

FOR THE LOVE OF ANIMALS



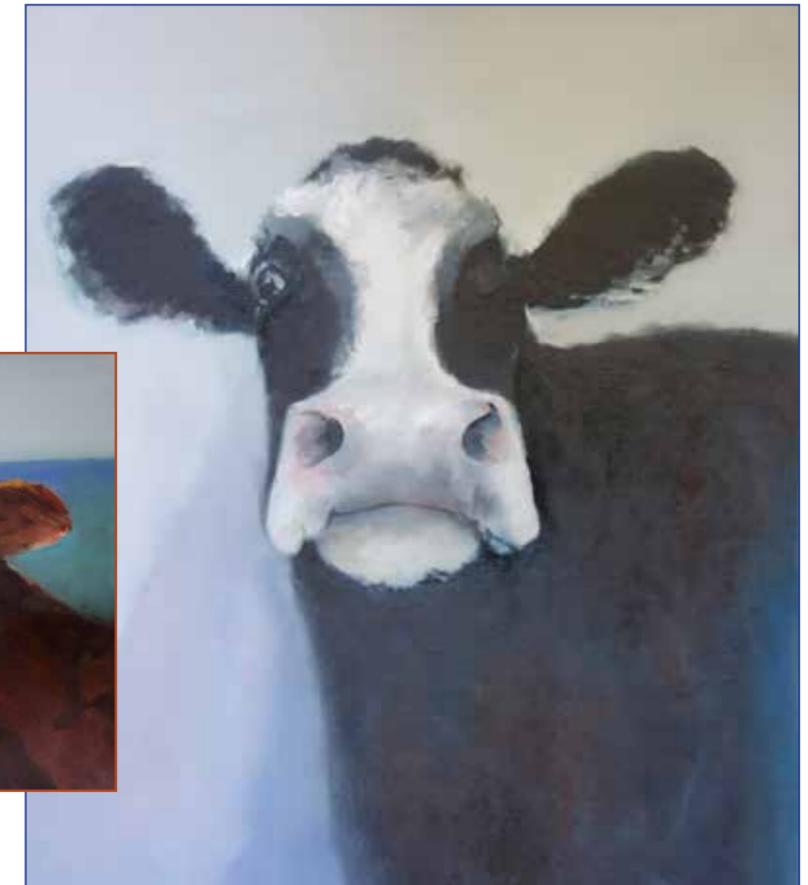
Artists who paint for animals

*What do we do to ourselves when we eat our own?
Deny our kindredness, re-invent ourselves, attach ourselves
to another place? Give ourselves wings as we might, the fact
remains that we also brutalise ourselves (David Brooks)*

Opposite page:
Leonie Lyall:
Will that be with milk?
oil on canvas
Below: Paddock Pin-up
Right: *Bloody Flies!*



Below: Claude Jones: *Bent on Destruction*,
glazed ceramic, epoxy clay, acrylic, varnish,
120x70x28cm figure, 30x35x15cm rabbit,
2013 (courtesy Arterial Gallery and Brenda
May Gallery, Sydney)



Poet and writer David Brooks' essay, *The Smoking Vegetarian*, is a thoughtful discourse on the killing of sentient animals for food. He describes his reasons for being vegan as 'an aversion to animal slaughter, animal cruelty'—reasoning which he realises 'unsettles people'.

Brooks is in the company of many today, from academics, scientists and philosophers to ordinary people from every background. However, it is still not easy to 'come out' against the killing of animals for food. We have managed to bluff ourselves, to justify our desire to eat meat. We separate the cling-filmed trays of neat slices in the supermarket, obliterating from the mind the acts very often of cruelty which obtained them—all forgotten in mouth-watering elegantly-worded menus and lusciously arranged meals, shared in celebration of family, friendship, marking occasions, confirming who we are. And eating animals is not all—'very nearly the entire material world of humans', as Brooks says, rides 'on a tide of suffering'.

Such statements are confronting and ethical responses by individuals are not at all easy to implement. Nevertheless, today we live in a society where we have choices and the choice not to eat flesh is not a life or death decision, but a moral or a health decision.

