

CRISP

*from the editor
the birds and the
bees*



*back-to-back
the hoi polloi*

*how-to
straight from the
gogglebox*

our interview with claire bridge

Figurative realist artist, **Claire Bridge** will have you be swallowed by an-impossible-to-break love affair come every stroke of her paint brush. Her fascination lies in the concept that our physical human form is both particles and waves of energy... vibrating at a particular frequency which only appears to be one or the other when observed (according to our expectations). Her current works (which are being shown at "Air Born"), take the notion of change further. Figures float and hover, yet we are also able to see the mysterious forces at play, made visible by their effects. She stresses the importance of getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, and the greatest achievement is to climb a mountain and reach a peak, only to look out at the view and see the expanse valleys and of even higher mountain peaks yet to be ventured.

When did you first begin painting?

I've always painted. I'm told that as a child I was constantly drawing and painting. I was very clear, even from the age of five that I would become an artist. I did however go on some adventurous "detours" along the way, working as a sign language interpreter, a professional martial artist and instructor, an illustrator, teaching art, doing paintings conservation and a very brief stint as a magician's assistant, just to name a few.

During all this, I never stopped painting. It is more recently in 2010, that I committed to painting full-time, which is also the year I had my first solo exhibition at Flinders Lane Gallery. I had been juggling running other businesses, my martial arts school, coaching business and doing part-time work in paintings conservation and although I found these fascinating and fulfilling in many ways, I often felt that I was compromising my art because of the demands of those other commitments. I wanted to give my art more of the energy and focus it deserves. Making that level of commitment to my art, putting aside the distraction of other "jobs", creates a space for the work to develop and flourish.

How would you describe the themes you visit in your work? What is your intended audience?

The edge of change is where my work begins. At the heart of the work is a fascination with time and change.

In particular I'm interested in alchemical change, the changing states of matter and light, of perception and form, literal and metaphysical. I am fascinated by the concept that our physical human form is both particles and waves of energy vibrating at a particular frequency which only appears to be one or the other when observed, according to our expectations.

My paintings speak of our inner world through both inference and its reflection in the physicality of form, illuminating the space, literal and imagined, between our inner and outer worlds. I explore the paradox of both change and timelessness, seeking to make visible what is invisible. In earlier work, I was looking at the transitions from adolescence into womanhood, states of psychological change and issues of climate change and our relationship to each other and the planet. Most recently I have been fascinated with alchemical and imaginal change. My work focusses on the processes of change itself, of transformation and transcendence, our relationship with ourselves and the world around us.

Floating and suspension... weightlessness, appeal to my imagination.

The current works in "Air Born" at **Anthea Polson Art** opened March 29th, take the notion of change further. Figures float and hover in 'other' space, liminal abstract fields located somewhere between materiality and emptiness.

Yet we also see forces at work, made visible by their effects. There are moments where paint and image dissolve into each other, energy in motion visible in the spaces between. We catch a glimpse of the chaos amidst the calm.

Air Born plays with notions of being 'born' of air, appearing as if by magic 'out of thin air' and with the sense of being carried and 'borne' by air. Underlying all of this is the inference of the desire to take flight, to be lifted, to be carried and perhaps more than anything ... a desire to be free.

As for my intended audience? Each person will come to the work from their own framework and so it will speak to every person in a different way. It is my intention that my work be an opportunity for each person to respond to as they are inclined. I seek to open up gateways through the work. I want to spark and ignite something in people.

I imagine that people who come closer to my work want to be touched. They want to go beneath the surface, to explore, are curious and intrigued by what it is to be human and to be alive. These are people who are attracted to paradox and to mystery. People who are inspired and touched by beauty or who can be comfortable with the uncomfortable and go beyond it to something new.

How would you describe what being in 'the zone' consists of? As in, how do you muster up

the mood to create?

Being in the "zone" is being relaxed and open with a clarity and expansiveness of perception, a sense of daring and the energy to act. A relaxed intensity.

The way I see it, Art is an expression of myself, combined with the infinite creativity of the Universe, sparked by inspiration, gathered up by imagination, formed into an idea and made into reality.

Imagination is where you and the universe are at play in the field of dreams and possibilities.

To get myself to that "field of play" I walk, meditate and go through my rituals of preparation, cleaning brushes, looking at the work in progress, mixing colours, getting all my senses engaged. My aim is to have all of me present, as much as possible, when I begin to paint.

It is difficult to sustain, being totally present, day in, day out for hours on end. You have to relish your own company. I listen to audio books and music. Like the tides, there is a natural flow in and out of the zone throughout the day or week. As an artist, it is important to recognise this wave-like nature of "the zone", the expansion and contraction of creativity, and to move with it.

When you first start an artwork, how do you proceed?

Do you have a general idea of how you would like it to look? do you sketch a draft? is it a complex process? Finally, how long does it take you to complete a work?

