



SPECIES SPECIAL ... Lisa Adams' *Backlash*; John Olsen's *Monkeys at the zoo*; and (far right) the intriguing *Inquisition*, another of Lisa Adams' pieces in the Philip Bacon show detailing the 'integral nature' of animals in our lives.

BRILLIANT CREATURES

Artists set free their inner menagerie

When cave folk first started daubing on cave walls, what did they daub? Images of animals, right? It's a point art dealer Philip Bacon makes and it's a pertinent one in regards to the latest exhibition at his eponymous gallery.

The show is entitled *Creatures: Great and Small*.

Philip Bacon seems to be channelling his inner Dr Dolittle here and he stresses that art featuring animals has always been with us. In his introduction to the exhibition he points out that the famous Lascaux Cave in France features prehistoric depictions of mammoths, horses and ibex, and he says that mosaics of exotic animals in Sicily's Piazza Armerina also elucidate the point.

"We are all fascinated by and drawn to Durer's rabbits, Stubbs' horses, Picasso's doves and Damien Hirst's shark," Philip says.

"Australia's indigenous art history is rich with depictions of native fauna and since colonial times our painters and sculptors have included animals in countless works, indicating the integral nature of animals in all our lives."

Philip and his staff set about curating a little museum show (where works are for sale) from his ample stockroom. They have come up with some treasures from the past and some recent works by artists from the gallery's stable.

We are all drawn to Durer's rabbits, Stubbs' horses, Picasso's doves

The most extraordinary work in the show to my mind is by Lisa Adams, an exciting Queensland talent whose paintings are meticulous, intriguing and ultimately dazzling. Her 2016 painting

Inquisition is simply amazing. It depicts surgeons at work in an operating theatre. But who or what are they operating on? Large wings spread behind them but a human hand is evident, with a drip in it. Is it an angel on the table? Or a winged messenger? Icarus? No wait, he lost his wings.

Perhaps it is his father, Daedalus.

It's a surreal work. Adams has a couple of others in this show too. *On the scent* is a

wonderfully metaphorical piece showing a dog swimming in a wild sea with a stick in its mouth and *Backlash* shows a figure on a rearing horse. Both are exquisitely painted in fine detail. Lisa, based on the Sunshine Coast, is a major talent but we will have to wait until next year for another full exhibition of her work. It takes time for her to complete a painting and it is obvious why.

There is much else to admire – and of course there has to be a William Robinson farmyard work. The gouache *Farmyard with startled rooster*, harking back to his days on acreage at Birkdale, is a lovely example of that. *Light from the sea*, one of his forest works, is also included and there are magpies in that one, that you may not notice at first glance.

Davida Allen's *Feeding donkey* is charming, and John Olsen's *Monkeys at the zoo* is fabulous and yes, there is an Olsen frog work too, as there should be.

Sam Fullbrook's smudgy *Platypus* is cute but the one of his I really loved was *Child hugging pet*, painted around 1969. That's going to be a sentimental favourite, I reckon.

John Kelly's painting *Dobell's Cow* is another one that catches the eye, and the lines in Brett Whiteley's (*The orange*) *Fruit Dove in Clark Park*, a silkscreen print done in 1980, shows what a master he was.

Another master work is the expansive Tim Storrier landscape *Incendiary tableau (red belly black)* and *the noon line*, which features, as the title suggests, a snake as a symbol that has all sorts of connotations.

There are some interesting historical pieces too, including three works by William Strutt (*Wolf eating*, *Maggie* and *Sleeping Wolf*) all dating to the early 1890s. Charles Douglas Richardson's 1897 work *The goose girl* is quite charming.

This show is engaging with a lot of variety. Dr Dolittle would be pleased, I'm sure.

CREATURES: GREAT AND SMALL, until Mar 4, Philip Bacon Galleries, 2 Arthur St, Fortitude Valley, 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, ph: 3358 3555. philipbaconalleries.com.au

