IT'S TIME: Nina Battley grabs the bull by the horns at Harriet Space gallery. **BELOW:** Urban Landscape. **Pictures:** CHLOE ERLICH

Creature of taste

Battley ices her cake with strong flavours

YELLOW, white and multi-layered, set apart from its blue and red companions, Horny Creatures hangs on the gallery wall as the epitome of Darwin artist Nina Battley's inspiration.

A veteran of numerous exhibitions in Western Australia, where she lived before coming to the Territory, the German-born painter spent a few years in her new tropical home painting less than she thinks is healthy.

The artist reckons painting is like cooking: "the more you do, the better you get".

She speaks of "icing" a painting with layers of colour — and wine glasses and cutlery are hidden within the folds.

ARTS FIX

Battley, 42, has thrown herself into her work again and without stretching the analogy too far, the Horny Creatures 1 and 2 duo is the icing on the cake.

In 2, a few white lines call to mind Sydney Nolan's curved-line Luna Park but this is Battley's work, pure and not-so-simple.

"It's about taking life by the horns really," she said.

"From the last show there's a bit less decorative work; it's got more complex and deeper. I think I've just stirred the broth a bit, added some more spices

"It's very much about the tropics and living here."

Tonight's 6pm opening of the new exhibition is also the launch of the Harriet Place gallery as a full-time open-all-week operation.

Darwin's non-indigenous painters will be pleased the gallery will give them a space that will concentrate on their work.

"This will be focusing mainly on contemporary work rather than traditional," the gallery's Paul Johnstone said.

"I think Darwin really needs it."

Nina Battley is at the Cross Cultural Art Exchange gallery, 2/2 Harriet Place, Darwin, until May 17.