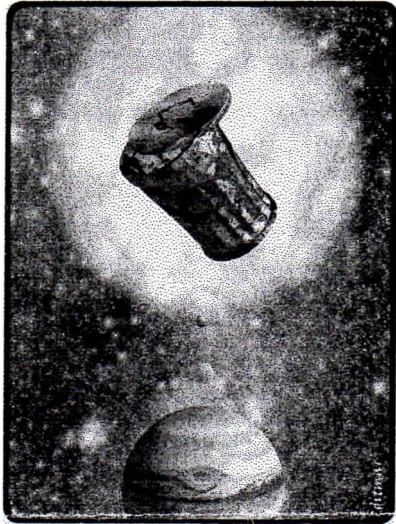


Out of the Bin



'Space Bin' Artwork by Ditmar

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A Newsletter from MERV BINNS
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Dear Readers,

Melbourne has been experiencing a drought for the last year or more and water restrictions have been in place. Despite some rain recently, which has been coming at night and now during a lot of cold and miserable wet days, it has probably not been enough to ease restrictions for the coming summer. But we may get more rain in due course between now and the end of the year. At least all the lawns and gardens in general are benefiting at the present and I will have plenty of garden work to do when the rain stops. The weather at least has kept me indoors mainly and given me some time to catch up on reading, to go to a couple of movies and visit some art galleries.

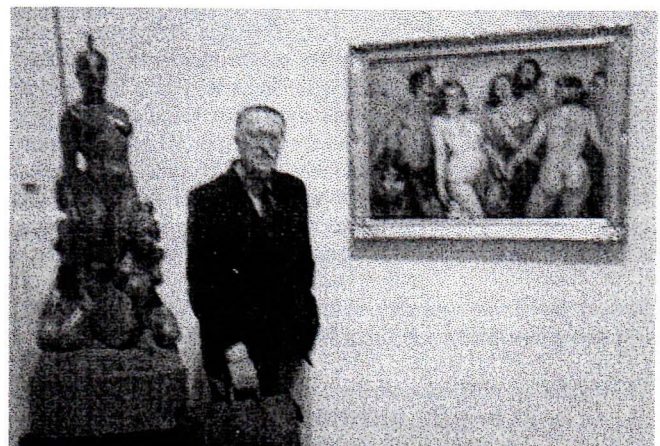
ART

I have always been interested in art and I have a general idea of what I like and dislike. I can appreciate the genius of artists who can reproduce realistically what they see or their mind conjures up and I can appreciate paintings and sculptures for that matter, from the ancients to the renaissance, the impressionist period, the Pre-Raphaelites – which I love- and much more. I should mention that my wife Helena has a talent that she has expressed very nicely in the past but alas not recently. She has done portraits of family and friends, such as the late Wynne Whiteford and a series of scenes from the *Lord of the Rings*, which I can now view proudly around the wall in our lounge room. I have appreciated the graphic art of cover illustrators of the SF&F magazines and books, calendars and reproduced in the many books we have on our shelves.

I have been amazed at the computer art work that our friend Dick Jessen has done, which has now adorned the covers of numerous fanzines and convention posters and even won him the Australian Science Fiction Achievement Award – Ditmar – for Fan Art, at the 2002 National Australian SF Convention, CONVERGENCE. I can even appreciate the work of some comic strip artists and cartoonists. But how can I mention the work of such as Da Vinci and fan art in the same paragraph, you may ask. I guess I just like pretty pictures and I particularly like to see the marvelous things that artists can not only conjure up, but actually reproduce for us to admire.

I could ramble on forever about the artwork of fan friends such as Ian Gunn, Chris Johnson, Marilyn Pride and other Aussies, not forgetting the American fan artists such as the prolific Bill Rotsler. Also comic strip and great graphic artists such as Stanley Pitt and Alex Raymond, but I will endeavor to cover my interests in them in another missive. I have been prompted to talk about art and artists after recently visiting the National Gallery of Victoria and viewing the work of aboriginal painter **Albert Namatjira**, in whose paintings the Australian outback, in its amazing grandeur, he captured so beautifully. We noted that the great Australian artist Sir William Dargie had encouraged Namatjira and we were sorry to hear that only a few days after we saw the Namatjira exhibition, Dargie, who won numerous awards for his work (including several Archibald prizes), passed on. The Namatjira and associated work by indigenous artists and others, was luckily a free exhibition which Helena and I appreciated very much, but I had no inclination to view an adjoining exhibition of the work of Sydney Nolan, which they were charging to see. So you might gather from that I do not appreciate the work of Nolan or other similar styles of art. I do not like Picasso's work, for instance.