'I could not resist the gaze of the creature which was made more immediate by the simplicity of the brushwork... Her sincerity is apparent, yet there is no attempt to lecture—the point is made by our inevitable empathy with the creature' (Tony Bond of Paddock Pin-Up)

Art drawing attention to the needs of animals

Christine Townend founded Animal Liberation in Australia in 1976 after reading Peter Singer's book of the same name. In 1980 she and Singer founded Animals Australia, then called the Australian Federation of Animal Societies. Christine has authored many non-fiction books on animal issues and a collection of her poetry about animals will shortly be published by Island Press. She has held five solo art exhibitions, at one of which each painting was accompanied by a poem, and has donated many paintings for fund-raising for Animal Liberation and for Help in Suffering animal shelter in Jaipur, India. She has used her art as a means of drawing attention to the needs and interests of animals.

Christine Townend's story is known to many, especially through her own writing. Her book *Christine's Ark* (with journalist John Little, Pan Macmillan Australia 2006) tells how on a visit to India in 1990 she found herself in charge of a run-down animal shelter outside Jaipur housing just a few stray dogs and goats. From that small start, she has had an enormous impact on the lives of thousands of animals and the people who rely on animals for their livelihood. With her husband Jeremy, who gave up practising law in Australia to work with Christine in India, they spent 17 years expanding the activities of the shelter, attracting funding from international donors, creating new shelters and new programs, with staff numbers increasing from 5 to 40 and opening up to not only dogs and goats but even to elephants and camels. Today, Christine and Jeremy return every year to India, but they have resigned from their positions there and Christine has been focused on working towards her Doctorate of Arts at Sydney University.

Leonie Lyall's Paddock Pin-up

When her portrait of a cow won a coveted local art prize and high praise from its eminent judge, artist Leonie Lyall found an opportunity to speak out about her long-held concerns regarding animal welfare. The winning painting, called *Paddock Pin-up*, when hanging in Gallery Blackheath before the competition, had elicited so much interest from visitors that Leonie was able to use the opportunity to share her views. 'Because of my membership of Animals Australia and various other bodies which are fighting to stamp out the incredible cruelty experienced by our livestock—not only in Australia but with the live animal export program—the

cows simply arrived in my mind and asked to be painted. I don't have live models, they just appear and it's been a wonderful experience seeing them evolve on the canvas.'

Judge Tony Bond, retired assistant director and senior curator at AGNSW, described the winning painting as 'a very simple small painting of a cow's head looking straight at us. I could not resist the gaze of the creature which was made more immediate by the simplicity of the brushwork... Her sincerity is apparent, yet there is no attempt to lecture—the point is made by our inevitable empathy with the creature.'

