

XMAS NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024

Information - stimulation - inspiration
perspiration and occasional exasperation



Feedback welcome at:
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of the Nambucca Valley Arts Council

“INTO VIEW”

An Exhibition by Natalee Selwood

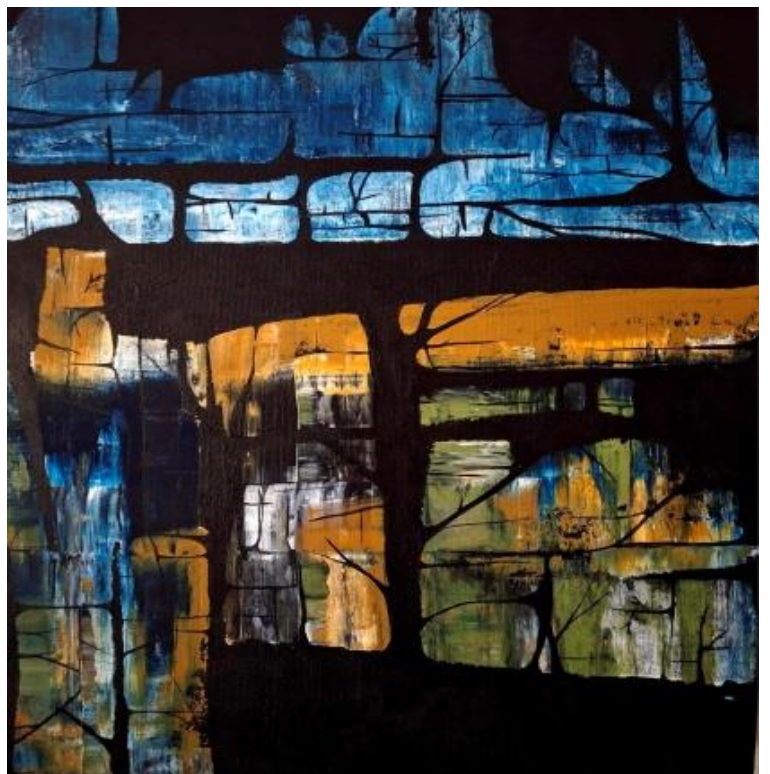
Natalee enjoys working with acrylics and texture mediums to create abstract and contemporary works and has been strongly influenced by the environment and its strong varied colour palette. Since moving to the mid-north-coast the oceans, beaches, rivers and dense bush have been dominant in her work. However, for her featured Artist Exhibition she has created works by revisiting memories of her previous employment as a Water Monitoring Officer where great distances were travelled from Far-western NSW to the Blue Mountains in times of extreme drought and also in severe floods. The following are extracts from the diary of when Natalee was a Hydrographer which influenced some of the works for this collection:



“During times of drought the landscape is barren and the sky is made up of dust torn from the exposed land. Inklings of grass depleted of colour, cling to the ground in hopes that the desolated land will once again be given replenishment. Trees along the waterways claw their roots to the banks in hope of survival.” N. Selwood.

“When the rains come, the landscape slowly evolves from the arid dustbowl to reveal the re-emergence of life and growth. When the rain comes as an incessant downpour, that emergence of life is swallowed, then engulfed, as the soupy mud ridden torrent sweeps the land”. N. Selwood

Two samples of Natalee's work:



Natalee is looking forward to continuing to explore topics and techniques for the NVAC Themed Exhibitions as well as contribute to the NVAC Bi-annual Art Exhibition next year (2025). You can hear more about that at the special morning tea to open her show at 10.00 am on Dec 7th at the gallery.

PLEASE NOTE: In limiting the amount of news & info material to be included in this Xmas Newsletter, our planned article on a selected writer has been shunted over to the January 2025 issue. It consists of a review of D. H. Lawrence's quickly dashed-off novel on Australia called *Kangaroo*—a novel no local writer would have dared to write because of its deep and scathing criticism of the life he encountered in his brief stay here. We think it's of high interest because of how it shows how a fearless writer can best serve his fellows by his painting word pictures of what he sees rather than what he thinks everyone will want to hear—the fashion now imposed by publishers and their fickle public. To that end, we've included a Charles Dickens cartoon below to make the point sink in. As our war memorials clearly warn: the high price of freedom and peace is **eternal vigilance.** Ed.



