



Caption

Title: Our Frank

Medium: linocut with ink and watercolour

Size: 280 x 380mm

Year: 2010

Rona Green '*Losers and Winners*'.

Exhibition Review: Chloe Cull 10/3/2011

Australian print maker, Rona Green's latest exhibition at Solander Gallery in Wellington (running from 16th February to the 19th of March) can be seen as a survey of society and the different personalities within it (or outcast from it). The selection of works titled '*Losers and Winners*' is a fresh and modern look at different character's traits, portrayed through Rona's wonderful prints of dogs, cats and rabbits in portrait style with tattoos, scars, wonky eyes and all.

Speaking with Rona following the opening of the exhibition opening, I discovered that these were not just portraits of any animals, but animals that Rona knew personally. These are animals with recognizable personalities that Rona has cleverly portrayed in her artworks. *Jacky*, 2009, the bad-ass dog with a black eye, sailor tattoos and an attitude not to be messed with, *Our Frank*, 2010, the dog with a sailor hat, a bird tattoo, a bad past but a heart of gold, and *B.B.*, 2011, the smiling but slightly sinister bunny who you can't trust, are just some of the characters portrayed by Rona in '*Losers and Winners*'.

What I particularly loved about the exhibition is that over time while studying the works, I realized I knew all of these personalities in my own life. And as I talked to others at the opening, their feelings were the same: they too had a tough looking colleague with a chip on his shoulder, or a good- looking friend that needs knocking down a peg or two (like *Theodor*, 2008, a good looking, black T-shirted dog with piercing blue eyes and a stance that says he knows he is cool).

I talked to Rona about her childhood and when she became interested in art. With such imaginative works, she must have had a pretty creative upbringing, right? Well, according to Rona, her parents were not “arty” at all. However, her grandmothers were both into crafts such as cross-stitch and Rona spent hours with them learning all the techniques and methods involved. This kind of hands-on work has always appealed to Rona and mirrors the process-orientated printmaking. When I asked why she chose print making in particular as a medium for her works, Rona told me that it is exactly this ‘process-orientated’ idea that drew her to print making. Always being able to improve, experiment with different methods, whether it be lithographs or the linocuts she chose for this series of works, and the ability to finally master something you’ve been working on for a long time, are reasons that Rona loves what she does.

This ability to improve and conquer a medium is what we can see in *Losers and Winners*. The quality of these works is flawless. The time and care Rona has taken is obvious; the tattoos, facial features and backgrounds are painstakingly hand painted. Not only has she taken time in the production of her works, but in the extensive research of the different ideas that influence her work, for example, sailor tattoo culture and Russian prison tattoo culture. In this series of Rona’s work the tattoos can be seen as ‘badges of honour’ and as marks of a person’s past and achievements. The tattoos are thoughtfully chosen and each is carefully matched to the special character of the animal depicted.

Rona has also experimented with photography, and there are photographic elements evident in this work. The use of the portrait style references early portrait photography. The idea of taking subjects out of their normal environments, placing them by themselves and letting them tell a story through their gestures, expressions and personal styles is one often seen in photography.

By bringing all of these elements together, Rona has created a wonderful and engaging experience for the viewer. Come along to Solander Works on Paper at 218 Willis Street in Wellington to enjoy this exhibition, learn something about printmaking and maybe a little about yourself.

Exhibition closes 19 March
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