

VIKTORIA MARINOV

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(1933-1996)

3 June - 3 July 1999

Ivan Dougherty Gallery

The University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts

presented in association with

The Art Gallery of New South Wales





FOREWORD

Viktoria Marinov Bequest Fund, Art Gallery of New South Wales

The Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales are delighted to announce the establishment of the Viktoria Marinov Bequest Fund to purchase works for the permanent collection by female artists under the age of 35 years. This fund will provide great encouragement to younger women artists both through the purchase of their work for the Gallery and through having their work displayed in the permanent collection.

The first two works have been purchased this year; a large format photograph derived from a 'digiprint', *Psychotourism* 1996 by Patricia Piccinini and an oil on canvas, *Untitled* 1998 by Melinda Harper. Piccinini is one of the most promising young artists working with computer generated imagery; her work has been widely exhibited in Australia and is now beginning to receive overseas recognition, most notably at the prestigious NTT Inter-communication Centre in Tokyo in April this year. Harper is one of a few young Melbourne artists who have been exploring the continued relevance of abstraction in recent art. Both works are very welcome additions to the Gallery's collection.

Edmund Capon, Director
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Viktoria Marinov Scholarship in Art, UNSW College of Fine Arts

Of course, it was with real regret that the College learnt of Viktoria Marinov's premature death in 1996. Viktoria became a student of the Alexander Mackie College (now

the College of Fine Arts at UNSW) as a mature age student and graduated with a BA in Visual Arts in 1983 and then a Graduate Diploma in Professional Art Studies one year later. Although she had a background as a designer with particular interests in architecture and the role gardens play within suburban houses, her art courses encouraged her to focus on the visual arts. She participated in many group exhibitions, including some held at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery. She regarded as a significant point in her career being selected and hung for the Dobell Prize.

She taught part time from the completion of her studies until 1992-93 when she became too ill to continue. Viktoria had strong links with the feminist movement and Nicholas Marinov reports that: "In her youth she was part of that well-known group of young feminists that included Germaine Greer, Margaret Fink and Lillian Roxon. She felt that women artists were often excluded from the male dominated art scene and wanted very much to support them. When she made her will she decided to leave her estate divided between the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the College of Fine Arts at UNSW to support young women artists under 35 years of age".

For COFA, the bequest has meant that a sum of \$200,000 now exists as a base from which scholarships monies can be drawn. It is a delight to know that the benefit of this bequest will be appreciated by younger women for generations to come and importantly that Viktoria's strong and influential relationship with the College will remain in perpetuity.

Ian Howard, Dean
College of Fine Arts
The University of New South Wales

INTRODUCTION

Viktoria Marinov's work in this exhibition covers the period between 1980 and 1995 and reveals all the influences that shaped her formative and thereafter mature work. She studied at what was then Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education from 1980 to 1982 and during that time met many of the Sydney artists who taught there and also became very familiar with other artists of their generation whose work is characteristic of Sydney painting of the past three decades.

The visual language she adopted was based on painting styles that date back to the sixties in Sydney. There is often a reference to the harbour and the landscape reduced through painterly styles such as that developed by John Firth-Smith. Firth-Smith in turn exhibits the legacy of local painting in early Brett Whiteley collage and abstraction and that of John Passmore and Godfrey Miller. The shadow of Lloyd Rees also informs the images of Firth-Smith, giving the ideas a longer regional lineage.

The shift between abstraction and recognisable imagery is a post cubist aspect of Australian art that is most identifiable with the views of Sydney harbour. Other influences of this kind are Ann Thomson and Kevin Connor. Syd Ball and Alun Leach-Jones also taught Viktoria Marinov, the former's influence being more recognisable than the latter's. Another remarkable artist whose work she obviously admired was Ian Fairweather and his presence is keenly felt in some of her work.

