

# Wonder of WILDLIFE

When she moved to Coledale the natural beauty of the area was so striking that it inspired Lizzie Buckmaster Dove to become a serious artist, writes LOUISE TURK.

## WHEN ARTIST LIZZIE BUCKMASTER

Dove moved to Coledale in 2007, after having lived in cities for most of her adult life, she saw the natural environment through fresh eyes.

The dramatic ocean views from her new home, as well as the striking beauty of the escarpment and the precious vegetation and animals that it supported had a profound effect on her.

Buckmaster Dove was in sensory overload as she observed the surrounding environmental beauty which was very different to the urban landscapes of London and Barcelona, where she and partner Mike Dove had spent the previous decade.

"I had really overwhelming impressions of the flora and fauna because we had been in London with hardly any birdsong and we were back and there was this cacophony of sound in the mornings and there was wildlife everywhere," she says. "I was alarmed by the severity of the wildlife."

Nature was unpredictable and sometimes confronting. Buckmaster Dove tells the story of how, just after they had moved in, she brought home a traffic cone for her boys, Max and Wilkie, to play with.

"It was about a week later that I discovered there was a redback living in it," she says.

Not only was Buckmaster Dove reading the natural world in a new way, her perceptions of her birth country had changed after living in Europe. Australia, in her mind, was less isolated and more part of a global network.

"I was so much more aware of how new this country is and how we are connected or not connected to the rest of the world," she says.

"It used to seem like the world was somewhere else but I no longer really have that feeling."

Her fresh observations about her own country and her new role as a mother coalesced into a creative force that would see Buckmaster Dove establish an art practice.

After completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of NSW's College of Fine Arts in her early 20s, Buckmaster Dove worked in creative areas but she had not committed herself to being an exhibiting artist.

The timing was right four years ago. She set up a studio in the family's spacious two-level Coledale home, just metres from the beach.

Using her steady hand, Buckmaster Dove took a sharp surgical knife to book pages, photos and paper to make her art. Her methods have included slicing through pages of second-hand books to make 3D paper constructions, dissecting wildlife illustrations to make assemblage pieces, and creating cubes from vintage atlas pages.

It was not long before Buckmaster Dove's artistic talent and keen intellect appeared on the radar of Sydney curator and art dealer Nicky Ginsberg. Within a year of returning to Australia, Buckmaster Dove was being represented by NG Art Gallery in Chippendale.

In 2008, her first major solo exhibition, entitled *Into The Woods*, was held at Ginsberg's gallery. That year Buckmaster Dove and her art began to get noticed.

Her beautiful art-filled home was featured several times in Australian home decorating magazines. A style page in the *Sydney Morning Herald* proclaimed: "Hey, collectors: invest now in Australian artist Lizzie Buckmaster Dove's beautiful hand-cut and rolled paper works, which are gaining increasing interest from serious collectors and public institutions."

Flinders Lane Gallery in Melbourne was the site of Buckmaster Dove's next solo exhibition in 2009: *An End To Myth*. Earlier this year, *Still Light* was shown at the NG Art Gallery.

She worked with botanical illustrations, in the first two shows, to explore ideas about the impact of the introduction of European plant varieties on the surrounding native flora, and the layering of European culture over the existing culture of indigenous Australians.

In her series *Silent Gathering*, she carves out shapes of native birds from second-hand gardening journals and mounts them against colonial wallpaper in box frames.

"These are the ghosts of native birds that once were in our habitat when there were no introduced plant species," she explains.

More recently, Buckmaster Dove staged a collaborative series of works called the *Tide Project*. It involved three people from different parts of the world collecting found objects, along a daily route. Each object had to reference a circle because the project was completed over a lunar month.

Buckmaster Dove picked up objects washed ashore in Coledale; and two friends, one in Britain and the other in Spain, collected flotsam in their respective countries and emailed images of the objects



Artist Lizzie Buckmaster Dove, who has exhibited in Sydney and Melbourne is taking part in next weekend's Scarborough Art Show. Picture: ANDY ZAKELI

to the Coledale studio.

Buckmaster Dove cut silhouettes of the items through pairs of paint swatch cards.

"The idea came from my walks along the beach collecting things and thinking about how the tide connects us all, and how our actions go beyond the moment," she says.

Buckmaster Dove believes in the importance of being connected to her community. "We are very happy here," she says of her hometown. She walks seven-year-old Max to Coledale Public School, and she is regularly seen strolling on the beach or buying essentials at the nearby shops.

"You can walk to get milk, the papers, DVDs, 70 per cent dark chocolate, and fine wine," she laughs.

It's these ties which has led the successful artist to be invited to exhibit at this year's Scarborough Art Show at Scarborough Public School from October 9-10.

"The committee rang me up and asked me to put something in," she says. "I want to be visible in my own community because I show in Sydney and Melbourne and I felt quite honoured to be specially invited for this."

Buckmaster Dove has selected four works for the committee; with some pieces from the *Silent Gathering* series and another paper assemblage of images of native birds entitled *On Green*.



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The exhibition will be officially opened this Friday at 7pm by John Monteleone, acting director and senior curator of Wollongong City Gallery. It will feature works by painters, sculptors, print-makers and photographers including pieces by well-known artists Benjamin Sewell, Tanya Stubbles, Buckmaster Dove and Sallie Moffatt. The school's 78 students will also have their work exhibited in the art show.

Over the weekend, there will be a range of children's activities, gourmet food and live music by local musicians.

Buckmaster Dove is not sure whether she will make it to the opening night function. She is in the final trimester of pregnancy with her baby due this Monday.

"It's due on Labour Day - hilarious." ■ The Scarborough Art Show is on October 9 from 10am-5pm and October 10 from 10am-4pm.