

Lew Brennan, Artist

- Article by Ken Coleman

Every day, Lew Brennan walks the path from the house he built himself when he was 23 years old, to the studio he converted from a tractor shed with the help of a good mate. Once inside, the music is turned on and the eclectic feel of the space suddenly makes sense. All artists' spaces reflect the artist, but Lew Brennan's studio *is* the artist. The curios and mementos that have found their home here all represent a part of the artist's life, or the history of the small town he loves so much and calls home. While seemingly cluttered, there is nothing in this warm, almost cosy space which does not belong. For an artist whose trademark is attention to detail, this is telling.

Brennan has a clear vision of how he wants his art perceived. His connection to his subject is evident in the care placed in each aspect of his work, and in the effort he makes to ensure each piece comes alive for the viewer. There is an evocation of memory and familiarity in the art, whether it be a portrait, a streetscape, a still life or an equestrian study, often leading to the unusual circumstance of people being pulled closer and closer to the works, somewhat mesmerized. Movement and light are prime factors, with shadows and reflections allowing the viewer to experience the many varied subjects as a dynamic moment in time.

The emotional content of the work is a singular thing. His work invites the viewer to find their own story within the piece, rather than dictating what they must think. The detail presented allows an examination of the subject to a degree not available to most people in everyday circumstances. When, for instance, does the man in the street have the opportunity to see the light held within a wild horse's eye, as it considers fight or flight? This emotional content is a subtle and personal experience which promotes this individual private personal interaction between the viewer and the subject, giving greater depth to the impact of the piece itself.

Brennan's technical and detailed work belies his lack of formal training. His ability to capture perspective and depth derive from a combination of natural talent and years of hard work. Often, his art was squeezed between waking early and exercising horses before a 12-hour work-day on a building site, to then come home to attend to farm chores and the family he loves dearly. Art was always a passion built around family commitments. Today, with the family grown, his chores completed and his community service behind him his art takes priority.

As an artist whose style is closest to "Realism", Brennan came to discover an uneasy relationship existing between "Realists" and many in the mainstream art community in Australia. "I find my art has been far more readily accepted overseas than at home, although it seems the tide is turning as new media connects artists with the world and the world with artists." he says. This attitude from the established high end Australian art community seems illogical in a climate where almost every exhibition featuring Brennan results in public endorsement and sales for the artist's works.

Heading from his studio to the lights of his home, his feet treading the path worn into the lush grass, Lew Brennan often pauses and considers the vista of the Noosa Hinterland around his home, and the almost overwhelming and majestic physical presence of Mount Cooroora, which looms over his shoulder. In the progression of the balmy sub-tropical evening, there can be little doubt the day's journey is instrumental in allowing this unique artist to tap into the essence of the beauty which drives his work.

Lew Brennan's works are represented in the US:

- The AVRA Gallery, Margate City, New Jersey & Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Cross Gate Gallery, Lexington, Kentucky.
- Copro Gallery, Santa Monica, California.

He is represented in Australia:

- Frances Keevil, Sydney
- JK Gallery, Thredbo NSW
- Manyung Gallery, Mt Eliza and Flinders, Victoria
- Gallery 6/31 Brisbane, Queensland.
- Cusack and Cusack Gallery, Keyneton, Victoria