

Beautiful new beginnings

Intellectual rigour goes on show at ACT debut, **Jacqueline Williams** writes

The idea was simple. Three young artists, who'd previously never met and hadn't been shown in Canberra before. Join them together and you have Beaver Galleries' latest exhibition, *New*.

There's no specific theme to *New*, nor was there intended to be. The Director of Beaver Galleries, Martin Beaver, thought Nicole Slatter, Maria Parmenter and Lucienne Rickard's work would all sit together comfortably in the Deakin gallery space, despite the fact they each work in different media.

"There was a similar intellectual rigour behind what they were doing," Beaver says.

"The bottom line is, they're three young artists who are starting out and had probably never thought of showing in Canberra."

Beaver is a great supporter of artists and is often the voice behind their fledgling creations.

"They were just people I had found and seen their work in my travels over the last couple of years," Beaver says.

"A solo show would probably have been a bit too much to deal with, so sharing as a small group is easier on the artists," Beaver says.

Beaver has been in the art business for many years, but it's possible he still feels a rush of excitement when selling an artists first work.

He first met Rickard two years ago in Tasmania, Parmenter in Adelaide earlier this year and Slatter in Western Australia four years ago.

Curators often find it difficult to explain what it is that strikes them about a particular artist and their work, and Beaver was no different.

"You've got to have a gut reaction, initially," Beaver says.

"Initially you just see the work and think that's actually really, really good work and it makes you want to find out more about the work and about the artist."

Slatter's landscape oil paintings explore the notion of space as an echo of time in memory through familiar scenes of everyday, urban life in moments of silence and expectancy.

The places and landscapes portrayed in her paintings highlight a sense of isolation.

"Nicole views her work as a stage for human interaction and invites her viewers to become participants, imagining possible narratives that may accompany each painting," Beaver says.

"Consequently, her paintings are not limited by the boundaries of a canvas or board but by the limitations of her viewers' imagination."

It was the thought behind each artist's work that caught Beaver's attention and the three women all have accomplished skills.

Slatter has exhibited extensively



Artists Lucienne Rickard, Nicole Slatter and Maria Parmenter, above, and Rickard's *Don't despair just look up at the sky*, right.

throughout Western Australia and has been a part of group exhibitions in Victoria and Queensland. Parmenter has received many awards for her ceramic works, including Judges Commendation at the South Australian Ceramics Award in 2007. In 2006 Rickard was awarded the Rosamond McCulloch Studio Residence at the Cite des Arts Internationale, Paris.

"There are many talented artists out there and as a gallery director you've got to have a strong connection to the people," Beaver says.

Beaver has seen many works, a lot of which he has liked, and he admits it's difficult to choose who to show and who not to show and what to choose and what not to choose.

"The bottom line is, you look at things and say, what would you actually like to own yourself, what is it about the work that makes you want to take it home and live with it," he says.

Parmenter's ceramics draw upon her memories and recollections. Working in stoneware, she created many hand-built sculptural objects for *New*.

"It looks at the idea that domestic objects can act as vehicles for memory," Parmenter says.

Twelve groups of Parmenter's works are on display in the Beaver Galleries, which contain two to four objects each. The final product took her four months to create.

"The unique thing about this show is that none of us are from the ACT and we haven't shown in Canberra before," she says. "Which is a nice opportunity to get our work to a different audience."

Rickard's lead-pencil drawings are described as quirky, delicate and detailed.

"There are extraordinarily fine, obsessive marks in her drawings and they are quite beautiful," Beaver says.

The drawings feature imagery inspired by Tasmania's colonial history, displaying its isolated location and unique flora and fauna.

Each work in the gallery space

was specially created for *New*, which Beaver describes as "a bit of a shot in the dark" because the artists didn't collaborate on what they were doing and they didn't know how it would work.

Parmenter says, "Even though the themes are reasonably different they all work quite well together."

■ *New* - paintings, ceramics and drawings at Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin, until November 2.

