

art

September 2009

Welcome to the second edition of **art**

Our effect on the land and environment and it's effect on us has been happening ever since we got here. Animals driven to extinction, forest burnt to the ground, sometimes just as a means to flush wildlife out for food, waste left behind, undesirable additions to the landscape and so on. Generally speaking, any major negative effect that the landscape has on us, stems from our negative effect on it, a cycle we have created ourselves and one that is hard to stop. Rapid growth in some parts of the world can often be blamed for this, when investments return large profits, the environment tends to have to bow down to the power of greed and of the mighty dollar (or Yen, or Yuan, etc.). In recent times in New Zealand, we have taken a strong stance against environmental damage, overuse of the land, generally development has been controlled in a way that it has remained in harmony with the environment. Some cities have been better at preserving architectural history than others, some choosing to build with more function in mind than form, often choosing not to maintain and restore it's historical buildings. I think Wellington leads by example in that they have gone to great lengths to ensure that the historical and aesthetic integrity of the city remains intact. Fortunately the mid-eighties share market crash forced a reprieve in the rapid redevelopment of this city, giving the old buildings a chance, and enabling the locals to clear their heads and to see that what they had been doing was wrong. Funny how things go.

In a not overly narrative way, I have begun to incorporate a lot of these thoughts into my most recent works, and plans for new works. Not only looking at our effect on the environment (and it's effect on us) but also how we have effected each other.



Restoration 2009 71 x 152 cm sold Papamoa NZ

My most recent painting, Restoration is about the replanting of the land, inspired by (amongst other places) Motutapu Island in the Hauraki Gulf. Deforestation in New Zealand has

been going on for a very long time. We will never even come close to restoring even

a small percentage of our native bush, but it's heartening to know that thousands of volunteers turn up several times a year to places around the country like Motutapu, to plant native trees. Restoration was painted over an intense 7 day period, it was a piece I was obviously pretty enthusiastic about. On about day five I found I had trouble driving the car out to the country to pick up our two boys after spending the day at their grandparent's place, I couldn't keep my eyes on the road, constantly looking at the landscape. I had to pull over and let my wife drive. I was under the influence of the environment! Looking at all the things that I wanted to paint!

But let's keep hope, a painting commissioned by my friend and client in Belgium, shows a stark, dry landscape, crumbling rock wall, little vegetation, all reflecting on some kind of climatic event which in turn has effected the ecological balance, in this case, the bee population has been sent into decline. Hope is offered in the form of the honeycomb that the keeper is holding, laden with honey. The mountainscape



But let's keep hope 2009 71 x 91 cm commissioned Belgium.

shows the Mount Everest shape, linked to Sir Edmund Hillary who was a bee keeper and a strong advocate for the preservation of the environment.

I'm looking into some local history here in the Bay of Plenty, at the moment I'm trying to figure out a way that I can capture some of this on canvas, possibly incorporating the Maori wars, a subject most locals (including myself) know very

little about. I am reading Michael King's Penguin History of New Zealand (nothing to do with penguins!) I'm only part way through, so far very interesting and well researched stuff! I have a meeting planned with a local historian and author and will make sure I can at least slightly grasp some of the events and atrocities that have taken place in and around Tauranga before embarking on any such works. As with works past I will try to focus on the positive aspects of all the above, hopefully nothing too morbid or morose! I will at least will seek to find a balance within the work.

Bryce
Brown.

Take care
Bryce.