

Jenny Manning

Bio and Artist Statement

I was born in Adelaide in 1946 and educated in Melbourne and London. My first degree at the ANU, Canberra, focused upon English Literature and Philosophy, my second degree at the ANU School of Art focused upon sculpture. After finishing a Diploma of Education at the University of Canberra I taught briefly in the College system and with students with special needs. For the past 23 years I have been, and still am, an Educator in the Education and Public Programs sections of the National Gallery of Australia, where I have had an interesting career interpreting the permanent collection and all visiting exhibitions to all ages from kindies to geriatrics. It was while studying sculpture that I furthered my interest in off loom weaving with ropes, bandages, cables and plastics. This obsession with binding and wrapping has been a persistent theme running through my more recent painting and drawing practice. The illusion of three dimensionality that is achieved by weaving forms over and under fascinates me as does the vibrant use of colour and pattern, another persistent theme that evolved from my interest in textiles.

'I have always been interested in fibres, knots and tangled webs. Sometimes I drew them or painted them and sometimes I explored the process in three dimensional knitted fabrics. But in Mildura I discovered veins. It all started when Peter Lancaster, a master Lithographer from Melbourne was her for a couple of days printing works of art for Geoffrey Ricardo. He asked me to make a drawing on a stone. I went to the fridge and found half a cabbage. This drawing of curved leaf forms explored the delicate structure of veins and capillaries and started me on a journey which led to drawings of placentas, foetus like forms and ambiguous animal, insect, human organs. Knots and tangles are still there but are now overlaid with a deeper conceptual connection with how life is supported and how growth takes place.

Who knows where this will lead, but I believe that this new direction is a rich vein to explore.

Without my enriching time here as an artist in residence (The Art Vault, Mildura) I may have languished in Canberra knitting and knotting and never realising the potential of the cabbage leaf.'

Taken from 'In Residence: Reflections of Canberra based artist Jenny Manning', Review, Issue 4, May 2009.