

Silverstream Exhibition Opening

A warm welcome ladies and gentlemen, and special guest, Helen Williams – it's great to see you all here on this splendid spring afternoon.

For those of you who are not familiar with Silverstream Wines Tony and Felicity bought the vineyard in 2005 and through Tony's broadacre farming knowledge and the wine making expertise of James Kelly they began a growing regime that has established harmony between grapes, topography, soil, and the Mediterranean climate to reflect the true characteristics of this region in their wines. I'm sure most of you are already appreciating those qualities.

I must first say a few words about the The Art Trail.

It is organized by Art South an organization based in Albany that was established to promote fine art and craft in the Great Southern Region and to assist art and craft practitioners, organizations and galleries with professional skills development. The event is sponsored by the Bendigo Bank, the Shire of Denmark, Events Corp, the City of Albany and GWN amongst others. I am sure you will join me in acknowledging the importance of their sponsorship without which this occasion would not be possible. As their part in this annual event Tony and Felicity have invited Helen Williams as artist-in-residence for the period of the Art Trail and she will be here on certain days fulfilling that role.

A few words about Helen: She was born in Mt Barker but has lived much of her adult life in Kalamunda and is now based in Albany. She is a self taught artist - learning to paint when she was quite young. She joined the Kalamunda Arts and Crafts Group almost 50 years ago and her interest and skills have grown from there. She was a guest artist for Army Arts during the 1970s and has won many awards in Perth including the South Perth Heritage Award for water colours 3 times - as well as several country awards. Some of her paintings hang in permanent collections in the South West including Bunbury, Busselton, Morley and Mt Barker. Helen now enjoys being a member of the Albany Art Group. She loves painting ***En plein air*** which is a French expression meaning "in the open air" - used to describe the act of painting outdoors.

Artists have long painted outdoors, but in the mid-19th century working in natural light became particularly important to Impressionism where capturing the particular quality of light at certain parts of the day was an important element of the painting. The popularity of painting outdoors increased with the introduction of paints in tubes in the 1870s. Previously, each painter made their own paints by grinding and mixing dry pigment powders with linseed oil however, I'm not sure that the same applied to painting in watercolours.

Before opening the exhibition I want to make a few observations about the similarities between artists and wine makers. Firstly, they must both have a keen interest in their respective pursuits and be willing to spend many, many hours learning and developing the necessary skills to become competent in their distinct crafts. They must learn to be observant of their particular environments and strive to match what they produce to the particular settings in which they are being developed. Helen must be able to capture and convey the atmosphere, characteristics and details of the scenes she paints and Tony and Felicity must be able to express the complex character of this region through the smell, (the bouquet) and taste of their wines.

Having become competent in their respective arts the challenge is to put the paintings or the wine in front of people in order to win their appreciation and, ultimately, their approval in the form of sales. That is the process we are involved with this afternoon but there is one other activity that is often common to both pursuits – **The Review**. Having displayed the fruits of your artistry in wine making or painting it is someone's job to write about it. Let me give you an example of the similarity in writing about art and about wine.

Briefly then – some notes from a wine tasting review:

This wine is truly great. It creates its own universe of flavor. I get completely lost in it, and even after I swallow there are waves and waves of changing spice and fruit. This wine is profound. It transcends its description. It has such great balance. There's raw meats, graphite, black & white pepper, sweet ripe spicy blackberry and some burnt chocolate. Every sip is a new adventure. We drank it with a strip steak and the restaurant's amazing braised carrots and celery. The wine first melds with the food before it takes over the entire palate.

That is a review of a Napa Valley wine from California.

And now an equally brief sample of a review of an art exhibition:

In another gallery, a great rusting hull rises to the cupola above, before descending in graceful sweeps like billowing sails. Somehow, it resolves into a mouth, or a tunnel, or at least an opening into darkness: another seductive hollow that draws you into its void. How? Animal curiosity, the desire for knowledge, the visceral pull of a tunnel, the sense of looking deep into the engine room of some titanic ship; perhaps the hope of a ringing echo, a scent, a new hue. Each sensation stimulates another. The artist makes synaesthetes of us all.

And that is a review of a sculpture exhibition at the Royal Society of Arts in London.

What is noticeable about these reviews is that both writers are attempting to heighten our senses in an uplifting declaration of the characteristics and qualities of the product of both artist and wine maker. It is a celebration of the artistry and the skills involved in the process of creating a good wine or a good artwork. My hope is that the words of these writers help to heighten your awareness of the power of your senses to engage with the world more deeply and allow yourself the pleasure of living in the moment.

I am sure you will join me in congratulating Tony and Felicity on the excellence of their wine and Helen on her beautiful paintings and it is my great pleasure to pronounce the exhibition officially open. Please Enjoy!