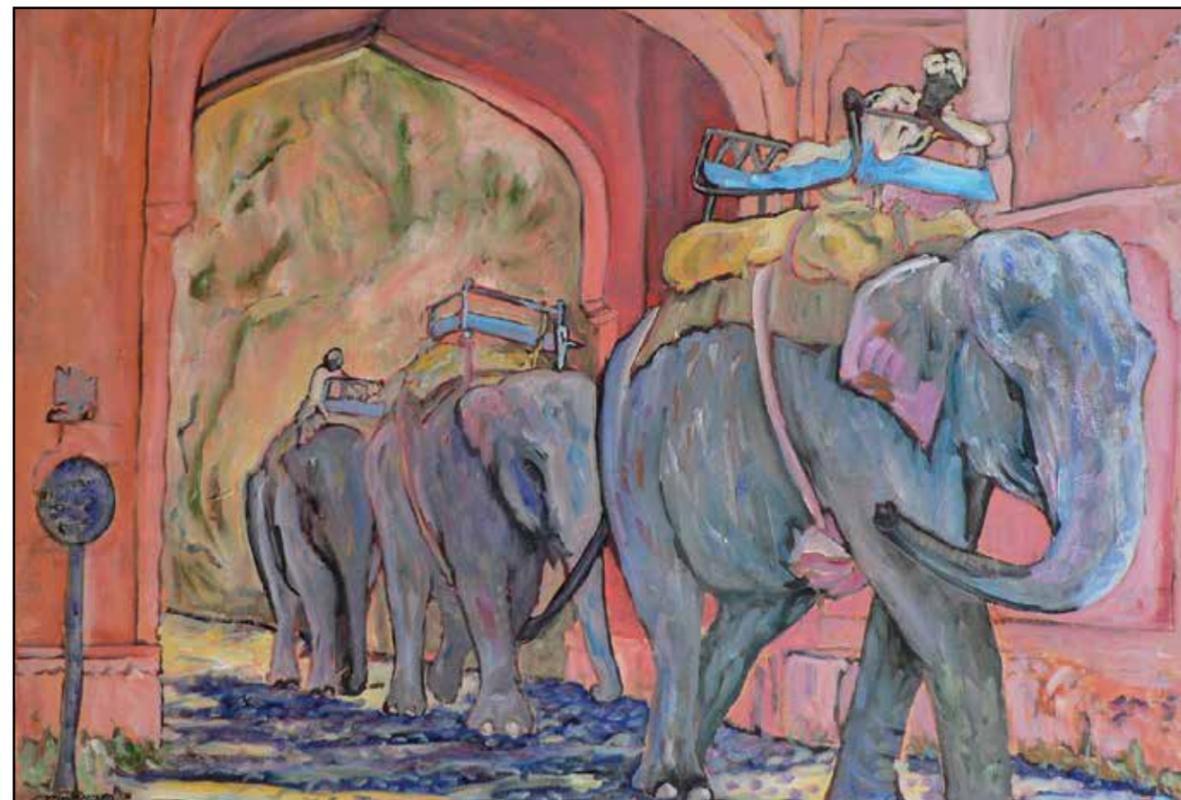
Paddock Pin-up has been donated to Animals Australia for fund-raising and Leonie Lyall feels that some momentum has been gained. She has just completed 12 small cow portraits for an exhibition at Traffic Jam Gallery in Neutral Bay, Sydney.

Lyall: 'It would be wonderful if artists could involve themselves more fully in promoting the needs and interests of animals. However, before they are able to do this, they need to look at the whole issue of animal cruelty. In the case of livestock, think about the animal and its living conditions before it ends up on your plate.'

'I see and hear the suffering of animals every day of my life—not physically but in my inner self. We feel it is our right to regard animals as no more than a food source, a working beast or entertainment, a product for us to use as we wish. Food is seen as coming from the supermarket shelf. The entertainment industry, and I include horse racing, uses and abuses animals for profit with no concern about the welfare of the animals.'



Jane Lennon: *Lucky Duckies 1-7*
From recent exhibition *Plate it Up* at Sheffer Gallery Sydney
Our expectations of sentient beings know no bounds—unseeing functional abstract creature vessels, alluding to hanging meat



Christine Townend, *Elies, Jaipur*

WALKING AMONG ELEPHANTS

I walk among the slapping trunks,
the creak of arthritic bones,
touching these restless ships,
as the great thighs shift.

I lay my palm on the rough skin;
you flinch, your eye flicks,
and I see the black scars,
your forehead a grave of wounds
mottled, tufted with black hairs,
sculpted like old carpets
thin with wear.

Like lost mountains
you stand here,
metal chains round your ankles
attached to wet cement,
dung about your toes,

your trunk ceaselessly searching
for forest grass, the stream
foaming among ferns.

Your eye, embossed with folds,
peers from the head's roof,
a small black pond,
extension of the great blue brain,
the purple veins.

'Ride?' the mahout asks.
I stand amidst the restless bulk.

I know you have speech, words, history,
children, fathers, sons,
leaders.
If you did not know,
then I could stop knowing.

