

Lin Camac

Circle of Friends

Edited by Trevor Lang

This uniquely talented lady assigns much credit for her wealth of artistic achievements to a circle of close friends ... people who have helped her to overcome a negative past by confronting her with new challenges.



Born in Coffs Harbour, Lin Camac endured a disrupted and poverty-stricken childhood. She was never sure of where she belonged, which undermined her confidence and made the journey to adulthood an uphill slog. She never lacked artistic ability, though. She was always on the lookout for a discarded pencil stub.

"I thought I was Queen of the world when I was given a packet of 12 coloured pencils one year as a Christmas present," Lin says. "I don't know who it was that gave them to me, but all my vacation time was spent in an orgy of filling in blackline colouring-in books – cheap nasty pulpy paper and atrocious pencil quality

(compared to what I currently use), but even then I tried to shade realistically. Typically English publications with scenes of foxgloves, hollyhocks and daffodils outside thatched roof cottages; or old windmills on country lanes. An idealised world indeed!"

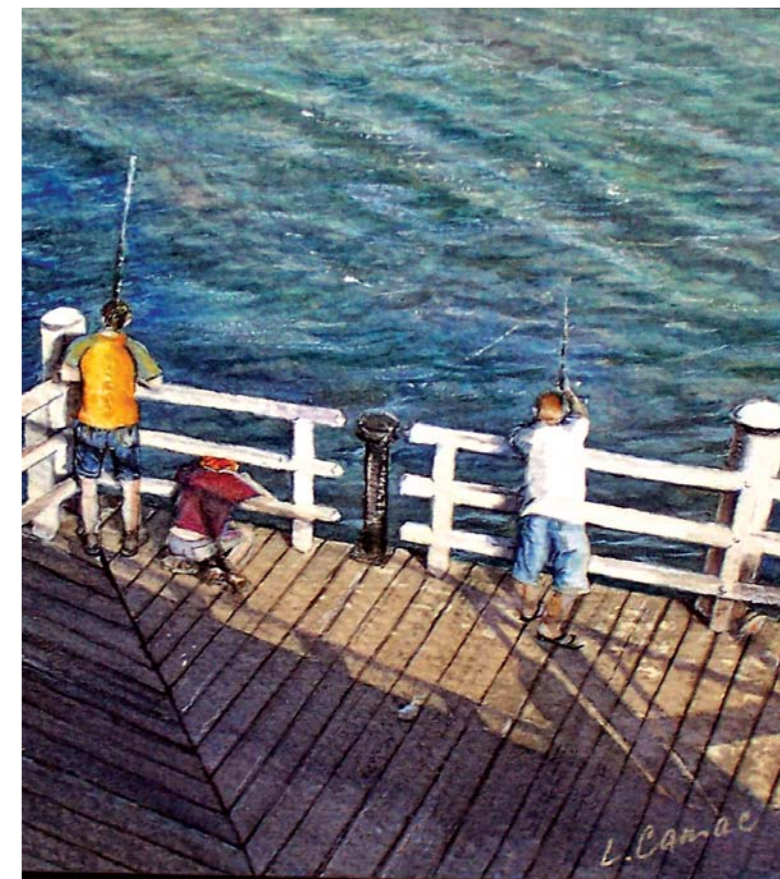
"I don't know what happened to all those early efforts," she continues.

