



Auf Wiedersehen Tararua

by Hilary Pedersen

A friendly mayor, “respectful” Eketahuna school children and the landscape all feature among Berlin resident, graphic artist and film maker Marina Pruefer’s impressions of a month spent in Tararua.

Ms Pruefer who courageously escaped from East Berlin aged 21 in the boot of a car with her four year old son, has just completed a month-long residency at New Pacific Studio, Mt Bruce.

She has been working on a project to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and to link the event with the lives of men and women in New Zealand.

Through a series of sketches and then five minute film interviews with residents in Wairarapa, Wellington and Tararua she has compiled a snapshot of recollections and viewpoints relating to the Berlin Wall and its impact on Germany and other countries.

Interviewees were asked two questions: “What was your response to news of the fall of the Berlin Wall?” and “Are there still walls?”

Believing that “we are all responsible for our history,” Ms Pruefer explains that “every country and every individual is engaged in a search for their identity. The arts help in that process,” she says.

Among those sketched and then interviewed on film was Tararua mayor Maureen Reynolds, who welcomed Ms Pruefer to the district and said she was honoured to be included in the project. “I found Marina’s ability to sketch quickly and accurately quite amazing and to hear of her plight as a much younger person was incredible” she said.

Other subjects included the Swiss Ambassador to New Zealand, Sir Brian Lochore – sketched during a visit to the Eketahuna Golf Club – Masterton mayor Garry Daniell and Wellington publisher and board member of New Pacific Studio Roger Steele.

A friend of New Pacific Studio director Dr Kay Flavell who is also involved in the project, Ms Pruefer said she had come to New Zealand “for a new view.” She intends to return.

A morning spent at Eketahuna School creating bird masks to feature in a ‘Birds Go Walking’ project was another highlight. “The children were very open, friendly and respectful,” she said.

A highly regarded graphic artist Ms Pruefer’s skills were put to work in the law courts recording the 1992 – ’96 Honecker Trials – a series of law-suits brought against former East German head of state Erich Honecker.



Her lightning on-site drawings, collages, cuttings and comments are now recorded in nine major leather-bound books.

Now, among her other projects she runs a programme for urban youth called “Art instead of

Violence.”

In a note of hope, she says “You gain insight into yourself and your past...and become inspired with courage to create a better future.”