It may so far appear that Viktoria Marinov's work never threw off the mantles of her elders and supposed betters, but this exhibition reveals that this was not the case. She was of course a mature age student, commencing her studies when in her forties and her premature death in

1996 tragically cut short her years as a fully formed artist. However despite the limitations of her career she nonetheless produced some memorable drawings and paintings.

The series of life drawings are distinguished by their liveliness and sensual line and lack of any unnecessary embellishment; they capture the living essence of the model in a natural and most sensitively observed manner. The early paintings, inevitably, reveal many of those previously mentioned artists whose lives, teaching or work inspired her. But she did find her own language, having absorbed that of many others.

Viktoria Marinov's sure sense of colour and her ability to successfully choreograph a large painting brought to her subject matter an effervescence and clarity. The environs of Sydney and its harbour setting, as stated earlier, provided the inspiration and starting point for much of her best work. She was able to find original ways, that fell between figuration and abstraction, of bringing to life the astonishing variety of relationships that the harbour and its surrounds provides. She had a sufficiently informed eye to avoid any repetitions and the great range of changes of light and shifts of focus that these familiar subjects provided invariably resulted in her involving even the most accustomed Sydneysider with an unexpected and invigorating reward.

Marinov also worked successfully using, in the foreground, elements of a domestic setting, a kitchen for example, and juxtaposing it with the expanse of the harbour and its craft and a distant headland. She found cannily and painterly productive ways of settling this complexity into effective resolution. Her studies from a

journey to Vanuatu also resulted in some beautifully resolved depictions of boats and their hulls and their relationship to the surrounding space. These forms clearly resemble their origin, yet as in all her most accomplished works, they touch on a shape that is universal and consequently are able to convey an essence that transcends the subject and its representation.

Viktoria Marinov also created imaginative and imaginary hybrid figures as in *Frog People I* and *II*. She understood as well the relationship between the earthbound and the mythical, as *Unfinished Goddess* boldly reveals. *Blue Eyed Child with Horned God* approaches the subject from a mythological base and provides a further example of this strange energetic imagination.

This exhibition is a microcosm of some of the most particular local influences in painting and in particular it has to be seen in the context of the old National Art School, what was then Alexander Mackie CAE and City Art Institute (now UNSW College of Fine Arts), and the contribution these institutions have made to decades of artistic production in New South Wales.

Most important of all though is the careful and effective distillation that resulted in Viktoria Marinov creating such a body of lively, sensitive and imaginative work. The presence of her creative spirit will remain with us and the generosity of her investment in the training of other younger women as artists will continue the memory of her vision.

Anthony Bond Art Gallery of NSW
Nick Waterlow OAM, UNSW College of Fine Arts
Sydney, May 1999



Blue Eyed Child with Horned God 1985

On the 5th March 1996, Viktoria Marinov died. She left behind a wealth of memories, a wonderful body of work and a wistful wanting in the hearts of those who loved her. Viktoria was a diligent, searching, brave yet fragile being who dedicated the last two decades of her life to the exploration and pursuit of her artistic gift. Her work is a blessing, her memory an honour to hold.

Viktoria met her husband, architect Nicholas Marinov in Montreal, Canada in the mid sixties. Accompanying Nicholas to Egypt a few years later, Viktoria met and was inspired by the great architectural master Hassan Fathy who saw a special quality in Viktoria. He saw her creative potential. It was Hassan Fathy who taught Viktoria how to see, gave her spirit permission to draw and stirred within her the disquiet of artistic endeavour. It was more than a decade later Viktoria began her life as an artist.

I met Viktoria Marinov in 1980, when we were students together at Alexander Mackie School of Art (now UNSW College of Fine Arts). I loved her immediately and found in her a profound integrity coupled with a passionate hunger for art and its world.

As a mature age student Viktoria understood well the pressure and preciousness of the limited time we were allocated in which to assimilate and graduate into "artistic beings". She did not suffer fools gladly nor tolerate her time being wasted, and could be scathing and acerbic in response to unwanted interruption.

