

Janna van Hasselt
'Make Yourself at Home'

23 July - 10 August, 2008
Seed Gallery, Auckland
Review: G. Barr

Janna van Hasselt's latest Auckland offering 'Make Yourself at Home', at Seed Gallery, confidently explodes colour across the gallery's white walls and mixes the right levels of maturity and fun.

van Hasselt is a beautiful storyteller and continues to move forward artistically. She has grown and the step forward can be seen obviously in the move to working in 3D with The Rookwolken Series and subtly in the Zeven Dagen Series with the intelligent play of fore-and background. It makes me want to see the work on more than one occasion because of all the details to be discovered.

There is a story in each piece of art and the obvious symbols, such as the recurring wine glass in The Zeven Dagen Series, mix easily with the swirls and lines of colour to draw you in and hold your attention.

The gallery added has an outline of the meaning of the exhibition on the reverse side of the exhibition list. While this is helpful as a reference guide it is not needed when viewing van Hasselt's work and here lies the artist's strength. She does not need to explain her work because each piece is a fully complete whole in itself. You do not have to 'work' when viewing the exhibition. The eye does not have to push itself around – it is led effortlessly by her colour compositions.

'Make Yourself at Home' seems a lot more 'comfortable' and 'at home' than past exhibitions and contains a sense of peace. As the edginess and maybe uncertainty that comes with being young has disappeared what has burst forth is a wholeness in the sense that van Hasselt has come to understand something not only about who she is but also what she is, what she does and how she functions. van Hasselt has made herself 'at home' in her mind and translated that to her work. The exhibition is therefore full and engaging and a delight to view.

The use of rubber and faux leather as surfaces on which to print and paint in the Zeven Dagen Series are unusual and come with their own personalities. This added dynamic is handled with maturity and allows the works to pop.

The Rookwolken series is, for want of a better word, yummy. I would like to see van Hasselt explore this further. The innate 'Janna-ness' of this exhibition has a confidence that comes with peace and purpose. The pieces are fresh and engaging and the artist's sense of form shines.