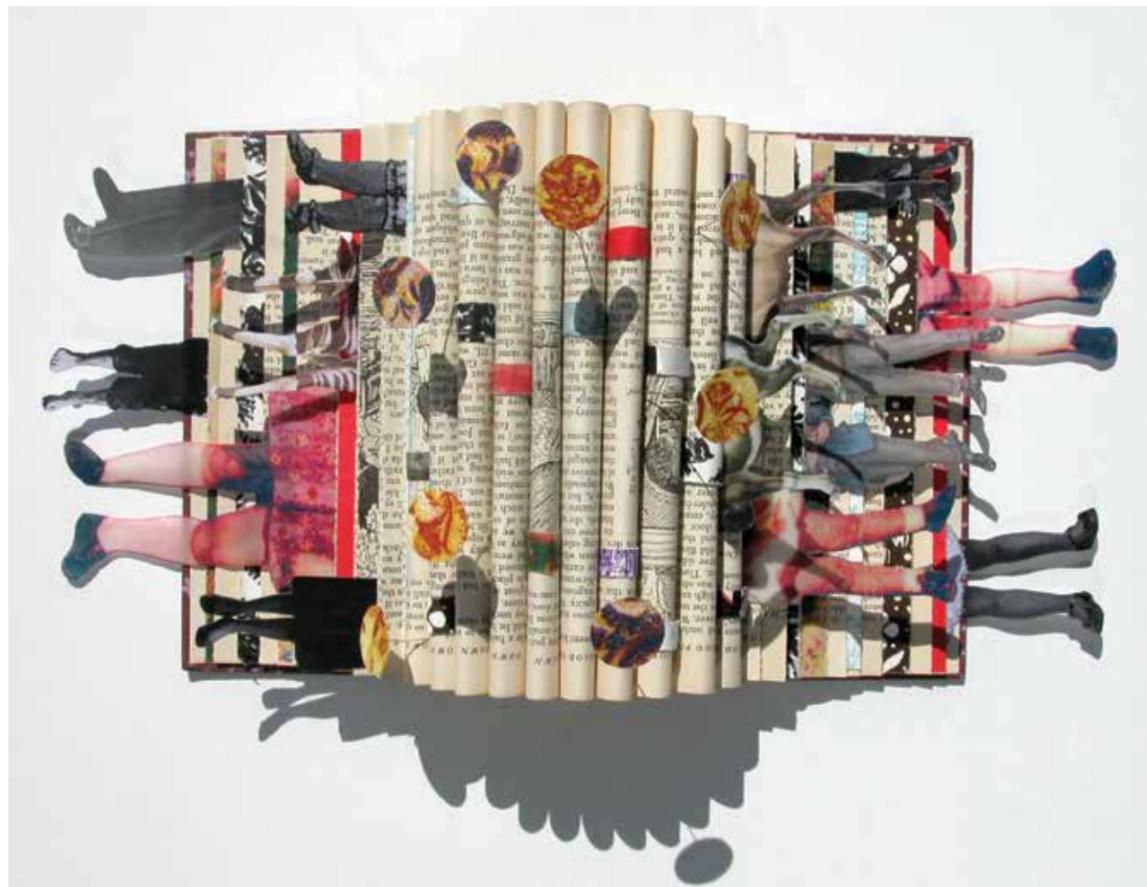


*Natural Dysfunction, 2010
Book sculpture, 30x40x15cm (wxhxd)
This work - about order and disorder - was made for a solo exhibition at Brenda May Gallery in 2011. It describes the natural dysfunction in all of us, animals included.*

*Below and opposite page:
Box of Hope*



*Animal Instincts, 2010
Book sculpture, 30x40x15cm (wxhxd)
This book, made for the solo exhibition at Brenda May Gallery, is about the animal in all of us. It represents a form of knowledge dispersal and shows a concern for our natural environment. The digitally printed hybrid creatures residing in the deconstructed book show an exaggerated concern for scientific advancement and hover between multiple identities. The work references the history of nature and alchemy and the effects of culture, progress and existence on our environment and nature.*

THE ENIGMATIC ART OF JANET PARKER-SMITH

Humans are fascinated by how important wings are for flight and how much we can learn from animals, but creatures are not treated with the respect they deserve and it is very often the role of the artist to reveal unpleasant truths.

