

Colours of life

STRUGGLING to find a way of putting "the individual in the landscape" of her paintings, British artist Becky Blair was granted the solution a year ago when travelling through India.

Confronted with the masses, she suddenly found clarity and started putting representations of humanity, rather than people with identifiable features, in her work.

"The works have definitely taken a different turn compared to when I was last here as before it was floral, trees and certainly not people, as they've just appeared," Blair said.

"Sometimes you want to put people in the subject matter but I was thinking of figures too literally, getting caught up in life drawing and fixating on the face, mouth and so on."

A recent road trip down the west coast from Darwin cemented the process, producing her latest body of work, *Backseat Fiction*, as unusual as it is instantly recognisable.

"You get a glimpse, like a memory of a figure and some people say it is almost warm, like the haze around a figure when you're looking at something on a

hot day," Blair said.

Taking her kit to the beach and painting for hours in a long-sleeved shirt, sun-cream and sunglasses, she admits to becoming so absorbed in the work that the heat was unnoticeable.

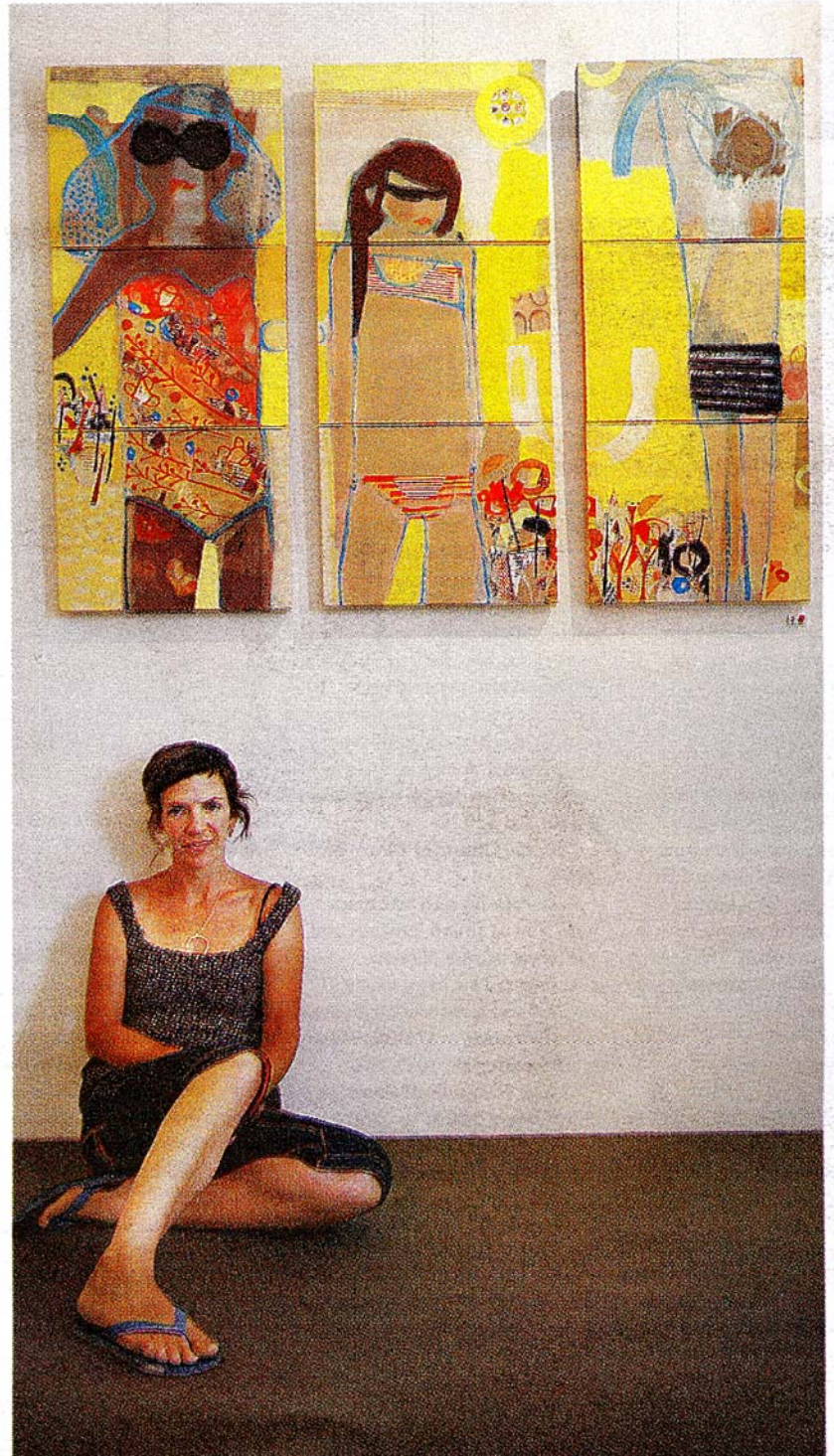
"It's a funny sort of feeling when you are painting, as you kind of want to switch off your head so it doesn't get in the way," the 33-year-old said.

"Things happen instinctively but I aim to capture what's in front of me the best I can."

Citing Broome's Cable Beach and seeing boab trees "in their natural environment" as trip highlights, she said her favourite time was day's end, "when the light turns pink".

"Before my work was more on the surface, decorative and dealt with colour rather than the environment, where now I want people to get the sense of being at a place," Blair said. "But I don't want to make it too obvious and the finished painting should keep a bit of mystery so people can still interpret it for themselves."

Backseat Fiction is at Gadfly Gallery, Dalkeith, until December 22.



Becky Blair with some of her art at Gadfly Gallery, Dalkeith.