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By T.J. McNamara

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Anita DeSoto: Wedding

What: Vintage by Anita DeSoto and Six days by Simon Allison

Where and when: Orexart, 1/15 Putiki St, Arch Hill, to September 3

TJ says: Dashing bright painting of women a little uneasy in conventional roles by Anita DeSoto and unusual combinations of lead and wood in the inventive sculpture of Simon Allison.

At Orexart, there is also a contrast: austere sculpture and bright painting making two shows though the works alternate on the walls.

The paintings are dashingly done by Anita DeSoto and show women swept into various historic and present roles by the winds of chance. The swift and vivid style of painting implies force of circumstance rather than choice. The emphasis is on pathos and nostalgia.

In the past, her work has suggested bodily stress; here the pressure is more mild but interior. In *Wedding*, a bride goes swishing past in a car having just thrown her bouquet. She looks backward with more than a hint of regret. In *School*, a young woman gets out of a car in a storm both of rain and of emotion; *War Bird* shows a woman pilot heroic but uncomfortable in her role, and in *Stables*, a woman with a horse is just plain awkward.

These colourful and thoughtful investigations into the stress of playing a role are in direct contrast to the austere wall sculpture in wood and lead by Simon Allison. He cuts deep grooves into dark, blackened timber and fills them with molten lead that often overflows into irregular patterns.

The title of the show is *6 Days* following one of the works which replays Colin McCahon's *Six days in Nelson and Canterbury* with its variations on austere hills. The solemnity of the work is repeated in *8 Stations* referring to the Passion of Christ.

The artist trained in New Zealand and has achieved considerable standing in England as a sculptor, but it is evident he follows the solemnity and invention of some traditions here.