Janet Parker-Smith is such a multi-layered artist, a Sydney-based printmaker who works with print media, sculpture and altered books. Her work deals with identity, displacement and the environment.

Parker-Smith: After completing a Masters degree of Visual Arts at COFA (UNSW) in 1994, I began work for South Sydney Council at Pine Street Creative Arts Centre where I set up a small printmaking workshop. The skills I acquired during that time were invaluable and led to the position of Printmaking Technician at the University of Western Sydney.

The art school at UWS felt like a second home. Interaction with students from diverse backgrounds impacted positively on my art practice and the changing aspects of my life. During this time I gave birth to two children, Jasper and Tully, and the focus of my work became sacred motherhood. In 2006 UWS Art School was coming to an end and I was invited to be Studio Supervisor in Print Media for Sydney College of the Arts.



Janet Parker-Smith



I looked for inventive ways, without overt reference to the environment, to express my perception of wanton destruction.

Above: *We are all just earthly creatures*, 2011, Wooden box, etched copper and fixed digital print on copper, 62 x 40.5 x 25cm

This work was included in the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize 2012. The human and hybrid figures discuss the ways of the world. The hybrid creature hovers between multiple identities. The viewer is asked whether the form they are looking at belongs or is intrusive. This work explores nature's boundless capacity for reinvention and rejuvenation and the necessity for this as a means to survive.

Left: *Transitionally Lost*, 2014, 80x120cm Archival digital print from collage on Hahnemuhle paper

The character in this image is representative of power and gender. She is fantastic and poignant. While she appears whimsical and childlike she could also be seen as sinister in her dance. This work deals with displacement through the use of otherness as a mechanism of protection, inclusion, exclusion, isolation and connection.



Janet Parker-Smith

Working at SCA challenged my view of teaching and how and why I make my own work. It broadened my outlook and led me to investigate issues of displacement, order and disorder. I investigated the phenomenon of scientific cloning, its impact on humanity, on our planet and the risks posed if no controls are in place.

My creative intentions became clearer as I continued to make art which addressed these issues and I came to realise that the basis of my interest and my purpose in making art is the current state of the environment and the destructive impact of mankind. I looked for inventive ways, without overt reference to the environment, to express my perception of wanton destruction. And so I began making artworks with a slightly disturbing but immersive narrative which contained subtle but pervasive messages. I started to collect, alter and 'reinvent' old books into sculptural objects.

Making these objects allows for space, meaning and form to be explored. Each book is transformed from its former incarnation, often becoming unrecognisable. Pages are folded, torn, removed. Destruction of books became a metaphor for destruction of my environment/city. Intrinsicly I hold the belief, however, that there is hope within destruction.

My recent works (2008 to now) usually begin as small collages which often include historical imagery inhabited by hybrid creatures—a combination of humans, animals and insects. This can be seen as an incongruous gathering of characters in equally incongruent settings. Despite the works having an often dismal view of the world due to uneasy, dysmorphic characters, optimism is suggested through a calculated combination of disparate elements leaving the viewer unsettled but intrigued.

