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Jennifer Goodman Form, shape and colour in conversation

Stepping into artist Jennifer Goodman's recently built studio in Melbourne was like entering another world.

The spaciousness, the white walls and reflective pale grey floor created an ambience in which I experienced a floating sensation it was quite beautiful and serene.

It's no surprise that fine art is created here by this full time artist who says she spends most days and many late nights in this space.

Tubes of paint lay on a table in disciplined rows beside a wall size easel. Nearby stood three tall trolleys stacked with small bowls containing remnants of mixed colour.

"I need order while I'm working. I want to know exactly where to find a colour when I need it.

Since I only use mixed colours, the bowls become a reference of what I have used, a history of my work".

The inter relationship of colour, tone and shape are the essence of Jennifer's current large abstract canvasses.

I see them as compositions of varied vertical and horizontal columns of colour woven in a balanced but geometric conversation.

Someone else has compared them to the harmony and counterpoint of classical music, so I thought I should ask Jennifer for her explanation.

"Colour is very important. Tone is important mainly to position the shapes where I would like them to be. I like to use strong colours that have a subtle relationship between them so they sit restfully together.

"I do understand about colour theory and I know at once if a colour is wrong, like a discord in a piece of music but I suppose it's intuition really." Amazingly Jennifer paints the shapes freehand, no masking tapes for her.

"The result is more 'organic' - it doesn't matter if it's not perfectly straight, it's more natural."

She hasn't always worked this way. She explained that although evolution of her abstraction had been gradual, she had reached a stage where she felt comfortable and loved what she was doing. From kindergarten, everyone knew Jennifer was destined to be an artist.

"I remember being the one called on to draw things, so I guess I was aware I had some talent and in primary school I once won an art competition judged by Sir William Dargie. I was also fortunate the school I attended valued and encouraged art as a subject, equipping me for further study in Fine Art at RMIT."

After some time drawing and painting from the figure she became aware that her paintings were becoming increasingly abstract.

"The subject was not that crucial to me. I was more interested in the flat forms of colour within the figures.



"Probably for the last ten years it has been flat forms of colour that have been my focus.

"My new studio has allowed me to work on much larger canvasses and I've also observed the colours I mix are becoming warmer .

"Over the last six years, I have experimented with collage. The paper colours available are in stronger tones than I would normally mix and I have been pushed beyond my comfort zone.

"Sometimes if I particularly like a collage I will do a painting creating those colours."

Jennifer has had four solos exhibitions, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 at John Buckley Gallery, now located in Richmond, as well as exhibiting in many group shows.

She has won The City of Darebin, Latrobe University Acquisitive Art Prize in 2007 and has been short listed for other awards

Her work is in private and corporate collections across Australia but you can see it now by going on line to visit the gallery at www.johnbuckleygallery.com.au

As I was leaving the studio, we walked through their beautifully manicured garden, where I admired a row of orchids about to burst from their spikes.

Wondering what this very disciplined artist did for relaxation I suggested it might be gardening.

"No, but I do love my garden."

Rather, her relaxation is enjoying their Lorne house with her husband Greg and two adult children, Lauren and Adrian and naturally visiting galleries and exhibitions.

Ah yes yet another light under a bushel at Lorne.

- Cynthia Wynhoven