



Sex Kittens and Hot Dogs...

ONCE UPON A TIME

this is a story about an artist, a chef
and a 'slow food' restaurant

Let's begin with the restaurant.

Slow Food began in Italy to resist the opening of a *McDonald's* near the Spanish Steps in Rome—It is an organization that promotes local food and traditional cooking. Founded by Carlo Petrini in 1986 the movement has since spread worldwide. An alternative to fast food, it strives to preserve traditional and regional cuisine and encourages farming of plants, seeds and livestock characteristic of the local ecosystem. Small regional businesses and sustainable foods are promoted. It also focuses on food quality, rather than quantity. First established as part of the broader *slow* movement, *Slow Food* speaks out against overproduction and food waste and sees globalization as a process in which small and local farmers and food producers should be simultaneously protected from and included in the global food system.

The State Library of Victoria recently posted a new blog, *The archive of a pioneer 'slow' food restaurant*, compiled from documentation collected and gifted to the library by chef George Biron and visual artist and teacher Diane Garrett, recording their lives at

Opposite page:
Diane Garrett: *Terrier in leather jacket* —
montage and paint. One of many pieces I
produced around the theme of *Sex Kittens*
and *Hot Dogs*.

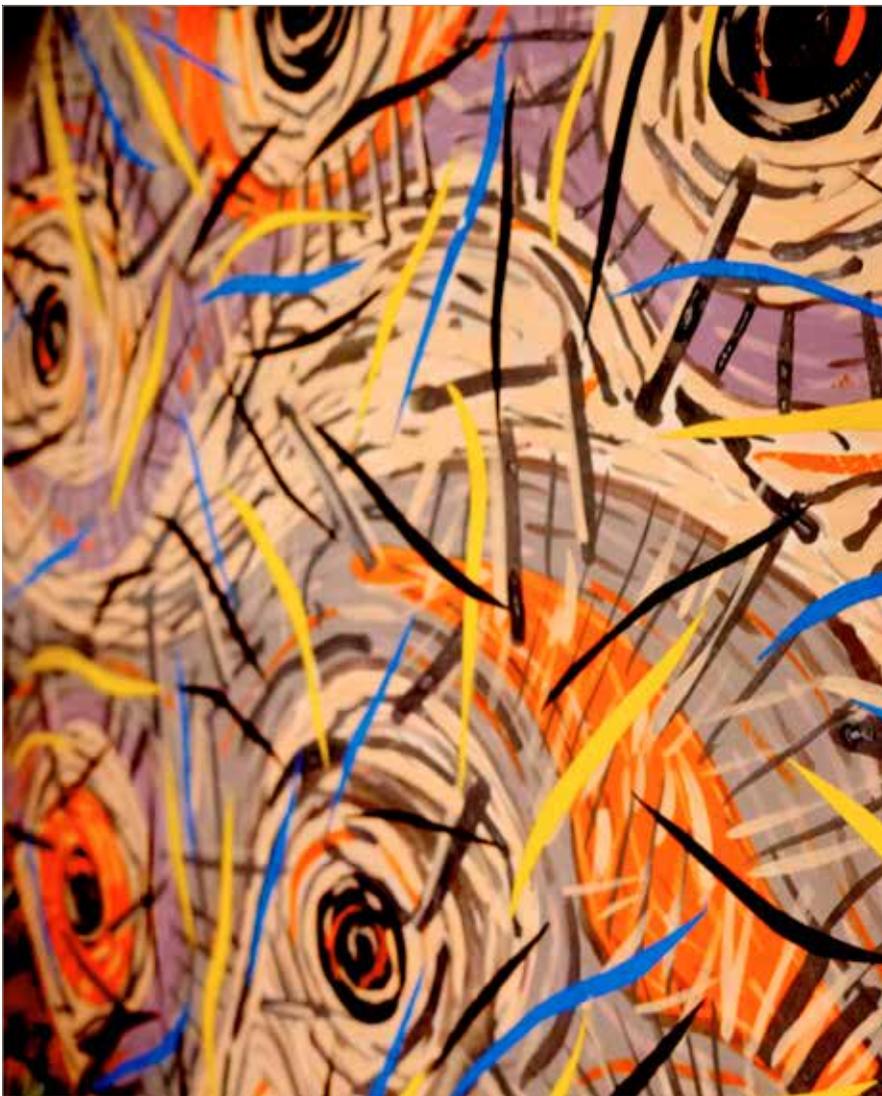
Sunnybrae Restaurant which opened in 1990 at Birregurra, two hours southwest of Melbourne.

<https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/the-archive-of-a-pioneer-slow-food-restaurant/>

The archive records the history of Sunnybrae from 1867 until the 1970s when Diane and her then husband Rod Gray set about restoring the derelict cottage on a hill with 28 acres of land. Later Diane met chef George Biron and together they set about creating the modern commercial kitchen and dining area in the building which would become a highly regarded food destination.

