



Sydney artist Llewellyn Skye's quirky animal sketches will be showcased at Nyst Gallery, Southport, next week

While many artists make a point of saying how challenging, tiring and indeed harrowing the production of art can be, Llewellyn Skye admits she finds painting such fun that she smiles as she works.

Only this year did Sydney-based Skye, 32, start painting the quirky animals that so entertain and amuse her. The work was for a solo show at the Randwick Children's Hospital.

Given only seven painting days to create this show, Skye used sketches she had made during her Thailand honeymoon as a base for the work needed to fill a long hospital corridor.

"I had a few elephants and monkeys," she explains.

Inspired by the theme, she produced 77 small animal canvasses in seven working days.

"I had so much fun painting these little animals - pulling faces, staring at you or just sitting around that I found myself doing it all over again," says Skye.

The result of her animal fixation goes on display at the Nyst Gallery, Southport, in a show called *Party Animals*, opening next Friday.

"I have had so much fun painting *Party Animals*," she says. "I've kept the paintings free and expressive, resulting in some quirky little numbers that had me smiling as I painted them."

Trying to find the character in each animal has been a rewarding experience, and the depicting of 'the commonalties between humans and animals' was a source of interest and amusement for the artist.

"That human quality or the unconditional love they have when they look at you," she says. "With all the fun I was having I also threw in a little bit of cheek."

"At this stage I just want to get paint on to the canvas. I don't want to paint political messages or concepts."

Having relatively recently moved into paint, Skye's aim is to 'paint what I see to be able to capture light, expression, feeling'.

The difference between the work for the original show and this new show is the artist had more time to consider.

"I still wanted to keep them fresh and spontaneous, but I was able to sit back and think," she says.

The animals, colours and brush marks

Animals come to join the party



are more sensitive this time. For the present she will continue painting animals.

"I have lots of ideas that I'd like to explore," says Skye, adding the animal theme also gives her 'a freedom that I would like to have when I paint people'.

Skye says she will eventually paint people, as she is fascinated with character lines and funny expressions.

But at present she says she enjoys the freedom she has with animals.

"Being an animal lover myself, I suppose I really empathise with them and like to think of them having the same qualities as we do."

Moving into painting has been almost hypnotic, admits Skye.

"When I paint I go into another world, it's something that keeps me captivated."

Her imagery comes from collecting pictures and photographs.

Born in Gosford, NSW, Skye graduated from the National Art School in Darlinghurst, Sydney, with a degree in sculpture. But she believes she 'always wanted to be a painter' and finally took the plunge.

"After my degree, I did a painting course for a year - and have not looked back."

Her painting style, however, remains strongly influenced by her sculptural background.

"I construct the form, in a modelling sense. Each stroke or section is a building block for me as I try to create a three-dimensional image on a two-dimensional surface."

"I'm really glad I studied sculpture, as I think it helps my painting. When I paint it comes naturally to me to paint the form."

"The technical process of a painting is my journey. With a strong knowledge of drawing I find the issues of space, composition and mark making at the forefront of my mind."

Certainly there is a sculptural content in the current body of work. The brushstrokes are layered, the animal portraits stark, with strong characterisation. These are set against plain, flat, colour backgrounds, which in itself gives the finished product a distinct sense of three-dimensionality.

The rather carved texture comes from the complexity of the brushwork. The total mood? Joyful.

■ Llewellyn Skye's *Party Animals* at the Nyst Gallery, Southport, July 4 to August 10



Leathem has 'em in a spin

CC wrote a story six weeks ago about local ballerina Gina-Marie Leathem (above) winning a scholarship to work with the American Ballet Theatre in New York.

Her excited mother, Dianne, has phoned to say Gina-Marie, just 15 years of age, is having the time of her life.

"She told me her legs are covered in bruises, her feet are bleeding and she's exhausted but loving every minute.

"A friend of mine grew up with the mother of the principal dancer and has taken Gina-Marie under her wing while she is staying in dorms on the Lower Eastside of Manhattan."

Our girl has solo and featured roles in some of the performances which must mean this prestigious dance company likes what it sees.

To all the locals such as Lucy Cole and the many others who supported Gina-Marie at a Surfers Paradise Chamber of Commerce lunch, a big thankyou because we may soon have a super star of dance to claim as our own.

Opening of Llewellyn Skye exhibition at Nyst Gallery



Anne Sidebottom and Jason Cooney

Party comes to life

ANY invitation that reads 'Party Animals' is sure to pique the interest of people, no names, who specialise in champagne and laughter.

In this case, the invite referred to an art exhibition by Llewellyn Skye at Nyst Gallery in Southport.

A packed gallery wandered in and out of the many nooks and crannies of this daytime law office, enjoying the expressionistic depiction of animals of all shapes and sizes hung on the walls.

Spotted Ann Seiersen happily traipsing around the gallery with a pair of smaller works trying to mix and match and see if this goes with that at her abode.

Spotted in conversation with gallery owner Lorraine Pilgrim were Dr Robert McLaughlin and wife Carol, presumably over which of the Party Animals to take home.



Llewellyn Skye and Patrick Quabba



Jasmine North and Cherie Orevich



Sophie Parr and Bronwyn Fyffe

Zingara dancers score German acts

WE all realise change can be good and the new shows coming to us at Conrad Jupiters are different and colourful, as shown proven on opening night of *Merchants of Bollywood* which opened last week.

But spare a thought for all our wonderful young dancers who are now out of a job or looking further afield for a gig.

It so happened we stumbled across local dancers Anne-Marie Fish and Megan Barry-Cotter at the *So You Think You Can Dance* gig at the Gold Coast Convention and Entertainment Centre on Sunday night.

While they definitely know they can dance, the duo excitedly said they had signed to work in Mannheim, Germany, and are set to head to



Anne-Marie Fish and Megan Barry-Cotter

Europe to start their next stint of kick, turn, kick, in October.

As Anne-Marie said: "It's a case of another suitcase in another hall. If *Zingara* at Conrad had not closed I would never had the opportunity to get such a fantastic job overseas.

"It could be Hollywood, not Bollywood, here I come."

Simple game of pick up 52

ONE thing you never want to do in newspapers is upset the people who design the pages, aka the sub-editors.

A happy go-lucky, cheery bunch that are always brightening up the office with their merry tales of a stress-free life in front of a computer screen.

So you can imagine we were anxious not to upset their savoir faire when we

asked one of the cast members from *Merchants of Bollywood* for his name.

"If you want my full name you better hand over your notebook," he said smiling. Fifty-two letters later he had finished writing and handed the book back with a broad grin.

In the interests of a good relationship it was decided not to submit the picture and caption.