Jenny Watson: here, there and everywhere
Genny Watson: here, there and everywhere
Cat. no. 28
New York 1995
oil and synthetic polymer paint
on Indian cotton; synthetic
polymer paint on canvas
3 components: 183 x 112 cm irreg.,
25 x 20 cm, 25 x 20 cm;
overall dimensions variable

Genny Watson: here, there and everywhere
Jenny Watson: here, there and everywhere

The Vizard Foundation Contemporary Art Project
Jenny Watson is the Vizard Foundation Contemporary Artist 2011

Published by the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, on the occasion of the exhibition Jenny Watson: here, there and everywhere, 18 January to 8 April 2012.

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The Ian Potter Museum of Art is delighted to be staging Jenny Watson: here, there and everywhere as the opening exhibition in our fortieth anniversary year, 2012. Here, there and everywhere is the inaugural Vizard Foundation Contemporary Art Project, a creative initiative of the Vizard Foundation designed to encourage mid-career and senior artists to take risks and explore new directions in their practice. Jenny Watson is the first of three annual Vizard Foundation Contemporary Artists. I am most grateful to the Vizard Foundation, whose considerable financial support has enabled Jenny Watson to pursue new ideas and create exciting work for the project, and has supported the Potter to present the exhibition.

The Potter has a commitment to presenting exhibitions that focus on key aspects of an artist’s oeuvre. Here, there and everywhere presents a selection of works produced or exhibited by Jenny Watson outside Australia, where much of her career has taken place, and new work that reflects on this distinctive aspect of her practice. Although currently based just outside of Brisbane, Watson’s practice has flourished in the many countries where she has worked and exhibited. This exhibition brings together a number of rarely seen key works, and investigates the themes and iconography of Watson’s international experiences.

Jenny Watson’s remarkable career spans four decades and her work is held in public and private collections around the world. In Australia she is well represented in the collections of the state, regional and national galleries. I thank her for wanting to be part of this important survey exhibition at the Potter and for her contribution to it, through creating new work, making work available, sourcing loans and answering inquiries. Watson’s work has long been a passion of the exhibition’s curator, Chris McAuliffe, Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art and currently the Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Visiting Professor in Australian Studies at Harvard University. I am grateful to Chris for creating such a compelling and tightly focussed exhibition and for his revealing essay on the artist.

We are extremely grateful to Arts Queensland whose grant to the artist has enabled the production of this elegant publication.

Numerous lenders—both public institutions and private collectors—have made works available to the exhibition. Once again we are grateful for the assistance of our museum colleagues, the artist’s Australian and international representatives, and the generosity of the many private lenders. Staff at the Potter are thanked for their work in presenting the exhibition, bringing together loaned works from around Australia and overseas, and for preparing this publication.

Christopher Menz
Acting Director, the Ian Potter Museum of Art
Tokyo
4 p.m.
Cat no. 45

*A beautiful day in Delhi* 2008–09
synthetic polymer paint on Chinese cotton, silk pashmina
2 components: 102 x 93.5 cm irreg.,
97 x 97 cm; overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 29

*36 hours* 1996 (detail)
watercolour on coloured paper
26 sheets: 54.7 x 37.4 cm each,
overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 46

*Between Düsseldorf and Cologne* 2009
oil and synthetic polymer paint on cotton;
synthetic polymer paint on canvas;
plastic figurines and wood
4 components: 180 x 98 cm, 30 x 30 cm
(circular), 20 x 30 cm (oval), 5 x 13 x 4 cm;
overall dimensions variable
The initial catalyst for this exhibition was the significant scale of Jenny Watson’s international activities. Commencing with her first international solo exhibition, in Germany in 1990, almost two-thirds of her solo exhibitions have been presented outside of Australia in galleries and museums in Europe, the United States and Japan.

But the simple numerical tally of Watson’s achievements abroad is not the heart of the story. International travel, propelled by exhibition commitments, studio residencies, professional and personal relationships, has shaped and sustained Watson’s art for almost four decades. Her practice traces journeys from Australia to the international centres of contemporary art, and back. It reflects the life of a traveller, captured in snapshot-like observations, cherished souvenirs and diaristic texts. It reveals emotional peaks and troughs; friendship and isolation, confidence and vulnerability, success and sacrifice.

