

Veronica Cay

Faded dreams and night blossoms

November 16 – November 30 2024

Buderim-based Veronica Cay informs that her current paintings and drawings depict an ongoing conversation she is having about the varied roles and experiences of women throughout history. Her focus is always from a female perspective. Cay's works embrace the figurative expressionist mode. Both painted surface and human document they have an extraordinary psychological presence. The figures occupy an indeterminate space. Realistic portrayal is not her concern but rather the arousal of a subliminal, emotional response.



Cay tells that the genesis for the exhibition came from *The Courtesan* series she'd loosely started 15 months ago. The painting, *eavesdropping on the domestic*, was in the Sunshine Coast National Art Prize this year and depicts Cay's ongoing musings. "This work explores the roles and relationships of courtesans in former times," she relays. "Sometimes the most gifted and highly educated were held in high regard and provided entertainment with performances for a wide audience. Other times, the women fell into disrepute, the term courtesan becoming a euphemism for a prostitute. However, many courtesans had legal contracts and long-lasting relationships that provided security and independence into old age, similar to a marriage contract. My *eavesdropping on the domestic* painting is a contemporary view parodying the historical."

"There are several collaged drawings that explore the theme of 'the courtesan' in a variety of ways," Cay continues. "The *saints or sinners* work draws on Madonna-type iconography and refers directly to the myth that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute". Cay refers to a James Carroll transcript from the Smithsonian Magazine, June 2006, in which he opines that the Mary Magdalene legend, dating from early Christian records, discredits sexuality in general and disempowers women in particular.

"The paintings *quilted covers to soften your dreams* and *sanctuary in numbers* are multi-layered, transparent and opaque to reveal and conceal what might lie below the surface," notes Cay. "Both suggest the dualities of past and present or present and future. The largest work in the exhibition, *truth resides at the edges of our souls*, is also rendered in multiple layers of media and meaning. Numerous bodies morphing into and out of each other speak of the multiplicity of roles that women play throughout their lives."

Cay explains that her process nudges cultural and aesthetic assumptions and wryly engages with the contradictions inherent in contemporary life. "Most of my work begins in the life drawing studio, a space where gentle observations can be made journeying through a human landscape – a distilled experience offered by the model. Gestures and marks appear across the surface with a variety of materials and tools as I try to evoke a feeling. A drawing can convey many things about the human condition; vulnerability, fragility, strength and power that cannot easily be expressed in any other way".

"The title for this exhibition was chosen as it leaves room for the imagination to wander and wonder. I prefer not be didactic as to specific meanings. The viewer's own perceptions and life experience will give rise to varying interpretations," concludes Cay.

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