



From the Artists Table

An exhibition of works by Charlotte Thodey and her students.
The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney 2nd – 11th August 2013

Many artists are inspired by their gardens and Charlotte is no exception. Sitting in a beautiful garden environment with an equally inspiring borrowed landscape Charlotte's weekend escape in Berry provides her with a secluded peaceful haven in which to create her work. Charlotte and her husband Stephen have spent 12 years creating this 16 acre garden Her love of nature no doubt began during her childhood in New Zealand when she spent many hours working with her Father in his vegetable garden." He was a country Doctor and grew all the food for our rather large family. The garden was pivotal, he was busy, if you wanted time with him you had to weed!"

After studying art in England, Charlotte worked in Paris spending her spare time visiting galleries, markets and painting. These years helped lay the foundation for a passion for France and still life art. With this history it seemed perfectly natural that Charlotte would be invited to exhibit in Chateau Villandry in the Loire Valley during the summer of 2012.



In fact for 10 years one of her New Zealand friends living in the Loire had suggested that she exhibit in a Chateau in the area and by chance when visiting France after the Friends exhibition "From Garden to Table" she had a meeting with the owners of Villandry, who liked her work and invited her to return in 18 months and exhibit 60 works for 6 months. The logistics of painting, framing and transporting such a large body of work seemed daunting, but not impossible! Charlotte and her husband Stephen spent a week living in the Chateau, working by day to erect and display the paintings, then enjoying this special Chateau and Garden alone in the evening for a week before the opening party in June 2012. "It was quite wonderful to awake to rows of blue cabbages and a multitude of other vegetables.....it felt right!"

Later in the year it was with great anticipation and excitement that I visited Villandry to view this exhibition. Housed in glorious rooms with oak beamed ceilings her paintings sat comfortably overlooking one of France's best known kitchen gardens. Visitors to this exhibition could easily have been forgiven in assuming that Charlotte had completed these works during a residence at the Chateau and not during weekends in Berry! Large works of cabbages sat alongside canvases of melons, pumpkins of all shapes and sizes, radishes, potatoes, parsnips, lemons to name a few of the 60 works.

Luckily for the Friends these 60 works have returned home and will be for sale with several works by Charlotte's students in the exhibition From the Artists Table in August this year..

Although Charlotte has a serious commitment to her work her sense of fun is always evident, in fact one garden writer described Charlotte as "A New Zealand artist capable of putting smiles on the faces of her fruits and vegetables and immortalising them with her broad grinning brush". Judy Fayard in her review of the Villandry exhibition "Jewels from an Antipodean Garden" for France Today stated that Charlotte's work glowed with vivid colour and often a deft and charming touch of humour. The media release from Villandry stated: "This New Zealand artist is a humorist of fruit and vegetables. Her paintings are funny, charming and poetic by turns".

Charlotte has painted continually and has always felt a painter first and foremost. For the past 29 years she has worked in the Sydney Gardens. During this time she has been a devoted supporter and promoter of the Gardens, starting the Sydney Botanic Visitors Centre as an exhibition, shop and information centre in the 1980s with a colleague and has been a lover of the First Farm area. She has been teaching still life masterclasses on behalf of the Friends for 7 years with all her classes being booked out well in advance. It was due to the success of these classes that the Friends decided to hold the exhibition From Table to Canvas in 2010.

"In my classes we are keen to portray the essence of the plant and the use of acrylics is kind and forgiving, allowing the painter to layer up from the inside of the fruit towards the light. We like sumptuous decay, blemishes are welcome. Personally I am drawn to cabbages the king of vegetables. Simple, delicious they become more beautiful as they age"