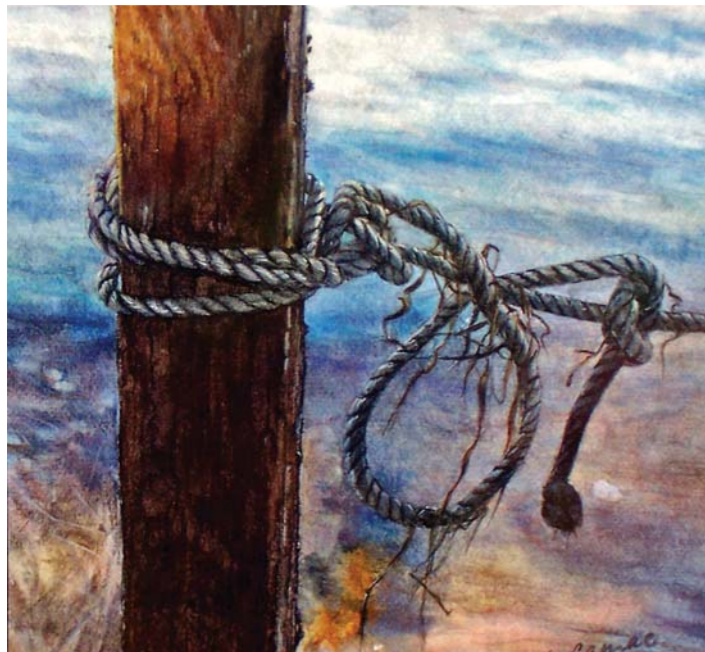
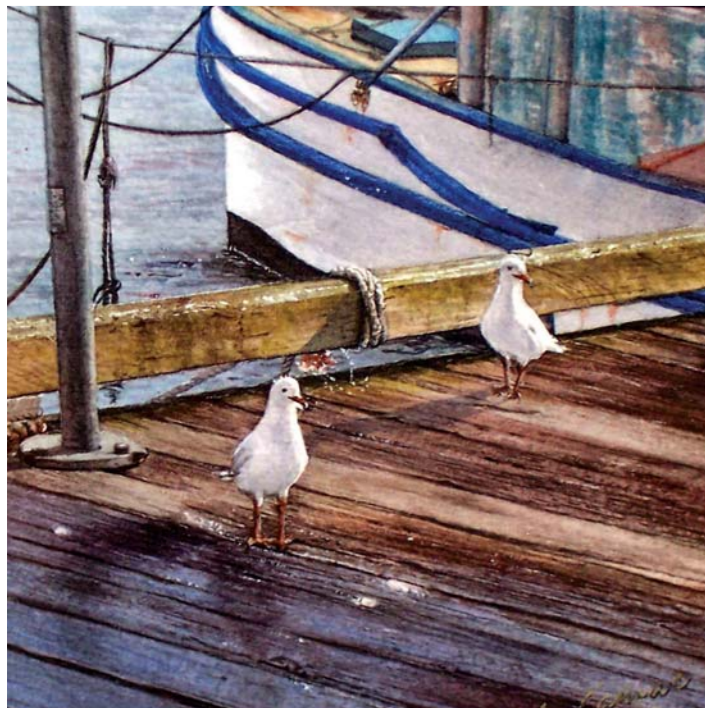
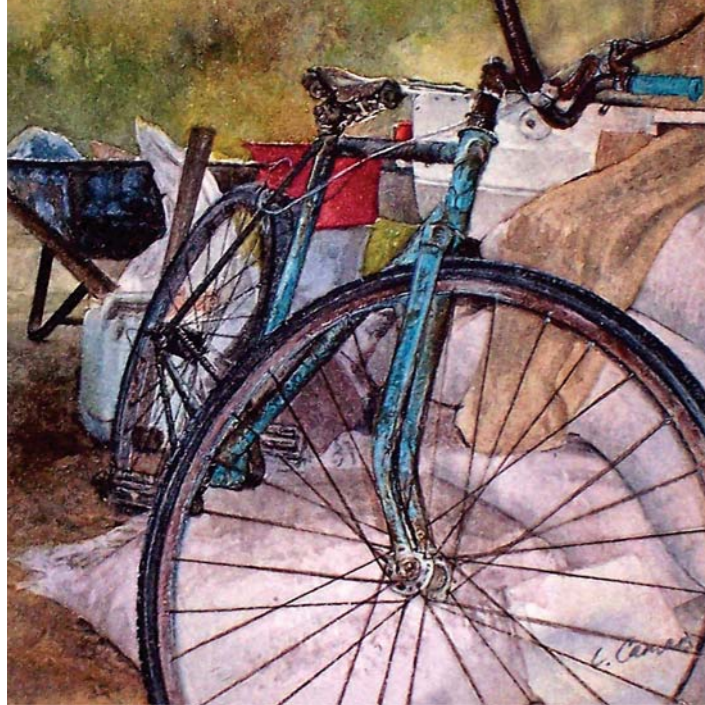


"Just more junk added to the kerb of life's highway, I guess. Most of my childhood photographs and memorabilia were destroyed or burned by a paranoid schizophrenic mother who thought aliens were out to get her. She died last year."