WHAT'S ON IN THE LOCAL AREA:

Sawtell Art Group: "A Long Hot Summer" Entries in by 8th December – Opening 12th December with Christmas drinks and nibbles

South West Rocks Community Art Gallery: "Sculptures Rock" 16th December to 5 January – Register now – Members Expo 16th December to 5th January

ArtSpace Urunga: "Earth Matters" 26th November to 14th December – Summer Show 19th December to 28th January

Nambucca Valley Arts Council: "Into View" Natalee Selwood 2nd December to 3rd February – "Beautiful Nambucca" 2nd December to 3rd February.

Bellingen Community Arts Council: Summer Members Exhibition 1st December to 17th January

Matilda Street Gallery, Macksville: Summer Exhibition Dec/Jan

Nambucca Valley Arts Council:

Special Art Sale Dec/Jan - Bargains to be had here!



THEMED EXPO: "BEAUTIFUL NAMBUCCA"



Two works exhibited by Member Jenni Urquhart

Colin Friels – actor

(from a SMH interview by Karl Quinn in 2018)

The question arose whether actors are artists or crafts people. Colin Friels was ready to share his feelings on that. He is an instinctual performer with a short attention span, who needs to feel rather than think his way into a part. But it takes time and, he concedes, it doesn't always happen. "I have no rehearsal technique. I just chuck myself in the torrent. It's horrible to watch." Although he loves working with his wife, Judy Davis, he says: "I'd rather not inflict myself on her. Someone who knows you intimately knows all your weaknesses."



It's interesting to note that despite all this negative self-talk, as the therapists would put it, Friels is far more upbeat about his worth in the realm he says would have been his path had he not been struck by the acting bug. In the photo here, he's with Judy Davis.

If he hadn't gone to NIDA as a 20-year-old, he says, "I would have laid bricks and worked horses. I was a good brickies' labourer, and I loved it. I'm still the happiest man in the world with a batch of cement and a bunch of bricks." He's building a solid stone wall on his property at Moss Vale, a couple of hours south of Sydney. The farm is a remote place, eight or nine kilometres down a dirt road, and he can go weeks at a time without seeing or talking to anyone else.

"I'll talk to myself a bit – 'come on you old idiot, get going, get that fence fixed, that horse needs trimming'. I talk to my horse a lot, to my Jack Russell. You handle the rocks all day and start talking to the rocks. 'You are so beautiful' or 'you bastard, what's wrong with you'." He's no loner, he insists—"I like people, I like company"—but there's something entrancing about the physicality of all that hard work that is enough for him. "You wake up at 6.30 in the morning, stiff in the body, aching, you stretch it out and get into it. It's wonderful."

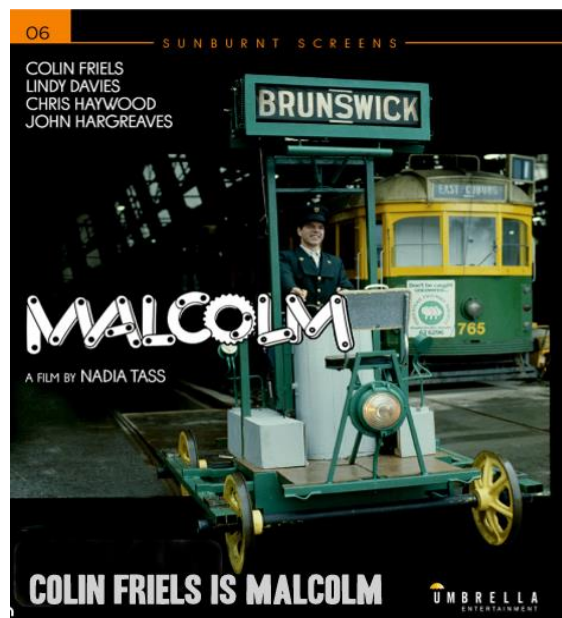
That was what drew him to acting, too. "I thought of it physically and visually—I didn't know what it was but I just thought, 'I want to do that'." Its little wonder