A delightful memory I have is of visiting her in her postgraduate studio on the Flinders Street campus. She had walled herself in with large canvases on easels and when she appeared from within her fortress, scarf tied

hard around her head, her tatty old grey jumper on, brush in hand, she looked and was in her element. I noticed a small badge pinned to her jumper and as I got closer to her I could just make out in very tiny type, the two words... piss off. She looked at me and said in her hybrid and imperious accent (born more from intention than specific region), "yes Merrilee, that's right, they can all piss off".

Viktoria knew her time was precious and fought for it every moment. From those student days in the early 80s until her death, Viktoria's work developed at a great pace. She formed strong relationships with her peers and some of her lecturers, among them Kevin Connor, Paul Atroshenko, John Firth Smith and Alun Leach Jones, who remembers Viktoria both as student and neighbour...

I first met Viktoria when she was a student at the College of Fine Arts, studying in 1980 to 1982. She was always a lively and energetic student in the painting classes that I conducted. What was attractive about her was her restless questioning about whatever she was working on at the time. This did not always lead to easy dialogue but it did lead to an expression of her ideas that was always valuable in terms of her finished work. I have always thought that this made her an unusually attentive, serious and valuable student in any painting class. I liked her for her dedication, disputatious character and seriousness of mind.

In later years I renewed her acquaintance when she became a neighbour, living just a couple of doors away. She was still lively,

still painting and it was always pleasant to chat with her. Rather wonderfully she took on the responsibility of replanting trees in a small park at the end of our street, a park which we had all tried to make flourish - she succeeded with her "green fingers" where we had all failed. I often think of her when I walk through this small but now green park. There is now a small plague there, placed by her husband to her memory - the plague reads: Viktoria's Knoll.

Alun Leach Jones

Paul Atroshenko remembers Viktoria particularly for her phone calls. A frequently published "letters to the editor" writer, Paul would find as soon as his latest opinion appeared in print, he would receive a highly abusive phone call from Viktoria damning his views. And before he had a chance to utter a response of any kind, down would slam the receiver. "I never ever found her offensive, her passion was so pure and so honourable, it was almost flattering in a way".

From art school Viktoria continued her studio practice and also became a lecturer herself, teaching drawing at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre and Sydney College of the Arts. In the late eighties she was invited to Vanuatu as artist in residence at Gallery Michoutouchkine. The paintings and drawings produced from and during this time mark the beginning of Viktoria's great work. It was not much later, in the Christmas of 1990, that Viktoria was first diagnosed with cancer. Her artistic development over the next six years was often thwarted and interrupted by her illness, treatments, celebrated "all clears" and her

final devastating diagnosis in 1995. Sadly, the little badge from her postgraduate studio days couldn't scare away this time devouring monster.

It was in 1994, during an "all clear", Viktoria came to share our studio in Surry Hills. Her first action was to instruct Nicholas to design and build a fortress (which he duly did) for her to paint in. She used to wire the door closed every evening to keep the rest of us out, but it wasn't long before Lucy, Scott, Herb and I were unwinding it open to have a peek...

In the short period of sharing a studio space with Viktoria Marinov I had the great pleasure of meeting a confident, brave and adventurous woman. In her walled in space she would work for hours. Several times I just had to see what she was creating - on entering her studio I found a world of rich ochre, abstracted subjects, textures overlapping and contradicting movement.

Her bold investigations, strength and creativity will always inspire me.

Herb Robertson

Viktoria's paintings were like her, in her directness and being so confronting in her life. She is reflected in her work, very bold with many layers with different meanings, many stories in one painting.

Like in life there were often many agendas. But (truly only one) a lot of armour to protect

oneself. But if you look closely you see everything. You see many colours, truths, the first impact (vision), then look deeper, slowly you discover the essence. Be open.

Scott Petrie

Viktoria Marinov:
The Keeper of the Sacred Pearl

Viktoria Marinov kept a deep blue, shiny, smooth, iridescent, beautiful, priceless, luminous, cool, weightless, magic, mysterious, divine, magnificent pearl in her pocket. At all times during the night she would place her hand on it to remember it was there. She did this for a long time, mainly when she was a small child. In fact I seem to remember that she told me she used to play with it, like it was a weightless ball full of light.

