



LISA ADAMS

40 YEARS  1974-2014

*A voice in me was whispering, 'Take me with you,  
into that other world where you are going...'*

from *Cara* by Jena Woodhouse

(Mascara Literary Review, <http://mascarareview.com/jena-woodhouse/>)

IF OUR LIVES UNDERGO A DRAMATIC SHIFT when we are at an impressionable age, do we stay suspended, searching for the reality of what we lost? Or do we grow toward the promise of the future? It is my sense that there is a personal projection in the paintings of Lisa Adams – and most of the solitary figures in these works are identifiably autobiographical. Her approach, work habit and the imaginary dreamscape scenarios she creates, describe the elemental journey of an individual.

In *Gravity* (2012), apples rain down from a tree under a portentously dark sky within an otherwise unremarkable landscape. This painstakingly realist image speaks to Isaac Newton's discovery, a feast of fruit celebrating the 'Aha!' moment, evoking the sensory overload that accompanies significant breakthroughs. However, the apple may be equally a signifier of the loss of innocence, with the rider that, no matter the achievement, the internally driven work must continue apace. *Sharpshooter* (2013) sees the young woman patrolling her back, the employment of a mirror, unerring precision and detail to render the

impossible (unsighted shot) possible. *Slow* (2013) sees her dwarfed by, yet pushing, a giant snail toward the troubled weather of a blackened sky, with persistence and determination non-negotiable. The snail's spiral shell is a symbolic reference to evolution, to the necessity of progression that notes that the alternative is almost inevitably stagnation.

These images are crafted slowly, meditatively, with attention to the smallest detail to render their improbable scenes impossibly real, drawing the viewer into their internal narrative. Their enigmas remain in our imagination, working away to unpack what it is that disturbs us and is central to their meaning. Lisa Adams' paintings have a literary sensibility, the kernel of their stories explored in a multiplicity of scenarios. They offer an escape similar to the narrative of fiction or film, and their ability to move us into their journey is testimony to their power.

Many of the paintings of recent years explore the gritty reality of the life of the painter – the necessity of persistence – and the long, slow hours that are required. A bout of painting-induced RSI in 2009 forced a fundamental review of Adams' practice, and a recommitment to both the means and method of her approach. She has learnt to pace herself, to rest when she begins to hurt, and to take enforced breaks from the repetitive tiny brushstrokes that have the potential to damage muscles and create significant pain. The alternative – a change of style or method – was untenable.

YOU ARE INVITED *to the* EXHIBITION OPENING  
*and* DRINKS *with the* ARTIST 6–8pm FRIDAY, 28th NOVEMBER 2014



cover: 3. *Sharpshooter* 2013  
OIL ON CANVAS 81.5 × 66.5 cm

above: 2. *Mirage* 2011  
OIL ON CANVAS 59.5 × 100.5 cm

Adams has a profile that belies her exhibiting history, necessarily tied to the time it takes to produce such detailed realist paintings. This exhibition is only her fourth commercial show after some twenty years of practice. Yet the potency of the paintings, and the darkness of the most recent work, speaks to personal and professional upheaval.

As an artist she is self-taught, but it is a vocation for Adams. She left her family home aged 17 and was without the support to invest in a formal art education, but continued to paint, learning what she needed along the way. “I felt compelled within myself. It was a need.”

“I write my ideas into a notebook, the same one since I started. Some ideas I had ten, fifteen years ago but a new idea may see them all click into place. I like to know that there is something to move on to. As I am working on one painting, the next one is unfolding in my head. Just to be able to work is the thing.”

Recent reconciliation with her father (from whom she had been estranged since her family split when she was six years old) has had its difficulties but been ultimately positive. “Another piece of the puzzle is back”, she suggested.

*Icebreaker* (2014) shows a white swan ploughing through the frozen water, white snowy skies above. While this may evoke recent climate science and change to the nature of the polar icecaps, it speaks fundamentally to the power of quiet persistence, with the gentle nature of the swan not to be denied. Adams suggested, “In my life journey, I feel like I’m always trying to push