Starting and finishing an artwork are strange concepts for me as an artist. I really can't define when an artwork begins. Ideas evolve. The seeds of some of my most recent paintings first appeared years ago. Ideas float about and then somehow, one day, they crystallize and become more solid and clear. Starting an artwork is a process of listening intently and quietly observing the inner visions and murmurings, looking out for the spark and shiver, the image that grabs hold, the idea that tugs and won't let go.

I work with models and have them come to my studio. I light them, costume/ or not and pose them. I guide them with my initial inspirations and allow them to respond. I want a natural feeling, an authentic feeling so it is something that they also must express. Sometimes these sessions lead me to new ideas and new approaches to my work. At times I sketch. I will work on the composition for months sometimes until it gels. There are works I am doing now that I did the reference photo-shoots for years ago. It can take time for the right moment to arrive for a certain work. Other works happen quickly and can be a very short time between idea, reference gathering and final painting.

Some paintings can take months or even years to complete. That doesn't mean I am painting on that piece for months or years - it is more that it can take time for the work itself to evolve, for the fullness of it to mature and so become a completed painting. Other paintings I might do in a week or two. Often the factors that influence how long a painting will take are the complexity of the piece, the level of detail and the technicalities of the materials. I will work on a number of paintings at once so that I can be most efficient with my time, given that there may be days between painting sessions when working with oil paint, waiting for a layer to dry before continuing on with the next layer or section.

In answer to the often asked question "How long does it take to paint that?" If you imagine painting is similar to writing a piece of music, a concerto, then I imagine the composer might say something similar when asked how long does it take to write a piece of music? "All my life... until this moment I have never created this before."

A painting is the sum of everything that has happened before and also of what is yet to come. It is the fruit of all my past, it holds the resonance and essence of my present and is sown with the seeds of my hopes and aspirations, my imaginings and all the possibilities of what is yet to unfold.

What are your hobbies? What do you do when you're not painting?

In the words of writer Arthur Miller "Everything we are is at every moment alive in us."

When is a painter not painting?!

I decided this year I wanted to have a hobby. I have a tendency to make any "hobby" a profession, such as studying sign language or martial arts. I get so involved and then next thing I find that I've made it my full time work. I'd like to have a "hobby", something that's just for fun. My sister is an amazing jazz, swing and blues singer and I'm looking forward to doing some singing with her ... and it looks like we are about to form an accapella group very soon! Also, I've always wanted to play the Cello.

With painting being such a solitary activity I need to connect with people. I am a Reiki practitioner, have a site focussed on showcasing women artists called ArtWorldWomen.com, I am the Visual Arts Advisor for the American Australian Association and am currently expanding my business Synergize Coaching. I have continued with Coaching, something I have done for over 10 years because I love the collaboration. People inspire me and I am thrilled to participate in their successes and growth. It never ceases to amaze me how much joy can be brought into the lives of my clients and all the people around them when they are working on their goals, start turning their business, life and relationships around and begin creating what they truly want in their life.

Do you have any strong beliefs/wish to make a change in life?

I have a strong belief in constantly changing! Change for me is growth, being alive, discovering and evolving. I like to feel I am on some edge of adventure every day, at the point of the unknown, stepping into unfamiliar territory. I am constantly learning and there is not a day that goes by where I am not changed, by some new thought, perception, perspective or insight. What seems to be consistently true is that wherever you put your focus and energy this manifests and expands. We imagine the futures that create our present reality, consciously or not. It is my intention to create consciously.

What advice would you give to other artists, as well as young people in general trying to find their voice, or 'groove'?

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. You will need to risk and dare and dream to go places in yourself and with your art you have never been.

Get to know yourself, intimately. Love who you are and love what you do, passionately and with commitment. Imagine and act. The artist does both. Grab the threads of inspiration and patiently follow them.

Be courageous and vulnerable. Your own opinion of you and your work will have more influence on the development of your art than anyone else's.

What has been your proudest moment so far in your career?

There is nothing quite like the wonder of a good day's painting, when I look at the canvas and am amazed at how that even happened. To climb a mountain and reach a peak, only to look out at the view and see the expanse valleys and of even higher mountain peaks yet to be ventured. There is certainly pride in my successes and yet I feel some deeper, sustaining kind of pride in the very ordinary day in and day out daring act of picking up the brush to paint.

www.claire-bridge.com

How do you get your hands on a bit more of Claire Bridge?

"Air Born" - The nearly sold out show!

March 29 - April 12th

Anthea Polson Art, Gold Coast

<http://www.antheapolsonart.com.au/exhibition-details.php?exhibitionID=109>

Film - "Edge of Change"

Short version:

<http://www.handmadefilms.com.au/claire-bridge/>

Long version: <http://www.handmadefilms.com.au/claire-bridge/>

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