As time moved on she told me that slowly she grew up, that's what she told me, one day quite silently she realised it was lost. She became very sad and wanted to find it again because after all she felt so happy when she was a small child. Maybe if she could be like that again, she would begin to look for it. She did look and she did find it and she painted it, for herself and for us to enjoy too.

Lucy Donnellan



Unfinished Goddess 1987

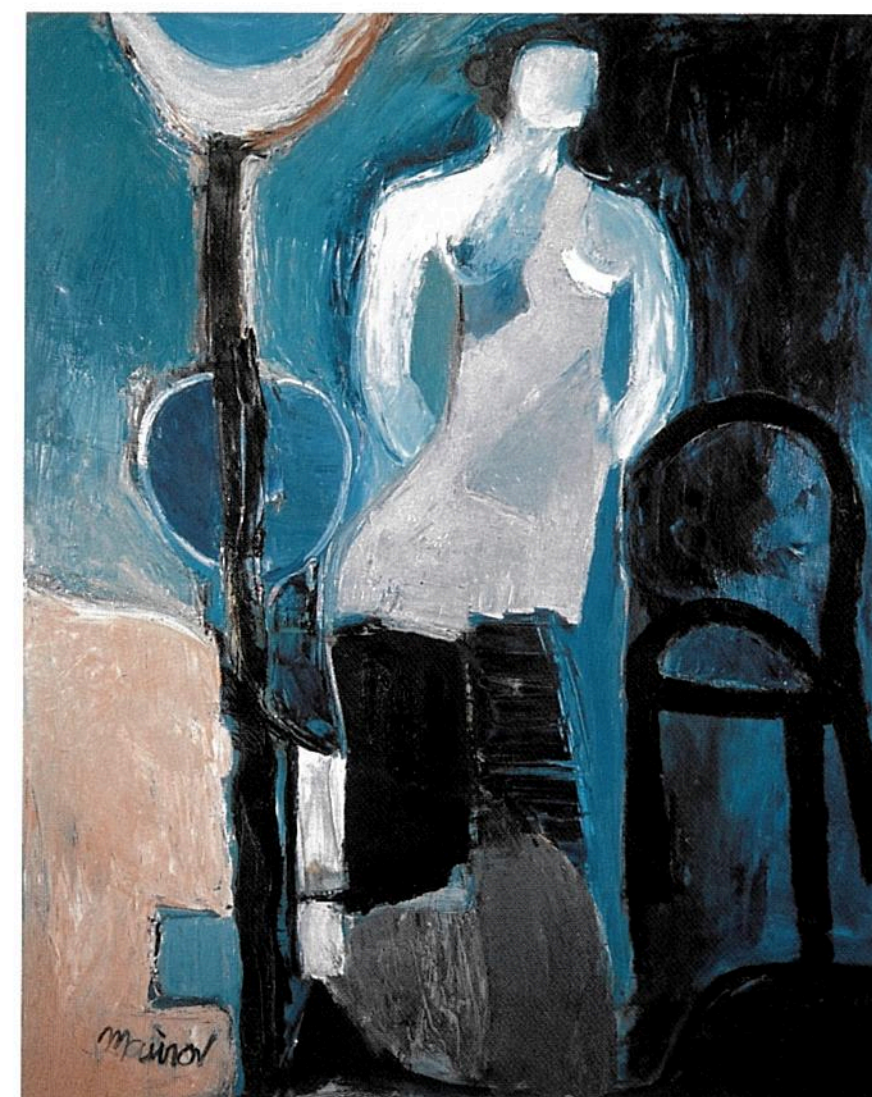
Viktoria's bequest to the Art Gallery of NSW and the UNSW College of Fine Art is a magnificent final gesture, and to me, her final portrait — noble, generous and profound.

