



Truly Hot Art



Paul & Zumi in the studio

Anyone expecting to see "nice little sugar bowls and little domestic pots" may be disappointed when they visit Paul Davis' latest exhibition, '3 Degrees Above Normal' which comes to Sturt Gallery just before Christmas. Davis' work has undergone quite a transformation since he commenced his stint as Sturt's Resident Potter six years ago. "This is my third exhibition here," the loquacious potter explains in between patting the aptly named 'Zoomie', his faithful Blue Heeler dog, who, judging by the cloud of potter dust rising from him with every pat, spends a lot of time in the studio. "The first focused on smaller wheelthrown forms, the second on the Japanese tea ceremony. Most of the pots in my third exhibition here are completely different, more sculptural. Big handbuilt pieces to create a large space to carry ideas, like ceramic paintings. I never dreamt of working on this scale twelve months ago."

Considering glaze as important as form itself, Paul plays with his signatory rich and creamy glazes to leave behind contrasting negative spaces and patterns and designs across the rich clay he uses. By firing the pots for this exhibition at 3 degrees above normally used firing temperature, he creates movement in the glaze, and a title for his exhibition. "I love that candlewax way the glaze moves." To make the base and sides as interesting as the top, all pots have been tilted during the firing process to "allow the glaze to move and create an organic fluidity reminiscent of lava flow or melting snow." The glaze is applied thickly to create textural cracks as it shrinks and cools.

The originality of Paul's work is enhanced by the Japanese style Kagero clay he developed specifically for his own use three years ago, and which he now markets. "I always made my own clay to develop orange colours, and now I can't imagine using others", he says. He enjoys pushing boundaries, extending himself. "Each piece tells a different story. What you can do with clay is limited only by imagination. I want to know how far you can take it", he says. He revels in exploring, developing and expressing new ideas, new forms, new concepts and, like a true artist, "can't cope with being compartmentalised and locked down. I can't sit comfortably producing the same stuff each year. The nature of the marketplace has changed. People come and want to be stimulated by an artist's work. They want to know the story behind it, how you have evolved, and they expect to see you as an artist who has moved on and travelled into new areas."

Paul Davis certainly has covered a lot of ground throughout his career. Born and raised in the post war environment of

working class western suburban Melbourne, he appreciated the eclectic cultural and racial mix. He developed a love of ceramics at school, went on to major in ceramics at RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), and at age 23 found himself lecturing at Monash University, where he remained for 25 years. A scholarship from the Japanese Foundation took him to Japan, where he worked with the famous ceramics artist family of thirteenth generation potter Saka in Hagi, in stints of six months to a year on and off across the next six years. Returning to Australia was unsettling for him, a culture shock. "Living and working in the environment of ceramics is so highly prized in Japan. Ceramics is considered the highest art form. Artists are so highly respected there. I missed the aspect of respect [ceramics] commanded in the community. In Australia, for that level of respect, you have to be a sportsman! Sports is the pinnacle in our cultural experience, in Japan, the Arts are the pinnacle. It's a completely different psyche." He felt misplaced. He didn't fit here, didn't belong in Japan. "It was pivotal, it changed my life. I could see it was possible to make a living in ceramics, and more important,

that if I didn't start practicing my art, I may not express my true love. Until then, I had seen myself as an artist who taught, not a teacher who made art." He took up the position of Potter in Residence at Sturt, and hasn't looked back professionally. He enjoys the stimulating environment of learning from visiting potters, and working with adult students reaffirms his sheer joy of working with clay. "Although the Sturt residency program can be disruptive regarding continuity and creativity, it is far outweighed by meeting renowned artists to challenge your ideas and thoughts, and constantly inspire you to go to another level. In your own studio you could become stale, insular."

Creative & inspiring works!

'3 Degrees Above Normal', Ceramics by Paul Davis at Sturt Gallery, Range Road Mittagong from December 21st to February 2008



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FutureArt

upcoming arts...for the diary

- **Sturt School for Wood Graduating Exhibition @ Sturt**, Mittagong from 1st to 16th December 2007.
- **'A Private View'**. Small paintings and woodcarvings by Britta Stenmanns, pottery by Simon Bowley 15th-16th December 2007 at 30 Spencer Street Moss Vale.
- **'Kids on Show' @ Bowral & District Art Gallery**. An exhibition to showcase and celebrate local young artists of primary school age, from Wingecarribee Primary Schools from 1st to 9th December 2007
- **'Disposable - Affluence: To Have or Have Not' @ Bowral & District Art Gallery**. An exhibition of works by MultiFocus Photomedia Artists, Inc, a multicultural group of woman photographers who use photography to comment on current social and political issues. From 13th to 18th December 2007.
- **Highlights from Handel's Messiah @ Shambala at Kennerton Green**, Mittagong on December 16th 2007. For further details www.shambala.com.au
- **Recent Ceramics, Hand Coloured Prints & Jewellery** by Judy Benjamin & Celeste Coucke, at the Robertson CTC, Hoddle Street, Robertson. Drinks with the artists on Friday Dec 7th from 6pm to 8pm. The exhibition will continue until Sunday December 16th. *Gallery hours: Wed to Sun 10am - 4pm.*