

Bendigo's treasure chest



» graphic art

JEFF MAKIN
art critic

Teachers' pets:
(main picture)
Bendigo From the Road to Eaglehawk by S.T. Gill and (smaller picture)
Landscape (1923) by Tom Roberts.

» Landmarks and Milestones:
The F.M. Courtis Collection

Where: Bendigo Art Gallery, 42 View St, Bendigo, until August 10

THIS collection marks a period when these regional centres had their own art schools, and teachers' colleges that were far more community-based and independent than what we have now.

Most had begun in the 19th century as a School of Mines or Mechanics Institute. By the late 1960s they had evolved into Colleges of Advanced Education, yet still retained strong regional traditions.

In the 1980s, as an outcome of the Dawkins Report, all these small competitive colleges were subsumed into mega multi-campus universities where they were amalgamated, re-badged, down-sized, or simply disappeared.

As was the practice in these art schools and teachers' colleges, small collections of artworks had been acquired, not as investments but as teaching aids.

It was one thing teaching art from reproductions, but entirely another to sight and discuss the real thing.

And usually these collections centred on the areas of specialisation offered by each institution.

The F.M. Courtis Collection began as the Bendigo Teachers' College Collection.

Courtis as head of art education at this institution (and a past president of the Bendigo Art Gallery) made his first purchases in 1958: a watercolour of Templestowe by Len Annois, and an early painting of the Grampians, by Arthur Boyd.

Interestingly, both were



landscapes, which recognised Bendigo's geographical position. One offered a pastoral, tamed view, and the Boyd typified the more rugged scrub with its woolly hills, shrieking white cockatoos, granite outcrops and awkward trees.

Both paintings set collecting parameters that were followed by later curators.

The collection now numbers more than 350 works, 31 of which have been selected for this exhibition.

The majority of these reflect an educational philosophy built on the Australian landscape tradition and illustrate a diverse range of technique, influences and conceptual approaches.

Some, such as the 1857 lithograph *View of Bendigo from the Road to Eaglehawk*, by S.T. Gill, are of immense historical interest, with figures in the landscape and the tents of gold diggers in the background.

Other works trace the evolution from a typographical picturing of a very un-

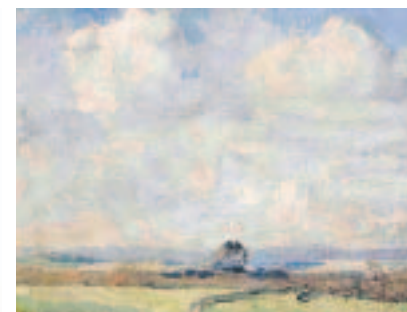
European land (the Eugene von Guerard chromolithograph of the Moroka River Falls 1860) to Heidelberg School plein airism and to the more internalised abstracted landscape of John Coburn — from awesome moments to awkward movements.

The story pauses upon a pink sunset by John Mathers; a virtuoso cloud study by Tom Roberts, and a large William Frater.

The Frater is entitled *Bendigo*, but it could be Aix en Provence.

A more environmentally aware picture is painted by Neil Douglas. His *Stick Music, Little Desert 1970* celebrates the coming of spring with the yellow and green of the wattle in one of the most desiccated regions.

Local artists William Delecca and Bryan Clemson are both represented with accomplished asides to their contemporary, Fred Williams. Such well-drawn bones upon which to hang the fabric of the land mass are also evident in a masterly lithograph by Lloyd Rees.



There seems to be some uncertainty about the future of this teaching collection

Other artists include Shay Docking, Sir William Dargie, Charles Wheeler, Godfrey Miller, John Coburn, Arnold Shore and Abbie Heathcote.

This exhibition ends chronologically with its most recent acquisition, a C-type photograph by Donna Baily.

Though the scale and process of this work, titled *The Ideal 2004*, announces this collection's entry into the post-modern era, its strata of dried bush subject matter hangs comfortably within eyeshot of a Clifton Pugh.