For many years, Australian artists have been seduced and haunted by the world beyond our shores. When literary critic AA Phillips coined the term ‘cultural cringe’ in 1950, he skilfully assessed the ambition and trepidation of the Australian artist. While the comparison was ‘needless’, he wrote, Australian authors always asked themselves whether their efforts would meet the standards of the ‘cultivated Englishman’.1 Phillips’ subtle reflection was reduced to a grim formula; over there was always better than down here.

This sentiment was compounded in 1966, when Geoffrey Blainey’s The tyranny of distance suggested that Australia’s distance from international centres was a defining characteristic of its historical development. In 1974, Terry Smith’s essay ‘The provincialism problem’ raised the stakes even further, arguing that not only the criteria of artistic merit but also the general terms of cultural value were shaped in metropolitan centres.2 Regardless of the nuances (and even optimism) of each author’s argument, they generated catch phrases confirming the belief that the ambitious Australian artist must permanently relocate offshore: expatriatism was the only sure cure for provincialism.
This survey of Watson’s travels and of her international career is the story of the
eroxism of these demons. Watson shows that the ‘cultural cringe’ and the ‘practical problem’ have withered, as the scholars who named the phenomena hoped. Distance is no longer an impediment. Watson has built and maintained the networks needed to propel a sustained cycle of exhibitions abroad. There is no ‘cringe’ in her art. She speaks with assurance of her own experience and values, combining the languages of international contemporary art with the accent of an artist who still calls Australia home. Watson emphatically demonstrates that the age of the expatriate artist is over; she has presented 56 solo exhibitions, in 11 countries, over a 21-year period, without relocating abroad.

Along the way, Watson has neither complained of provincial imprisonment nor sought a solution in expatriatism. She has always imagined that an Australian artist might have a different relationship with international centres. Her painted dreams have overcome geographical distance and colonial doubt. As a teenager, Watson made collages of Carnaby Street fashions and faces clipped from magazines. In Self portrait, Kings Road, London, 1966 (1986), she retrospectively transplanted herself to the heart of swinging London. If childhood dreams could be fulfilled, the painting suggested, so too could adult aspirations be realised. But not at the expense of her personal roots in Australia. In the background a horse—a perennial symbol of Watson’s keen love of horses—stands as a powerful reminder of the call of home.

In 1975, when Jenny Watson first travelled abroad, it was still widely assumed that leaving Australia was integral to creative achievement. As playwright David Williamson later recalled, ‘it was believed that anyone with talent in writing, theatre or film should leave the country immediately and work elsewhere before they were stifled by the deadly distrust of creativity in sports-obsessed Australia.’

In the years between this early trip and Watson’s first solo exhibition in Europe, the idea that Australia was a barren and resistant cultural environment, necessitating departure, was questioned and ultimately dismissed. Speaking in 1984, around the time that Watson was participating in a large exhibition at a Parisian museum, renowned expatriate art critic Robert Hughes remarked on a significant difference between the circumstances of his generation and hers: ‘I left Australia because there were things you just can’t learn in Australia … Today, a young Australian … would be likely to do so without any particular feeling that they had to leave.’ Ian Brittain concluded his 1996 survey of prominent 1960s cultural exiles with the suggestion that expatriatism is not now an issue of concern. He further noted that literary critics such as Jim Davidson and Geoffrey Serle had remarked on the decline of expatriation and the rise of Australian culture as a ‘primary point of reference’ in the early 1970s, while author Frank Moorhouse had, in 1980, declared ‘the end of the expatriate tradition.’

The factors shaping this change were both material and ideological. They shaped the experiences of many artists besides Jenny Watson. But no other Australian artist made her experience of this change and its consequences so central to her art. The stories and symbols in Watson’s work, her pursuit of a rolling dialogue between home and away, even the very materials from which her paintings were made, all have their roots in the increasingly confident cosmopolitanism of a generation of Australian artists freed from the burdens of distance and provincialism.

In material terms, new wide-bodied jets and a strong Australian dollar made international travel rapid and accessible in the 1970s. Federal government support of artists’ international travel and overseas studio residencies through the Australia Council also commenced mid-decade. Watson was awarded such grants in both 1975 and 1980, using them to travel to London, Paris and New York.

