

The front of the cottage leans forward at an improbable angle – collapsing, frozen like a museum diorama in a decadent state of recreated nostalgia. There are no straight lines or right angles here, nothing perpendicular about it. Beyond the act of time, there appears to be a great weight, perhaps a burden, upon the small cottage

Ruth Hingston and Tim Brook came to Haefligers' Cottage just prior to New Year in 2001 as part of Bathurst Regional Art Gallery's Hill End Artist-in-Residence program, a partnership with the National Parks & Wildlife Service of NSW which owns the site.

HILL END IS A SMALL VILLAGE IN THE MOUNTAINS BETWEEN Bathurst, Mudgee and Orange in the Central West. When commercial photographer Beaufoy Merlin documented the town in 1872, at the height of the gold mining boom, it boasted a population of around 8,000 (and 28 pubs). Hill End has a formidable place in Australian art history as the subject of paintings such as Drysdale's *The Cricketers* and the home of Donald Friend for much of the 1950s. Hill End is listed on the register of the National Estate as a relatively 'intact' gold boom townscape and became a managed cultural asset in 1968 when it was declared a 'historic site' for national significance managed by the NPWS. The cottage now known as Haefligers' was purchased by Paul Haefliger and Jean Bellette in the late 1940s and used as a base by their circle of artist friends and associates. Haefligers' Cottage and its contents were bequeathed to the NPWS for inclusion in the historic site in 1991.

Today the village of around 120 residents has turned its economy from fossicking, shearing and rabbiting to cultural tourism. Apart from overwhelmingly powerful aesthetics, the fascination of Hill End lies in the overlaying of contested meanings. Historians, architectural conservators, archaeologists, art historians, cultural heritage administrators and artists have all been inadvertently co-opted into a powerful oral tradition of repeating and elaborating the intangible stories associated with the site. The lines between historical fact and apocrypha are constantly obscured.

December

10 December – 18 January

👁️ *Paper as Object*, exploring material, substance and the potential of paper.

GRAFTON Regional Gallery.

Tel 02 6642 3177

Website www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au

10 December – 18 January

👁️ *Siblings* Robert Rosen, established society photographer, uses his long-standing friends as subject matter. **GRAFTON** Regional Gallery. Tel 02 6642 3177

Website www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au

During their brief residency, Ruth and Tim engaged with the site with remarkable intellectual intensity resulting in a rare eloquent and resolved visual statement about the elusive forces – the institutions, beliefs, attitudes and desires – that invisibly form our experience of such a complex and resonant site. While they have produced two separate bodies of work, the residency was an intellectual collaboration.

Ruth Hingston's three-dimensional and twisted frames have found an effective focus for these impulses – window frames constructed of corrugated cardboard mediate the interior and exterior spaces. Her warped walls mimic the mud and lime of the wattle and daub buildings, with her delicate imprints of embroidered linen disrupting the replica. Indeed, a piece of lace representing the ironwork of a verandah detail inverts the tension between internal and external spaces. Ruth placed glimpses of her well-drafted pencil drawing of the bed-head and

Frames

of authenticity

A Review by ALISON BENNETT



Doorstep by Ruth Hingston
Photo: Tim Brook

10 December – 18 January

👁️ *With the Flow Against the Grain:* Keiko Amenomori-Schmeisser, innovative display of new textile works. **GRAFTON** Regional Gallery. Tel 02 6642 3177

Website www.graftongallery.nsw.gov.au

12 December

🎵 The Idea of North a cappella quartet, supported by local talent Lisa Couper. Candelo Town Hall, **CANDELO**.

Tel 02 6493 2349

Website www.idea.com.au

'Haefliger' chair behind the openings. She wanted to capture the desire of the outsider, the tourist, to peer into these private closed spaces – to experience some kind of interior authenticity.

Perhaps less successful is the series based on chimneys. It seems an unnecessary masculine juxtaposition to the windows and is easily confused with Nolan's Ned Kelly.

