

Simple inspiration of human instances

Art

Amy Martin

JUDY Horacek is used to having a blank page to fill. As a newspaper cartoonist for 17 years, her job has been to report on current issues through her images. But when it comes to her artwork, Horacek says it's a "different blank page process".

"I think it's kind of the opposite," she says. "With a cartoon I think: 'I want to do a cartoon about...' and it's usually an opinion.

"With this ... it's more: 'what happens here and what if I stamp this here and paint this here?'"

The result is Horacek's whimsical 59-piece exhibition *Instances* at Beaver Galleries.

One could say the main difference between Horacek's two mediums is that there is no punchline in her artwork. While the punchline is what makes cartoons "easy to judge; people find them funny or they don't", the lack of one, or even a lack of a clear message from Horacek to her audience, is part of the beauty of *Instances*.

These works are more subjective.

"This is less clear cut than the cartoons. It's much more wanting people to ponder and muse. Not trying to change anyone's mind about anything," Horacek says.

"[I want people to] enjoy the work and the colours and say 'isn't that pretty' or 'isn't that nice'. Or 'doesn't that just touch something that is beyond words?'

"My cartoons, I know they're pictures and that adds something to it, but mostly you can describe them.

"Whereas with these ones it would be harder to describe because it is about how green might work on somebody's mind or how lines might do something.

"That thing that we can't describe is why people still like art."

While the process may be different, there are still some similarities between Horacek's two mediums, because at the end of the day "it's still me and it's still my sensibility".

The same big issues which inspire the artist's cartoons are also running through

her mind when she creates her prints, watercolours and sculptures.

The difference is the archaeological context which inspired Horacek to create *Instances*.

"I was in Athens and ... I fell in love with the very, very old things. Not the classical things, not the perfect things, but the old, funny little objects," Horacek says.

"Nobody knows what they are; they might be gods or they might be children's toys and they're in the museum, and they're figures. I thought it was interesting, that point that humans started ... seeing and making something.

"I was thinking about becoming human

and that was important to me initially, thinking about the point in humanity today, with a world collapsing and with the refugee crisis all over the world.

"In the end, those big ideas, those are kind of ideas in the back of my mind but more what's coming out in the final thing is thinking about people and objects and the simple world people would have had then."

Instances is the third exhibition you can see Horacek's work in at the moment, with her cartoons also featuring in *Behind the Lines* at the Museum of Australian Democracy and *Inked* at the National Library.

It's a rarity for anyone to be part of three Canberra exhibitions at once, let alone a car-

toonist, and that could be because there are not many who also create work for galleries.

"A lot of cartoonists paint very beautifully or do life drawing and things like that, but I'm probably the main one I know who actually has the two distinct things: the cartoons that appear in newspapers and books and then actually shows in actual art galleries," Horacek says. "But if you have a full-time job as a cartoonist you don't have much time. If you're doing an editorial cartoon every single day, there's not much time outside of that, or if there is you probably want to chop wood or something."

Instances is at Beaver Galleries until May 19.



Artist Judy Horacek with works from her exhibition 'Instances' at Beaver Galleries. Picture: Jamila Toderas