

# sydneyroadgallery

Artist Q & A ETHEREAL exhibition 2021 Sydney Road Gallery

## Who are you and what do you do?

My name is Marilou Palazon. I am an Australian contemporary painter. I also have had an Interior Design business running parallel to my studio practice. I love the Interior design as I adore fabrics, sculptural and spatial challenges. It appeals to my design, business, and logic side of my brain. Some Interior projects can go over a couple of years with stunning results. I also have a clientele that I have had for almost 30+ years and many are like old friends.

You get to know people closely when building their homes. All clients are referred and often work with extended family members. Very blessed. Both are running at a mad pace for quite some time now. Not much sleep at the moment...

## Why do you do what you do?

Back to painting... it's a bit like breathing. I must do it. According to my daughters if I haven't painted in a few days, I am unconsciously cranky.

## What's your background?

I'm an expat child. Spanish/French father, Filipino/ American mother. I grew up in Hong Kong and finished my education in Sydney. Asia in the 70's was an intoxicating place visually. Had plenty of free- roam as a child as my parents travelled constantly. Left under watchful eyes of amahs we emersed ourselves in the Chinese / British culture- Moon festivals, night markets etc. I have a particular love of Asian artefacts and art. As I child I guess I became an observer early- I didn't belong there nor was I yet Australian. We lived this transitory life, of change- this probably filters throughout my work.

Of fragility, of longing and time.

Our home was actually above the clouds sometimes in an area called The Peak. It was quite magical from a child's perspective to look down onto the harbour with clouds below you. As kids I have vivid memories of running around all day in the Chinese bush, of weekends jumping off tops of junk- boats into a deep green harbour, of weirdly shaped mountains, of many languages and tongues not understanding a word.

It took until my 20's to feel attached to a land. I travelled across America for a couple of months and flew back over Sydney harbour. I actually cried and realised I was an Australian. I was no longer a wanderer. I belonged.

### How do you work?

I work alone. I enjoy my own company and need it every day. I like working on series of works 5-10 at a time. It stops preciousness and procrastination.

I like it when large works surround me, and I have to immerse myself.

### What's your work-day like?

As mentioned before its quite a full-on schedule. I do admin and calls up to 9 am - this clears my day to paint / design work uninterrupted. I schedule all works and projects to do all things well. I spend the early evening with my daughters who are both older / students with their own schedules. Dinner then probably another 4 x hours of work. Sleep. Repeat. Walks and social events are scattered through-out the timetable. Friends and **family are very** important to keep me balanced.

### Describe the space where you create?

I have a large studio 2 minutes away from home. It is part of office/café/dance studio complex in our suburb. My studio is very comfortable, airy with great light. Sometimes I feel very spoilt. I can spread out, play music and hold classes. I'm a very private person – it's another home for me.

### How has your practice changed over time?

I've found with age and developing muscle – i.e., to produce a constant stream of work sharpens your skills. I have just finished 18 commissions and 20 works for this show. I have learnt so much in the last 9 weeks by really extending myself. I always feel like I have so much more to do and learn. It's exciting.

### How have you developed your career?

I'm a COFA graduate majoring in painting. As a student I illustrated for magazines then was poached by a Painted Finished company to be their studio artist. It was the step into a world of fabulous décor and big budgets with a lot of decorative painting involved. I worked on many well-known properties in Sydney at the time. I kept getting poached by various companies in the same field and decided to start my own business.

For many years I had small Painted Finishes company of 5-6 full-time artists plus a teaching studio. We worked across Sydney on fantastic painted decorative projects,

huge in scale - sometimes booked out 8-10 months in advance. My artists were incredibly talented and loved the projects I won for the company. Each job was always different e.g. marbling 60 x 5 metre columns in clubs to huge dining room vaulted ceilings / trompe l'oeil of birds, hanging gardens and sky In classical style. One private residential mural was 23 metres long. We often worked on complex jobs and scaffolds. It was quite a fantastic time. It was probably the forging of my love of the monumental in scale of my works.

