



ART INVADES SPACE

A stray blob of paint led artist Margaret Ellen Turner in a new direction and inspired her towards her most successful year

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Sunshine Coast artist Margaret Ellen Turner was trying to save a painting when a blob of paint accidentally dropped on to the canvas.

In a moment of inspiration, she then dragged her homemade squeegee tool over the paint blob and loved the effect so much that she immediately stopped everything to pursue the new technique.

The mistake turned into a blessing. For the past three years, Turner has continued to experiment and fine tune the blobs for the award-winning, 16-work *Space Invaders* series, showing at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

It is Turner's most successful exhibition since she started to focus on painting 15 years ago after originally starting in sculpture.

Space Invaders 572 (2013) won this year's Kenilworth Painting Prize, *Space Invaders 528* (2012) was a finalist in this year's Moreton Bay Art Award, *Space Invaders 563* (2013) was a finalist in this year's Wilson Award, New South Wales, and *Space Invaders 569* (2013) was a finalist in this year's Sunshine Coast Art Prize.

"This is my most successful year and it feels very good," she says. "It is a reward for all the hard work. My work defies explanations, it's not something I set out to do."

Turner likes that the blobs have been described as "space invaders" from the iconic computer

game, as well as floating particles, faceless veiled women and clusters of coral reef. One young fan compared the yellow blobs with baby chickens.

"I like that people bring imagination to my work," she says. "I love playing computer games, I love the excitement, colour and noise and that is what my paintings are like."

The Sydney-born artist, who moved to Queensland in 1991 and works from her Caloundra home studio, lays the canvas horizontally and then starts applying the layers – up to 80 on each painting – to build a rich and dense build-up of colour.

As well as using brushes, she has different-sized spoons that she uses to drop blobs of bright organic acrylic polymer resin paint on to the canvas before moving the paint across the work with her squeegee to leave impressions of colour.

"I vary the pressure of dots. I use thin transparent ones and then thick round ones and they always leave a trail," she says.

"I make lovely glistening layers of paint which all talk to one another."

Turner, who has studied in Sydney and London and taught at several universities, then glazes the painting to highlight underneath and top paint layers, which combine to create an optical illusion.

Space Invaders exhibition is at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Sippy Downs, until December 20





Optical illusion: Margaret Ellen Turner with Space Invaders 569, which was short-listed for the Sunshine Coast Art Prize; and another in the series, 590 (below).

