

## Eggs and Equanimity

I miss the lovely rich smell of oil paint. Egg tempera was in common use in Italy in the fourteenth century and for good reason it was called 'la pittura *al putrido*'. Fortunately the smell vaporises as the surface dries, leaving gloriously luminous fields of pure colour. The short-lived smell is a small price to pay for a medium that puts the viewer closer to pure pigment while providing one of the most durable of all painted surfaces.

About 12 years ago Simon developed a chemical sensitivity to oil and acrylic paint. Fortunately his artistic production also includes drawing, sculpture, performance, installation and poetry. In his last major solo exhibition in 1995, *Dhamma Works*, at the Lawrence Wilson Gallery he deliberately focused on sculpture to limit his exposure to the debilitating fumes. It has taken years of experimenting to find a means to return to paint without prompting the headaches and other symptoms.

As time passed and Simon became more involved in Vipassana meditation his art practice has changed enormously from a young, radical, energetic practice addressing the subjective angst of living in a consumer-focused society. Slowly, as the meditation practice began providing the artist with a different way to approach living, we see the introduction of Dhammic concepts and principles into his artwork as evidenced by the Dhamma Works exhibition. Some of these works were 3 dimensional interpretations of concepts such as '*anicca*' – impermanence or '*sankharas*' – the conditioning of the mind.

Large panels of oil pastels were his first foray back into anything like painting. Thankfully he had the good sense never to exhibit them. They lack the spontaneity and looseness that characterises the rest of his oeuvre. Lessons learned about the medium from those large experimental works have been put to good use with the *treen* series which makes the most of the pastels' shimmery, opalescent qualities, their capacity to blend, smudge and be both opaque and translucent. The portable size of the *treen* and their varied shapes and curved surfaces allow him to respond intuitively to the sculptured forms. The use of the *treen* echoes his earlier works and their direct comments on a culture predicated on shopping. Recycling these handmade sculptured objects, purchased at swap-meets, into artworks, he honours their makers and the households they've come from.

Many of the *treen* works were made in moments of complete contentment, often listening to beautiful Indian Ragas as the sun sets. Simon has had to work hard to arrive at moments of tranquillity. His valuing of an equanimous mind and the training provided by Vipassana to this end is allowing him to approach making art differently.

*Anicca*, the principle of constant change, is the pervasive theme of these artworks. It is the essence of both his meditation and art practice. Simon was determined to find a fluid medium to better-allow him to express *anicca*. Tempera is usually associated with meticulous styles of painting, but he kept experimenting with egg-yolk (free-range), water and pigment combinations in a search for the ideal media. In his words:

*I am after the impossible act of capturing the impermanent on canvas... My futile attempts to arrest the present moment through an unplanned strategy are documented in modulating colour. The infusion of beauty obscures the unpalatable nature of this venture.*

On our return from India in 2002, the vibrant colours of India became a more obvious influence in his work. For the first time he used bright pink, gold and silver.

As Simon grew more confident with his new medium, his works started growing in scale. The physicality demanded by these large works echoes his very early large scale paintings/drawings. He tunes into the sensations in his body as he paints.

The sensitivity and spontaneity of the early work remains but the angst has gone. He works as the moment, his own body and the fluid medium presents itself.

Back in 1989, Noel Sheridan, then Director of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, warned us that Simon's interest in Buddhism could take him away from his art. In many ways this was prophetic as the practice of purifying the mind should rightly be privileged over other activities. But with the practice of Vipassana this artist has returned to a space where the act of painting is helping him to express, understand and communicate his reality.

Gevers describes the process thus:

*Choose a colour  
Go to the picture  
It sticks  
It washes off  
Another colour comes along  
No directions until you get there*

*Some body paints the picture  
Some mind moves the body  
Coloured fluid dried like blood  
Veils, sheens, opaque and blind  
Surface to depth entwined*

I'm struck by the similarity in approach to that of the artist Gerhard Richter, as articulated by him in 1985:

*No ideology. No religion, no belief, no meaning, no imagination, no invention, no creativity, no hope – but painting like Nature, painting as change, becoming, emerging, being-there, thusness; without an aim, and just as right, logical, perfect and incomprehensible...* (The Daily Practice of Painting, Thames and Hudson, 1995, p121)

In an interview the following year, when questioned by Benjamin Beucleugh about what he expects from painting, Richter replied,

*Just that something will emerge that is unknown to me, something which is also universal.*

Enjoy.

Nikki Miller is the artist's partner. She works as an art consultant with Art Support Pty Ltd.

