



## Country style

Tags: [floral artist \(/archive/tag/floral-artist/\)](/archive/tag/floral-artist/), [Samantha Dennison \(/archive/tag/samantha-dennison/\)](/archive/tag/samantha-dennison/)

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**Interlacing Poppies**

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A move to Albany allowed artist Samantha Dennison's career to soar. We check in with the realist painter as she celebrates her home studio's first anniversary.

How did you come to be an artist?

I previously worked as a high school art teacher and ran a small part-time business painting personalised furniture and ceramics for children before I had my own family. Whenever I had the time, I would paint small landscapes in gouache and oils on the side and had my first solo exhibition of these at Gallows Gallery in 2003.

Then, five years ago, my husband, our three young daughters and I swapped life in Perth for living in Albany, arriving at our new home on Christmas Eve. The twins started at school in 2013 and soon after, I set myself up in our garage and began to paint again. Inspired by some luscious lemons given to me by a neighbour, I focussed on still life painting. It was when I was invited by curator Amber Creswell-Bell to take part in a 2015 group show 'Fleurt' – at Saint Cloche gallery in Sydney – that raiding my neighbours' gardens as well as our own for things to paint became an established part of my practice. Not long after that, I took the leap to painting full time.

What do you love about being based in rural WA?

It is fair to say I wouldn't be painting the way I do if I hadn't moved to Albany. I like the community. I like knowing the people around me and that our children feel the same. I like that we also have family here. I love walking into the garden and waving good morning to my neighbours. I love their generosity. I love living near the harbour, and that we sometimes catch a glimpse of dolphins from our window. I love the wildness of this coastline and being so near the beach. I like that there is more space, that life is gentler, and that the weather is cooler!

How do you stay connected?

Instagram is an obsession, but it has allowed me to move away from the city and still be able to keep community contacts from before. It has also allowed me to connect with my new local arts community and build stronger friendships with those local artists. I utilise it to support my artist friends, to follow their progress and to experience their exhibitions, albeit in a limited way in locations I can't physically get to. Instagram allows me to share my process and promote my work beyond my regional boundaries. And so, while we may be a long way from the city, I believe Instagram makes it a little easier to keep up arts industry connections.

Can you tell me about your aesthetic?

My work is concerned with community, conversation, seasonality and changes in light as the year progresses. The flowers I paint come from our garden and I have lovely neighbours across the road who let me pilfer their garden for plants to paint. The same goes for a bunch of other friends but I have also been known to pull over on the way into town to knock on doors and take cuttings from obliging roadside trees. The other objects I like to paint are vintage and op-shopped vessels, mostly white pieces and coloured glass, together with contemporary pieces that I collect during the occasional online forage.

My still life oil paintings are known for their quiet stillness. I think this has a lot to do with the way I arrange the flowers and varied vases, bottles and bowls that I use, as I aim to instil a sense of space and calm. Most are composed on the same eye level as the viewer with a shallow depth of field so there is very little separating the viewer from the subject. I also like to explore patterns of negative space in my paintings as the space around the objects is often more important than the objects themselves. As a result, I consider my aesthetic to be clear, calm and considered, but for the paintings to nevertheless communicate the sense of buoyant joy I feel when I collect and arrange my subjects.

What are the highlights of your career?

Exhibiting my paintings in my current solo show at Linton and Kay Galleries, Mandoon Estate in Caversham, until December 24. Being selected as a Finalist in the 2016 Albany Art Prize – a nationally recognised art award – was also a highlight.

What's next for you?

I am always best when I have a project on the go. I have a few ideas in mind, but I will take my time as I explore them and see where they take me in the New Year. There will, however, always be a place for my still life paintings because I continue to have a lot of fun with them, and I relish the conversations and connections I make while I am collecting material for them.

*Samantha's solo exhibition at Linton and Kay Galleries, Mandoon Estate in Caversham runs from now until December 24. She'll be giving a floor talk on December 2 at 11.30am.*

*Visit [www.lintonandkay.com.au](http://www.lintonandkay.com.au) (<http://www.lintonandkay.com.au>). Alternatively check out her work at various times of the year in Yallingup Galleries and Paper Pear in NSW.*

*Sign up to her newsletter or contact Samantha at [www.samanthadennison.com.au](http://www.samanthadennison.com.au) (<http://www.samanthadennison.com.au>) or via her Instagram [@samanthadennisonartist](https://www.instagram.com/samanthadennisonartist)*

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