then that Friels—who arrived in Australia as the 11-year-old son of working-class immigrants from Glasgow—resists the idea of what he does as any kind of art. "It's a craft. An actor can't be an artist, it's impossible. He can be a good craftsman, there's nothing wrong with that, the craft is quite beautiful. But your job is to serve the writers. An actor's got a job to do. Hopefully over the years if you get enough practice, you learn what's best to do, what not to do." The ideal state for an actor, he says, is a complete absence of self-consciousness. For the celebrity thespian, he muses, that must be an incredibly difficult state to achieve. But not for him.

"A Chinese doctor I'd been seeing said to me once, 'Are you famous?' And I said no. He said, 'Ah, good. To seek fame is like pig seeking slaughter'." (The Chinese know). Mind you, he could well be famous and not know it. He doesn't own a computer, and never has. "I've never had an email in my life, never written an email. I've done maybe four text messages." He's got nothing against technology, he just doesn't feel the need to embrace it. "It will give you information more quickly but it doesn't make you a more enlightened person."

If this humble, self-doubting salt-of-the-Earth Luddite schtick is a performance, it's a good one. And it's one to which he remains utterly committed to the end. As I order an Uber back to the office, Friels reels out one more anecdote at his own expense. "I'm so dumb that I called Directory Assistance once because I couldn't get a cab, and I asked for the number for Uber," he says. "The operator said, 'It's an app'. So I said, 'Well can you give me the number for the app?'" She told him he might be better off just waiting for a taxi. "And," he adds, "I still haven't been in a Uber".

The film "Malcolm" was made before John Howard killed off the Australian film industry to Americanize us. It's worth a watch if you want to see Friels and Hargreaves at their absolute best. It can be watched free on SBS On-Demand.



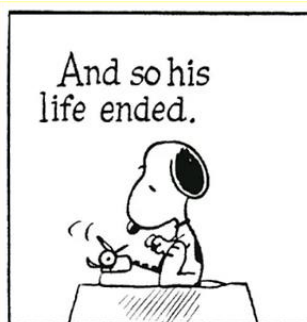


Mildred's scandalous past as an artists' model was never discovered.

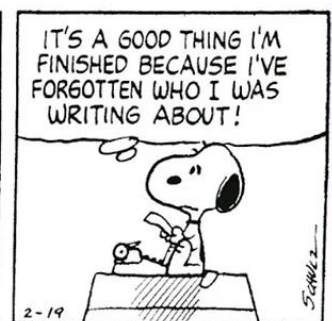
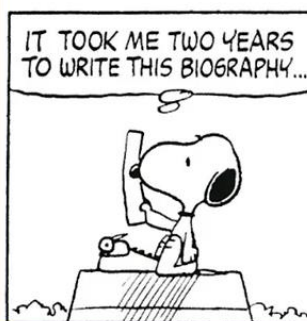
WHY DO WE DO IT? by Anaïs Nin (1903 - 1977)

"Why one writes is a question I can answer easily, having so often asked it of myself. I believe one writes because one has to create a world in which one can live. I could not live in any of the worlds offered to me – the world of my parents, the world of war, the world of politics. I had to create a world of my own, like a climate, a country, an atmosphere in which I could breathe, reign, and recreate myself when destroyed by living. **That, I believe, is the reason for every work of art.** The artist is the only one who knows the world is a subjective creation, that there is a choice to be made, a selection of elements. It is a materialisation, an incarnation of his inner world. Then he hopes to attract others into it, he hopes to impose this particular vision and share it with others. When the second stage is not reached, the brave artist continues nevertheless. The few moments of communion with the world are worth the pain, for it is a world for others, an inheritance for others, a gift to others, in the end. When you make a world tolerable for yourself, you make a world tolerable for others.