Viktoria Marinov was a great woman, a marvellous friend and a bloody good painter. I miss her spirit and her song.

Viktoria was just, determined, rational, also lyrical, emotional and vulnerable, a believer in the strength of womanhood and in her own strength.

Throughout her life she longed to paint. However she was unable to pursue this longing until later in her life. Untimely death halted the blossoming of her talent.

Nicholas Marinov



Union Street Blues 1987



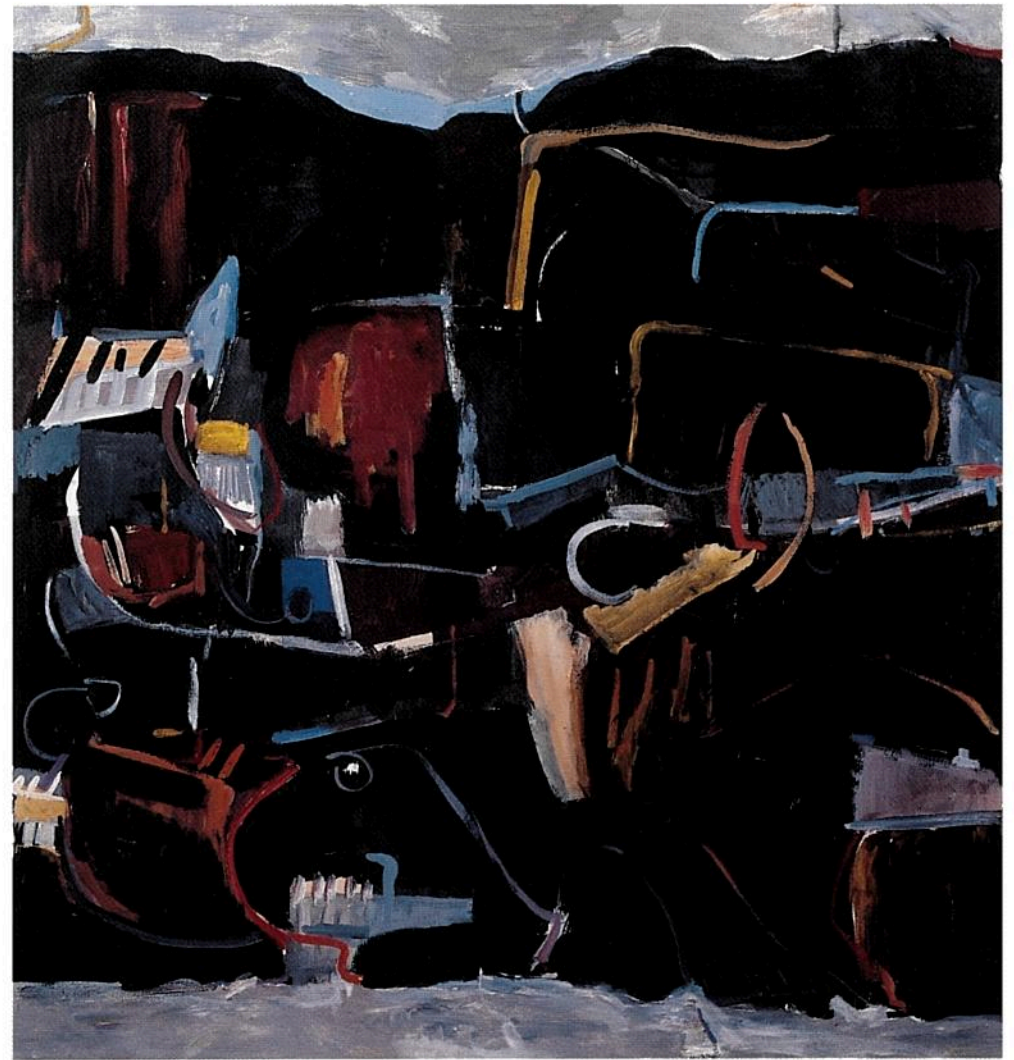
Dreaming in the Desert 1988



Vanuatu Study 1 1989



Sydney Foreshore 1994-95



Nightshore 1994



Kitchen Foreshore 1994-95



Blindfold 1994-95



Foreshore Study 1994-95



Harbour Study III 1994-95



LIST OF WORKS

Untitled 1980
ink pen on paper
51 x 37.2 cm

Untitled 1980
ink pen on paper
51 x 37.2 cm

Untitled 1980
51 x 37.2 cm
ink pen on paper

Untitled 1980
oil pastel on paper
56.5 x 38.3 cm

Untitled 1980
charcoal on paper
56.5 x 38.3 cm

Untitled c.1981-82
woodblock print
26 x 30.5 cm

The Wide Air 1983
oil and mixed media on
canvas
136.5 x 182.5 cm

Metamorphosis 1984
pastel on paper (triptych)
each 74 x 50 cm

Pull 1985
oil and mixed media on
canvas
118.7 x 98.5 cm

Equal Chance c.1985
oil and mixed media on
canvas
118.7 x 108 cm

Frog People I 1985
oil and mixed media on
canvas
76.5 x 102 cm

Frog People II 1985
oil and mixed media on
canvas
76.5 x 106.5 cm

Union Street Blues 1987
oil and mixed media on
canvas
152.5 x 121.6 cm

Happy Families I 1987
oil on paper
113 x 79.3 cm

Happy Families II 1987
oil on paper
113 x 82 cm

Unfinished Goddess 1987
oil and ink on paper
103 x 100 cm

Woman Mourning 1987
oil and mixed media on
canvas
76.7 x 59 cm

Dreaming in the Desert
1988
oil and mixed media on
canvas
101.5 x 101.5 cm

Vanuatu Study I 1989
oil and mixed media on
canvas
40.6 x 51 cm

Vanuatu Study II 1989
oil on paper
57 x 60 cm

Vanuatu Study III 1989
oil on paper
69.5 x 65 cm

Vanuatu Study IV 1989
oil on paper
70 x 64.5 cm

