

Other than football...

Yesterday, on Saturday 4th June, I joined a friend from the budding Glen Eira Artists Society at a stall in Carnegie. It was part of the support provided by friends and colleagues and community to the artist Anthony Breslin. Several years ago, Anthony used his life savings and substantial borrowings to buy an old church. He began the long and difficult task of rebuilding it to be a cultural/arts hub on Neerim Road, Carnegie. His vision "was to promote the arts and artists, as well as support, educate, and cultivate a younger generation of artists." (from his flyer). Over the last two years, he has done most of the work himself. He had almost completed this work of love and passion when an arsonist almost destroyed his dreams. The insurance company has played the game of insurance company and found loopholes, and so he held a day yesterday to try and raise the rest of the \$220,000 needed to finish the project.

There was silent auctions, an auction, art work by Anthony, art work donated by others, music on the back of a truck, jumping castles for the kids, a BBQ of Argentinian sausages, pizza making, face painting, ethical sports runners and balls for sale, a fire truck and, as always, handsome fire-fighters to go with it. And then there was us.

Emily, a fellow artist from our Figurative Art Group on Tuesdays, was handing out our flyers and talking up the Society, and on another table, I was working on a watercolour of the Rabbi's, an image of a painting my grandmother managed to bring to Australia so many years ago. Throughout the day, we chatted to people, and I invited the children to come around my side of the table and watch me paint. Heather, our secretary joined us later. Zamir came to visit bringing my other camera. Mum came; she's a member too and is our photographer.

I love working with the kids watching and asking questions and admiring. There's something to be said for working with children with their emotions so honest and out there. Throughout my children's schooling, I was the visiting cartoonist who would sit with the children and inspire them to cartoon their parents, pets, teachers, monsters, anything to get them to play. I would guide them gently but they would take off and fly and do the most amazing drawings. As an artist, that's the part of the soul that one touches in the moment with the art.

I tried to win tickets to "The Footy Show" in the silent auctions but was outbid. I bought a small painting of Anthony's (in St. Kilda colours) and one of his beautiful coffee table books of his artwork. I even got to talk to the local Greens senator as she did the rounds.

Later in the afternoon, Anthony came and chatted and looked at the work I was doing. We talked, of course, about the St. Kilda Football Club. He'd been at the Grand final last year, I think the replay, and he and his friend had cried at the result. Heartbreaking. It is something, as well as the love of art, that we share. My friend Heather bought the Magpie art piece from me this year; she's a happy Pie supporter and was going home to watch the game last night. My St. Kilda thermal mug which is always with me, labelled my colours. I am a Saint tragic.

We sat all day and though the sun was out, it was chilly and by the night I was very cold and feeling like I was going to get sick. I hit the Echinacea and the Vitamin C and the chicken soup, I drank apple cider vinegar and honey, and sat wrapped up in the heat of my home to watch the game.

The Saints looked on for the first half, but all the liveliness and energy of the last several weeks wasn't there in the strength that was needed against the Pies, and they cooked us like a turkey over the last two quarters. We were glad we didn't make the trek to the G. We looked at my iPhone and saw that it only got worse and got ready for bed.

While at Carnegie, I had looked at the terrible saga of the Doggies going down to the ever strong Geelong. So it was football misery for both my sister and I.

And life goes on. My only consolation is my mate Marks words: like a mantra I repeat it to myself and it does help.

"We won once in 1966, and one day we'll win again. We will always have that."

It's going to have to do for now.

Yvette Wroby

5th June 2011