Christine Townend



Nicole Welch: *Apparitions #6—Projection 'Le Kangaroo me charge, 1869'*, pigment ink, face-mounted 80x80cm 2014, edition of 6 *Le Kangaroo me charge* engravings from *Australie—voyage autour de monde par le Comte de Beauvoir 1869* (courtesy Brenda May Gallery, Sydney)

Elephant in the Room

A fundraising exhibition for the Animal Welfare League held this November at the Brenda May Gallery in Sydney, brought together a wide variety of artworks with themes ranging from Australia's colonial days and the killing of wildlife to the age-old love humankind has for its domestic creatures. Artists included Patsy

Payne whose work lent its title to the exhibition, Peter Tilley, Nicole Welch and Claude Jones. Twenty percent from the sale of these artworks directly benefitted the Animal Welfare League NSW, a charity which has operated for over 50 years, maintaining two shelters, a veterinary clinic and 12 branches which care for surrendered, neglected and abandoned animals.

Compassionate Voices

Voiceless, the animal protection institute founded by Brian and Ondine Sherman, uses artworks as a means of fund-raising as well as for extending the constituency of people who care about animals. A recent exhibition held in Sydney, *Compassionate Voices*, raised animal rights issues. One participating artist, Anna-Wili Highfield commented, 'it's all about the eye contact.' The former Opera Australia scenic artist now sculpts organic rags representing animal subjects. She says a link through the eyes helps viewers to strike a deep connection with her work. 'I think there's a sort of language barrier between human and animal communication, and you can sense a sentient being there when you make eye contact with an animal' (Sydney Morning Herald 14.8.2014).

Voiceless was founded in 2004 and is led by father-daughter team Brian and Ondine Sherman, supported by patrons Michael Kirby, J.M. Coetzee and Jane Goodall. Voiceless Ambassadors are internationally recognised artists who are committed to ensuring that animal protection is the next great social movement. Ambassadors lend their voices to speak on behalf of animals across all forms of media. Voiceless also supports a range of grants and prizes, holds law lecture series annually, makes submissions to government and publishes reports on animal industries and the law in order to expose legalised cruelty and to inform public debate.

J.M. Coetzee who chairs the judging panel for the Voiceless Writing Prize says: 'There is a rich world literature which takes animals—their feelings, wishes and desires—seriously.' Voiceless aims to recognise the best Australian short fiction and non-fiction that has at its heart the place of animals in the world we have made.

Jane Lennon's environmental art

Jane Lennon is an environmental artist, a description which encompasses both her chosen lifestyle as a vegan and her artform—unusual brightly coloured papier maché sculptures. Jane passionately believes that 'we humans are brutal in the way we care for our fellow creatures'. An inspiration for her is Eckhart Tolle, author of *Power of Now* and *A New Earth*. She credits Tolle with helping her become connected to the universe rather than being an outsider. 'His influence on my work comes partly from his message of acceptance, enjoyment and enthusiasm. So when I am in my studio and keep this in mind all things go well' (Silas Clifford-Smith, *The Papier Maché Art of Jane Lennon*, *Oz Arts Issue 2*, 2014).

Lennon: 'I feel an abhorrence at the idea of eating a sentient being. I was first a vegan in about 1994 when I met a passionate vegan who kind of bullied me into it. My daughter from the age of twenty progressed to



Peter Tilley: *Coming Home*, cast bronze 21x21x12 cm 2014 (courtesy Brenda May Gallery, Sydney)

veganism and encouraged me to do the same. We have both been influenced and inspired by Colleen Patrick-Goudreau. While my daughter and Colleen would claim that their main motivation is concern for animals, this is one part of it for me, along with the impact on the environment and personal health.'

Lennon's sculptural creations have evolved as a part of this philosophy. 'I might start with a shape, maybe recycled packaging or cardboard and I will join a few pieces together and then cover them with my unique claylike paper pulp. In this process many of these shapes become organic and more often than not abstracted animal or bird forms emerge. I don't really feel I have chosen to base my sculptural creations on animals, they seem to channel me. I dream of the day we all see ourselves as part of the circle of life rather than top of the food chain in a hierarchical system.'

For David Brooks: '...reorientation toward the Animal demands a deep and extensive de-centring of the human. One questions directly the right of homo sapiens to be the point of everything, proposes that the human be amongst, not above, that it be one of, not THE.'

References

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