



ALLERGIC REACTION

When artist Inge Doesburg developed an allergy to her own work, she was forced to reinvent her craft. As she tells **Diana Dekker**, the fickleness of fate touches her life and her art.

Inge Doesburg's life has been unpredictable. Married to a New Zealander and living on the other side of the world from her Dusseldorf birthplace, she is used to change.

She arrived here in her early 20s, 23 years ago. "I've come to that halfway time, living in New Zealand, wondering what will be the rest of my life."

Meanwhile, her art practice, until recently primarily printmaking and mixed media, has been hit by what could turn out to be a fortuitous fickle stab of fate, an allergy to some of the materials she uses in printmaking. She was already tending to monographs – "so my work has naturally moved into painting. At this stage I don't know if I'm out of printmaking".

Prints or paintings, landscape inspires her work.

She has been mulling the words of a Goethe poem, *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern – The Song of the Spirits over the Waters*. Goethe, in the poem, compares the soul of man to water raining down and, evaporated, returning. He likens the fate of man to the changing wind. So Doesburg, painting New Zealand land, water and sky, imbues the work with her own sense of the fickleness of fate and the circular movement of water.

The words hovered in her creative consciousness when she was at home in

Dunedin painting the work for *Above Water*, her exhibition at Solander Works on Paper in Wellington.

"They're classic landscapes but have that feeling of movement and circularity, of how everything is really random and enormous. That's life."

She prefers to walk in remote places, such as Fiordland, the Chatham Islands, Stewart Island and Kapiti Island and then reflect for as long as it takes.

"I go to places and it simmers away for a long time. That's not a thought process. I do work toward deadlines. I let the exhibition come closer so I have to work fast. Some people work methodically towards a show. For me it's cathartic to work quickly."

Close to home she continually absorbs the look of Dunedin's hills. "My view at home is of Mt Cargill with its telegraph mast which a lot of people don't like. I love it. I love that connection with the sky, visually and emotionally."

"In New Zealand the skies are so vast. Germany, which is very highly populated, is much more earth bound... Most of the pictures in this show have big skies – slightly related to Goethe's poem."

The paintings are also related to her delight in "being in nature. I love cycling. I cycle to work and it feels fantastic to be in nature. That's another German romantic thing, being part of it. It seems to be more so there than here because [there] we have a lot of forests and cycleways. Here it's often a matter of taming nature or getting on top of it. Different

Inge Doesburg with her paintings at Wellington's Solander gallery.

Photo: ROSS GIBLIN

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countries have a different attitude as to how they live with their environment."

Even the physical nature of her work has a fickle life of its own. She had intended to make large works for her Solander exhibition "and then I bought these tiny little canvases. You see it coming out in a certain way and you have little control over it." Apart from two metre-wide paintings they are mostly 35cm – "so relatively small". They are a mixture of media, but mainly oil on paper or canvas.

In Dunedin, where she graduated from Otago Polytechnic School of Fine Arts with a fine arts diploma with honours in printmaking in 1993, she teaches part time and runs the Inge Doesburg Studio and Gallery showing the work of other artists as well as her own and specialising in works on paper.

In Wellington for the opening of her exhibition, she and her husband went on a three-day walk in the Wairarapa, taking in Castlepoint. Back in Dunedin she will mull over it, before producing her next body of work. And, always, wondering about the vagaries of existence. "I don't know what will happen. I love New Zealand. It's as much a part of me now as Germany is. I'm divided, or as some people say, added to. I have two homes now."

Inge Doesburg, *Above Water*, and Ben Reid, *Paradise Lost*, at Solander Works on Paper Gallery, Wellington, until June 11.