

Flower Power exhibition flourishing with symbolism

Mike Mather | Waikato Times

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Elena Brambilla's work Botanical Beehive depicts a colourful adornment to the iconic Government offices in Wellington. Photo: Supplied
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It's a month usually associated with Halloween, political revolutions and beer festivals, but for one art gallery in Hamilton, October is all about blossom-themed art.

Timed to coincide with the onset of springtime (although the associated warmer weather is yet to manifest in the Waikato), the exhibition at the Welcome Swallow is appropriately titled Flower Power.

The Grey St gallery has made a name for itself nationally as a champion of watercolour artists in particular, and has hosted numerous themed displays of art covering subjects as diverse as the Waikato River, cityscapes, mountains, building design, the Hamilton Gardens, Europe, and the human body.

This time the theme is the specialised reproductive structures found in certain plants that produce seeds - in other words, flowers.



Sandra Turner-Barlow's incendiary acrylic work M67 is a featured work in the exhibition. Photo: Supplied

Running from October 1 until November 1 and sponsored by **Annah Stretton**, *Flower Power* features the talents of five artists from around the Waikato and further afield: Sandra Turner-Barlow, Carmel Van Der Hoeven, Bernadette Ballantyne, Juliet Roper, and Elena Brambilla. Many of the works in *Flower Power* are ripe with symbolism - most prominently Turner-Barlow's powerful acrylic-on-board composition M67, which features a white poppy poking out from the top of a hand grenade. As curator Clive Gilson points out, the painting is the result of her development following time in Europe training with Italian masters. There is also Brambilla's more overtly political ink-and-watercolour work *Botanical Beehive*, which "offers botanical mitigation to institutional power".



Self-taught multidisciplinary artist Carmel Van Der Hoeven has two pieces in the *Flower Power* exhibition, one of which is this work titled *Cascade*. Photo: Supplied

The phrase "flower power", loosely attributed to beat poet Allen Ginsberg, came to define the anti-Vietnam War protests of the 1960s. Simultaneously, the artist Andy Warhol created a series of iconic floral silk screen images.

A more recent addition to this theme is British artist Banksy, whose “flower thrower” stencil work - actually titled Love is in the Air - has become a visual metaphor depicting resistance to oppression.

All of the works in the exhibition are for sale.