Less immediately tangible were ideological factors, especially a determined internationalism within Australian politics and culture. The short-lived Whitlam government (1972–75) has been characterised as one that ambitiously engaged with ‘the global experience of modernity.’ This internationalism was also manifested in the growth of global connections in contemporary art exhibitions such as the Biennale of Sydney, inaugurated in 1973. Subtle but significant signals were also sent when Australian artists were displayed alongside their international peers; in the 1977 exhibition Illusion and reality, Watson’s work hung with paintings by Chuck Close and Michelangelo Pistoletto. The dynamic complexity of this shift in consciousness was captured in Ian Brittain’s observation that by the early 1990s, a post-expatriate era combined a growing sense of cultural independence from Britain, the cosmopolitanism arising from post–World War II migration, and greater confidence in Australian expression.

Nevertheless, Watson’s early reflections on travel do hint at the rhetoric of imprisonment and escape common to the expatriate narratives of the 1950s and 60s. The fence (1972) very bluntly speaks of containment, with the sparkling and eager eyes of a young woman barely visible above a heavy suburban wall. Two series of drawings—the London sequence (1978) and the Paris series (1980)—‘have a tone that anyone who travelled young at this time will remember. A trip to London meant a cramped bedsit in a terrace row near Paddington station, with the dream of European sophistication acted out with toasts of exotic aperitifs such as Dubonnet. Paris was experienced as a suite of almost theatrical gestures, reminiscent of nouvelle vogue films: sidewalk cafés, exotic cigarettes and visits to shops that were once just tantalising visions in imported fashion magazines.’
PAGE 18-19
Cat no. 1
The fence 1972
oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas
172.5 x 250.5 cm

PAGE 20 TOP
Cat no. 6
‘French eye make-up window’ from the series ‘Paris’ 1980
gouache and coloured pencil on paper
56.4 x 76 cm

PAGE 20 BOTTOM
Cat no. 2
London sequence 6: 118 Gloucester Terrace, Paddington: Standing in the rain 1978
gouache and coloured pencil on paper
56.4 x 76 cm

PAGE 22
Cat no. 14
‘Face and hand’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
pastel on paper
76.2 x 55.8 cm

PAGE 23
Cat no. 15
‘Gesture’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
pastel on paper
76.2 x 55.8 cm
gesture
Beneath these almost self-deprecating images of the wide-eyed tourist, however, lay a keen awareness of the need to establish the foundations for professional participation in the international contemporary art scene. By the early 1980s, Australia was ‘flavour of the month’ in a metropolitan art world growing accustomed, in a pluralist era, to looking beyond the beaten path for new voices. Group exhibitions of Australian contemporary art, usually supported by state and federal arts agencies, were presented in London (1982), Paris (1983), New York (1984), Los Angeles (1984) and Frankfurt (1988). It was through the latter—the touring Australian Bicentennial Perspectives—that Watson secured her first international solo exhibition at Galerie Hilger, Frankfurt, in September 1990.

Watson’s expressive, emotion-driven paintings may have made sense in an art scene now dominated by painterly values and personal symbols. But, as her earlier suite of European drawings (1982) suggested, there were deeply entrenched cultural differences—language, class, tradition, and a narrow conception of women’s place—to be negotiated. Watson’s solution, which served her well in the ensuing decades, was to ground her professional dealings in personal relationships supported by sustained communication and personal contact. In short, success, if it were to come at all, would not be overnight. And, as far as possible, professional relations would be grounded in friendship. Travel, for Watson, was not the frenetic activity of the postmodern nomad touted in the art magazines of the day. Rather than move rapidly from city to city, hurriedly producing the work demanded by a crowded exhibition schedule, Watson maintained her base in Australia.

While Watson’s strategy of patience and persistence established a relative stability to her professional trajectory (especially in the hothouse atmosphere of the 1980s and ‘90s), there were still personal and emotional disruptions to be dealt with. For all its contemporary convenience, travel retains its capacity to disorient and destabilise. Alice in Tokyo (1984), for example, was based on an incident during Watson’s first visit to that city, when she found herself out of all proportion to the furniture in a Japanese café. While Lewis Carroll’s Alice is an apt metaphor for Watson’s own adventures in new lands, the origin of this painting lies in the sudden, jolting recognition that one is not on one’s home ground. Added to this is the fact that, even in the late twentieth century, the primary rhetoric of travel was masculine in tone. To be away from home also meant being out of the domestic sphere, traditionally characterised as women’s space, and active in the public realm.

