

Jennifer Alison Ahmad

Artist Statement

Jenny Ahmad is a very new emergent artist whose highly coloured, enigmatic interior paintings of family scenes create beautiful and affectionate depiction of ordinary life and domestic settings. Returning only recently to showing work after being emersed with two babies at home, Jenny paints her two kids and husband in quiet between moments and suburban life. Her paintings are unusually excited and lyrical, with very free brushwork and a hyper-coloured palette and expressionistic technique in an unusual combination of hesitation and risk-taking. Her subject is typically interior life with almost abstracted and formal but deeply emotive depictions of her children, husband and herself at home, creating a fierce intimacy and a kind of mysticism about the everyday.

Jenny's painting approach came out of her tutelage by much-loved painters Idris Murphy and Ian Grant while at CoFA (College of Fine Arts) and their focus on a poetic response and a re-seeing and awkward approach as a way of translating an experience of place and relationships that is essentially human and psychological. Stylistically their influence can be seen in her style in the vibrant elusive colouring, delicate drawing and soft formalism. Another big influence is other teaching lights in Australian painting community like Elisabeth Cummings, Ann Thomson, Guy Warren and Ross Laurie which has impacted younger Australian artists technique focused on experiential portrayals of space, abstracted representation and a search of romance and memory.

Jenny has only just now starting being able to paint again after hibernating with toddlers at home and is beginning to explore and develop her painting practice, returning to her first love after previously exhibiting installation work and sculpture. Previously Jenny was with Stephen Mori's Gallery in Sydney and his partner Susan Nori, and participated in shows with other galleries like 4A Gallery and Paddington Gallery with object pieces as well as site works. After a flurry of exhibiting and a lot of interest in her work after graduating, she took a long break to start a family and is only now starting her practice again, focusing more deeply on drawing and painting, and this is her very first show after that break.

Right now in this development stage she hopes to process all of those influences and combine the learning from new sources to produce a direction of work and these paintings are the first things to come out of this start. Jenny's approach puts together diverse and eclectic influences, her style visibly combining the techniques and theory of European modernism and post-impressionists with the theoretical approach and painterly skills of the American Expressionists. In her work you can see the absorption of the bodies of work by the Moderns like Matisse, Chagall, Derain, Kees Van Dongen and Schiele, and most deeply the effect of both the underpinning thinking and the style of Bonnard, Vuillard and the Symbolist artists. At the same time in her work can easily be seen the other dynamic of the influence of American Expressionist painters in her visceral use paint and broad brushwork and interest in accident and pigment. Especially can be seen the technique of Diebenkorn, as well as a deep admiration for De Kooning and others like Rothko and Still. On top of these debts are Australian artists and Expressionist movement like Charles Blackman, Sydney Nolan, John Olsen and Ian Fairweather and the teaching of the history of the Australian abstract painting here.

This tension of influences results in a strange mix with smudged, blurred scabbling at form unsurity meets passages of fast and bold flashes and sweeping gestural mark-marking. Her colours are unusually sweet and liquid, swinging between creamy low-key harmonies and electric colours, in unusual hue combinations resulting in a beautiful mixing of messiness against surprising sunniness and delicacy. Although delicately coloured and drawn, the very free and energetic nature of the highly charged calligraphic brushwork and delight in risk-tasking and speed and the physical qualities of liquid paint is juxtaposed with fragility and tenderness, making her depictions of these private scenes both quiet and intuitive but excited and full of joy in the act of painting.

Often depicting hyper-coloured and dark-lit interiors and rooms, Jenny's style is always trying to capture and translate an emotionally charged *mis-en-scene* where some small moment plays out in seemingly elongated time of the affectionate observer, in an approach she calls 'subjectivism'. The obfuscation and distortions in her work is an effort to work in a way a bit like how poetry works - through mistakes and suggestion, gaps and reconfiguring the known making it seem both strangely unknown but also more immediately intimate and familiar. Evocative and slow, the delicate unfolding of everyday events and rituals become highly charged and emotionally involved. Her careful wavering forms and half-seen rooms are refigured by intimate observation and affection, where the trivial is made once again mysterious.

New paintings and sketches of Jenny's can be viewed on her Instagram account, which is @jen.a.ahmad and she is always seriously excited to get feedback from art-lovers and viewers and enjoys communicating with people who have viewed her work.