with neon and plastic. In the late 1970s, while working in Sydney, the tools of David's trade began to dramatically change with the introduction of computers. David tried to adapt but a computer was nothing like the tactile paper, pencil and ruler he loved. He was soon made redundant.

He returned to Wellington in need of a new path and developed a love of painting and music. For the past 30 years he has worked as an artist and a musician, moving easily between the two crafts. Much of his art continues to reflect his early career as a commercial artist. Bold, straight lines and strong colours are a core theme.

Gypsy Blu

The pseudonym **Gypsy Blu** reflects the artist's European traveller ancestry. Inspired by the tales told by his gypsy grandparents, and by his parents' love of art and craft, he knew from a young age that he wanted to be an artist. His first canvas was his bedroom wall.

Gypsy Blu began with watercolours before moving to acrylics and most recently 3D collages. He describes his work as colourful, edgy and political. The music of Pink Floyd, David Bowie and the Beatles also inspires him. Every piece tells a story, the brush is his book, and from the first nail in the frame he knows the story and how it will play out.

During a period of depression and isolation a friend introduced Gypsy Blu to Pablos Art Studio and a whole new world of opportunity opened up for him. He has been a resident artist there ever since and has exhibited at the associated Roar Gallery on several occasions. He says he feels like a showman when he exhibits and the work is his own little circus.

Gypsy Blu is one of four founding members of the Wellington City Council social housing art group, WACHA (Wellington Association of City Housing Artists). The aim is to offer advice and support to artists who live in Council flats and who want to further develop and exhibit their work.



Judith Carson



Judith Carson comes from a creative family and can't remember a time when she wasn't involved in some kind of artistic expression. By age five the highlight of her week was a long walk from her home in Evans Bay to Wellington Polytechnic for a Saturday morning art class, a routine she maintained for eight years. The paintbrush was and still is her way of life.

After leaving high school she followed a traditional work path, before marrying and raising four children. It was only when the last became a teenager that Judith returned fully to her art. She gave up a lucrative career to attend art school. For four years she explored and experimented with her art. She was poor, she says, but tremendously happy.

Judith takes inspiration from the landscape of New Zealand and our native bird life. Time working and living in Zimbabwe is also reflected in her work. More recently a passion for jazz music and the visual ascetics of jazz performance features in her work.

Judith paints mostly in acrylics but also has an interest in collage and pastels. She has exhibited at a number of galleries around Wellington.

Justin Tate

Justin Tate's approach to painting continues to evolve and has a lot to do with experimenting and developing techniques for image processing and rendering.

This has led him away from more orthodox styles toward a combination of screen printing and painting that he calls a "screen transfer".

Justin has chosen to work with images of artefacts and classical themes because of his interest in history and mythology and because they give a good template to expand upon.

He uses computer graphics to help with design and composition. At the computer-aided design stage he sometimes uses a form of half-toning called "dithering", which gives images greater tonality.

At the painting stage he focuses on surface effects, texture, layering of transparent washes, detail, lines and edges.

Screen printing with acrylic paint onto canvas is unusual so Justin developed innovations to achieve this. He chose to work on canvas because of its traditional appeal, simplicity and durability.

In the past, Justin's work has included oil and acrylics, drawing, icon painting, abstract, minimalism, collage, stenciling and narratives.

In the future he hopes to produce larger and more abstract screen transfers.



Kayla Riarn



Kayla Riarn's mother was passionate about crafting and from a young age Kayla was taught the skills of macramé, cane work, weaving, knitting, and paper marbling. But it was the restoring of old, faded, discarded objects that really appealed. To this day, Kayla continues to bring new life and beauty to forgotten objects, a process she calls beautification.

She recently developed an interest in painting, inspired by friend and artist Victor Te Paa and applies the same attention to fine detail to her paintings. Kayla often finishes an artwork, hangs it on the wall, only to notice a tiny detail that is not quite right, so down it comes for a touch up.

Kayla's other passion is food. She has worked as a chef for many years and likes to merge food and art, creating not just culinary, but visual feasts for her customers.

Through her love of Asian cooking Kayla discovered the art and culture of the region. This is a main source of inspiration for her art. Again, it is the attention to detail that is often present in Asian culture that appeals to Kayla and she draws on this not only for her art but for the way she lives her life.