A crucial strategy in Watson’s integration of her already-established practice with the new context of Europe and the United States was the direct and indirect introduction of these places into her art. This was achieved most directly through techniques commonly associated with travel. Watson’s inscriptions on paintings, or on caption-like text panels, were akin to diary entries, recording incidents and observations, or more functional records such as to-do lists, itineraries and expense records. In another gesture familiar to any traveller, found images were glued to the canvas or small, souvenir-like objects were placed adjacent to them. Most significant was Watson’s use of fabrics purchased in her travels as the actual ground for a painting. In this way, an item associated with a foreign location became the material foundation for her art. Mindchatter (1991) represents a rather frazzled, perhaps jet-lagged artist, her mind abuzz with confused thoughts. The ground for the painting is a length of fabric purchased in Meppen, Germany; the artist still remembers the welcoming enthusiasm of the shop assistant. The work balances the pressures of international exhibitions with the everyday generosity shown to strangers.

Elsewhere, Watson uses her art to openly acknowledge and externalise the pressures of professional practice. Eternal youth (1992) was among a suite of paintings presented at the Australian pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale. The small text panel, which reads ‘This painting is in the process of being purchased by a museum’, declares (with a bluntness that disturbed art critics) what is at stake in this most prestigious of international forums. Likewise, suites such as 36 hours (1996) and Made in Japan (1993) reveal the anxieties of separation. The deceptive simplicity of Watson’s statements has lead many to overlook a message central to her work: an international career is not a magic carpet ride but the outcome of an individual’s participation in a global economy anchored to markets and institutions. The challenges may be inspiring and the potential rewards seductive, but great sacrifices must also be made.

All of these strategies—the development of relationships, the physical incorporation of the foreign, the open confession of trauma—echo those identified in the earlier literature of women’s travels. Rather than seeing travel as a matter of taking territory or marking the boundaries of a space, women travellers have sought an ‘active engagement with a mutable environment’. As is the case with women’s travel writing, Watson’s art has ‘an affective dimension … that denotes empathic concern for the people met, the landscapes discovered along the way’. Responding to the pleasures and dangers that arise from this engagement is what gives Watson her voice.

It is claimed that ‘travel is the most common source of metaphors used to explicate transformations and transitions of all sorts’. What is striking in Watson’s reflections on her journeying is the absence of any of the grand metaphors. She doesn’t characterise travel as a trial, a quest, an adventure or a pilgrimage. Only rarely and indirectly, in a painting such as The fence (1972), does she present travel as a form of freedom or release, a rhetorical figure that usually serves as a prelude to the discovery of a new self.
Cat no. 18
Alice in Tokyo 1984
oil, synthetic polymer paint, ink and horse hair on hessian
224 x 174 cm

Cat no. 23
Mindchatter 1991
oil on German cotton, false horse tail and ribbon
187 x 98 x 9 cm
The key to understanding the distinctive meaning of travel in Watson’s art is the persistent and unresolved oscillation between ‘home’ and ‘away’ in her work. Images of foreign locales are often interlaced with signs of her Australian home. The cat, for example, represents domesticity. It evokes a sense of repose (a cat sleeping on a bed or lap) or of daily domestic duties (as in the annotation ‘Floor swept, cat fed’ on a 1999 series of watercolour paintings made in Tokyo). The horse is another repeated motif, a reminder not only of the artist’s other life as a horse-enthusiast but also of the significant and ever-present domestic responsibility of caring for her horses. Frequently, Watson makes a narrative of this oscillation, using texts—itineraries, to-do lists, date-book notes—to contrast locations and to suggest that her mind is in two places at once.

This home and away rhythm injects a significant note of discord into the metaphor of travel. The travel narrative is often one of becoming; a succession of challenges and disruptions resolve into a new self. Typically, a travel story will plant a sequence of metaphorical signposts on the route towards a new being. Departure suggests freedom from prior constraint, passage implies a liberating mobility, arrival allows the formation of new relationships, ‘creating a new union and coherence between self and context.’

