



Carl Gopal website text document: <http://www.carlgopal.com/carl-gopal-1991/>

Carl Gopal Solo 1991

Carl Gopal – Solo was my first solo exhibition in 1991 at the Bridge Gallery in Northbridge, Western Australia. It happened quite by accident with the support of a small gallery that was showing all the odd stuff in Perth. A scary and enlightening experience and I haven't looked back. It's been 20 years since and although this work reflects where I was at the time and the era, it holds a special place for me.

It was a transforming experience and was only made possible because of the Bridge Gallery – a small, avant garde, always experimental art gallery in William Street, Northbridge, Western Australia. The space ran from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s and, during its early reign, held a special place for the Northbridge arts community which has yet to be recognized. Many brave Australian artists exhibited there, but side by side with shy, emerging artists, making it the most creative and collaborative space to grow as an artist. Many have compared it to Sydney's Yellow Room in terms of the energy that was happening then.

I never regretted eschewing formal art training for this more enjoyable learning curve with people of this calibre. Art schools and learning has become so professionalized that these moments are rare. Similarly, when I was a student at Perth Technical School in the middle of the central business district, we often had parties on the rooftop while discussing painting and art history. Impossible today - unless you want to be raided by the SAS and arrested.

As a Bridge Gallery artist – and later gallery assistant – I was able to directly question and learn techniques from the most dedicated and passionate visual artists in Perth. Risk-takers. Gary offered me a free exhibition and promoted me at a time when I was only just learning about my identity as an artist. It's a vulnerable and important time for an emerging artist when 'the market' needs to come secondary to creative development.

My first exhibition (titled unimaginatively *Solo*) was oil and chalk pastel on paper paintings pinned to the walls with small nails unframed. I worked very intensively with pastel for a number of years, enjoying the intensity of the colours and immediacy of application. I also applied it very physically, using fingers to rub the dry pastel into the paper and, with the oil pastel, using large amounts of clear oil sticks for the painterly qualities that I was able to achieve. It was cheap, and it wasn't scary.

Thematically, the subjects were very personal, starting in Melbourne when I was working in the fashion industry as a textile designer in Richmond. Catching trams in the rain, consuming loads of coffee, wine and cigarettes in the tiny cafes that littered the city - did I mention food was cheap back then? In Melbourne I lived in a small studio in outer South Yarra behind a converted Edwardian mansion that was in stages

of recovery. The people and places from that time found their way into my art. I did a few linocuts too. Back in 1989 Melbourne still had something of the underground stillness of lost thoughts that will never become anything. My friends and I listened to lots of Nick Cave and watched the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the excessive 80s.