



"Piano Fingers" an exhibition review by Sandy Pottinger

The Lighthouse Toowoomba's Write Gallery is a hub of creativity. Its stated brief "to make imagination a destination, curiosity a way of life, and play an essential to understanding" could not be better exemplified than in the gallery's current exhibition. "Piano Fingers" shares the journey of exploration leading to the publication of an eponymous children's book.

Caroline Magerl is the internationally acclaimed author, artist, an illustrator whose latest book "Piano Fingers" was launched earlier this year in London. Caroline was at the opening of her exhibition here in Toowoomba. Her gentle modesty, her desire to

turn her passion for art and literature into a shared experience added a further dimension to her compelling illustrations.

The works on show range from quick thumb nail sketches and notations of colour, memory glimpses of interiors with their pools and auras of light, to larger works that are illustrative, certainly, but carry a loose painterly and interpretive quality in the softly diffused backgrounds. There is a quirky wonderland sense of magic and suspended reality seen especially in works that feature Gus, the ghost cat-mentor, old as eternity, who lives in the piano. His expressions are judgmental, encouraging, and amused-sometimes bored and sometimes joyous. Bea, the piano student who longs to play like an angel, is serious, a little uncertain, but totally determined.

The illustrations with their careful attention to space, lighting, the placement of objects, and the occasionally skewed perspective create images that seem to breathe and reverberate: sound grabs from a secret coda that swells, weaves and swirls into the cacophony of emotions that is the silent music of the soul.

The exhibition is a visual delight, it is a story about a story, it is also a voyage of discovery that lays out the process of turning imagery into language, drawing the conceptual strings into a complex cat's cradle that appears disarmingly simple.