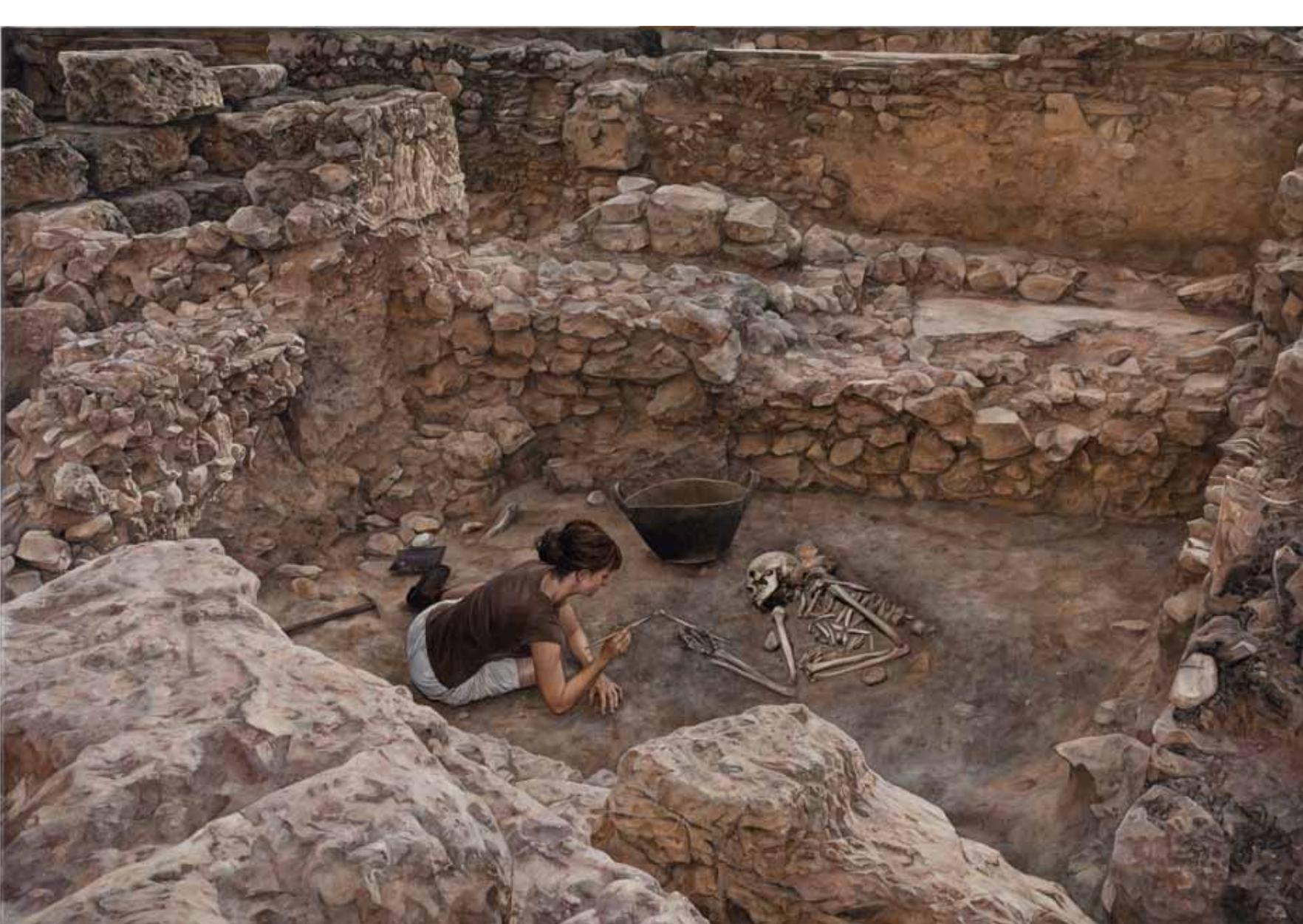
through. I can’t stand boredom, a focus on the everyday.” Similarly, *Heavy fog* (2014) may reflect the changes she has experienced in recent years – the peaceful dove is difficult to see in the whiteness of the fog, even as it seeks to be visible.

In *Dig* (2011) she lays out her ultimate challenge – sitting with a skeleton in an archaeological dig (another environment where slow, painstaking work is essential) and touching her brush to that of the skeleton. Her own history intersects with art history, and both are dealt with in the way she has always progressed – with paintbrush and canvas. “I’ve always lived a simple life, free of clutter. My whole life has been about image-making. I’ve needed space and time to think and little outside distraction.”

It is fitting that this final exhibition in Philip Bacon’s 40th anniversary year acknowledges an important painter with an unerring eye and an arsenal of narrative. Her paintings intersect with cultural tradition in her own way, allowing individuality and vision to prevail. She suggested, “I feel like my practice has ripened – everything I do I want to be my best. I do paint my dark side, but I am exactly where I want to be. I want the best shot at this [painting] existence.”

Louise Martin-Chew, October 2014

opposite: 1. *Dig* 2011  
OIL ON CANVAS 68 × 100.5 cm







5. *Heavy fog* 2014  
OIL ON CANVAS 84.5 × 63.5 cm





6. *Avalanche* 2010  
OIL ON CANVAS 59.5 × 80.5 cm





7. *On the scent* 2011  
OIL ON CANVAS 54 × 87 cm









II. *Gravity* 2012  
OIL ON CANVAS 52.5 × 75.5 cm



17. *Sharpshooter (Study)* 2013  
OIL ON CANVAS 55 × 30 CM



IC. *Icebreaker* 2014  
OIL ON CANVAS 49.5 × 83.5 cm

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

- 1969 Born Adelaide, South Australia. Lives in Cooroy, Queensland
- 2003 Art history/contemporary art study tour through Western Europe  
Teacher-painting, 'ONSITE' project for marginalised/disabled youth
- 2002 Teacher-painting, Support Services, Noosa District State High School
- 1998-05 Teacher-painting, Community Initiative Team, Queensland Adult Mental Health
- 2010-11 Teacher-painting, Mental Health Unit, Nambour Hospital