Diane created all the display and signage elements for the restaurant, such as menu covers and aprons, and her artworks featured on the walls of Sunnybrae. Every record of their endeavours at Sunnybrae was painstakingly collected, categorised and stored in custom boxes, from empty coffee bags showing the varieties of coffee they served to notes describing the wines on their list.

The gardens were developed to support the philosophy of slow food and George researched and grew an extensive variety of produce which he used in his recipes. They kept ledgers recording the seed varieties grown, together with the seed packets, even the plant tags relating to George's extensive research on Solanaceae, or nightshades.



Details of George's cooking classes and the restaurant's evolving menu over the years were all recorded by hand. Sunnybrae continued for about ten years before closing and reverting to a private residence for George and Diane, but then re-opening in 2008.

Sunnybrae was sold to renowned Australian chef Dan Hunter in 2013 and is now known simply as Brae.

Diane Garrett:

My partner George Biron and I ran Sunnybrae Restaurant and Cooking School in Birregurra for many years. Since selling the business we have moved to a lovely 1970s house in Kyneton, and I have a newly built studio space. Above is a group of the tables (and a detail of one of the tables) I decorated for the first exhibition in my new studio. The bases were made locally. The tables fold flat and can be displayed or set up as needed. There was a second exhibition the following year.

George and Diane pioneered a unique style of regional dining, championing fresh and local ingredients. Today Brae restaurant continues this tradition: 'each day the highest quality ingredients are carefully selected from Brae Farm's own organic harvest, local farms and ethical, sustainable producers...'

Brae Farm's Winter 2020 menu reads: 'the last figs / golden globe turnip / Russian red kale / cavolo nero / badger flame beetroot / red choy cabbage / society garlic / garlic chives / red winter kale / silver ribs silverbeet / blue curled scotch kale / Spanish flamingo kale / bulls blood beetroot / American curled kale / kailaan / reine des glaces lettuce / Ethiopian kale / Japanese turnip / golden Detroit

beetroot / wasabi rocket / radicchio / red core carrots / badger flame beetroot / golden acre cabbage / snowball improved cauliflower / chioggia beetroot / romanesco / swede / violet Sicilian cauliflower / cylindrical beetroot / freckles lettuce / cherry belle radish / green salad bowl lettuce / flashy troutback lettuce / rouge d'hiver / pink beauty radish / shungiku / broccoli raab / grand duke kohlrabi / superschmelz kohlrabi / sage / alpine strawberry / perpetual silverbeet / fordhook giant silverbeet / eureka and myer lemons / finger limes / red centre limes / globe artichokes / dill / chervil / sea parsley / sea celery / Florence fennel / Danvers carrot / tomatillo / warrigal greens / the very last pomegranate'

My earliest projects as a child were working on Stitching Cards—sewing between the dots that were on the edge of the boldly coloured designs. I taught Art and Craft in Victorian Secondary schools for many years. The innocence of youth and its raw perspective is a viewpoint that I aspire to keep. While teaching I needed to demonstrate the range of traditional skills and approaches which I have also incorporated into my predominately two-dimensional pieces e.g. montage, collage, embroidery, painting...

My subject matter is based on everyday images and childhood memories. I have a large collection of printed images/fabrics and embroidered pieces which I use in combination with paint.



The Bowling Club started out as a tea towel advertising Coolangatta. I particularly liked the modernist club house. The bowling green has been over-run with rabbits and the foreground looks to be water with a floating kookaburra. I don't think it was a considered reference to Global Warming (as has been suggested), rather just a change of colour!

My dad and grandpa were both keen bowlers. When grandpa's house was due for demolition after his death, his bowls were still in a box on the floor, unwanted by any of my relatives. I took them. I thought it sad that no-one wanted this close connection to him as he had been a champion of the Box Hill Bowling Club in the early 1900s.

Carolynne Skinner





Leopards in London began with a piece of printed fabric showing a row of telephone boxes. As I was stretching it onto the frame it started to distort, giving it a Luna Park/ Giggie Palace look which I liked. The grid fabric beneath the leopards was part of a Japanese obi bought at a Tokyo flea market. The leopards themselves were cut from a table runner – Middle Eastern I think. The two Manga creatures were included floating in the rain, their grey and red colour seemed to add to the London vibe.

The Lady in the Mauve Dress is a nod to the 60s. My late sister-in-law Nola had an outfit similar to this – mauve wool bouclé with a fur fabric trim. The pointy bust line was also a must have. Nola was a link to dressmaking/fabrics. She had been part of a team who had done the beading on Ely Lucas's Gown of the Year. The sideboard was a feature in my home – tapered legs with metal tips: a place where the 'best' china was kept.

Fruit bowls also seem to appear as a design feature at that time. In this piece, the fruit bowl and the dog are images cut from tea towels.

