



Bruce Vinall, *That Which Is Past*, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 122x152cm. Collection Warrnambool Art Gallery

Bruce Vinall

Warrnambool 's Bruce Vinall describes himself as a haptic artist or someone who paints and draws from the way he feels and senses the world.

"Haptics look at the world as if they are touching it," he said.

"My work is about an expression of life - visual, tactile, it is about walking along the cutting, or listening to the surf," he said.

Now in his 80s, he said this time of restriction due to the Covid 19 virus reminds him of his early childhood - the pressures of uncertainty and tension in the house when an uncle went missing in action in WWII and was later found safe. Also the fear when schools closed and children were kept inside during the Polio epidemics, which occurred in Australia in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

He said he finds it reassuring that Government Opposition, Unions and Citizens have pulled so well together in this present crisis.

For many years Bruce taught art in schools and later painting at the Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education (later Deakin University) for 14 years. He showed his work in South Australia, Warrnambool, Melbourne and regional Victoria.

His paintings and works on paper have an energy and colour that can create a sense of calm in movement, a contemplative space.

"I call my art modern, not contemporary and somehow I do seem to have the capacity to communicate to people who don't get modern art, and often I sell to people who have only ever had paintings of gum trees on their walls," he said.

Bruce has always had an interest in spirituality and philosophy, and in 2003 he recorded a lecture examining his art through ideas of drawing on the right side of the brain, the theory of Robert Sperry a psycho biologist who suggested creativity began on the right side of the brain and rational analytical thinking on the left, and the divide between classical and romantic philosophy through the author Robert Prigogine's book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance."

Once when life challenged him, a friend let him stay in his shack on the Yorke Peninsula for the winter and work. He said being immersed in nature gave him some of his best works.

"It was all about the air, the light, the water, and living by the sea."

He said his work has an emotion but is never dark or depressive rather it is affirmative and captures the feeling of his environment and even in its abstraction can still suggest landscape.

He continues his art practice learning to paint with acrylics rather than oils to avoid the fumes and continues to work on paper using pencils, pens, and gouache and water colour.

"Now more than ever in my life, I find myself just switching off my head and letting rip in my work like a jazz player, my hands moving faster than my head," he said.

On a recent trip to hospital, he took his drawing pad and pens, and among the works he created is the impressionistic drawing "Pancho and Lefty", shown below. He quipped "far better to draw than watch television."



Pancho and Lefty, 2020



Clockwise from top left (details): *The Forever Dragon*, 2012, acrylic on linen 152x152cm; *Keeeaar*, 1987, oil on canvas; *Mind Moves*, 1994, oil, acrylic and oil stick on linen, 122x152cm; *Losing the Ground*, 1984, oil and acrylic on canvas 119x108cm