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2014 Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane
- 2009 Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane
- 2004 Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane
- 2000 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
- 1998 Noosa Regional Gallery
- 1994 Noosa Fine Art Gallery

**SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2013 *The Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize* (finalist), South Australian Museum
- 2012 *Animal/Human*, UQ Art Museum
- 2010 *2010 Selected Recent Acquisitions*, UQ Art Museum
- 2008 *Contemporary Australia: Optimism*, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art  
*Tattersall's Club Landscape Art Prize*, (winner), Brisbane
- 2004 *Flesh*, works from the Alex Mackay Collection of Erotic Art, toured by Noosa Regional Gallery
- 2003 *People and Places*, Redland Art Gallery  
*Central Queensland Art Purchase*, Rockhampton Art Gallery  
*Sex and Sexuality*, Noosa Regional Gallery

- Heat*, Noosa Regional Gallery
- 2001 *Ready, set...go!* Global Arts Link, Queensland  
*Conrad Jupiters Art Prize*, (finalist), Gold Coast City Art Gallery
- 2000 *Skin Deep*, Pataka Art + Museum, Porirua, New Zealand  
Cooloolo Shire Public Gallery  
Noosa Regional Gallery
- 1998 *Conrad Jupiters Art Prize*, (finalist), Gold Coast City Art Gallery  
*Luscious*, Cooloolo Shire Public Gallery
- 1995 *Direct Sun*, Noosa Regional Gallery
- 1994 *Breton's Beach*, Noosa Regional Gallery
- 1991 *One*, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne  
*10th Anniversary*, Noosa Regional Gallery  
*The Surreal Mind*, Noosa Regional Gallery
- 1989 *Selected Survey*, Noosa Regional Gallery

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- 2014 Cover artwork, *Dreams of Flight* by Jena Woodhouse
- 2012 Louise Martin-Chew, 'Lisa Adams and Her Mysterious Muse', *Australian Art Review*, issue 33 May-June
- 2011 'Best & Brightest', *Q Weekend*, *The Courier Mail*, Nov
- 2010 Artwork, *Australian Women's Book Review e-journal*, Volume 22.1
- 2009 Louise Martin-Chew, 'Artist has a brush with magic' *The Courier-Mail*, Oct  
Ingrid Periz, 'Lisa Adams: Outside In' *Australian Art Collector*, issue 48
- 2008 Francis E Parker, *Contemporary Australia: Optimism*, exhibition catalogue
- 2004 Painting 'Maze' featured in Bernard Fanning video for track '*Songbird*'

- Alison Kubler, '*Lisa Adams: Paintings*', exhibition catalogue  
Sandra McLean, 'Different Destination', *The Courier-Mail*, Oct.8
- 2003 Louise Martin-Chew, 'The Artists', *Artlink*, Volume 23 No 2
- 2002 Artwork, Douglas Heck and Burrell Calendar
- 2000 Louise Martin-Chew, 'Obscured as much as revealed', *The Australian*, Aug. 11
- 1999 Rex Butler, '*Lisa Adams: Paintings*', exhibition catalogue
- 1998 Sally Price, 'Double Take', *Noosa Blue*, Spring Edition  
Lynne Seear, '*Fantastical realism and the big questions-paintings by Lisa Adams*', exhibition catalogue
- 1996 Cover image, *Artworker*, Spring Edition
- 1994 Renay Bone, 'Generation X', *Noosa Blue*, Summer Edition  
Cover image, *Boardwalk*, Summer Edition  
Francis Flynn, 'The life dreams of painter Lisa Adams' *Boardwalk*, Summer Edition

**AWARDS AND GRANTS**

- 2008 Winner, *Tattersall's Club Landscape Art Prize*
- 2006 Shortlisted, 'RIPE' *Art and Australia and ANZ Bank Contemporary Art Award*
- 1997 Regional Arts Development Fund, Project Grant

**COLLECTIONS**

- Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art  
UQ Art Museum, Brisbane  
QUT Art Museum, Brisbane  
Noosa Council  
Rockhampton Art Gallery  
Tattersall's Club, Brisbane  
Jeffrey Archer Collection, London



15. *Full moon 2012*  
OIL ON CANVAS 39.5 × 63.5 cm



14. *Wind shift* 2013  
OIL ON CANVAS 30.5 x 100.5 cm



40 YEARS 1974-2014

## PHILIP BACON GALLERIES

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EXHIBITION CURRENT: 25 NOVEMBER TO 20 DECEMBER, 2014