

FOREWORD

Before and during the last world war, Australia was a fairly grey place artistically and culturally; but towards its end there was a sudden great flowering of the arts. Colourful Elaine Haxton was in the midst of this and played a significant part.

She was a great friend of my parents and their acquaintances. A bohemian, a loyal friend and, above all, a terrifically good artist, she had been properly and professionally trained. To my young eyes she was an extraordinary and wonderful character and surprisingly tolerant of children, well, at least of me. A dedicated smoker, Elaine had a voice with a touch of Marlene Dietrich to it, and an English rather than a Sydney accent. I can hear it now.

All in all, Haxton was an artist's artist. She was a superb draughtswoman and extremely skilful in many media. Having worked as a commercial artist she had a very sharp eye and her works communicated strongly with the viewer. While her paintings often brought to life the vivid seascapes, colours, foliage and animals of the beautiful part of the world in which she lived, they exhibited robust elements of humour and playfulness as well.

We used to stay in the boatshed she and her husband converted to a guest shack on the water at their house at Clareville Beach. I have fond childhood memories of her cats, the remarkable house, the riot of a Sydney sub-tropical garden, and Elaine working quietly away in her studio.

On the wall in our own house by the sea is a painting I've lived with all my life. It shows three fanciful and colourful nuns, one with a parasol wading in the shallows on a hot day, with their habits indiscreetly hiked up. I love this painting, which is pure Elaine, pretty and more than a little cheeky.

In her lifetime she never quite achieved the level of fame and superstar status of some of her contemporaries. I believe this is because much of the art of the time, and indeed now, was angst ridden, slightly morbid and often confronting. There was none of this in Elaine's work. Her artworks were joyous, whimsical and beautiful.

Lorraine McLoughlin has crafted a splendid book that gives deep insights as it chronicles this lovely, lively person and her excellent works. I am personally thrilled that Elaine's life and art are gaining the greater recognition they so richly deserve.

Adam Wynn, Winemaker, Honorary Consul-General of Japan in South Australia