

Denise James

Bio

2002-2006 - Teacher – Painting, Drawing, Koorie Art History, Study Skills (Cert3&4) Sunraysia TAFE; Koorie Co-Ordinator.

2001 - Sessional teacher (Painting, Koorie Drawing, Circuit Breakers), Sunraysia TAFE Registered Tutor, Koorie Students.

2001 - Certificate IV- Workplace Training and Assessment, Sunraysia TAFE

2000 - Bachelor of Visual Arts (with Distinction), Latrobe University (Mildura Campus).

Denise James is an artist who works predominantly in painting and drawing, with forays into installation based works.

'The empty human shapes in Denise's paintings, though two-dimensional, conveyed a very strong sense of having just been removed from a warm and sensual body. Many of the paintings include a person's name, like 'Minnie Meredith's wedding dress fades away' and 'Winter coast for Auntie Alice' and this further personalises the paintings and provides food for the imagination.'

Taken from 'Sunraysia Daily, June 3, 2004'.

'Denise explores through her work the essence of the garment, its glamour, beauty, its design and what is left behind once the wearer no longer stands inside. Pattern pieces, pins and stitches are layered beneath the picture plane like mini landscapes made to find their way around the contours of the body. Memories of a mother sewing busily at the kitchen table haunt and humble beneath the pellicle of pastel and pigment.'

Taken from 'Sunraysia Daily, June 16, 2004'.

Artist Statement

"What people had shed and left - a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes - those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated, how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons..."

From 'To the Lighthouse' by Virginia Woolf

My mother was a fine seamstress and made all her own clothes, her children's clothes, and dresses for special occasions for her friends.

As a child I would arrive home after school to see my mother busy at her Singer sewing machine set up at the kitchen table, surrounded by a chaos of fabric, paper patterns, cotton, pins, buttons and of course the 'good scissors', that were only meant to cut fabric.

I enjoyed my mother's sewing best when she was making a special garment for herself or a friend to wear to a local function. The fabric would be a shot silk or chiffon. These garments would often only be worn once or twice, and then left in the wardrobe for some time, before being altered or passed onto a friend or discarded to the Op Shop.

Now, as an adult, I frequent Op Shops looking for that special garment that has been discarded. Op Shops, with their haphazard arrangement of rack upon rack of seemingly unwanted clothing, the body scents wafting into the shop space, fires my imagination. As I flick through the racks of clothing, seeking to discover a special garment that is either homemade or that speaks to me because of the design, the question 'do clothes maketh the man or the woman?' appears in my mind. 'Who wore this garment and to what occasion? Did they enjoy wearing the garment? Were they successful and happy or are those tear stains on the bodice?'

Garments keep their secrets so I will continue to construct my stories with which to bring to life in my imagination those empty human shapes.

Artist's Statement - Lamberts Swamp

Lamberts Swamp is devastatingly beautiful; once a fresh water lake, now a salt encrusted expanse with corpses of trees scattered around the lake. Each tree corpse has a collar of white salt with minerals in the salt giving the remaining water a pink hue.

The block of land next to the lake is covered by a large planting of gum trees which the first owner used to spell out his wife's name. The trees stand like a sentinel guarding the lake. Both are now deceased but I feel the spirit of his wife stays and mourns the dying lake.

Exhibitions

2006

Signs and Symbols Gallery 25
Mildura Palimpsest # 6
Red group exhibition Mildura Art Centre
Melbourne Affordable Art Show Gallery 25

2005

Miniature Latrobe Staff Exhibition Latrobe University Bundorra
le femme rouge Gallery 25 Mildura
Melbourne Affordable Art Show Gallery 25

2004

Monochrome TAFE/Latrobe Staff Exhibition
(keeping) Human Shape Solo Exhibition Mildura Art Gallery June

2003

With A Little Help from My Friends Mildura Gallery Exhibition
Mildura Palimpsest # 5

2001

'karabiner – an exhibition about teamwork' TAFE/Latrobe Staff Exhibition, August
Beyond the Wire – A dog's life' – Solo exhibition, Mildura Art Gallery
Local Artists Group- Mildura Art Gallery
Mildura Palimpsest #4

2000

Final Years' Exhibitions, Latrobe University, Mildura and Bendigo Campuses

1999

"ADO" Combined Visual Arts students, Mildura TAFE and Latrobe University, Bendigo/Mildura campuses.

1996

"Countercharge", Women's Art Register, Melbourne.
"Save the Night", Women's Art Register, Melbourne.

1995

'6X6 – Art in Isolation', Mallee Women's Cooperative, Mildura Regional Gallery
'Works from the kitchen Table', Swan Hill Regional Gallery
'Works from the kitchen Table', Mildura Regional Gallery
'Any Old Boot', Mildura Regional Gallery

1992

"End of Year Exhibition", First Year BVA students, Mildura Regional Gallery

Awards

2001 - Visual Arts Graduate Studio Access Grant (VAGSAG) Latrobe University, Mildura

Collections

Mildura Art Gallery Collection
Latrobe University Print Collection, Mildura
Private Collections