But, as Eric Leed suggests, the mind of the traveller is driven by contradictory needs, desiring ‘motion and rest, liberty and confinement, indeterminacy and definition.’ It is the sequencing of these desires into a resolved journey, both literal and metaphorical, that balances the contradictions. Watson, however, very rarely sequences or resolves her narrative. Most of her travel stories have no beginning, middle or end. The artworks present discrete incidents, isolated observations and fragmented annotations. Narrative resolution is denied, leaving the viewer with a heightened sense of involvement in an often tense or intimate moment.

In some regards, Watson’s travel images speak of a classical conception of the modern traveller. As Leed notes, the legacy of the scientific traveller of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lives on in the assumption that ‘[t]he transformations that passage worked in the character of the traveller were … a product of observation, comparison, the sharpening of judgement, the ability to formulate a general picture or representation of the world from observation.’ There is certainly something of this spirit in Watson’s work. She has developed a sharp eye for the life of the streets. The gouaches made in Japan in 1999 or the 2004 series of watercolours presented in the exhibition Woman and cat in an Upper West Side apartment, such as Taxi and text piece, capture the peculiarities of local behaviour while also suggesting that universal patterns (shopping, commuting, recreation) might be detected. At the same time, Watson’s self-observation becomes increasingly acute. The artist develops a mature perception of her own needs and reveals them by focussing less on the exoticism of foreign countries and more on images of security (friendship, communication, rest and repose).
However, Watson's essential strategy is her avoidance of any grand metaphorical resolution: the Holy Grail is not found, the wandering warrior doesn't return, no rebirth in a new homeland is announced. Watson's only 'mythological' depiction of the travelling artist has the tone of a bitter parody. *Australian artist in a bar in New York in the year 2016 (1986)*, is no portrait of a painter hitting the big time. Alone, hunched over the counter, ironically spot lit by a golden shaft of heavenly light, is a defeated artist. Dubbed a 'wild colonial boy' by an inscription at the top of the canvas, this ambitious Australian no doubt arrived in the Big Apple humming Sinatra's 'New York, New York', only to join the throng of wannabes at the bottom, rather than the top, of the heap.

Watson rarely romanticises travel but it would be wrong to say that she treats it as strictly instrumental either. The fabrics that she uses as grounds and veils, for example, are sensual and exotic. The emotional wrench of distance and isolation is often poignantly declared. Yet there is always an implication that travel is part of the job of being an artist; a fundamental task that underwrites her art, a priming of the canvas rather than a scaling of the peak.

Even paintings which show the artist living the dream, as the saying goes, avoid the triumphalist rhetoric of the quest narrative. *A beautiful day in Paris* (2006), shows the artist, relaxed and mature, arriving in Paris to attend her friend Martin Grant's haute couture parade, to which she had contributed a short animation. But there is no hint of conquest or transcendence. Watson's focus remains on the moment and its mood. Her approach exhibits some of the qualities that have been identified as specific to women's experience of travel. 'Women', it is said, 'often pay more attention to the process of the journey than men do'.16 For Watson, the beauty of this particular day is a defeated artist. Dubbed a 'wild colonial boy' by an inscription at the top of the canvas, this ambitious Australian no doubt arrived in the Big Apple humming Sinatra's 'New York, New York', only to join the throng of wannabes at the bottom, rather than the top, of the heap.

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In her art, Watson makes it clear that her decades of international professional practice have not been plain sailing. She has, however, strategically avoided the identity crises that plagued earlier Australian artists. When George Lambert, at the time Australia's most successful international artist, returned home after World War I, he found that his peers disdained his European mannerisms; he had been away too long and had become somehow un-Australian.17 Never having relocated abroad, and always insisting on the centrality of her horses and Australian home in her life, Watson has never risked becoming a stateless member of the global community. Nor has she used the language of exile that dominated the post-WWII era of the expatriate. Instead, Watson has made the practice have not been plain sailing. She has, however, strategically avoided the belongings and veils, for example, are sensual and exotic. The emotional wrench of distance and isolation is often poignantly declared. Yet there is always an implication that travel is part of the job of being an artist; a fundamental task that underwrites her art, a priming of the canvas rather than a scaling of the peak.