There seems to be some uncertainty about the future of this teaching collection now that its current host is La Trobe University, and based at Bundoora, Melbourne.

One can only hope that it remains in the Faculty of Education, the former Bendigo Teachers College, to be used for the purpose for which it was originally intended.

AMC
FRANKSTON 12
BAYSIDE ENTERTAINMENT, WELLS STREET
www.a-m-c.com.au
INFOLINE: 1300 366 339

PROGRAM FOR MONDAY

MAMMA MIA! (PG) - No Free Tickets - 9.50, 11.00, 12.10, 1.20, 2.30, 3.40, 4.50, 6.00, 7.10, 8.20, 9.30pm

HANCOCK (M) - No Free Tickets - 10.20, 12.20, 1.20, 2.20, 3.20, 4.20, 5.30, 6.30, 7.30, 8.30, 9.30pm

KUNG FU PANDA (PG) - No Free Tickets - 10.00, 12.00, 1.00, 2.20, 4.20, 6.40, 8.40, 9.00pm

MEET DAVE (PG) - 9.50, 12.20, 2.30, 7.00, 9.00pm

THE LOVE GURU (M) - 10.20, 3.00, 5.00, 7.00, 9.00pm

GET SMART (PG) - 10.40, 11.50, 2.10, 4.30, 6.50, 9.10pm

YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN (M) - 10.30, 1.30, 4.40, 9.20pm

SEX AND THE CITY (MA15+) - 10.40, 3.50, 9.10pm

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: PRINCE CASPIAN (M) - 1.00, 6.30pm

CHILDREN OF THE SILK ROAD (M) - 4.00, 6.40pm

CLUB LOUNGE
No Free Tickets

MAMMA MIA! (PG) - 11.00, 12.10, 1.20, 2.30, 3.40, 4.50, 6.00, 7.10, 8.20, 9.30pm

PALACE
THE GEORGE
138 Fitzroy St. St Kilda 9534 9922

Sex And The City (MA15+) Mon 1.10, 6.30
Happy Go Lucky (M) Mon 4.00, 9.20pm
Shine a Light (M) Mon 7.00pm
The Counterletters (MA15+) Mon 1.45, 9.30
The Orphanage (MA15+) Mon 4.15pm
Mamma Mia! (PG) Mon 2.10, 4.30, 6.45, 9.00

BALWYN
231 Whitehorse Rd. 9917 1277

Mamma Mia! (PG) Mon 11.00, 1.30, 2.45, 4.00, 4.50, 6.30, 8.45, 9.30
Hancock (M) Mon 1.00, 5.10, 9.30pm
Get Smart (PG) Mon 10.30, 3.00, 7.15pm
Kung Fu Panda (PG) Mon 10.00, 12.00, 2.00, 3.45, 6.00pm
Unfinished Sky (M) Mon 12.15, 9.00pm
Happy Go Lucky (M) Mon 12.45pm
The Band's Visit (M) Mon 10.15, 2.20, 6.45
Sex And The City (MA15+) Mon 8.00pm
Mongol (MA15+) Mon 4.15pm
The Painted Veil (M) Mon 10.15am

DENDY BRIGHTON
20 Church St. 9522 7615

Mamma Mia! (PG) Mon 10.30, 11.30, 1.00, 2.00, 3.30, 4.30, 6.00, 7.00, 8.30, 9.30
Hancock (M) Mon 12.30, 4.45, 6.45, 9.00pm
Get Smart (PG) Mon 10.15, 2.30, 8.00pm
Kung Fu Panda (PG) Mon 10.00, 12.00, 2.00, 4.00, 6.15pm
You Don't Mess with the Zohan (M) Mon 11.00, 1.15, 6.30pm
Sex And The City (MA15+) Mon 3.30, 8.45