I adore the work of **Norman Lindsay** and I appreciate seeing any of his paintings. We saw some at the Ballarat Art Gallery a couple of years ago and one at the opening exhibition at the new National Gallery of Victoria at Federation Square in Melbourne late last year, along with a wide range of paintings by Australian artists from colonial days to today. I appreciated the exhibition of Rembrandt's work we viewed last year here. Helena has visited The Louvre and London's National Gallery, but I will never forget my visit to the Washington Gallery. There were not only great American historical paintings on view, such as a much larger than life George Washington but a glorious range of famous paintings from throughout history. Just standing alone in one relatively small room, surrounded by the work of various Renaissance artists, valued at probably more than the annual Victorian Government's budget, was a moment I will never forget. However my real love is the mystical, fanciful worlds of the Pre-Raphaelites, Arthur Rackham, Alma Tadema and many more, plus the many contemporary graphic artists of the science fiction and fantasy world whom I have appreciated during my lifetime.



MERV the art lover, with a Norman Lindsay painting in the National Gallery of Victoria at Federation Square, Melbourne.

(Photo by Helena)

MOVIES & TV

I remember seeing a documentary on TV with Peter Ustinov and the late Natalie Wood taking viewers on a tour of the Hermitage in the now renamed St Petersburg, showing the building and the art on display, but it was almost like being there myself upon seeing the movie *RUSSIAN ARK*. It was screened at the Lumiere Theatre in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne and Helena I took advantage of a special cheap entrance charge, \$5 for Monday daytime sessions (it's only \$3 for seniors daytime on Wednesdays). Two apparent ghosts in the movie, one we see and one is just a disembodied voice, tour the Hermitage and as they move through we see it as it may have been in the 18th and 19th centuries and later. People in magnificent costumes appear in different time periods, including royal personages, such as Catherine the Great and the last Czar and his family apparently as the revolution is taking place outside. There is ample time to look at the wonderful views of the architecture as the camera pans around the magnificent hallways and colonnades and through the various halls and galleries. Some close-up extended views of some of the paintings are accompanied by a verbal history of the acquisition of them, by the royal personages. It all culminates in a grand ball with hundreds of people in 19th century uniforms and ball gown costumes dancing and talking, in the most splendid ballroom you could imagine. And as the ball ends the great throng of people leaving the building fills the enormous hallway and entrance to the building, allowing us again to get another great view of the incredibly magnificent baroque, although not quite as ornate as much of European, architecture. *Russian Ark* is said to have been filmed in one extended take. The logistics of organizing such a feat beggars the imagination! Helena knew a little about this movie beforehand but we made the effort to go and see it and I am very pleased we did.

The work of the Disney Studios has come in for a lot of criticism over the years for the way they have bastardised classic tales. I must agree with that criticism to a large degree, but I will always remember that the first movies that I remember seeing as a very young child, were Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, *Bambi* and later *Fantasia*. (The latter contributing to my interest in classical music.) So I have a soft spot for Disney stuff and I can still enjoy good animated movies. I believe I missed a good one in *Atlantis* but I may catch up with that in due course. I enjoyed the *Toy Story* movies and *Beauty and the Beast*, and have seen and enjoyed other animated shows such as *Shrek*, *A Bug's Life* and *Antz*, but hated *Final Fantasy*. I also must admit though that glimpses of some animated movies on the TV and at CONTINUUM did not encourage me to see more. The innovative artwork can be interesting but the stories are something else again. I loathe *The Simpsons*! Last week on my own, I got to see Disney's *SINBAD* and that really brought back the childhood memories of *Snow White* and all. Helena unfortunately does not like many animated movies and does not accept my view that she has missed "a lot" over the years. (Although Helena has great admiration for the skill and artistry of the animators, she often finds the stories and dialogue a bit hard to take.) The art of animation has, like special effects, found new techniques, mainly related to computer graphics and they are able to come up with some mind-blowing stuff, but although I enjoyed the *Sinbad* movie in general, the most memorable scene for me was of the magical city as Sinbad and his crew come sailing back from their adventures. *FINDING NEMO* is due for release here late August.

