



BELCONNEN ARTS CENTRE

MEDIA RELEASE

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VAL JOHNSON – *Me, Myself and Others: A Journey in Portraiture*
CHAD SWANSON – *Meeting Van Gogh*
Exhibition Openings: 6:00pm Friday 23 October

Over the next two weeks, Belconnen Arts Centre is hosting two parallel solo exhibitions which provide two very different takes on the way artists can represent human subjects.

Val Johnson's exhibition, ***Me, Myself and Others: A Journey in Portraiture*** is a retrospective of the portraits that she has produced over the last 10 years, including both drawings and oil paintings. This exhibition chronicles the historical development of her work from her roots in the Max Meldrum method of tonal realism to her current unique style. In this time, Val has produced a number of self portraits, representing herself as she passed through varying stages of her life. She has also developed her own approach in painting the portraits of others, fostering an intimacy with her subjects before she paints them, searching to capture what she perceives as the essence of their personality and incorporating related symbols in the background to reinforce their character.

The resulting exhibition is a rewarding experience, enhanced by the evolution of Val's work over time and the sensitivity of her approaches in response to her subjects. At times the result is a loose drawing with very little background, revealing the raw intelligence and force of personality in her subject. Other works offer a polished depiction of the personality in close integration with their surroundings.

Local artist and psychology graduate Chad Swanson takes a very different approach in his exhibition, ***Meeting Van Gogh***. In this exhibition, Chad's subject is the multiplicity of ways in which Vincent Van Gogh has been accessed by different sections of society. To those who knew him, he was an artist who truly felt, a man who was prone to emotional outbursts, but who was nevertheless a man of pure heart and passion. To the psychologists who studied the story of his life, his manic behaviour was probably a result of bi-polar disorder, epilepsy, or lead poisoning. In Vincent's own eyes, he was a mystery – a man who gave himself completely to his art, and lost his mind as a consequence.

To resolve these different ways of seeing, Chad's employs Freud's proposition that the self is a battleground between restraint and desire. Though using a style that he refers to as "Geometric Expressionism," Chad harnesses the psychological power of shape to create a sense of asymmetrical balance, revealing a troubled soul on the edge of liberation and control.

Don't miss the Artist's Talks on **4:00pm Saturday 24 October** and **2:00pm 31 October**
Exhibitions continue until Sunday 8 November
Gallery hours: 10:00am – 6:00pm Tuesday – Sunday
For further information contact: Christine Watson: 02 6173 3304

Belconnen Arts Centre is an ACT Government facility and is supported by the ACT Government
Visit www.belconnenartscentre.com.au

