

Catch her drift

Heidi Yardley's vivid visions delve into 1960s counterculture

GALLERIES Phil Brown

It was the title of one of Melbourne artist Heidi Yardley's paintings that attracted my attention almost immediately.

The work, from her latest show at Jan Murphy Gallery in Brisbane, is called *In watermelon sugar*. It's the title of a 1968 novel by American author Richard Brautigan, a countercultural classic.

I was a fan of Brautigan's as a youth. I assumed Heidi must be, too.

She tells me she's a fan of the countercultural era, and has a copy of the book but hasn't quite got to it yet. It's part of a small library of countercultural literature she has assembled as part of her investigation into her parents' era.

At 43, she's enjoying rediscovering that era through literature, magazines, music and her paintings. The nudes in this show are quite retro, gleaned from men's magazines from the 1960s and '70s.

Heidi has pushed her usual muted colour pattern into a more psychedelic realm in this show, with intense shades of indigo and crimson, as a way of suggesting a heightened state – the sort of heightened state that people once tried to achieve through the use of LSD.

But she's not so much interested in the drugs as the aesthetic of the time and the mind-expanding possibilities of that counterculture. She's reading Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* right now and is a big fan of countercultural writer Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

Paintings like *Rise up singing*, *The purple dawn* and *Luna luxor* can all be described as psychedelic. The titles are evocative and some reference the music of a period that Heidi finds intriguing.



The nude portrait *When the music's over*, for example, is a direct reference to a song by The Doors, a band named after Aldous Huxley's book.

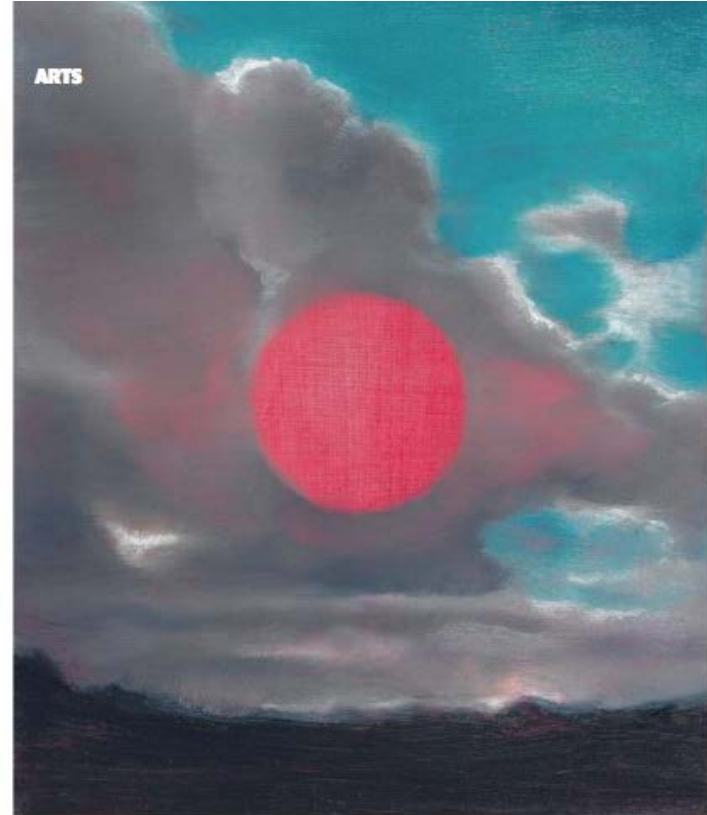
You can see how this all fits together, can't you? There are portraits, landscapes and still life works, and the show's title, *Drifters*, suggests figures from another time and place who have drifted into ours.

Of course, you can just enjoy the works for themselves without the backstory, but I think Heidi's exploration of the inspiration of the counterculture movement is very interesting, and the music and literature of the time warrant revisiting.

Meanwhile, I reckon these works should be viewed while listening to Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

Who's with me?

Heidi Yardley - *Drifters*, until Aug 18, Jan Murphy Gallery, 486 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley. janmurphygallery.com.au



MOODY HUES... Heidi Yardley's latest show, which reflects mind-expanding experiences of the psychedelic era, features works including (clockwise from top) *Luna luxor*, *After van Aelst*, *Crimson ways* and *Turbulent flight*.