BRIGHTON BAY
294 Bay St. 9556 3590

Mamma Mia! (PG) Mon 11.00, 1.30, 4.00, 6.45, 9.15pm
Children Of The Silk Road (M) Mon 1.15, 3.45, 6.30, 9.00pm
Unfinished Sky (M) Mon 2.30pm
Mongol (MA15+) Mon 11.15, 1.45, 7.00pm
The Band's Visit (M) Mon 12.30, 5.15, 7.15, 9.30
Happy Go Lucky (M) Mon 11.00, 4.15, 9.20

WESTGARTH
89 High St Northcote. 9482 2001

Mamma Mia! (PG) Mon 11.00, 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 9.00pm
Kung Fu Panda (PG) Mon 10.30, 12.30, 5.00
Happy Go Lucky (M) Mon 11.15, 2.30, 6.45, 9.15pm
Mongol (MA15+) Mon 1.45, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30

CINEMA COMO
Car Tronak Rd & Chapel St. 9627 7633

Children Of The Silk Road (M) Mon 10.45, 1.15, 3.45, 6.15, 8.45pm
Happy-go-Lucky (M) Mon 1.40, 6.30, 9.00
The Band's Visit (M) Mon 12.50, 2.40, 7.00, 9.15
Unfinished Sky (M) Mon 4.00pm
My Brother Is An Only Child (M) Mon 4.10
Mongol (MA15+) Mon 11.00, 1.30, 6.40, 9.30
The Orphanage (MA15+) Mon 10.45am
The Counterletters (MA15+) Mon 4.30
The Flight of the Red Balloon (PG) Mon 11.10am

Legend: • NO FREE TIX

My dress outlived my marriage



THE rocky landscape of shattered relationships is artist Janice Gobey's hunting ground.

With a mix of paintings, installation and text, Gobey tries to find the points when marriages begin their descent into disaster — which still befalls about half the 100,000 Australian couples who tie the knot each year.

The fairytale dresses and accessories of the \$5 billion wedding industry are set against pieces of handwritten text depicting the harrowing stories of failure, mostly gathered from the artist's friends and contacts.

"I'm interested in the rose-coloured spectacles and when the cracks start to appear and what it is that sends you over the edge," Gobey, 44, says.

"People said they'd send me their stories, but when it came to write them they often found it too hard.

"So I interviewed them instead. I really had to psych myself up for it mentally. It was quite harrowing and confronting.

"I needed a stiff drink after doing three in a week," she says.

There are about 20 such stories in the exhibition and she's hoping that eventually she will have enough material for a book.

She is inviting people to submit their stories on her website.

The most common themes, she says, are infidelity, boredom and uncertainty.

She says people often go so far down the track of planning a blockbuster wedding that they feel they can't back out.

"People often think the wedding will make it all right. One woman found out her husband was gay and he'd thought

getting married would make him straight," she says.

Gobey's ideas came from examining the demise of her own marriage. Originally from South Africa she married young and, after two children and a career in human resources and recruiting, she and her partner drifted apart.

Since their divorce she hasn't had another long-term relationship.

"When people see a room full of wedding dresses, they run a mile," she jokes.

Gobey, who has a degree in psychology, has spent months collecting used wedding dresses from eBay, op shops and the Salvation Army, often baffling shop assistants by not even trying them on.

"We spend so much time on this event," she says, "on this one moment

when you're the princess and the star. You wear the dress for an afternoon and some people spend as much as \$14,000 on them.

"It's such a big industry and so much money goes into it, then people don't have enough money to buy a house," she says.

"It's funny, too, that women — including myself — have divorced the man in our lives, but we still have the dress lurking in a cupboard or box somewhere.

"We are somehow loath to give it away or throw it away. It's easier to rid ourselves of the man than the dress."

see > Til Death Do Us Part, Works by Janice Gobey, Trocadero Art Space, Level 1/119 Hopkins St, Footscray, until July 26, ph: 9687 6110 or visit www.trocaderoartspace.com.au

MISCHA MERZ