

Talent is something
that is god given. You can't

ALICE ON A
GOOD DAY

Jenny Watson

CHRONICLES

EDUCATION KIT

The Artist: Jenny Watson

Born in Melbourne, 1951, Jenny Watson is an Australian artist with a practice that spans over four decades. Highly regarded, nationally and internationally, as one of the most eminent voices in contemporary art, Watson studied painting at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, and divides her time between Leeds, UK, and Brisbane Australia, where she is an Adjunct Research Fellow at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.

Throughout her practice, Watson has set herself apart from the mainstream and redefined traditional perspectives of painting through her use of alternative techniques, non-traditional materials, and the inclusion of text alongside her imagery. The first woman to represent Australia in a solo exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1993, she has exhibited throughout Australia, Germany, Belgium, Japan, New York, and Italy, and is an active participant in the Brisbane art scene, contributing to the growth and development of many emerging artists.

Watson's practice has been variously influenced by conceptual art, literary archetypes, feminism, and punk subculture, often leading to works that are confrontational in theme and intent. However the inclusion of text to record her exterior circumstances and concurrent interior dialogues ensures her work is always intimately connected to her innermost thoughts and contemplations.

The Exhibition: *Jenny Watson: Chronicles* 14 July – 3 September 2016

Chronicles takes a thematic approach to Watson's work, focusing on the prevalence of text throughout her career, and the powerful role it has played in constructing her highly personal narratives.

The works included in the exhibition track Watson's career trajectory from the earliest appearance of text in the 1970s, through the deliberate deskilling of her painterly style, to a new suite of works where text, painting and objects interact. Seminal works include the suburban house 'double paintings', the newspaper and magazine pages, and the *An Original Oil Painting* duo of works, which took Watson's conceptual project to its most reductive point.

The inclusion of text and the painted image has formed a crucial duality in Watson's practice and its various manifestations provides the thread connecting the works in the exhibition. While the images in Watson's more recent paintings have simplified, the relationship between the elements has become more complex.

Is Watson becoming less distanced in her representations of self in her words and images? Or are these intertwinings of text, image, and object becoming more complex, within a modality in which there is no 'real' truth of one's self to reveal?

Curator: Angela Goddard. Education Kit: Elsie Duffy, 4th year Bachelor of Education (Visual Arts) with supervision of Dr Marta Kawka, School of Education and Professional Studies – in partnership with Griffith University Art Gallery.

Image: Jenny Watson/ *Alice on a good day* (detail) 1987/ Oil, gouache, synthetic polymer paint, silk cut outs and paper on canvas / 122 x 214cm / Collection: Amit and David Holckner / Melbourne / Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Jenny Watson

CHRONICLES

RESPONDING TASKS

1. What common motifs are used as Watson's subject matter? Provide examples.
2. Watson uses a series of unconventional materials and techniques within her works, including discarded fabrics as a painting support. **List** the materials and techniques used within the artworks and **justify** how they challenge traditional artistic conventions.
3. **Select** an artwork of your choice. **Describe** the dominant visual conventions within the work. (Design Elements: line, colour, texture, shape and form. Design Principles: unity, balance, scale, proportion, emphasis and contrast).
4. Jenny Watson once stated, "Painting should be as natural as breathing". **Reflect** on this quote and **describe** how this relates to Watson's artistic practice.
5. In the 1970s, Watson was heavily involved with the underground punk scene. **Analyse** how this influence is translated into the aesthetic and conceptual features of Watson's practice.
6. Observe the work *Alice on a good day* 1987. **Identify** and **explain** how Watson uses appropriation and how this alters the meaning of her work.
7. **Select** two artworks by Watson from different stages of the exhibition. **Complete** the Venn diagram below and **examine** the similarities and differences between each work.