We also write to heighten our own awareness of life. We write to lure and enchant and console others, we write to serenade our lovers. We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection. We write, like Proust, to render all of it eternal, and to persuade ourselves that it is eternal. We write to be able to transcend our life, to reach beyond it. We write to teach ourselves to speak with others, to record the journey into the labyrinth, we write to expand our world, when we feel strangled, constricted, lonely. We write as the birds sing. As the primitive dance their rituals. If you don't breathe through writing, if you don't cry out in writing, or sing in writing, *then don't write.* Because our culture has no use for any of that. When I don't write I feel my world shrinking. I feel I am in prison. I feel I lose my fire, my color. It should be a necessity, as the sea needs to heave. I call it breathing."



@PEANUTSSPECIALS



BOOK REVIEW

The arts and education are two peas in the same pod. When they get shelled and separated, we can know we've got trouble on our hands. And we have it in spades. One book that deserves far more attention in Australia than it's ever got is John Taylor Gatto's "Dumbing Us Down". The multi-award winning high school teacher criticized—no, condemned—an education system that was ruining America by fostering ignorance in the population. We've been actively copying it for more than five decades and face the prospect of the same return on investment we see in the US today. If people are frightened and confused, at the core of it is a failed education. Education, remember, is the tool we use to do better at living than wild animals. Gatto expands on that at length, blaming the lack of encouragement to think outside the box—the curious habit humans have to assure their continued survival. How do we think outside the box on the matter of education? In the Opinion Piece below, I've selected an author who did just that, back when the wheel in education was already beginning to fall off its axel.

OPINION PIECE

A Cultural Defrost

World culture is in such a crisis there seems no way back from pending civilizational collapse. Why is that? Well, we ignored the thinkers amongst us so we could embrace political expediency which led us to the devaluing of education and the impasse we're in today. One thinker we ignored was Ivar Lissner who, in 1961, had this to say about education. The time we spend in school is largely wasted. He had a solution we adopt or else. The choice is a radical one, and it's ours:

"Education could be changed. Naturally, any radical change would involve the dismissal of teachers which in the present world situation would mean that they would suffer serious privation. Today most people spend the best part of their lives, from the age of seven until about thirty, poring over books, and at the end of this, they are chagrined to find that they have learned nothing, and still have a long way to go. A lifetime is too short to learn everything.

However, using hypnosis in a truly scientific spirit, the whole scope of education could be changed. In a few hours a child could master a whole subject which at present takes the better part of its youth to master. Further, he would do so with great accuracy. *It* would be sufficient to put a child into a controlled hypnotic sleep, with the help of a drug such as canabissativa, or a combination of chloroform and morphia, administered at intervals with a psychologist at hand to dictate all the material to be learned.

This could be carried out on a large scale with thousands of pupils at once, making use of headphones. It would be easier, more convenient, and cheaper, and it would not bore a child with long lectures, it would not be subject to the shortcomings of the teachers, and other disadvantages of the present system. Pupils could go to college early, sleep and come back with a scientific degree in their pockets.

Do you think this is too short a time to learn so much? Surely a teacher would not be able to dictate enough in that time. The spirit pays no heed to the concepts of time and space, an eternity can be condensed into a second or a second can be made into an eternity. One could create the system of rapid transmission. Human thought waves work on a band of about 5 mm wavelength.

If electrical messages were sent within this band in successive waves, the whole of human knowledge could be transmitted in a very short time. The same method could be used to do away with atavistic tendencies and criminal tendencies. In hypnotic sleep the mind becomes receptive and ready to learn and profit by sound teaching. One could go further and break down the barrier between the conscious and the subconscious.

However, this would require considerable technique which could only be mastered in time, as there is a risk of the concept of time disappearing from the mind altogether. Prisons could be emptied, in the first place by deleting criminal tendencies from the human mind so that no further malefactors would come into being, and in the second because those with criminal tendencies already would be re-educated, by the hypnotic process and reintegrated into society. With its framework changed, society would overcome the moral prejudices which dog its steps. Man would overcome death and old age would no longer exist on Earth." - Ivar Lissner (1961).