High school years were a nightmare for Lin – never fitting in because she was constantly being moved somewhere else; finally settling in Newcastle after her widowed mother married a bloke who worked as a labourer for BHP. Solace was found in the school art rooms where she could access a whole array of new equipment to explore jewellery enamelling, pottery, textiles and mosaics ... but she always returned to the humble graphite pencil. Education Board issue paper, although not great, was certainly a step up from the stuff she had been using.

"I'm the worst kind of packrat," she admits. "I still have a pencil from





those long-ago days of chalk and mouldy oranges in a Globite school port. It is a Copperplate EDB sadly worn down to a short stub, but I can't throw it out. It may come in handy one day!"

The Whitlam years made tertiary education possible when course fees were abolished. Lin Camac mastered in Showcard, Ticketwriting and Screenprinting, passing with distinction and topping her class.

"I was ranked second in New South Wales. Some bloke at Gunnedah pipped me by half a point in the technical side. I was given an offer of employment by a leading retail store when only two months into the course. I still work there today," Lin reveals. "I think that most artistically gifted people subsume or divert their talents into like-minded labours – signwriting; fashion or jewellery design; architecture or graphic illustration; leathercraft; photography or hairdressing. This manifests a typical desire to view the world from an angle unlike anyone else."

A cartooning degree followed for the young artist. "I've always had a maniacal sense of humour, and nothing is sacred."

The passage of time made her draughtsmanship improve, from early attempts at capturing faces (whenever she could convince someone to hold still for long enough) or quickly rendering the odd eucalyptus leaf or neighbour's cat. Anything and everything.

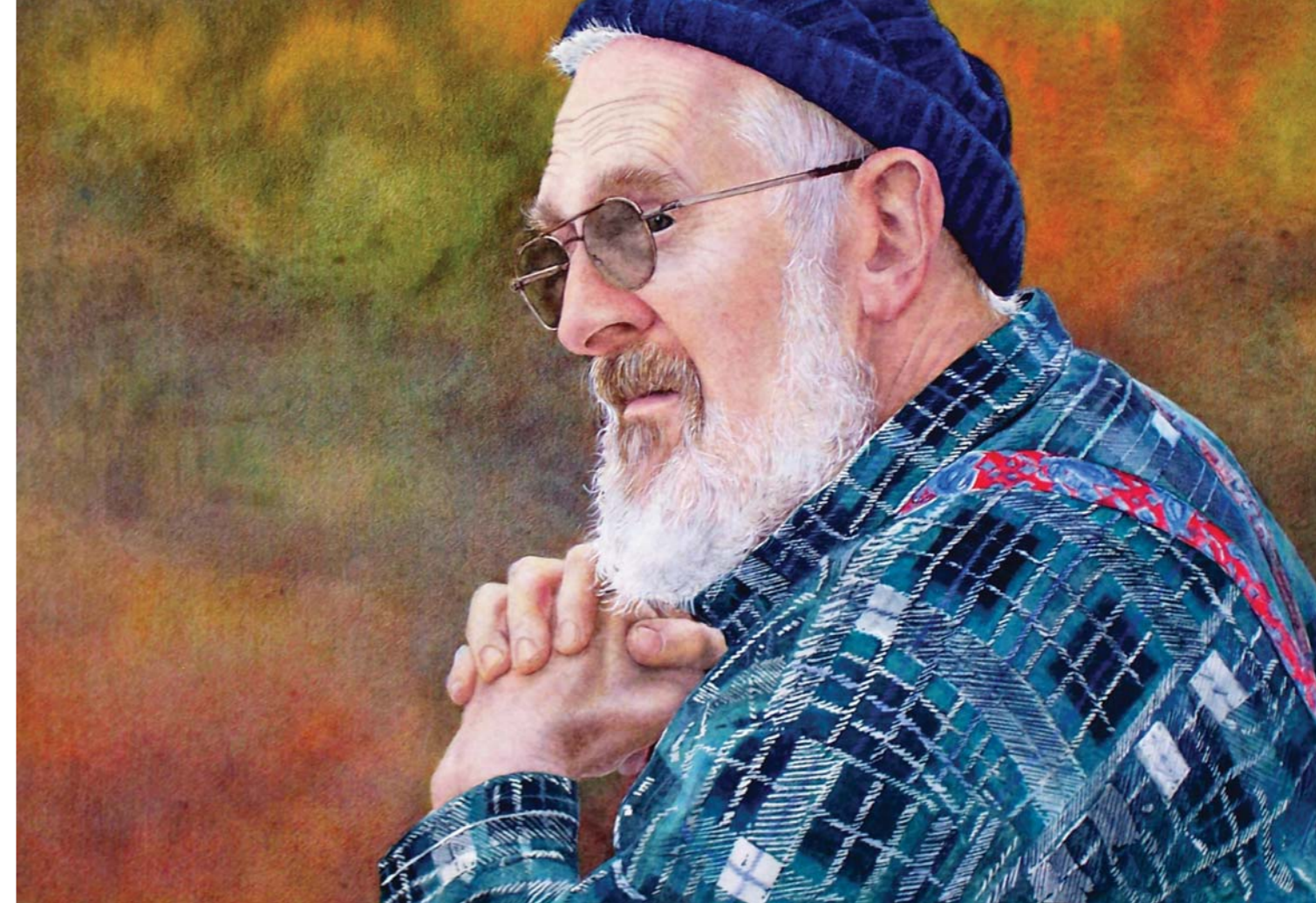
Co-workers were always the butt of her cartooning. Many 'portraits' of department staff were framed to become memorable retirement gifts.

