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SUSAN WALD

FOR MY RECENT Theatre Painting and Monoprints exhibition and catalogue, at Langford120, theatre director Adena Jacobs wrote, "Susan was present throughout the entire rehearsal process, observing and responding through her drawings. She became a kind of visual dramaturge, documenting the inner workings and sensory experience of the process."

I have long felt a passion for the theatre. Although some elements of the theatre are evident in my work, I try to find an equivalent and use the theatre as a springboard to develop my own personal visual language. My wish is not to illustrate theatre, but to condense it down to the essence of the experience, and when possible to use metaphor to provoke the imagination.

Samuel Beckett has been one of many influences in my work over the last 20 years: reading Beckett's work sends small shocks through my nervous system, it is like the skeleton of our humanity. It leaves me with the sense of a distilled experience, an essence, for with a few words he is able to conjure up the universal.

I spent approximately six weeks drawing during rehearsals of each production of

Jean Pierre Mignon's direction of Beckett's *End Game*, Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*, and Raymond Cousse's *Strategy of Two Hams*, all performed at the former Anthill Theatre, Melbourne (1991-1994). Barrie Kosky's *The Exile Trilogy* was performed in 1991-1993, the imagery revisited in my series of paintings and monoprints.

More recently Adena Jacobs directed Sophocles' *Elektra*. Day after day I would draw, seeking to make concrete the elusive essence of emotion, form and space, an array of mediums at my fingertips, pencil, pastel, ink and acrylic, all there in the service of my endeavours. These experiences with Kosky and Jacobs culminated in the Langford120 exhibition. The drawings were the seed.

'Elektra 9' is an example of these drawings using brushes, acrylic and water, reacting quickly and spontaneously trying to capture the figure's stillness before moving. 'Painting 1' is inspired from Sophocles' *Elektra*. I wanted to use the idea of the figure with a space that was not literal – the emotions it might provoke by playing with the space, colour and form. 'Painting 4' was a response to and influenced by the monoprints from *Elektra*. From a dark, painted surface I worked in lights, slowly bringing the figures out of the

darkness. Then I allowed myself to react, trying to carve out a space that made sense to me internally. 'The Exile Trilogy 8', from *The Exile Trilogy* was more immediate than the larger paintings. It was one of 19 small paintings that I experimented with before attempting the larger ones.

Drawing is the core of my painting. For me, drawing creates an awareness of the abstract elements opening up an awareness of myself, which I try to convey in paint. The monoprints have become an integral part of my working practice facilitating rapid experimentation and subtle development of the image. 'The Exile Trilogy, Levad 4' was made from a second ghost image on the plate, the image reworked with brushes, ink, tarlatan and cotton buds.

Many years ago, watching a documentary by Werner Herzog at the Melbourne film festival, I was struck by the incredible

beauty of the images making the desolation in the imagery possible to bear, to feel and to acknowledge. I would like to paint pictures that are so beautifully painted that the viewer is able to digest any pain they may convey. ■

www.susanwald.org

www.langford120.com.au

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- 01 The Exile Trilogy 5, 2014, oil on linen, 30 x 36cm
- 02 The Exile Trilogy 8, 2014, oil on linen, 41 x 40cm
- 03 Painting 4, 2015, oil on linen, 138 x 98cm
- 04 Painting 3, 2015, oil on linen, 138 x 98cm
- 05 Susan Wald in her studio, photography Peter Lyssiotis

Courtesy the artist