*Once I have resolved the compositions in the small collages, a large screen or digital image is created. The choice of materials, colour and scale of the work is very important. For example, the negative space of dense black that encases the figures in my large digital prints signifies depth of loneliness, emptiness and loss (see *Transitionally Lost*). The inclusion of children in my collaged images is an intentional choice which has been said to reference the concepts of innocence, trust and freedom from corruption (Larsen, Pia: *Image and Identity*, Imprint, Summer 2013, Volume 48, Number 4).*

I work mostly from a home studio and my children know that while I am working it is either a no-go zone or they may sit quietly with me. When little they would sit with me and make objects. Now they are older this happens rarely



Happiness is a Slippery Customer, 2016, Screen print, 56 x 76cm

This work was also part of the exhibition 'As Far As The Eye Can See'. The background of this image is from a photo taken by my father in the Blue Gum Forest at Blackheath around 1960. He spent a lot of time bushwalking in the mountains. While my siblings and I were growing up he would take us on many of these walks. We would start as early as 5 am and not stop until the sun had set. I believe this is where my love of the mountains and in particular Blackheath comes from. Some of the photos have become the starting point and construction of many works. This work is obviously about my concern with logging and the tearing down of trees to build more housing for people, but what happens to these animals once their homes are destroyed?



The Vanishing Point, 2016, Screen print, 56 x 76cm

This work also made for 'As Far As The Sight Can See' exhibition raises concerns for the habitat of our earthly creatures. The use of the human figure morphed with birds brings an intentional element of concern. Once human life is attached do we consciously give more thought that these creatures may lose their home in a fire? —while for an animal most people give less thought to it.



Sydney, the city I live in, has become a place I no longer know. I am constantly concerned that our city will not be able to sustain itself—that the city of construction will become the city of destruction.

which gives me more time to focus, but I do miss the close creative time with them. Since having children my life choices have been reasonably conservative. Choices such as undertaking residencies are made according to how far away they are from family. I know that being able to undertake overseas residencies is not too far away.

Respite from the craziness of Sydney has been found with the purchase of a small house in Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. To some extent this has changed the direction of my work. I feel a greater connection with nature and its fragility and I have increasingly become a champion for that which cannot champion itself.

Sydney, the city I live in, has become a place I no longer know. It is growing too fast. I am sure our parents said the same thing but I really feel the construction that goes on around me is like nothing that has been seen before. I am constantly concerned that our city will not be able to sustain itself—that the city of construction will become the city of destruction.

I am an artist who loves technique and process so I am continually exploring new ways to extend the print medium. The inclusion of small object-based art and the construction of altered books is exciting and sits comfortably within that exploration. I continue to actively learn, investigate and experiment with new ideas and processes. I like my work to challenge or flaunt traditional printmaking techniques and incorporate new elements of process and technique while always being aware that each phase of my life and experience will be reflected in my art practice.

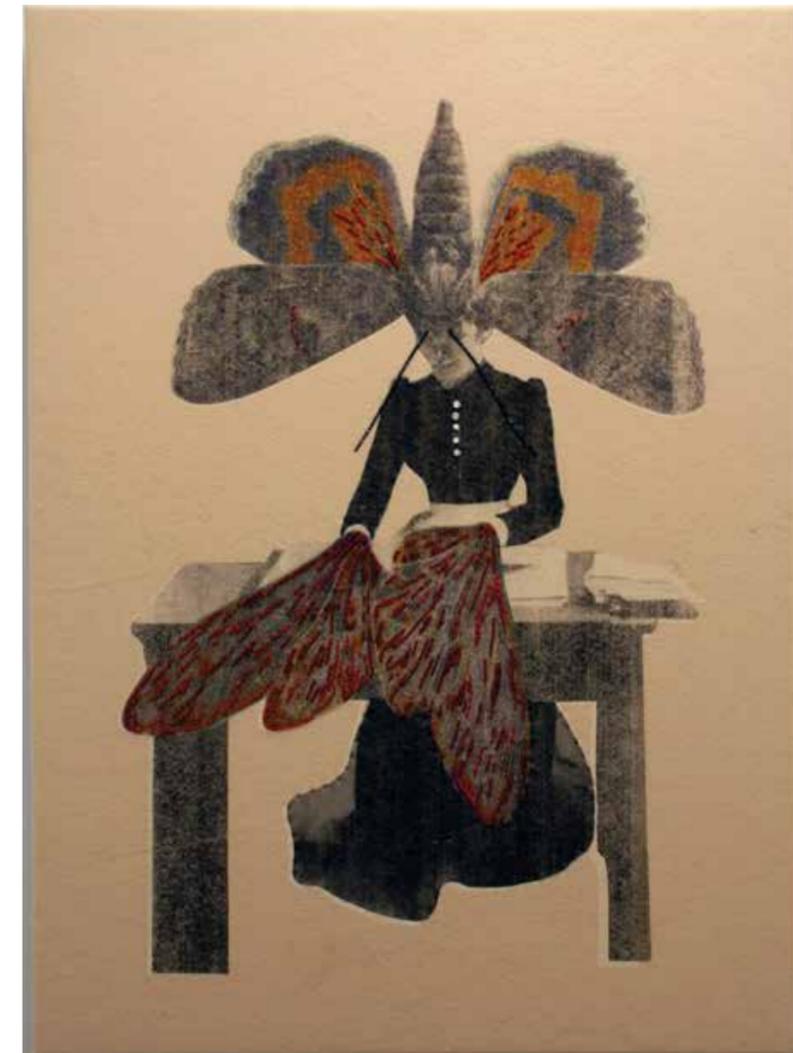
My recent works have started from small collages, often encompassing period historical imagery inhabited by hybrid creatures, combining humans with animals and insects. They can be seen as an incongruous gathering of characters in similarly incongruous settings.