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By incorporating the personal and professional demands of her career into her art, Watson establishes a new kind of internationalism for the Australian artist; one that is globally aware without being globally adrift, that is professional without being depersonalised, and that speaks comfortably everywhere in a local accent. Some 60 years after Phillips penned 'The cultural cringe', Watson embodies the qualities that he saw as a cure for it; she is unselfconsciously herself, she is relaxed in her engagement with the world, and, perhaps most importantly, she invites the audience to join her on her journey.

Dr Chris McAuliffe
Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Visiting Professor in Australian Studies, Harvard University

**NOTES**


6. ibid., pp. 242–43.


12. Here Watson nods to Queensland poet Judith Wright's 1966 poem *Turning fifty*, 'with kitchen swept, cat fed/the day still quiet/ I taste my fifty years/ here in my cup'.


14. ibid.

15. ibid., p. 60.


This print was made in Japan after the artist's cat died.
Cat no. 26
Made in Japan 1993 (detail)
lithograph on paper
5 sheets: 33.2 x 49 cm each,
overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 42
Taxi and text piece 2004
watercolour on paper
2 sheets: 56 x 75 cm each,
114 x 75 cm overall
Cat no. 19
Australian artist in a bar in New York in the year 2016 1986
synthetic polymer paint, colour pigments, gouache and collage on cotton
161.6 x 256.4 cm
1. The fence 1972
   oil and synthetic polymer
   paint on canvas
   172.5 x 250.5 cm
   Courtesy the artist
2. London sequence 6:
   118 Gloucester Terrace, Paddington: Standing in the rain 1978
   gouache and coloured
   pencil on paper
   56.4 x 76 cm
   National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Michell Endowment, 1982
3. Dubonnet 1979
   coloured pencil heightened
   with white body colour
   over pencil on paper
   56.4 x 76 cm
   The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Thea Proctor Memorial Fund, 1979
   gouache and coloured
   pencil on paper
   56.4 x 76 cm
   Collection of Stephen Rainbird, Hobart
5. ‘Coffee’ from ‘Conversation piece’ 1980
   oil on canvas board
   20.3 x 25.4 cm
   Collection of Greg Ades, Melbourne
6. ‘French eye make-up window’ from the series
   ‘Paris’ 1980
   gouache and coloured
   pencil on paper
   56.4 x 76 cm
   National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Michell Endowment, 1982
7. ‘Ricard’ from ‘Conversation piece’ 1980
   oil on canvas board
   20.3 x 25.4 cm
   Collection of Greg Ades, Melbourne
   oil on canvas
   182 x 372 cm
   Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne
9. ‘Chair’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
   pasted on paper
   76.2 x 55.8 cm
   Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
10. ‘Chandeliers’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
11. ‘Column’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
12. ‘Column and shadow’ from
    ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
13. ‘Cow’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
14. ‘Face and hand’ from
    ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
15. ‘Gesture’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
16. ‘Pferde’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
17. ‘Red bra’ from ‘European drawings’ 1982
    pasted on paper
    76.2 x 55.8 cm
    Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1983
18. Alice in Tokyo 1984
    oil, synthetic polymer
    paint, ink and horse hair
    on hessian
    224 x 174 cm
    Courtesy the artist and Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
    synthetic polymer paint, colour pigments, gouache and collage on cotton
    161.6 x 256.4 cm
    The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased with funds from the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council, 1987
    synthetic polymer paint and gouache on paper
    76.2 x 60 cm
    Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, gift of Loti Stomong and Victor Stomong, 1995
    watercolour on paper
    27 x 20.7 cm (sight)
    Courtesy the artist
22. Love hurts 1991
    oil on French damask
    synthetic polymer paint on canvas
    2 components: 140 x 111 cm
    irreg., 51 x 41 cm; overall dimensions variable
    Courtesy the artist and Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
23. Minetchatter 1991
    oil on German cotton, false horse tail and ribbon
    187 x 98 x 9 cm
    Courtesy the artist
24. Eternal youth 1992
    synthetic polymer paint on canvas
    109 x 90 cm
    irreg., 51 x 40.3 cm; overall dimensions variable
    Courtesy the artist and Gimpel Fils, London
25. Tied up 1992–93
    synthetic polymer paint on cotton
    2 components: 109 x 90 cm
    irreg., 51 x 40.3 cm; overall dimensions variable
    Courtesy the artist and Smorgon, 1995
26. Made in Japan 1993
    lithograph on paper
    5 sheets: 33.2 x 49 cm each,
    overall dimensions variable
    Courtesy the artist
27. Travelling and troll 1993
    oil on cotton, Gonk doll
    2 components: 149 x 90 cm
    irreg., 22.9 x 7.5 cm; overall dimensions variable
    Courtesy the artist and Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
New York 1995  
on and synthetic polymer  
paint on Indian cotton;  
synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas  
3 components: 183 x 112  
cm irreg., 25 x 20 cm, 25 x  
20 cm; overall dimensions  
variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide  

