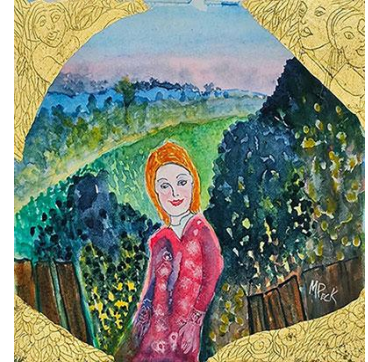


Marilyn Peck

Dancing With Knives August 15 – August 22, 2026

Marilyn Peck's 5th exhibition with Anthea Polson Art coincides with the launch of her latest poetry book, *Dancing With Knives* published by House of Thieves Press. Consequently, she decided to also call her current body of small paintings *Dancing With Knives*. In elucidating this most curious title Peck offers, "Any creative endeavour worth pursuing needs to be innovative and for me that meant being dangerous – as though I'm dancing with knives. I am challenging the viewer to see our myths and legends through my eyes and hence to come dancing with me. I imbue the figures with movement as if music is playing somewhere close by, but look closely... danger is lurking."



Suffused in the numinous, the exhibition is a treasury of watercolour works containing a cornucopia of stories and reminiscences aglow with palladium and gold leaf.

Resident in the Gold Coast hinterland since 1986, the still spritely and effervescent 94 years-old artist 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. To prevent a tendency towards detailed realism, Marilyn variously employed the brush, palette knife and even her hands. The following decade has been termed *The Fantasy Period* and was characterised by experiments in mixed media that included enamel spray and acrylic marbling. Her paintings 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 wet watercolour paint. 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 that Peck began working in miniature which gave pictorial voice to her abiding interest in history, literature and mythology.

The 1990's are classified as 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 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 venerable 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* and the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight Suite*. The former 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. Multi-layered in process and meaning, the paintings do not simply illustrate certain passages from the poem but rather interpret its ethos in relation to her own personal experiences.

Peck's latest body of works, both written and painted, continue in this realm.

Barry Spurr, Australia's first Professor of Poetry and the Literary Editor of *Quadrant* enthuses, "Marilyn Peck has a true poet's eye for incisive commentary on life's tragicomedy with her distinctiveness and engaging personal focus."

Peck's creative output has been prodigious. She has developed an international reputation as a significant miniaturist, winning awards both overseas and in Australia. Her artwork is represented in the Gold Coast City Gallery and Tasmania's Burnie Regional Art Gallery collections as well as the Smithsonian in Washington DC. From 2011 her poetry has been selected for publication in the highly respected *Quadrant* Literary and Cultural Journal with published books being acquired by the National Library of Australia and Queensland's State Library. Peck's contribution in fostering inspiration and creativity in others is equally impressive. She was a founding member of the Australian Society of Miniature Art in NSW, 1986 and was Foundation President of that body in Queensland, 1988.