

MARY VAN DEN BERK

BIOGRAPHY

Master of Art, COFA, UNSW; PhD, UNSW; BSW (Hons), Massey

I am an artist based in Sydney's Northern Beaches. I work mostly with painting, mixed-media canvases, and sculpture. My art explores concepts within the broad themes of people, place, and narrative. I bring depth and nuance to these themes from my former careers in social work, human genetics, and academic research. I am especially passionate about our environment, and ensuring we develop sustainable and just relationships within it.

In addition to my own artwork, I create a form of commemorative art for other that I call Tribute-Art. This work-form celebrates individuals' lives and creates permanent legacies for close friends and family members to find comfort in. My skills in art and social work complement and strengthen each other in this work. Moreover, I enjoy teaching and collaborating with others in my own art classes, which I host for both community groups and individuals. My classes offer a broad range of directions, from helping others create their own Tribute-Art, to more general art classes, such as my sessions with seniors at Coast Seniors Centre in Little Bay, NSW, and my assistance at CanTeen camps, at which I run workshops at their annual "Good Grief" camp.

I graduated my Master of Art in painting at COFA, UNSW in 2010. Before this, I took classes at Kuringai Arts Centre, at Waverley Woollahra Art Centre, and at the National Art School. I rekindled my childhood love of art in my late 30s, and resolved to dedicate myself to it. I was involved for many years in art volunteer work at "Lou's Place", a drop-in centre for women in crisis, at Kings Cross and the Art Therapy programme at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. Prior to my art career, my PhD concerned the efficacy of a Genetic Screening Programme for Fragile X Syndrome. I completed it in 1993 after deferral, during which I raised my three children.

After graduating with a BSW (Hons) from Massey University in 1981, I held numerous positions, including as a lecturer in the Department of Social Work at Monash University, as the Genetic Coordinator Counsellor for the Victorian Clinical Genetics Services, and as the Genetic Social Worker and Counsellor for the Fragile X Screening Programme at the Prince of Wales Children's Hospital in Randwick, NSW. In the early 1980s, I briefly joined Newham Social Services in east London, in the United Kingdom, and provided further residential relief work in various areas across the country.

I was born in Waipukurau, New Zealand, as the second of seven children. I have lived in Australia since 1985 together with my husband. We have three grown children.

EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 “Sea Worriers” exhibition & installation at Coast Seniors’ Centre
- 2020 “50 squared” at Brunswick Art Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne
- 2019 Participating artist in “Land” exhibition, Annandale Creative Arts Centre
- 2018 Finalist Meroogal Women’s art prize, Sydney Living museums
- 2017 Group exhibition “Washing” Coast Seniors Centre, Little Bay
- 2016 Tutors Exhibition, Coast Seniors Centre, Little Bay
- 2015 “Tribute-Art & Clay Connections”, solo show Bellevue Gallery;
- 2015 Group exhibition “Refugees”, Newtown Mission 2014. Selected in Blacktown City Art Prize, December 2014 – January 2015
- 2014 Participating artist 2014 in A4 for A4 Art Gallery, Sydney, 6-9 November
- 2014 Finalist in “Hidden-sculpture walk” Rookwood Cemetery
- 2014 Participating artist in ‘Boundless Plains: creative conversations with asylum seekers’, Annandale Creative Arts Centre
- 2014 Finalist International Women’s Day Art Prize 2014
- 2013 Finalist in “Mosman IN-situ” 2013
- 2013 Finalist in “Hidden-sculpture walk” Rookwood Cemetery
- 2013 Sydney Finalist in “Clifton’s Art Prize”
- 2013 Finalist in “Chippendale New World Art Prize”
- 2012 “Conversations” exhibition at Kaleidoscope Gallery, Waterloo
- 2012 “Plus One” Group exhibition at Art Est Gallery
- 2011 “Mashed Art” COFA group exhibition at Oxford Art Factory
- 2011 Solo exhibition: “Memories Revisited”, Yuga Gallery, Glebe; “The Wall”, World Bar, Kings Cross, NSW
- 2010 “Freedom Art Prize” group Exhibition at Tap Gallery, Sydney
- 2009 COFA Annual Art Show
- 2009 “Done and Dusted” – Post grad exhibition at COFA, UNSW
- 2005 “Art Centre Painters” exhibition, Tap Gallery, Sydney
- 2004, 2005 Waverly-Woollahra Art School Annual Art exhibition

GRANTS, SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 2015 Winner of Nava Soup Sessions pitching Tribute-Art
- 2011 ArtStart Grant, Australian Council for the Arts
- 2011 Presentation on “A Trans-disciplinary approach to Memorial Art” at inaugural “Death Down Under” Conference, Sydney University
- 1992 Turner, G; Robinson, H; Laing, S; van den Berk, M; Colley, A; Goddard, A; Sherman, S; Partington, M: ‘Population Screening for Fragile X’, *The Lancet*, May 16, vol. 339 pp. 1210–1213.
- 1991 Fook, J; Carew, R; Ryan, M; van den Berk, M: ‘A new direction in Social Work Education: Teaching by Distance (The Monash Experience)’, *Advances in Social Welfare Education*, pp. 169–180.
- 1990 van den Berk, M: ‘An Introduction to Genetic Counselling’ AASW, NSW Branch Newsletter, May (vol.2) pp.9–14.
- 1990 van den Berk, M: ‘Evaluation of BSW Courses provided internally and externally from Monash University Social Work Department’ April – internal report for use of Social Work Department and Faculty.
- 1989 van den Berk, M: ‘Effective Genetic Counselling – discussing client questions and concerns’, poster for Australasian Human Genetics Society Conference, July, Alice Springs, NT.
- 1988 van den Berk, M: ‘Comprehending and coping with genetic Information’, poster for Australasian Human Genetics Society Conference, May, Brisbane, Queensland.
- 1987 van den Berk, M: ‘Genetic Counselling and Social Work’, paper and presentation to Australian Association of Social Workers Bi-annual conference, September, Perth, WA.
Education and Employment History 2010 Master of Art (in Painting), UNSW, College of Fine Arts
- 1994 PhD, UNSW Thesis: “Screening for the Fragile-X Syndrome: effectiveness, consequences and a model for social work practice.” 1981 BSW (Hons) Massey University, New Zealand