

Planet protector's art has serious message

Marisa King

It was the perfect introduction to The Miracle Room. Laughter and chatter could be heard as we walked down the unassuming lane at 48 Fitzherbert Street to the gallery for the opening of its first exhibition since lockdown. Bubbles and a bonfire greeted us in the outdoor space, while inside we encountered the riotous, catastrophic, mixed-media works of Carterton artist Martin Doyle. The Miracle Room lives.

My only regret was I hadn't worn a ponytail to counter the delightful winds. (It's my first spring in Featherston, so I'm still getting acclimatised).

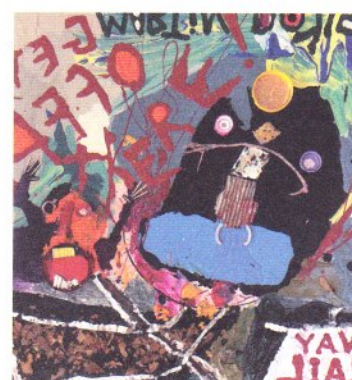
The publicity blurb described Doyle's work as life-affirming, redemptive and hilarious. Earlier that day, I read in the *Wairarapa Times-Age* that his brightly painted artwork, festooned with discarded bottle tops, dead insects and other detritus, also carries a serious message about the way humans are treating the planet.

The gallery was packed to the edges but I eventually picked out Doyle, surrounded as he was by art enthusiasts keen to discuss his work. A few days later, he told me he was "thrilled" by the turnout.

"There must have been 60 or 70 people there," he said. "Just about every second person was a painter or a poet." Every piece of Doyle's art has a story behind it. For example, *Get offa there!* sprang from the day he stepped down on a railway track to pick up a piece of plastic. "A railway worker with a voice like Luciano Pavarotti bellowed out at me, 'Get offa there!' It got me thinking about the endangered environment we all live in and the need for a message no one can ignore."

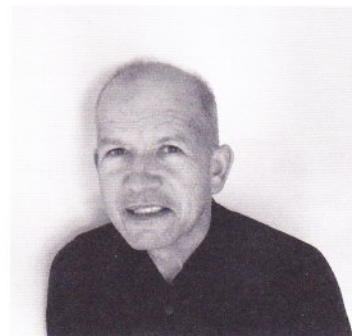


Walking in a storm 1

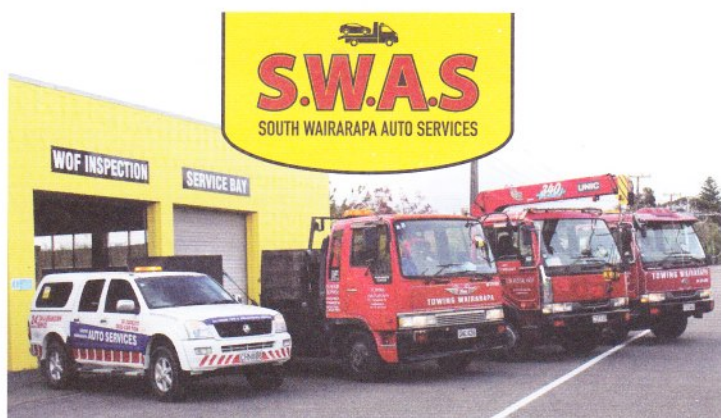


Get offa there

It seems the messages in Doyle's artwork have resonated with Featherstonians, with five of the 10 paintings on display having sold within 24 hours of the opening night. Doyle's next projects are to paint "a tough skinhead dog" called Coco and to illustrate a children's book written by a Carterton friend.



Martin Doyle



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