

L O N I N S P I R E S E X H I B I T I O N *at The Hive*

The thrill experienced by Claire Gemes four years ago as she purchased her very first original piece of art for her soon to be re-opened luxury accommodation business Lon Retreat was very apparent.

"The first art buy is a big moment and an honour to both the artist and the gallery, but mostly it is just enjoyable to know that the piece will provide pleasure for years to come," says Karen Spreadborough, curator and director of The Hive Gallery in Ocean Grove.

That very artwork was a peaceful abstract landscape scene with influences of the Victorian High Country by artist Kate Gorman, who resides in Yarrowonga and has been painting for over 20 years.

Kate had a background in fashion but left that for her love of creating on canvas and linen, teaching and working away in her home studio, where she tends to work in an expressive, painterly technique, building layers of vibrant colour in an abstract style.

Wind the clock forward a few years and The Hive Gallery is well established at five years old and has expanded from a handful of artists initially, to a stable

of over 30 unique artists, with regular monthly exhibitions.

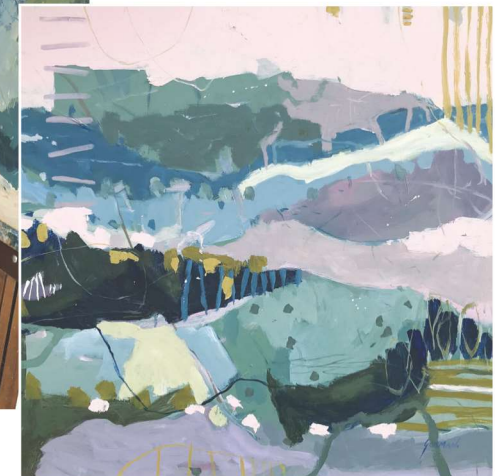
About 10 minutes down the road, Lon Retreat, the family home and property with its natural hot springs and private Point Lonsdale beach access, has been completely rejuvenated and is regularly fully booked out providing well received small scale relaxed escapes and pampering. Just 90 minutes from Melbourne, both are situated on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula, which recently made TripAdvisor's Top 10 list of places to visit.

Claire Gemes, director of Lon Retreat, grew up on the property and for a long time had very clear visions of what she wanted to create there. Stepping beyond her well-acknowledged hospitality venue achievements, her confidence in understanding the appeal of original art has gained full strength to the point that she now also hosts art exhibitions and is building her own art collection.

Together with The Hive Gallery and Kate Gorman, this is culminating in a joint exhibition this month showcasing more than 20 of Kate's acrylic on linen works that will all be inspired by the tones of Lon's natural surrounds and the sites and vistas of the Bellarine. Each



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Photos: SUPPLIED



artist that Claire exhibits gets unlimited access to the property to wander the grounds and paint "en plein air" as they desire, creating a body of work that seems right at home in the space.

Kate has long holidayed in Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads and is relishing fully focussing on an area she knows so well and being given the chance to develop a series that represents this intimately.

Her work at times explores the still life, but it is the landscapes in abstract form she is more well known for and "aims to fully immerse herself in, to feel the water or native plant life surrounding me and bring that out in my paintings". The proteas and banksia's strong sculptural shapes are noticeable features of the

gardens and the sheoaks and acacias that abound on the peninsula along with the protected and iconic Bellarine Yellow Gum all provide inspiration.

"The palette and light is quite different to further north where I also exhibit and gain creativity usually. I've loved the chance to spend more time in this region as I take it all in and paint, paint, paint," Kate says.

Kate Gorman's exhibition **Coastal Walks** will open at Lon Retreat today (Thursday, November 18) from 4-6pm, and will run until January 2 at both Lon Retreat, 25 Gill Road, Point Lonsdale; and The Hive Gallery, 41 Smithton Grove, Ocean Grove. It also can be seen online at lonretreat.com.au and thehiveoceangrove.com.au.