

A highly prolific career spanning over thirty years, the self taught painter John Bartlett has never let a commercially popular style direct his work. With 18 solo exhibitions and over 30 group shows behind him, Bartlett has never failed to experiment with new styles and techniques and allow his artwork create its own path, perhaps the reason for such a perpetuity of creative output and self motivation for an artist in his late seventies.

Having predominantly painted figurative work in the late seventies, his styles and media evolved with the shaping of computer technology, incorporating Xerox technology and computer illustration at different stages of his career, always keeping an open perspective to new techniques informing such a range of artistic endeavors.

Bartlett has exhibited alongside and worked closely with many artists, experiencing some becoming great names in the Australian art world and a number of whom have long since drawn close to illustrious careers, including sharing a studio with Howard Arkley and exhibiting with James Gleeson. In the eighties and early nineties he showed several solo exhibitions at Pinacotheca and in 1990 he was awarded a Studio at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, leading to three other exhibitions at the institution in the early nineties, more recently he has exhibited through well established Melbourne art dealers and galleries such as Dianne Tanzer, Charles Nodrum and Scott Livesey. With an interesting history and an ever fluid career, he relies on his love and motivation for creating new artwork to determine him as an artist without being restricted by past activities.

His studio out the back of the old Clifton Hill Organ Factory now resembles something between that of an alchemist's lair and a stock room with the permeating smell of hot beeswax. However, this is integral to his current project working with encaustics on custom cut aluminum. Bartlett uses encaustics to depict hexagrams from the I Ching, deeply meditative, introspective, and philosophical work for himself, however he also maintains a perspective that art doesn't need over theorizing and people can take from it what they may. His outlook may resemble old values, turning away from the conceptual, theoretic, and experimental work although at the same time finding experimentation and advancement in his own technique.

The medium of encaustics enable him to create deep textures and unique colouration with the softness of the beeswax contrasting the sharp lines of the aluminium. The work is in some sense minimalistic and reductive with heavy, bold lines of the hexagrams, while Bartlett has purposefully adopted some Japanese aesthetic principles with an apparent spontaneity and the embraced appreciation of imperfections revealing the artistic process. The unrefined line and splattered colour over the minimal compositions give the pieces life and character, encouraging an insightful contemplation echoing the Zen inspired creative process from which they are born.

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