

JWF Artwork Biography

Short Version 2024

1.0 Early Years; 1944 to 1961.

1.1 Beginnings

From an early age, I was interested in drawing, mostly comics, due to an Uncle, whose interest was principally Disney cartoon characters!. None of my earliest endeavours have survived, but by age 6 my mother entered some in Children's Art Shows and won various awards, certificates of which were proudly held and remain in safe custody.

1.2 Primary School; 1950 -1956

At primary school I was very active in sport, but more significant was a friend Michael Cashman; whose "artistic" household was full of Art books, easels and paintings, including recent works by William Dobell, a family friend from Wangi!..... More significant however ?....., was being given a copy of the US "Art News Annual 1951". For my oldest surviving artwork, a small 1956 sketch of my blind uncle Richard, I suspect it was inspired by this 1951 Journal..

1.3 The impact of one Art Magazine:

Being given a copy of this Art Magazine at age 12, was an exposure to the extraordinary diversity and sophistication of the visual arts, in a way that I could never have imagined, or accessed otherwise. I still have my copy, including the three expert articles on Goya, Toulouse Lautrec and Abstract Art, and exceptional quality colour plates for that time.

1.4 High School; 1956 -1961

At high school until 1961, I was distracted by sport and athletic activities, but finally managed to do well in Technical Drawing, English, French etc and late in 1960 revisited sketching and for the first time.... oil painting.

Two oil portraits of US musician Miles Davis and one of an unknown Namibian native were made, plus sketch portraits of French Artist Toulouse Lautrec. The Namibian and Lautrec portraits, all won first prize in both the "Novice Class" Sketch and Oil Painting categories at to the 1961 Newcastle A.H & I Association annual exhibition.....!

Unfortunately, the Lautrec sketch portraits and Miles Davis oils were lost while we were overseas from 1969-73, but the 1960 Namibian Oil portrait survived, has been restored and 60+ years later hangs in our house, along with the 1956 sketch of my uncle.

2.0 University & Post Graduate Years; 1961 to 1972.

2.1 Undergraduate Architecture. 1961 to 1968

Towards the end of final year at high school, I slowly realised that Architecture seemed the profession closest to my interests and skills and that final High School results were sufficient to obtain entry to the B.Arch course at Newcastle University

Architectural drawing was the foundation, along with structural mechanics, of any architectural degree then and I loved the opportunity to explore architectural history visually rather than in text.!

To expedite completion of my B.Arch degree, and aided by significant family support, I transferred to full time study and graduated in March 1968 with first class honours, University Medal and NSW Board of Architects Prize.

2.2 Postgraduate Research 1969 to 72

In the final years of my degree, I became fascinated with the vagaries of architectural and visual art aesthetics and the challenges for anyone entering creative design professions. At that time research in Environmental Psychology was expanding into visual art, architecture and urban design, centred mainly in the UCLA and Rutgers Universities in the US and Strathclyde University in Scotland.

Based on this, post graduate research applications were made to both Rutgers and Strathclyde, to pursue research in Environmental Psychology applications for Architectural and Environmental Design. Fortunately, both applications were successful, resulting firstly in a Fulbright Scholarship to the US and also a British Council Travel Scholarship to the UK. The latter was accepted, due to various practical issues in the US, but a more positive response in Scotland, with proximity to the historical and architectural wonders of Europe.

After a year of eager research, it was clear that any breakthrough in environmental psychology was decades away and a transfer was agreed to the MSc. program in Town and Regional Planning, which I completed in 1972, with a Thesis based on "The Future of Sydney 2020"

The MSc programme provided unique access to historical, urban design and international conference opportunities in Europe, including inner city renewal projects in Paris, Berlin, Hanover and Athens. The greatest prize was direct access to early modernist architecture, from Loos and the Austrian secessionists, to the Bauhaus, Gropius, Corbusier etc and more recent Italians Rossi, Scarpa, Botta etc., Such opportunities resulted in annual summer excursions through western Europe, principally Germany, France, Spain and Italy.

The European excursion ended with an irrefusable Whitlam "New Cities "programme offer, as an Architect and Urban Planner with the National Capital Development Commission(NCDC) in Canberra, including return sea travel and initial accommodation costs!.

3.0 Professional Architectural Work 1972 to 1977

Professional employment over this period with the NCDC in Canberra and later as an Associate with Yunken Freeman Architects in Melbourne, significantly limited opportunities for private artwork, apart from occasional family portraits, sketches and watercolours..

4.0 Private Practice 1977 to 2013.

Work as a Design Director in Lester Firth associates 1977 to 2013, further limited the opportunities for independent artwork, despite intermittent overseas travel every two years or so, , resulting in a limited number of works, largely related to family portraits and occasional sketches.

5.0 Professional Retirement in 2013.

5.1 Retirement.

Professional retirement in 2013 was based on several key factors which in order were.

- a. A strong desire to return to my enduring fascination with the visual arts.
- b. For Dianne to extend her interests in textiles, cultural facilities, music & student support.

- c. Confidence that family circumstances and funding were more than adequate.
- d. Increasing frustration with ACT public Development & Building Control procedures.
- e. A desire to increase overseas travel, particularly to Europe in early Summer.
- f. The fact that key family member and friends already lived in Berlin, Paris, Aix en

Provence etc.

Since retirement in 2013, all key retirement objectives have been met, allowing a major reengagement in the arts, successful post retirement arrangements and increased overseas travel. In the previous decade, OS travel was hindered by project and business constraints, resulting in two and five year breaks. After retirement, 6 annual trips were completed from 2014 to 2019, but ceased abruptly with Covid in early 2020, requiring agonising cancellation of all pre booked European travel arrangements.

5.2 Post Retirement Artwork 2013-2024

The 2017 and 2024 Alliance Exhibitions are largely based on works since retirement in 2013, with a few previous exceptions. More recent works created since the Covid 19 disruption have been based "in absentia" on extensive photographic records, plus invaluable Google "Street Views", exposing details of what was behind that parked truck, or the view from the other side of the square in different lighting conditions .etc..

En peinture veritable

JWF