

marilyn peck

Windfalls - Exhibition and Book Launch

September 17 – September 23 2022

With an international reputation as a significant miniaturist, Marilyn Peck has been winning awards and exhibiting, both overseas and in Australia, since 1970. In honour of this venerable artist's 90th birthday, Anthea Polson Art presents a survey of her work. The exhibition also features Peck's recent paintings and launches her latest poetry collection which shares the title *Windfalls*.

Like all found objects, 'windfalls' can be treasure or trash depending on who's doing the fossicking. Peck has been sorting through found images in her paintings and poetry for decades, turning 'happy accidents' into the beauties and beasts that cavort in her imagination.

"I discovered that painting in both negative and positive spaces worked well for miniaturisation," Peck imparts. "Depending on which way I look at an image as it emerges on the picture plane, various stories unfold in my mind. Subsequently, my brush brings these imaginings to life."



Akin to Margaret Olley, Peck has vowed to keep painting every day 'until the end'. "At ninety and beyond I will continue to paint small landscapes where the fine detail of my miniature period is no longer necessary. I now paint from photographs given to me by friends and family. My shaky hands may not be able take a focused photograph, but my paint brush still translates the beauty of a landscape and that is enough for me." Decades of work are suffused with the numinous. "I try only to be influenced by beauty," muses Peck. "I love accidental happenings in the picture plane. These are windfalls and gifts from God."

Peck's creative endeavours span a period of seventy years. Resident in the Gold Coast since 1986, she was born in Melbourne and studied commercial art at Caulfield Technical College. In the mid-1950's she worked as a graphic artist and fabric designer before seeking to broaden her creativity beyond the strictures of the lithographic process. Relocating to Sydney's Northern Beaches in the 1960's, Peck began portraying the ambience of the Hawkesbury River locale in both watercolour and acrylic paint. To prevent a tendency towards detailed realism, she variously employed the brush, palette knife and even her hands.

The following decade has been termed *The Fantasy Period* and was characterised by further experiments in mixed media that included enamel spray and acrylic marbling. Her paintings at this time depicted the mythological landscapes that inhabited both what she was reading and her own prose and poetry.

The 1980's are described as *The Found Period* where imagery was 'discovered' in the outcome of dropping objects into watercolour washes. The technique was a means of activating the imagination and accessing subconscious realms. Tissue paper and gauze collage were also introduced into her painting to give textural nuances and shifting focal points. It was around this time Peck began working in miniature. The miniature genre gave pictorial voice to her abiding interest in history, literature and mythology.

The 1990's were Peck's *Myth Period*. Throughout these years she painted for the most part in series or suites portraying fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems and ancient myths. The minuscule scale of the works encouraged a close engagement with the subjects depicted amidst jewel-like drifts of watercolour. Emulating the traditions of mediaeval illuminated manuscripts, areas of gold and palladium leaf accented the enchanting stories and parables contained within. The precious leaf was often inscribed with subtle patterns that added linear intricacies.

During the new millennium, Peck's fascination with archetypal symbolism culminated in two remarkable bodies of work. *The Wasteland Suite* is the artist's response to T. S. Elliot's 1922 poem decrying the rampant materialism of his day and the consequential decline of spiritual awareness. The book was superbly produced in hardcover by Macmillan Art Publishing. It was followed in 2014 by *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a richly illustrated translation of the Arthurian tale.

Peck's work is represented in the Gold Coast City Gallery and Tasmania's Burnie Regional Art Gallery Collection as well as numerous private collections. Her published books have been acquired by the National Library of Australia and the State Library of Queensland. She was a founding member of the Australian Society of Miniature Art in NSW, 1986 and Foundation President of that body in Queensland, 1988. Her poetry is regularly published in the literary magazine *Quadrant* and is included in the Australian anthologies, *Trainless Times*, edited by Leanne Wicks and *A Way of Seeing*, edited by Susan Steggall. Peck's books of poetry, *The Girl in the River* and *Memoir for Jimmy*, were published on Amazon.

Come And Find Me

And the Roar of blood as it runs
 Through veins to the pumping heart
 And the lungs;
 The wonder of the body;
 The sound of life in ears
 The feel on the face of tears
 The taste of the tears
 The race to the start
 And the end where you say
 Here I am
 Ready to invent a real new life
 Come and find me.

Marilyn Peck 2022