Recently Lin has been discovering more of what she is capable of – due in part to 'taking a line for a walk' or simply putting a brush into paint. She alludes to 'a constant striving to see the world in nitpicking detail rendered on paper'. Rediscovering watercolour pencils about 12 years ago at a Calligraphy course with her old chum Kaye Frost opened up a whole new world of possibilities – taking the use of this medium to a higher level.

"Credit must also extend to a close circle of friends who are still there believing in my ability to be better than I ever thought I could, especially after such a negative start in life when I was always being told off for 'scribbling'," Lin says.

"I have heard many comments from these people ... things like 'Here Lin, bet ya can't draw this'; or 'Here's a challenge for you!' ... I owe big hugs and 'thank-yous' to Ingrid, my 'gravity boot'; Elena, the reason I can cackle for hours on end with just one joke; painting chums Pam and Bernadette; Peter, who said to me a few years ago, 'Why don't you paint Judy, she's got an interesting face?' ... and (last but not least) Jack. Where would I be without you?"

Lin Camac loves to render tiny details, texture, the ugly or quirky side of Nature; and offbeat looks at subjects that fire the humour in her and make the titles



of paintings into wordfests. Botanical features in plants; the smallest nest of crowsfeet on an old face; the subtleties of shading on a weathered surface; all these details grab her attention.

Owning a glut of superb tools in the form of artist quality pigments, watercolour pencils and many kinds of graphite makes every new subject a joy to tackle.

"The 'hard-time hungries' make you appreciate simple possessions so much more," she explains. "Everyone asks me do I have enough pencils when they see my array. Too many pencils are never enough!" She pays tribute to Susan Harrison-Tustain, whose invaluable yellow underpainting method made a lot of sense; and to Susannah Blaxhill for pointing out the finer methods of botanical illustration.

"I'm currently a member of the Botanical Art Society of Australia and the Newcastle Society of Artists," she says. "Nearly every Friday night I have a jam session with the local Tall-trees Artists in Medowie."

Lin Camac tutors with the Newcastle Society at the Lambton Headquarters, and also at Scone Arts and Crafts in the Hunter Valley, where in 2007 she again won the Miniature Prize. Some

of her works are being exhibited at the Tanilba House 'Little Picture Exhibition' at Port Stephens from 7 December 2007 through to the end of January 2008. ■

