

NATURE OF THE MACHINE

Working with trademark precision, an artist makes strategic modifications to draw more manly eyes to his showroom

FIONA PURDON



Sunshine Coast artist Will Irving is banking on the masculine appeal of machines to attract more men to his latest exhibition.

Irving has created 17 works – oil paintings and pencil sketches – for his show, *Machinations: a masterful play with machines*, at Mercure Hotel in Brisbane's North Quay until August 11.

"When I exhibit my work in Switzerland there are always a lot of men there but I've noticed that not as many men are interested in art in Brisbane and I wanted to interest men a bit more so I decided to do something with machines and tools," he says. "I liked having fun with machines and making the pictures playful."

Irving demonstrates a keen sense of humour and irony in his works, such as *Ducatty* which has a cat face painted on a Ducati headlight.

Time Flies features the inner workings of a watch which has two flies sitting on its parts.

"For *Time Flies* it took a long time to do all the fine work and all those little gears," he says. "The original watch is from a photograph. I like to be exact with things. It's part of my pedantic personality and people respect precision and accuracy." Each work took up to five weeks to complete because of Irving's trademark detailed approach.

Each painting also juxtaposes nature and machines, such as local native green tree frogs sitting on an industrial water pipe in *Tiddalik*.

"Queensland is a good place for frogs, I used to have a lot of them in my back yard but they are starting to disappear. I use photos quite a bit or take my own photos but I'm familiar enough with these frogs that I didn't need

(photographs) but draw them from memory."

Irving, who regularly exhibits in Switzerland, was looking for something new and different for this exhibition and secured innovative fluorescent pigment powder from a German company in Munich which had been developed for the commercial chemical industry. He mixed the powder with oil paints to create vibrant colours which enhance the bioluminescence of nature and also generates a machine-like finish for his work.

"I wanted to use new-generation fluoro pigments which had the brilliant and outrageous colours," he says. "Fluoro pigments have a bad reputation but these new pigments are reliable, durable and high quality, and are a true innovation."

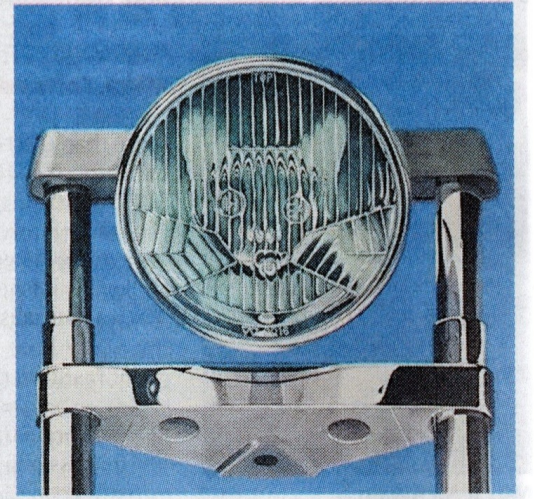
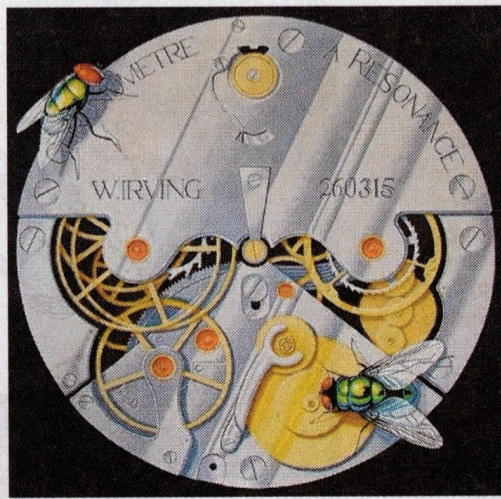
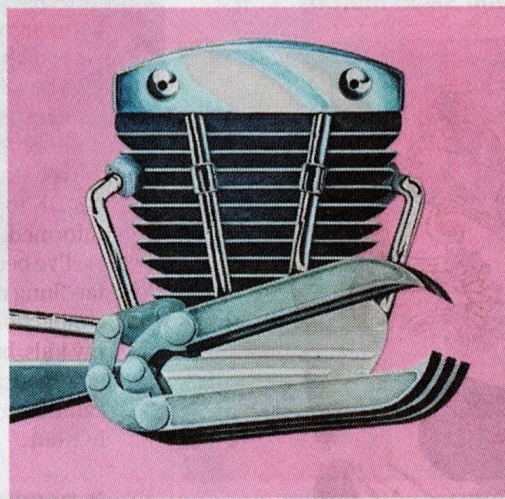
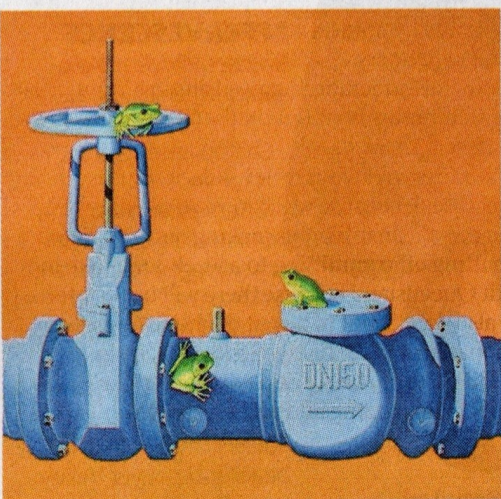
While Irving has used modern pigments he has favoured an old masters technique of using thin glazes over several fine layers of colour.

Irving, who lives in Marcoola, grew up in Sydney and became a jazz musician and guitarist after graduating from school. He moved to Queensland more than 15 years ago, originally based in Brisbane before he settled on the Sunshine Coast. He has held several exhibitions in Queensland over the past 10 years.

"I started painting because it was difficult to break into the music scene in Queensland and I didn't know any musicians," he says. "Being a painter is much the same as if you are a musician. You spend a lot of time rehearsing then you do a performance and people are looking at what you do."

Will Irving's *Machinations: a masterful play with machines*, Mercure Brisbane, 85-87 North Quay Brisbane, until August 11.

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Fluoro trailblazer: Special pigment powder provides vibrant colours and a machine-like finish for *Bird on the Wing* (main) and (above from left) *Tiddalik*, *Turbo Crab*, *Time Flies* and *Ducatty*.