Despite my works depicting an often depressing view of the world with their uneasy characters, there are also glimmers of optimism and new beginnings. The calculated concept of the work though is to bring together disparate elements that will leave the viewer unsettled.

BelowL

*A Marvellous Future, , 2015,
Screen print on felt with applique, , 80 x 120cm*

Through the process of collage different worlds become unified. The anonymous individual with her hybrid parts shows a natural dysfunction as she struggles to perform her task with her moth hands. This work explores the mingling of human and non-human, serving as a reminder of how vulnerable we are to the destructive impact of our own actions.



*Top: When the Hunted becomes the Hunter, 2014
Screen print on canvas, 80 x 120 cm (WXH)*

This work began from a project called 'Freak of Nature' in 2014, a portfolio of prints by 47 artists from Australia, UK, NZ and USA. The original photo used in this work was of my father, taken hunting rabbits in the Wolgan Valley, NSW. The original screenprint was small (20 x 28cm). This was then blown up and made into a large screenprint on canvas. In this work the hybrid bird/human becomes the hunter and we ask the question: who is being hunted?

*Left: Secret Pleasures, 2015
Digital print and copper sculpture, 20x25 x4 cm (wxhxd)*

Made for a show at M contemporary gallery, Woollahra, Sydney in 2016. It describes the pleasure people take in caging animals for show without thinking about the impact this has on the animal.



Bird Crowd (Plus One), The Conversation, 2013,
Digital print from collage

Humans are fascinated by how important wings are for flight and how much we can learn from animals, but these creatures are not treated with the respect they deserve. Here the cat is the intruder that may cause havoc at any moment!

Janet Parker-Smith has been master printer for various artists including Locust Jones, Debra Dawes and UK artist Mario Minichello and is the Studio Supervisor and part-time Lecturer in Printmedia at Sydney College of the Arts, and a sessional teacher in Printmedia at the National Art School. She has been exhibiting nationally and internationally for 18 years and is represented by Van Rensburg Gallery, Hong Kong and supported by Brenda May Gallery, Sydney, where she has had several solo exhibitions.

Janet exhibited at Sydney Contemporary 2015. She has been chosen as a finalist in many art competitions and has had recent work purchased by the Art Gallery of NSW and National Gallery of Victoria. Her work is held in numerous public and private collections.

Participant in *Crossing Boundaries*, a Printmedia collaboration between 5 Australian artists and 5 New Zealand artists who challenge traditional printmaking structures. Shown both in New Zealand and Australia.

Work included in the 50th Anniversary of the Print Council of Australia exhibition at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, "As far as the eye can see", 2016. Invited to participate in the Print Council of Australia Commissions in 2014 and 2009.