Untitled c.1989
watercolour and charcoal
38 x 55.7 cm

Trading on the Harbour I 1990
oil and mixed media on canvas
70.5 x 78.5 cm

Trading on the Harbour II 1990
oil and mixed media on canvas
70.5 x 78.5 cm

Landscape with Green Sky 1991
oil on paper, mounted on
canvas
71 x 66.5 cm

Cliff Face 1992
oil on board
45.5 x 38 cm

Ancrum Street Knoll 1993-94
oil and mixed media on canvas
91 x 91 cm

Night Shore 1994
oil on paper
97.5 x 92 cm
exhibited: Dobell Prize,
AGNSW, 1994
private collection, Sydney

Sketch of Darling Harbour
c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on board
88 x 98 cm

Harbour Study I c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on board
68 x 65 cm

Harbour Study II c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
board
68 x 65 cm

Harbour Study III c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
paper, mounted on canvas
71 x 66.8 cm

Blindfold c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
canvas
152 x 183 cm

Foreshore Study c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
canvas
125 x 200 cm

Kitchen Foreshore c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
canvas
125 x 200 cm

Sydney Foreshore c.1994-95
oil and mixed media on
canvas
125 x 200 cm

Untitled c.1994-95
ink and mixed media on
paper
59 x 85 cm

Radioactive 1995
oil and mixed media on
canvas
122.5 x 152 cm

All works are courtesy of
Dr Nicholas Marinov,
unless otherwise specified
Measurements are recorded height
before width

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, UNSW College of Fine Arts and The Art Gallery of New South Wales would like to sincerely thank Dr Nicholas Marinov, Merrilee Fleeting and Sally O'Neal for their generous time and assistance given in the preparation and presentation of this exhibition.

Ivan Dougherty Gallery

Director: Nick Waterlow OAM
Acting Director: Felicity Fenner
Curator: Jennifer Hardy
Admin. assistant: Yvonne Donaldson

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