

Pip - Biography

The discovery of an Aboriginal midden in her family's backyard when she was five years old sparked artist Pip's enduring fascination with the marks humans leave behind. The human footprint is intrinsic to her work, governing her intellectual activity through school and university to her executive work with the National Trust.

Pip grew up in a house full of antiques and paintings by significant Australian artists. The young Pip often accompanied her father to exhibition openings and art studios. Amongst the artists that Pip met and admired as a child and young adult were John Olsen, John Brack, Lloyd Rees, Elisabeth Cummings, Lance Solomon, Charles Blackman and Euan McLeod. McLeod painted a portrait of Pip's father who requested another portrait of himself to be painted after he died. John Brack was commissioned by Pip's father to paint her mother Joan Croll. It was his first private commission and now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

Other early influential artists include William Robinson, Robert Dickerson, Ray Crooke, Rover Thomas, Emily Kngwarreye, Fred Williams, Arthur Boyd, Brett Whiteley, Johnny Mawundjil, Robert Klippel, James Gleeson, and Peter Schipperheyn.

After graduating from the University of Sydney in Archaeology, Pip forged a successful career as an archaeologist. She dug at a desert site in Bahrain for their Royal Family, before moving on to Australian digs in Aboriginal communities and sites. The artist says the marks of her own culture called her to the National Trust and historic sites.

"The landscape shapes our footprint. Our footprint shapes the landscape." says Pip.

Pip decided to focus her energy and experience fulltime into her own artistic expression. She explores this relationship with modern interiors and everyday objects. Her fascination with the everyday objects that humans collect for their practicality and comfort is expressed from unusual angles. Through colour and spatial arrangements, Pip explores how we interact with our world and our multi-dimensional lives. Just as archaeology brings surprise discoveries, Pip's objects are also found where they are not meant to be, drawing parallels with unexpected life events. Her landscapes burst through everyday objects, but it is the distant view that calms and brings perspective on life.

Pip begins a work by selecting a background. Her choice may be a single colour or layered colours sanded back so they come through one another, or brushed so the colour below shows through. Whilst an image may inspire her, Pip works primarily from her imagination rather than by copying from photos. She draws the elements of the painting first by hand and then marks the lines out with tape to ensure the edges are crisp. The lines are then taped and Pip paints the remainder of the surfaces that require more work. By working with layers of different colours and sanding back, she creates another colour. Starting with the overall concept, Pip then narrows down to the details such as landscapes or other items of furniture within items of furniture / rooms.

In describing her approach to her art, Pip says " There is a deliberate element of naivety - keeping the hand drawn nature of the lines as I feel this gives more life to the work - for example sometimes people describe my chairs as "having conversations" or reaching out towards the observer. I think this is because they are things we human beings have made, in a way I am anthropomorphising them - making them the human element in the painting, as we often see the things we have as reflecting the person we are. "

Pip's landscapes reflect her personal outlook: "The landscapes are partly there because I can't bear to be in a room where you can't see out - I also prefer to see out in more than one direction - so, multiple landscapes. We are so busy these days that it is easy to get so caught up in our lives and our aspirations that we forget to look out beyond ourselves and put

things into perspective. They are also a reminder that the landscape and human kind are inextricably linked, as are the past and the present.” Some of Pip’s landscapes seem quite barren and this is her comment on the impact humans have had. It also enables the artist to create greater depth of field, again reflecting her “need to look out.” Just as her father used to call her a "dreamer" when she stared into space thinking about something, so too, her landscapes give the viewer a chance to dream.

Pip credits David Milne’s Swan Street Studios as being an extremely important part of her development as an artist.

Meeting David Milne at his exhibition at Swan Street Studios had an immediate and profound impact on Pip. “I was blown away by his techniques and was at a point where I liked my ideas but not the way I was executing them. David asked to look at some of my paintings. All I had was a reproduction of one work in my Diary and tiny photos on my phone. He commented on my unusual colours and unique concepts. After about half an hour of being shown around the studio David invited me to come and work there. He said "I like what is going on in your head" and I said I would love to learn about his techniques. He suggested I think about it and I said I didn't need to and accepted the invitation immediately.”

Prior to meeting David Milne, Pip painted in oils. As her mentor, Milne taught her how to use acrylics, how to achieve a quality finish and how a different approach may be more efficient or have a different effect.

Explaining her passion for artistic expression, Pip says “I feel as if my art is a sort of primal thing - I have to do it and I get a real buzz from the composition, the uneven nature of the lines, the beauty of colours impacting upon one another, the fun in putting elements in unexpected places - just as unexpected and unplanned things happen in life.”

Pip’s work is variously described as semi abstract and symbolic, however she says that whilst her unusual juxtaposition of items is like surrealism, she does not paint anything realistically. “I think all art that is painted today is contemporary in the literal meaning of the word. There are landscapes within my paintings but at this stage they are not dominant.” says Pip. “In an overall sense the line is all important - the form of a line can have a huge impact on the observer. My lines make me feel good and I hope that feeling is something others get when looking at the work.”

Pip held numerous joint exhibition: from 2007 – 2010 at Canterbury Art, 2011 Art at Home, with artists from Melbourne Art Central, 2012 Clay in Motion, Fireworks at Bird’s Gallery, Kew, Melbourne. In 2012, she held her solo exhibition, The Human Footprint, Art at St Francis, Melbourne.