

ARTIST PROFILE

Karen Barboutis

How did you become involved in the Hellenic Lyceum's «Nurturing Hellenic Heritage the Australian Way» exhibition?

My involvement in the Hellenic Lyceum's "nurturing Hellenic Heritage the Australian Way" exhibition was actually quite fortuitous. I was attending a function at the home of the Consul General of Greece, and Mrs Vasileios M Tolios. The president of the Hellenic Lyceum was also in attendance. Both the Consul and his wife had attended my previous exhibitions and asked me why I wasn't exhibiting in the forthcoming exhibition. I was not aware of it, nor were any of the committee aware that I was an artist. That is the life of the artist. Self-promotion is not what the artist is about. I do what I do for no other reason than that I can't not do it. Although all the artists for the exhibition had been finalised, the Hellenic Lyceum committee did manage to find the space to include my work.

What influenced your decision to accept the invitation?

My Greek-Australian Heritage and its influence on my art is of great importance to me. I was also excited at the prospect of meeting and exhibiting alongside other Greek-Australian artists. Although included in many group exhibitions I have never exhibited alongside nor even met, artists of a similar mindset and background as my own. All artists have their own point of view. It would be fantastic to participate in an exhibition that can reveal to the viewer just how unique and varied each artist's perspective can be in response to the theme of creating works that have been inspired by their Hellenic heritage.

Was the artwork you are exhibiting especially designed for this event or is it on-going work?

After a short holiday in Greece in September 2012, I returned to my studio in Sydney full of inspiration from the images that I had been bombarded with over just a few weeks. I had already made quick sketches and taken many photographs to use as the starting point to my body of work, Postcards to Me, from Greece. It was coincidental that I was already working on the theme that the inspiration for the Hellenic Lyceum exhibition.

How did Hellenic culture and/or history influence your work?

Born in Australia of Greek parents, I was fortunate to have the perfect balance of an Australian upbringing infused with my Hellenic Heritage. My father was very involved with the Greek Community, serving as president



NURTURING HELLENIC HERITAGE EXHIBITION

Since the 19th century, each generation of Greek Australians has blended their Australian upbringing with their Hellenic heritage, creating a sense of duality and a unique Hellenic Australian culture. The Hellenic Lyceum, Sydney, invited 15 artists across different media to interpret and visually showcase this cultural duality. Using their perspective as Australian born Greeks or Australians married to Greeks, a thought-provoking and diverse result is ensured.

Date: Thursday 7th – Monday 25 March 2013

TIME: 9.00am – 5.00pm

VENUE: NSW Parliament House - Theatre, Macquarie Street, Sydney

ENTRY COST: Free

CONTACT: www.helleniclyceum.com.au

of both the Kytherian Association and the Hellenic club for many years. He was recognised for these services to the Greek Community and awarded an OAM in 1990, one of the first Kytherian-born Greeks to achieve this honour. Greek Community, Tradition, and Greek Orthodox Religion, ran alongside Vegemite sandwiches, netball, and surfing at Coogee and Maroubra beaches.

When I travel to Greece, the Hellenic culture not only surrounds, but also absorbs me. I do not see myself as a tourist; rather I feel the culture and histories of my ancestors as I walk the streets, the Museums, and the historical and archaeological landscapes of the mainland and its islands. I just want to express how I feel, and pencil and paper is the way that do it.

How are these influences projected in your work?

I draw what I see. I am influenced by the images of the place I grew up in and also the images of the country that is so much a part of who I am.

A Greek-Australian artist: a blessing or a hurdle in getting recognized by the art community?

This particular aspect of my being an artist of Greek heritage has never been of relevance. Art is Art! The life of the artist, by virtue of the way they work, is a solitary one. The recognition the artist achieves in their community is always dependant on how the artist wants his or her work to be seen and the methods by which they attain this.



Once upon not so long ago, the term «Greek-Australian» artists carried a certain stigma. What issues did you have to overcome on a personal basis?

I have been working as an animator and an illustrator for over 25 years. I have only been working as an "artist" for the last 2 years. I have never encountered a stigma as a "Greek-Australian", so therefore had no personal issues to overcome. As an artist I do what I do because I feel I have to do it.

I don't have to answer to anyone. I show my work because it is the completion of the cycle of creating the art. If someone likes my work, it is a bonus. If they understand my work it is a gift.

Have you got any projects in the pipeline?

My work is constantly evolving. I am working toward a solo exhibition in early May 2013. The body of work is based on the theme, Postcards to Me, from Greece.

Finally, a message to the Greek Australian community.

Art in all forms is practiced by many talented Australians of Greek decent. Many people do not know these talented people exist. It is nice to get some recognition.

The Hellenic Lyceum Sydney has successfully brought together a group of artists and presented their personal interpretations of their Hellenic culture to the public space.