All this sounds like Huxley's 'Brave New World', doesn't it? The thinkers in our midst (the ones we still keep ignoring even now) assure us we're already there, having arrived by the slow boiling frog method—by quiet stealth. I endured an "education" that was what Gatto described. The greatest discovery of all time was realising that we can use our rational minds to control our subconscious. And we do nothing about it. It's so frightening we just seize up, immobilized. Ed.

OPINION PIECE

Where did all the artists go?

by Alec Cullen

Art and artists need defending as never before. I survived as an artist in a land that values artists the same as check-out chicks. I used to believe that the world was once perfect and something went very seriously wrong to land us in that situation. The fable of the Garden of Eden is no doubt what started that adolescent view of things and keeps so many of us naïve about the truth of it all our lives. We were all artists once and then something went seriously wrong about 3,000 years ago to cut the numbers down to a pittance compared to those indifferent to art and to artists.

Humanity is a creative species by its very nature. That's a given I won't debate with the trendy androids of today who want us all to become like them to make them feel comfortable about being non-artists (a kind word for philistines). There are other types of artists than painters, of course, but the appallingly low figure is reflected throughout. 'Every child is an artist,' said Picasso. 'The problem is how to remain an artist as he grows up. The chief enemy of creativity is good sense.' And so say all of us.



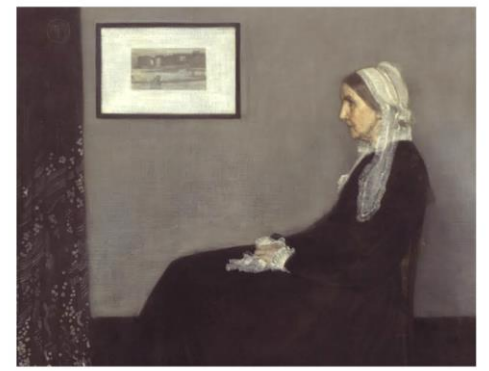
"Really, I'm fine. It was just a fleeting sense of purpose—I'm sure it will pass."

Good sense of which he spoke comes with conformity and loss of individual character that we imagine is the ideal for essence of adulthood. I can't speak for everyone, but when I was growing up, the strength of character needed to remain an artist for life was not encouraged. It was considered a character defect; a sure sign of too much independence. To please, you had to be a clone of both non-artist parents. You had to slum it.

Creativity is an evil to be eradicated by ripping it out root and branch. I had to fight to recover it in later life. They wanted cripples they could control, not well-balanced, ideal creative human beings. The 'good sense' they wanted me to adopt was a form of death that held no attraction for me. So I have no illusions where all the natural-born artists had gone. They're in a cemetery built especially for them while still alive. They were murdered by dead people who wanted to have the comfort of assurance that others were all safely dead of spirit, just like them.

Such feelings were considered aberrant by my lifeless entourage. Intuitive feelings from a source I was taught was the evil in me. I knew it was my only hope for survival in life. Every day we're all faced with the choice of trusting our inner voice or going with the mob. As history shows, the mob is consistently wrong, and yet it gets its way. It's so consistently stupid that it can never be right. Our political system is contingent on the assumption that the mob knows best even when it's so abundantly clear that it doesn't (see Trump).

The French thinker and author Albert Camus declared that we humans are the only species on this planet that refuses to be what it is. I would add that it refuses to question what it might aspire to be, and doggedly remains loyal to its diminished and even semi-deceased status. Since artists who survived the carnage are our most intelligent, you'd think that they'd be valued, but the rush to death goes continues



**"If other people are going to talk, conversation becomes impossible."
Whistler**

unabated. If it was his creativity that he was forced to abandon as a child, the adult artist is forced to become unintelligent, and to create that which will stroke the sad egos of the mass. Hitler thought it was a wonderful idea and wanted to formalize it through legislation and thought police. It almost became our reality. Only for some serious mistakes he made because of his inflated ego-pride, it would have been. It's Trump's turn now.

The highest power of humans is imagination. It's the imagination that argues for the Divine Spark in human beings, and that makes it infinite. That means godlike. Where's the room for an inferiority complex in that lot? Let's think about it.

