

1. Thank you for letting me look into the private workings of an artist.

Many paths and challenges have led me to this present stage of being a professional artist. I have often had to choose a more solitary life, amid the busyness of making a living and raising a family, in order to follow my personal journey of studying art and developing my arts career. I believe that while creative people thrive on social interaction, they also need alone time to create their artwork. I admit I am apprehensive about this public exposure, although I am grateful for the opportunity.

2. Did growing up on a farm in country NSW nurture your creativity?

It was a hard life on our farm. My parents worked long hours while also raising five children and we all had to pitch in. We were very self-sufficient living off the land, preserving fruit, growing vegetables and rarely went to town to buy food. My fascination with art first came from my father's drawings and as a child I began to draw on whatever I could find, including our farmhouse walls.

Our family moved into Wagga Wagga for job opportunities and high school for the kids. There I studied art and after leaving school did voluntary work experience which turned into a position in graphic design for an advertising company.

After I married there was little time to create art although my husband and I ran a photographic studio for 25 years. I took on the challenge of wedding photography, restored old photographs and framed many portraits. We had three beautiful daughters and a busy family life.

When we lost our son at birth and I had a near death experience at that time, I rethought my life and was determined to return to my love of creating art.

3. That's what led you on a formal route to art?

Yes, I was in my thirties, and it was then that I wrote my 'bucket list.' I decided to open an art



'Wise old man takes young fella fishn'

gallery, taught children's art classes and helped other artists sell their work. Wonderful as it was, I knew I had jumped the gun a little. I wanted to learn much more about the visual arts, so I took a TAFE course but hungered for more and enrolled at Charles Sturt University. Enabled by a series of awards and scholarships, I ended up with a Diploma of Fine Arts, an Advanced Diploma of Visual Arts, a Bachelor of Fine Arts, and finally a Master of Arts Practice, in Visual Arts.

4. That's a successful and extensive time studying. Did you work throughout the 5 or 6 years of this phase?

Yes, our family business continued but luckily, I was an early riser and relished the morning hours for my art studies, then I could look after my daughters for their schooling and its commitments, work part time in the photographic studio, go to university, care for the house, garden, and fit in art essays and painting in the evenings.

5. How long have you been in Normanville?

After the girls had left home to begin their own lives and the breakdown of my marriage, I saw an opportunity to begin a new life and came to the Fleurieu, settling in Normanville. Firstly, I worked as an arts and activities assistant in aged care in Victor Harbor, followed by employment in a garden centre. I now have a wonderful new partner, who has always been supportive of my arts career, and we were fortunate to purchase a home together in Normanville. Late last year I decided to become a full-time artist painting and selling art through my website and the Bluethumb Gallery, as well as via local exhibitions. Daring to take myself and my art seriously again has paid off and I've sold a number of artworks already and received a large commission from Sydney. Over the years I have sold hundreds of artworks and I hope to increase my arts practice through representation in galleries, as well as future solo exhibitions.

6. How would you describe your art?

My work is primarily contemporary abstract expressionist, working in mixed media, which includes painting, drawing, collage and printmaking combined with alternative materials such as coffee, bitumen, shellac and natural earth pigments. It is wonderful to experiment to see how materials combine as the artwork evolves and also to follow my own intuition and experience. Creating a truly original artwork gives me great satisfaction and I love to reveal a unique piece of work to the viewer. Some works can be quite painterly, whereas others are more detailed and precise. Often the works express movement, emotion and a sense of ambiguity.

7. What have been major influences on your art?

My father was an artist as well as a farmer, and as a child I was intrigued by his art. My parents were musical, both playing piano. My mum played piano-accordion as well, and my grandfather the violin. Hence the arts were always part of my background in one form or another.

University studies really inspired me of course, and I was fortunate to win a scholarship to study



Normanville artist, Julie Perri

and travel in the outback, learning the use of ochre and pigments in artworks.

Several art masters have also inspired me, particularly Kandinsky with his colour palette integrated with music and symphonies. I found other Romantic artists such as Turner, Friedrich, Delacroix and Gericault quite intriguing. Later big influences on my work were Anselm Kiefer and Sophie Cape for their use of mixed media, rust, earth and found objects. I continue today to research art, explore techniques and enjoy new challenges. My art is constantly evolving and developing.

8. How and where do you work?

Each day I try to create, and rise early, sometimes around 4 or 5am as I did in uni days. I feel fortunate to have a large art space in my shed/studio, with good light and plenty of room for creative productivity. It feels good to work unrestricted and be free to explore whatever my imagination comes up with. At times I am a messy artist with multiple works on the go and I make large statement pieces which can be 1.5 to 2 metres in width. I love having an art studio, a pleasing space where I am happy and can enjoy creating art for others to appreciate.

Julie welcomes enquiries and artwork commissions via email

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Visit her website -

<https://www.artjulieperri.com/>

or the Bluethumb online gallery -

<https://bluethumb.com.au/julie-perri>

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