

ChillZone On the North Shore



PHOTO: JELLY O'SULLIVAN

Beachcombers: Linda Howitt and Christian Mushenko at Balmoral.

A beach somewhere

An exhibition at the Bathers' celebrates the beauty of the sea.
By Emma Nicholas

Photographer Christian Mushenko usually reserves his memory card for models, food and celebrities. So when artist, Linda Howitt, a design manager and artist, decided to try a client-free collaborative project, the thought of the creative freedom it offered was so seductive that he spent months gathering the perfect images. Or maybe it was spending nearly every morning down at Balmoral Beach that was the enticing part.

Either way, the result is "Seduced by the Sea", an exhibition of Mushenko's photographs and Howitt's paintings showing upstairs at the Bathers' Pavilion at Balmoral. "We decided on these seascapes because Linda lives overlooking the beach and she's often sending me images of how it changes," Mushenko, 44, says. "I wanted to do something that elicited an emotional response in people, rather than just a pretty calendar image."

The two artists worked on building up their portfolio for the exhibition over four or five months last summer. The results were remark-

ably similar images of waves, light and sand produced by two very different mediums.

"We made a conscious decision not to replicate the works of other artists," Mushenko says. "We weren't interested in capturing the subject as such, but rather the feeling of what the sea means to people."

The images are beautiful and unique – soft, gentle, emotive portrayals of the sea.

"When you spend time down there you see things of beauty that others might miss," Mushenko says. "We wanted to isolate things, to draw out people's emotional response to something."

Some of Mushenko's photos show the beach almost in miniature form, which helps to put the viewer imaginatively in the frame. The images are products of his favourite Canon 1DS without any Photoshop cleaning up.

"The beach is a romantic place and very much tied in with people's emotional psyche," Mushenko says. "Because you look out to infinity, it puts you in contact with something bigger than you."