Rumour has it that a movie version of British TV's *RED DWARF* is a strong possibility and it may be shot in Melbourne.

We visited an exhibition at the State Theatre depicting the life and career of **BARRY HUMPHRIES**. Everything from show posters, art work by him, his books, Dame Edna costumes he has worn, photos from his childhood through university days, his early theatre work in London, the movies, the shows and much more.

It was a very comprehensive and unique coverage of a great career and he is still going strong. I saw him in person at a preview of his second movie with Barry Crocker and they were both handing out prawns at a post screening party. No, not raw, they were cooked.

Yet another icon of my movie life has passed on, **BOB HOPE**. I enjoyed his antics in the "road" movies with Bing Crosby and various other roles, but I appreciated him most when he was hosting the Academy Awards ceremonies. He made it to the age of 100, which was a pretty good innings.

LETTERS & COMMENTS

"We" are still trying to get used to using the computer and e-mail for communicating with people and we have overlooked some messages and we apologize to the friends concerned. We know that we can send OoB to some friends by e-mail but we have just not gotten into that yet, but we will. I have been endeavoring to acknowledge the receipt of zines and letters in my columns, as I have not had time to reply individually but I will make some efforts to do so in the future.

TIMOTHY MARION tells me that there is a movie titled *The Animatrix*, being a collection of animated stories that tie into the Matrix universe, so I hope that I can catch up with that sometime. I have also yet to catch up with *Hulk* and the trailer for *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* indicates that is a must also. Sean Connery just goes on and on, doesn't he. Gregory Peck's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *McKenna's Gold*, which I had forgotten, are two great movies, but I never liked *Duel in the Sun*. Saw a very nice doco on Peck on TV recently covering largely a speaking tour he did around 1995. My trouble is I am a bit of a romantic and in my younger days I never liked movies that did not have a happy ending, but in my later years I have mellowed and what I now consider as a "satisfactory" ending is okay. I never liked for instance the "film noir" movies typified by Joan Crawford at her histrionic best. I could go on and on about movies disliked or liked but my most detestable recent film has to be *PULP FICTION*. Bruce Willis said in an interview that he liked his role in that movie, but I think it was a dreadful role for him, though I did agree with him that *12 Monkeys* was a great movie and he rates that as one of his best roles. Tim agreed with us on *X-Men 2*: "The script seemed to get lost with so many characters - none of them had any real development with the possible exception of Wolverine. The ending seemed silly and contrived." Tim also says that he finds *Star Trek - Enterprise* a bore and following the movie *Nemesis*, the franchise is in trouble. *Bride of Frankenstein* is also one of Tim's favorite movies and he says another good movie is *The Bride* with Sting and Jennifer Beal, but I had not heard of that one at all. Thanks Tim!

ERIC LINDSAY tells us that "I did enjoy the many photos, (of the Foyster Memorial) which gave a sense of what happened for those of us not attending". Thanks Eric, that is part of the reason I am doing the OoB, to at least tell friends about things that are happening in fandom here that may well not be mentioned otherwise, though Bruce Gillespie does cover things and in a lot more detail than I can. Photographs by the way are being passed around between Dick Jenssen, Bruce, Helena and me and other friends, so in due course a comprehensive collection of Melbourne fan photographs will be recorded on CD and in various computer memories. Everything takes time of course and sorting out photos for memoirs and such is time consuming, but we are getting there. Eric sums up the movie: "*Matrix Reloaded* seemed to me a wonderful example of what some newspaper labeled 'fauxbrow'. A piece of crap (with good special effects) pretending to mean more than it could sustain." We are not up to viewing zines on the net as yet but the latest *Gegenschein*, #95, might be a good place to start. Thanks Eric!

WANTED

Finally for this issue, I am trying to locate a copy of *PORTABLE AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS* edited by Van Ikin, in UQP pb. Also *THE PRODIGAL SUN* and *THE DYING LIGHT* by Sean Williams and Shane Dix both in Voyager pb and the William Shatner *Star Trek* novel *PRESERVER* in any edition but pb will do. Please let me know if you can help with any of these and I will send cost and postage.

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