



## **Maunsell Wickes**

### **Gallery Paddington**

Lotje Meijer is an artist who grew up in the Netherlands. Meijer's talent became obvious early and by the age of 12 she was receiving private tuition from Dutch painter Jan Brugge. In Europe, Brugge is respected as an influential Modernist whose long career shows a clear path from figurative to abstract art.

Later Meijer studied in the city of Groningen at the Academy of Arts Minerva: bastion of the Dutch Northern Realist painters since the mid twentieth century. There, her most influential teachers were Diederik Kraaijpoel and Leo Schatz. Kraaijpoel is an important Dutch painter, sculptor and writer who is well known in Europe for his outspoken advocacy of figurative art. Schatz is also highly significant in Dutch art history: he was one of the last surviving members of Cobra, a movement that revolutionized modern art in Northern Europe, promoting the value of experimentation and freedom of expression.

As an adult, Meijer migrated to Australia. Australia is fascinating and inspiring and Meijer loves it. She is totally engaged with her new life and its artistic possibilities. One of Meijer's early works in Australia: "Looking for the stitches", features the Platypus. This extraordinary animal had first captured her imagination as a child growing up on the other side of the world. Over time, Meijer's hundreds of studies of the Platypus at wildlife zoos and aquariums have informed a large series of drawings and paintings, some of which are represented here.

Meijer's ties to Holland are still strong. The exploration of this tension within herself has become an abiding theme in some of her work: the concept of homeland and the sense of being pulled between two loves, two lands. The perspective of the immigrant resonates in a multicultural country like Australia, and provides a window into the nature of belonging for those who have never left home. Some of Meijer's paintings are surreal landscapes that describe belonging to two different worlds. Many tell a story - a narrative containing mystery and fantasy. The images hide secrets – perhaps a magnet, anchor, a compass, a fish (out of water). Other symbols are apparent on the picture plane, for the world to see. Yet, however loaded with meaning, her works are usually based in nature.

Meijer's European legacy – strength of technique, sensuous delivery of well-articulated observations and conceptually resolved imagery - continues to underpin her paintings and drawings. She has developed a very personal and distinctive textural method of building the

surface of her paintings with generous layers of oil pigment. Heavy impasto is laid down next to thin, delicate shapes. Flat elements serve to heighten the experience of the three dimensional. At times the viewer is invited to enter the picture by stepping through metaphorical portals. Exaggerated scale lends monumentality to paintings and drawings alike.



Lotje Meijer lives in the Blue Mountains, near Sydney, her studio surrounded by an extraordinary world heritage landscape. An environment rich with inspiration for this Dutch-born Australian artist. Unjaded by familiarity, she brings a unique perspective to its portrayal.

Meijer's gift to us is arresting and intellectually intriguing imagery forged by a master into objects of great beauty and enduring quality. They have the potential to offer something new with each viewing.

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Sandra Warner is an Australian art historian, archivist, curator, writer.