

Kapiti artist comes of age

Local contemporary artist, Soraya Bradley, seems destined for a bright future.

An exhibition of her recent work is currently on display at Lembas Café and will be available for viewing until the termination of the Arts Trail on Sunday.

Those familiar with Soraya's painting will notice a change in style. Although she retains her passion for figurative and feminine pieces, she is moving towards a more personal and honest expression of life and emotion.

"The need for containment is gone," she says.

"I believe it is vitally important for women to be free to express their true feelings," declares Soraya "I don't see myself as a feminist per se, but I do believe woman deserve to stand alongside men as equals, in a complimentary capacity."

Soraya hastens to explain that she has no desire to compete with men but wants to see woman enjoy the strength, autonomy and independence that men claim as their birthright.

Her dedication to this cause is rooted in childhood experience where religion influenced male and female status and roles within the family. Although both her parents were Christian Ministers, Soraya felt her mother's position was seldom acknowledged.

Christianity was a strong part of Soraya's early life but at around 15 she read "The Myths of Avalon" by ... and began to question the motives of the Church. The book reflected a perspective she had hitherto not considered. "I was horrified," she says. It spoke of missionaries destroying cultures and having a negative impact on the world.

She began to see Christianity as controlling and hierarchical with women playing a subservient role to men.

Until now, Soraya has trodden a gentle path, exploring the realms of elementals, fairies, angels and goddesses. Her subject matter has been derived from myth and allegory and is often deeply researched.

The exhibition at Lembas reflects Soraya's personal metamorphosis and she suggests we can anticipate a bolder expression of emotion as she grows in confidence and strength.

She is currently planning another Goddess series where she hopes to marry a desire to express her true emotions with cultural and historical sensitivity.

Soraya is also now accepting commissions, and is excited by her present projects.

She has come a long way from the young girl remembered for her doodling and the mother who produced her first canvas for her daughter, Arwen's birthday to the successful, talented and ever maturing artist we see today.

To view more of Soraya's sumptuous work, visit her website online at www.soraya.co.nz.