

JAN MILNER: A SURVEY

MID-CAREER RETROSPECTIVE OF KATHERINE BASED ARTIST

Curated by Cath Bowdler

Exhibition runs

30 October – 11 December 2015

Godinymayin Yijard Rivers
Arts & Culture Centre



Jan Milner, *Burnt Country*, 2008, mixed media. Courtesy of Ward Keller Collection.



Jan Milner, *Kakadu in the Wet II*, 2010, mixed medium. Courtesy of John Leo.



Jan Milner, *Sitting Room with a Very High Ceiling*, 2006, oil and charcoal on canvas. Courtesy of Craig Lambert.

Jan Milner is one of Katherine's most well-known artists. She arrived in Katherine in 1981 with her husband Graham Cole after travelling around Australia. They bought a block outside the town as they were attracted to the rural lifestyle and living in the bush. Jan felt she had to reinvent herself in this new and different country. She learned how to ride horses and developed a passion for dressage, animals and painting. Inspired by the extraordinary natural environment, Jan and Graham have lived in Katherine for over 34 years.

Jan always drew from a young age but she was not just interested in representing objects. She was also interested in capturing the light and the atmosphere of what she was drawing. She attended Caulfield Technical College, Melbourne, initially studying advertising then moving to a Fine



Jan Milner, *Flower Study I*, 2008, mixed media.

Art degree majoring in painting (not completed). Jan continued her studies at Charles Darwin University and Curtin University.

Jan is moved by the ever-changing natural environment in the Top End of the NT: its moods and mystery; the subtle pastel colours; the harshness and the fragility. There are a number of recurring themes and subjects in Jan's work. The most obvious is the expressive representations of country around Katherine, Kakadu and Nitmiluk. Jan finds herself being amazed at how different the country can look in different lights and at different times of the year and the day. She aims to convey not just the landscape but also the sense of the people who have 'walked here before' over thousands of years.

Another theme is the pastoral industry. These works consist largely of paintings of friends on properties and depictions of the rural lifestyle. Jan attended camp drafts where Graham and other family members competed and represents these activities with a fresh and authentic vision. Aboriginal people and positive aspects of Indigenous life in Katherine, such as people playing and attending football matches,

are another recurring theme. Unfortunately these subjects are not well represented in the survey exhibition as the works were not available for loan. Other subjects include still lifes, portraits of Katherine identities, history and wildlife.

Jan uses a wide range of media including oil and acrylic paint, bitumen, collage, drawing, printmaking and mixed media. Her works often have layers of meaning, literally built up out

of materials, such as recycled artworks and objects from her studio.

Jan has exhibited widely in Katherine and Darwin as well as in numerous competitions. Jan says that she finds it 'humbling' to bear witness and paint this country and the Indigenous inhabitants and their culture. She will continue to paint the constantly changing NT landscape and is interested in exploring some new themes and inspirations in the future.



Jan Milner, *Futbol Study I*, 2013, acrylic on canvas.



Jan Milner, *Lilyponds*, unknown, mixed media. Courtesy of Nola Sweetman.



Jan Milner, *Fenton*, 2011. Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of Dr James Scattini.

Jan Cole and Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre would like to thank the many individuals and institutions in the Katherine community and beyond who generously loaned works for this exhibition.

Images credit: Sophie Rayner.



**Godinymayin Yijard Rivers
Arts & Culture Centre**

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