

## Around the Galleries with Michael Berry

A marvellous place to visit, children a welcome but optional extra, is the **GORDON GLASS GALLERY AND STUDIO** Glassblowers on the corner of Dunns Creek Road and Red Hill Road, Red Hill - a state-of-the-art purpose built working glass studio with attached mezzanine exhibition space.

Grant Donaldson instantly strikes one as an uncomplicated man - for an artisan considered to be one of the nations leading glassblowers he is surprisingly without "arty" pretensions or airs, his demeanor friendly, direct and matter-of-fact - yet when you engage Grant in a conversation about his work you see a glimpse of the deeply passionate self-taught artist whose prolific ideas keep him awake at night drawing.

A farm manager in Tasmania in the mid 1980's, Grant met Eileen Gordon, an established Scottish glassblower, when she was employed at the Tasmanian Glassworks; she is the daughter of internationally renowned glass artists Alisdair and Rish Gordon who emigrated here in 1979.

Grant's fascination with glassblowing steadily grew as he spent more time assisting Eileen in production until his aptitude for the craft took over and he commenced producing his own range.

"You don't get a second chance, one mistake

and all that money and the piece itself are lost forever - you have to run with it and concentrate, there is no time to consider whether you can do it or not," he says, obviously excited by the risks of blowing glass.

After careful consideration the Donaldsons decided to build a glass studio on the Mornington Peninsula initially at Rosebud, and now at Red Hill...where beautiful rural views can be imbibed, customers are able to witness resident artisans creating new works and take in some of the glorious art pieces in the mezzanine gallery.

"This is a place where our clients can experience a little of the thrill I feel using traditional hand blowing techniques

- transforming sand into art," Grant explains.

So drop in at Red Hill and witness "taming the dragon in the firebox which breathes 24 hours a day" from 10 am to 5pm daily and experience the amazing universe of Grant, Eileen and the team of talented artists.

For the month of June at **GALLERY SORRENTO**, formerly known as First Settlement Gallery, local artist **DAMIEN RUFFIN'S** recent oil paintings and series of limited edition prints on canvas will be featured in the space's front room.

Loosely describing himself as an impressionist realist powered by an undaunting passion for sea themes, he reserves the right to avoid slipping into endless self repetition of tried and true formulaic images by making pictures in series and then moving on.

This attitude not only allows for spontaneous stylistic and narrative changes, but also facilitates his adoption of a variety of methods and technical approaches that the specific work dictates as it grows towards completion.

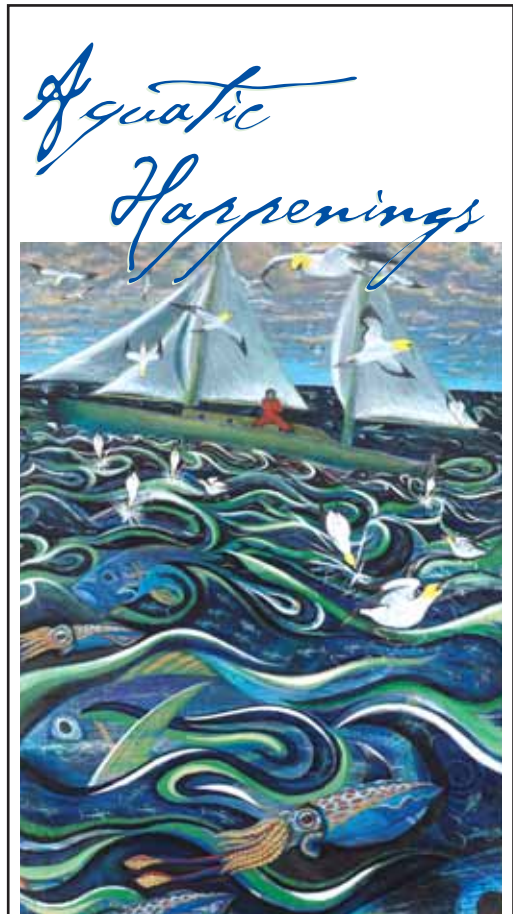
An inveterate skin diver, Damien sourced the inspiration for this sequence of fairly large format pictures while diving and around the dynamic Port Phillip heads, albeit with a taint of abstracted license.

"I have an enduring curiosity and fascination with gannets so they occasionally pop up...as do other animals," he says.

"I went through a period of painting topical political works such as the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and other such social issues, but I experienced trouble finding an audience for them...people found them too confronting & it became a challenge to get them hung."

So he decided as he needed to paint at a "collectible" level he would have to be realistic without compromising his artistic temperament or vision...it was then he returned to the vastness of the ocean and marine world to paint what "I felt good about" and suddenly people responded in a way in which they hadn't done when confronted with his controversial social comment pictures.

After all art is about relating and communicating with people and as long as there is no conflict in painting bearing that factor in mind, he can paint what he likes in the manner his heart and mind respond, he suggests. Looks like Damien has found his "mark".



### Gallery Sorrento June 2nd -24th

Signed limited edition prints and original oils on canvas available from Gallery Sorrento, (formerly First Settlement Gallery) 141 Ocean Beach Rd Sorrento  
Phone: 03 5984 2380  
Fax: 03 5984 5716  
E-mail: fsg@bigpond.net.au



**DJR** a display of work by Damien John Ruffin  
fine art email: djr.fineart@bigpond.com



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