Originally a textile artist, this body of work follows Hingston's Masters on an imagined miner's cottage in Kalgoorlie where a deranged widow had stitched herself and her life into the very fabric of the building. Warped Walls differs in that the work is resolved as a discrete frame, perhaps an extension of 'the window', while the Kalgoorlie work was an installation.

Photographer Tim Brook also focused his lens on the windows of Haefligers' Cottage but found a metaphor in the reflection and distortion of the images. Photography is a particularly potent contemporary medium for this subject that walks an ambiguous line between 'documentary' and 'manipulation'. The images captured in the aged rippled glass, liquid with time, are distorted and multi-layered. Through a highly ordered and rigorous

intellectual process, he appears to have uncovered the notion that so much of 'Hill End' is fiction, a result of storytelling on both a local, institutional and theoretical level.

However, the genuine affection and thoughtfulness with which he engaged with the house was recognised by Peter Mitchell, who purchased one of the works. Peter and his partner Ross have an intimate knowledge of the house as one of the circle allowed use of the home by the Haefligers. They have now retired to the outskirts of Hill End. *"He seems to have captured something essential about the house. So many of the artists-in-residence simply use it as a base to continue what they were already doing at home."* He then proceeded to identify the objects within the images that were original and those introduced for the artist-in-residence program.

It is refreshing to find work resulting from the program that intelligently engages with and illuminates the site, recognising but undaunted by the imposing shadows of Drysdale, Friend, Olsen, Smart and Whiteley, to make a contemporary interpretation of a rich, complex and rewarding subject. ■

Warped Walls : mixed media works by Ruth Hingston **Reflections on Haefligers' Cottage :** photographs by Tim Brook

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
1 August – 14 September 2003



The Hill End Artist-in-Residence Program is managed by Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in partnership with the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. The program aims to provide the opportunity for creative development in all areas of the visual arts in a unique environment, as well as contributing to the long term cultural development and sustainability of the village.

In 2003 over twenty artists from around the country participated in the program and a series of events, workshops and exhibitions has been developed by the Gallery staff.

Artists working across the visual arts, curators and arts writers are invited to apply for the sixth season of residencies in 2004. A limited number of places will be funded with the support of the NSW Ministry for the Arts. Applications close 23 December.

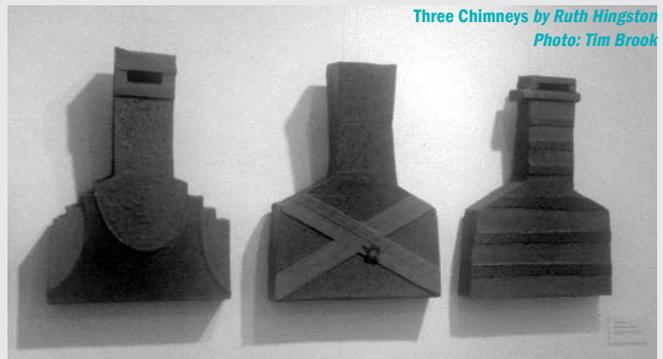
CONTACT Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
Email brag@bathurst.nsw.gov.au Website www.hillendart.com.

Alison Bennett is a curator, writer & photographer resident in Hill End.

Reflection on Haefligers' Cottage
by Tim Brook



Three Chimneys by Ruth Hingston
Photo: Tim Brook



December

12 – 19 December

👁️ Braidwood Regional Art Group
Exhibition Inaugural exhibition including the BRAGArt weekend of performances and works. Held throughout **BRAIDWOOD**.
Contact Gilly Tel 02 4842 2579
Email gilly@braidwood.net.au

12 – 19 December

👁️ *Gillamatong* exhibition featuring works and performances by local artists. Showing at the Braidwood National Theatre Community Centre, **BRAIDWOOD**.
Contact Gilly Tel 02 4842 2579

13 December – 4 February

👁️ *Fuzzy Prime Ministers: Surface Memories* exhibition of new works at the Tamworth City Gallery **TAMWORTH**.
Contact Kathleen Tel 02 67554459

14 December

👁️ Uralla's Great Day Out
URALLA Gallery
Tel 02 67783659