For information on Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka see [www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)

## Catalogue of works : Simon Gevers - I LIKE PAINTING - Galerie Düsseldorf - 21 November - 12 December 2004

1 Breathing Under Water 2004	14 Orange 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 61 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,800
2 Silver Shadow 2004	
3 Deep 2004	
4 Residue 2004	15 Swell 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 61 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,800 (Private Collection)
5 Rain 2004	
6 Orange Ice Cream 2004	
Egg Tempera on Board Each 244 x 122 x 4.3 cm \$ 4,000 each	16 Shine 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 61 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,800
7 Cave 2004 PVA on Board Each Panel 120 x 90 x 4.5 cm \$ 3,000	17 Range 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 61 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,800
8 Stella 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 90 x 120 cm \$ 2,200	18 Fine 2004 PVA on board 135 x 61.5 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,900
9 Zero 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 108.5 x 122 x 4.5 cm \$ 2,200	19 Pink Silver Egg Tempera on Board 90 x 60 cm \$ 1,500
10 Green Glow 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 120 x 90 x 4.5 cm \$ 2,200	20 Yellow Earth 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 34.5 cm \$ 1,100
11 White Happyness 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 120 x 90 x 4.5 cm \$ 2,200	21 Red Anatta 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 69 x 53 x 4.5 cm \$ 950
12 Lace 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 120 x 90 x 4.5 cm \$ 2,200	22 Blue Anatta 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 69 x 53 x 4.5 cm \$ 950
13 Black and Green and Blue 2004 Egg Tempera on Board 122 x 61 x 4.5 cm \$ 1,800	23-26 : Treenware Series - Oil Pastel on Wood Installation dimensions variable Each series \$ 1,500

## SIMON GEVERS

### Biography

Born 1956, Fremantle, Western Australia

### Education

1982-84 Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts) Curtin University of Technology  
1976 First year Theatre Arts, Curtin University of Technology  
1974 First year Bachelor of Arts, The University of Western Australia

### Solo exhibitions

2004 **I Like Painting**, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth  
1995 **Dhamma Works**, Lawrence Wilson Arts Gallery, The University of Western Australia  
1991 **perf**, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, The University of Western Australia  
1989 **Naïve Monster**, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)

### Selected group exhibitions/performances

1993 **Australian Perspecta**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
1992 **ARX 3**, PICA, Perth  
**Sub con sub URB**, 2 week performance season, PICA, Perth  
1991 **A Backward Glance**, PICA, Perth  
**Coles New World Order**, performance, Art Gallery of Western Australia  
1990 **Local Talent, Urban Living**, The University of Western Australia  
1989 **Paper, Scissors, Stone**, Moores Building, Fremantle

### Commissions

1997 Boardroom mural for Foodland Associated Limited (FAL)  
1994 Sculpture for entrance courtyard, Ngala Mothercraft Centre, Perth  
1992 Westrail poster commission, Perth

### Represented

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Hospital Benefit Fund of WA  
Royal Perth Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth  
The University of Western Australia, Various private and corporate collections

### Publications

Holland, Peter, ed. **Summer Shorts 2**, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 1994  
Holland, Peter, ed. **Summer Shorts**, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 1993  
Lynn, Victoria, ed. **Perspecta catalogue**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 1993  
Gevers, Simon **Art Reading Material No. 2**, PICA Press, Perth 1991  
Gevers, Simon **I've got a Big Mind**, PICA Press, Perth 1991

### Selected bibliography

**Business Weekly** Perspecta Review, 22 October, 1993  
**The Bulletin** Perspecta Review, 19 October 1993  
**The Australian** Perspecta Review, 9 October 1993  
**West Australian** 'ARX 3' review, 2 May 1992  
**Art & Text** 'perf' review, p 100 No 40, 1991  
**Art Link** 'perf' review, p 64, vol II No 3, 1991  
**Backward Glance** catalogue, 1991  
**West Australian** 'perf' review, 27 April 1991  
**West Australian** 'The Curators Group Show' review, 9 March 1991  
**West Australian** performance review, 22 January 1991  
**Praxis M # 28** Artist's Statement, December 1990, p24  
**Praxis M # 28** 'Subconscious' review, December 1990, pp 38-40  
**Local Talent, Urban Living** catalogue, February 1990  
**West Australian** 'Naïve Monster' review, 16 December 1989

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## I LIKE PAINTING

21 November - 12 December 2004

### GALERIE DÜSSELDORF

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