

# Claws Célèbres - my own interpretation by Margaret Proctor

Margaret Proctor's exhibition Claws Célèbres opened at Gallery 159 on November 8 and continues through November 22nd.

Paris 1908... West African cultures were becoming a major influence on the work of Picasso, Braque, Léger and Matisse. Their paintings and drawings adapted the primitive portrayals of decorated sculptures and masks, resulting in 'Art Sauvage', later Fauvism and Cubism.

The masks that hung on their studio walls were never intended for public exhibition or European interpretation. Their unexpected preservation provided admirers with objects and information that could have disappeared forever.

The masks had a subjective beauty and implied something secretive. They represented the supernatural, ancestor spirits, private messages, whatever was needed for protection from fire or wild beasts. Art from Grass and Dance societies also absorbed the influences of Portuguese explorers and Victorian lady missionaries.

Suddenly in Paris, mixed media art pieces became fashionable and were recognized as a stylish art form incorporating exotic and unexplained materials, layered upon each other.

My own preparation for this exhibition totally immersed me in the methods of expression of both African artists and the 'Wild Beasts' of Paris. Adopting their lateral thinking approach has become addictive; I can't stop seeing symbols in everything, everywhere.

It was as if a door had opened suddenly. Their approach was not 'Art for Art's Sake' but creating 'Hand-Thoughts'. There is no plan for

the end result but, as new materials are spontaneously introduced, their original purpose changes perspective and direction.

The final discipline was to know when to stop. I wonder if some tribal mask maker might have suffered the same temptation – to add just one extra piece in the middle of the night... I also managed to resist the common practice of burying the finished mask in mud. □

*Margaret Proctor's work has featured twice on the covers of TEXTILE FIBRE FORUM: issue #79 (2005) and issue #87 (2007). Claws Célèbre will be her third exhibition at TAFTA's dedicated Gallery space, GALLERY 159 located at 159 Payne Road, The Gap (Brisbane) Q4061.*



Seen this page, l to r: 'Spotted Food Gatherer with Nesting Ibis' H25cm; 'Marka Marionette' H32cm. Materials used: clay, wood, fibre, hemp, horsehair, leather, beads, glass eyes, metal studs, paint; papier mache technique plus painting and stitching; 'Grass Society Sculpture' H75cm. All images taken by Russell Stokes of Duraprint