Often, we did large, commissioned paintings then was the natural progression not only into Interior decorating but constant commission work. Some projects even now for a single residence can be 4-8 very large paintings.

My whole world is immersed in the creative. It's incredibly fulfilling.

### **What's the best thing about being an artist?**

What I do is not work. It doesn't feel like work. I also love the people it brings into my life - other creatives with similar passions.

I've also been there every step of the way with my kids as I have my own business.

### **What themes does your art pursue?**

The creation of something beautiful is very important to me. Nature's simple subjects such as birds, figures, water, and botanicals reveal universal themes of beauty, time, fragility, life, death, decay, and birth. Such rich sources of inspiration.

I like my images to push the viewer beyond just what is represented - to evoke a feeling or memory. The scale of images, the out-of-context provokes a response from the viewer. Fall into those petals please...

### **Describe a real-life situation that inspired you?**

When I first met my late-husband, I grew under him - he had an incredible mind and beautiful heart. He taught me to see the world in a different way. He had a rapier - wit and made fun of me. Loved it and miss it.

### **What's your most embarrassing moment?**

Don't have one that I can pin-point. Never dwell on silly. Good and bad events form us.

### **What's a happy memory from your childhood?**

Moon/ Mid-Autumn Festival in Hong Kong - memories of holding my father's hand as we walked around with people holding these fantastic lit lanterns. All different shapes and figures.

From my small stance in the world, it was just a terrific adventure.

### **What's your favourite art work?**

It's a section of the Sistine ceiling - The Libyan sibyl. The colours, the flow of drapery. The beautiful peaceful face. I could go on. I also adore Rothko. I tend to love art abstract or realism that has craft, skill and the spiritual.

### **What jobs have you done other than being an artist?**

After high-school I left home for UNI - I was a nursing aide for cerebral palsy clients. One of the most fun jobs I've ever had. It gave me my hard-work ethic.

### **Name something you love, and why?**

My daughters. They are strong, curious, compassionate, and gorgeous humans. I'm a better person for becoming their mum.

### **Favourite or most inspirational place?**

The Louvre for my right-brain. Skiing across New-Zealand. Breath-taking countryside. Monastic. Outside cathedral.

### **What's your musical playlist while practicing art? Which tunes inspire you?**

Listen from Yo-Yo Ma to punk rock to whatever is current. I have no choice - my daughters commandeer Spotify in our house. Keeps me young. Sometimes the words of songs can make me blush.

### **What is your preferred medium to work with?**

Acrylic on canvas

### **Which artists do you collect?**

I have some really lovely pieces - Peter Churcher, Minnie Pwerle Ian Grant, Kathleen Petyarre, Tim Storrier , Darren Gannon to name a few.

I adore sculpture and have stone and bronzes. I have collected since university. I remember my husband and I bought an artwork instead of doing a much-needed kitchen renovation. Love that piece today. Have renovated several times since - never regret your extravagances. Walls are covered. Don't buy me jewellery. Buy me art.

**Please select one painting from your current exhibition. Tell us about this painting and why you think it will connect with your viewers?**

"Lightness of being" is a break-through work - compositionally it is like landscape of waves, over-sized petals - it pushes the viewer to make other visual connections, historical references like renaissance drapery. The restricted palette of pinks without being wildly female and general peacefulness. I would like to do more of this style of imagery inspired by my floral subjects. Of falling into. Of endless interpretations and meanings. Or just a flower...

**What is the Sydney Road Gallery Experience for you?**

I joined this gallery in 2020. The beginning of COVID. I have loved being part of this stable of incredibly talented and hard-working artists.

More importantly I have had the immense joy of meeting our 2 x curators/ directors Fiona Chandler and Sarah Montgomery. They are talented artists themselves but also gifted art entrepreneurs. They are supportive, passionate, and dynamic directors. In the past 2 years of lockdowns, they have been a driving force with constant successful shows as a result.

The artists in this gallery are also very supportive of each other. The energy can be bottled!

Another wonder factor is the incredible local community, friendly, supportive patrons of this creative establishment.