

Love story through Art

Exhibition depicts couple's memorable life together

FEATURE

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A new exhibition is now on at Gallery 49 in Bridlington's Old Town, featuring work by a husband and wife duo Geoff and Jenny Morten.

The show has been arranged by Jenny, following Geoff's death in 2009, and it documents their life story together through a variety of colourful paintings and ceramics.

Free Press reporter Kieran Murray went along to see the work and to find out more about the stories behind the pieces.

Some married couples go through life experiencing the world. The Mortens did more than that, they captured their experiences and used them to feature as inspirations for their artwork.

A new exhibition - entitled 'Full Circle' - at Gallery 49 in Bridlington's Old Town, tells the story of husband and wife Geoff and Jenny Morten, from leaving Yorkshire to spend a lifetime together as artists. Their life experiences shine through in each piece of their work.

Jenny works in ceramics and is inspired from her first-hand experiences of nature, such as the sand and sea. She uses items such as a crab's claw to influence the style of rim on the bowls she produces.

Her method for making her work is the oldest method in ceramics. She recalled a day in the North Yorkshire Moors with strong winds that stripped the rocks of the moss which created diagonal lines from the natural erosion. She uses these darker lines on a brighter background to decorate her bowls.

Geoff was a painter and used his personal life experiences as inspiration for many of his pieces.

The pair met at York Art School before moving down to London. After a spell in Richmond they moved to Darlington where Jenny taught at a local college and Geoff started teaching Fine Art at Sunderland University.

While at Sunderland University, Geoff attended trips away and came back from



California having fallen in love with the place. He took early retirement and the pair lived there until 2009 when Geoff sadly passed away with lung cancer, aged 62.

A vibrancy of colour spills out from Geoff's canvasses and prints to appear as soft pastel shades on the smooth shell-like surfaces of Jenny's ceramics.

The exhibition is bright and colourful, like the art work on display, and it really compliments Jenny and Geoff's work. Geoff wanted to make a mark with all of his work and focused on his own life experiences and he certainly did that.

Photographs of Geoff's copper plates are intriguing. They are scratched into with a sharp edge to imprint leaving a marking on the shape which is then dipped into a bath of acid. 'On the Balcony' is one of four plates hanging together and they all have a number of meanings.

Geoff was an adopted child so he included a tree of life in his work to signalise the way he would find his

place in the world. A ladder features across many of Geoff's pieces as he sees them having two ways to go, like life itself. Geoff's canvasses use a range of colours, taken from his life in California, that certainly compliment the pale beach colours of Jenny's fine art.

The pair have always exhibited their work together including in California when they ran a home studio called MarMonte Studios.

Jenny transported all of Geoff's work to the UK after he died via a 40 foot container with over 1,000 pieces of his work to a house on St Johns Avenue, Bridlington where it was stored.

Geoff's passion transmits itself onto his work and he struggled to simplify his drawings to make them more accessible. It is this feature which makes his work so unique and personal.

The gallery had its open day on Saturday and the exhibition will continue to the 15th October. For more information visit www.galleryforty-nine.com.



LOVINGLY MADE Jenny Morten with her bowl inspired by nature, and a piece of Geoff's work, above.