



# Irreverent Tales

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Pamela Irving



# Bold, brave and unabashed!

*Whitehorse Artspace is excited to exhibit work by Pamela Irving in an inspiring exhibition of artwork made during thirty five years of creativity. **Irreverent Tales – Pamela Irving** is on display at Artspace, Box Hill Town Hall, between 22 June and 29 July 2017.*



Pamela Irving may well be best-known to exhibition visitors for her bronze sculpture Larry La Trobe – the larrikin dog which was ‘dognapped’ from central Melbourne in 1995. The work was never returned but was replaced soon afterwards with another whimsical recasting of the much-loved public sculpture.

Pamela Irving earned her teaching credentials and honed her skills at Melbourne State College and Melbourne University. She is a much-admired teacher to school students through numerous ‘Artist in Residence’ programs at schools, most notably throughout Melbourne. She is also a well-regarded mentor to developing artists who have worked alongside the artist on major commissions. Her mosaic masterpieces at Patterson Station and St Kilda’s Luna Park being the crowning achievements of her work from recent years.

Since displaying her artwork in exhibitions in the early 1980s, Pamela Irving has exhibited in over 20 solo exhibitions. She has also participated in over 100 group shows in Australia and overseas. Ms Irving’s bold artwork is instantly recognised for its humour, quirkiness and for the numerous mischievous characters that populate her studio and exhibition spaces – where they boldly hold court!

One such character is the popular **Untitled, Dog** – with her scary toothy grin and bold bare genitals. This work always delights visitors (especially children) when on display anywhere in Whitehorse. The work came into the Art Collection in 1985 after Ms Irving won the former City of Box Hill Acquisitive Art Prize (an amalgamation of the Box Hill and Nunawading Councils resulted in the creation of the City of Whitehorse in 1994). **Untitled, Dog** is displayed along with three new works, acquired for the Whitehorse Art Collection in recent years.

**Adoration of Yolo Man** is one of the newly acquired works in the Collection. It is an enchanting large-scale mosaic work which celebrates the motif of Yolo Man, with his trusty admiring dog. This is exhibited for the first time, along with two highly decorative works, representing Mr Hanky Panky.

The two Mr Hanky Panky mosaics best present the artist’s clever use of recycled items, including prized plates and loved tea-sets. The once treasured domestic-ware items may well have suffered from accidental breakages before being rescued and appreciated once again in Ms Irving’s novel new mosaic artworks. The artist frequently receives gifts of broken crockery which are used to adorn her work.

Yolo Man is also well-represented in the exhibition with the 2D Apocalyptic Alphabet embellishing a large section of wall space. The images that comprise the alphabet refer to famous artworks throughout art history and, more particularly, with images that signify the Apocalypse.

Ms Irving’s work has been collected by major museums and galleries in Victoria, including Museum Victoria, Bendigo Art Gallery, Geelong Art Gallery and the Shepparton Art Museum. Local government collections that comprise of some of Ms Irving’s work include the City of Melbourne, City of Glen Eira, City of Hume, City of Wyndham and City of Whitehorse. Tertiary institutions that own her work include Melbourne University, the Australian Catholic University and Deakin University. Her work also appears in public and private collections worldwide, including the Bars Collection, St Petersburg and the Museum of Art, Ravenna, Italy.

Irreverent Tales is sure to provoke and raise many a smile from visitors. An illustrated floortalk will take place at 2pm on 22 July at Artspace and art lovers can meet Ms Irving during Open House Melbourne at the iconic Box Hill Town Hall, between 1pm and 3pm on the last day of the exhibition, on Saturday 29 July 2017. For more information, call Whitehorse Artspace on 9262 6250.

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**Jacquie Nichols-Reeves**

*Senior Arts Officer, City of Whitehorse  
May 2017*



## The Artist

*I have had a long history with the City of Whitehorse. My first studio, after graduating in 1982, was in Box Hill, at the home of Maudie Palmer. Maudie was then the Director of Heide Gallery; however in her previous life worked as a potter. I rented her studio and gas kiln to create my first solo exhibition in 1983 at Profile Gallery, in Caulfield. In 1984 I had started my Masters Degree and was teaching at Melbourne State College in the ceramics Department.*

One night I received a call during class to let me know that **Untitled, Dog** had won the 1985 Box Hill Art Prize. This piece, now in the City of Whitehorse Collection, is here as part of my **Irreverent Tales**.

In an article in 2002 on the City of Whitehorse Collection by Victoria Hammond she wrote of my **Untitled, Dog** 1985, “Irving’s freaky dog, with its mal occluded mouth, antediluvian feet and exposed accentuated genitalia, is in the larrikin tradition of Australian humour, gleefully cocking a snook at the serious, precious aspects of pottery. Even its marriage of materials – earthenware and metal – is freakish. Its ‘up yours mate’ brand of humour is distinctly Australian, particularly as it also manages to radiate easy-going good naturedness. Nevertheless, its comical nature should not blind us to its technical accomplishments: the cleverness of its construction and sheer sculptural energy.”

**YOLO Man and His Apocalyptic Alphabet** created in 2015 is a more recent example of my irreverence. In these works, on paper and mosaics, **YOLO Man** (YOLO You Only Live Once), is an enthusiastic conveyer of figures from well-known and obscure mosaics and paintings about the Apocalypse.

**YOLO Man** carries the apocalyptic figures on his head and in his hands. He often has to struggle due to the gravitas of the figures that burden him. However, he manages the task with optimism. My studies and travels have influenced the figures that YOLO Man conveys. They appropriate some of my favourite artworks for example, the monumental mosaics found in the Florence Baptistery, Bruegel’s painting “Dulle Griet” and homage to one of my favourite artists, Enrico Baj.



The YOLO Man and his friends grew out of my Luna Park series. That body of work have large heads, often devoid of bodies and can be found cavorting on the Luna Palace Building.

Other characters in this exhibition include Mr Hanky Panky who has a habit of stealing cultural Icons and The FOMO Sisters. FOMO means Fear of Missing Out, these ladies look quite manic in their quest to figure out where or what they should be doing. Of course my work often contains reference to Larry La Trobe my bronze bitzer in the City Square of Melbourne. Larry has become like an alter ego, he comes with me on my journeys and is often the narrator in my story telling.

**Irreverent Tales** contains works in paint, clay, mosaic and mixed media. It reflects my love of humour, travel, history, satire and storytelling. My work has been a 35 year obsession, I hope you enjoy a glimpse of some of my reverie.

I would like to thank the City of Whitehorse for inviting me to exhibit and to all who work at the ARTSPACE for all their assistance with this exhibition.

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**Pamela Irving**





Exhibition on display at Artspace from 22 June to 29 July 2017

Images copyright the artist

<b>Cover</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Back cover</b>
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1980	<i>Enchanted Fish</i>	YEAR	YEAR	1985 5	YEAR
	2015				



Whitehorse  
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Tues–Fri 10am–4pm, Sat 12pm–4pm, Closed Sun and Mon