Belgium  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Courtesy the artist and  

variable  
5 sheets: 57 x 76 cm each,  
watercolour on paper  

1998  

variable  
each, overall dimensions  
26 sheets: 54.7 x 37.4 cm  
watercolour on coloured  
paper  

1996  

variable  
20 cm; overall dimensions  
3 components: 183 x 112  
canvas  

oil and synthetic polymer  
paint on Indian cotton, silk  
organza; synthetic polymer  
paint on Chinese cotton,  
silk organza over Sri  
Lankan cotton; gouache  
Chinese organza over Sri  
Lankan cotton; oil and synthetic polymer  
paint on canvas; plastic  
figurines and wood  

1995  

variable  
20 cm irreg., 25 x 13 x 4 cm;  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 30 cm (oval); 5 x 13 x 4 cm;  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 15 cm (oval);  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 15 cm (oval);  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 15 cm (oval);  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 15 cm (oval);  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium  

variable  
20 x 15 cm (oval);  
overall dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Transit, Mechelen,  
Belgium
Cat no. 22

Love hurts 1991

oil on French damask,
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

2 components: 140 x 111 cm irreg.,
51 x 41 cm; overall dimensions variable

I woke up. I was in a hurry to paint.
I put my jeans on without any panties and an old T-shirt.
I felt incredibly sexy. I had 6 primed pieces of coloured burlap, nailed to the wall, ready to go.
Cat no. 8
View of Paris 1980
oil on canvas
182 x 372 cm
Watching the U.S. Open on T.V. made me want to be in Manhattan in the evening rather than Melbourne in the morning.

I had just arrived in Paris. I had an appointment with a gallery. I went to the small hotel I had been going to for 20 years. I took a shower and washed my hair. On deciding to go for a walk and leaving the hotel a man asked me to go for a drink.
Cat no. 27
*Travelling and troll* 1993
oil on cotton, Gonk doll
2 components: 149 x 90 cm irreg., 22 x 9.5 x 7.5 cm;
overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 30
*The eye of the beholder* 1998 (detail)
watercolour on paper
5 sheets: 57 x 76 cm each,
overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 33
‘White cat’ from the series ‘Snow’ 1999
gouache on Japanese magazine paper
40 x 26.5 cm

Cat no. 48
*Transitions: Tucson,*
New York, Italy, Belgium,
Düsseldorf, London 2011 (detail)
watercolour on paper
6 sheets: 76.2 x 55.8 cm each,
overall dimensions variable

Cat no. 38
‘Fedex’ from the series ‘5 Maps of Manhattan (for Bill Anthony)’ 2000
watercolour on printed map
84.5 x 27.7 cm

Cat no. 40
‘Suitcase’ from the series ‘5 Maps of Manhattan (for Bill Anthony)’ 2000
watercolour on printed map
79.5 x 25.3 cm
Cat. no. 47
Transitions (production still) 2011
camera: Andrew Wilson,
ingedit: Audrey Lam
single-channel HD video
colour, sound
25 minutes
Jenny Watson was born in Melbourne in 1951. In 1972, she completed a Diploma of Painting at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, Melbourne. This was followed by a Diploma of Education from the State College of Victoria, Melbourne, in 1973. Watson staged her first solo exhibition in 1973 and has since presented 60 solo exhibitions in Australia and over 50 solo exhibitions in Europe, Asia, India, New Zealand and the United States. Her work has appeared in numerous group exhibitions and is represented in state, corporate and private collections throughout Australia and overseas.

Listed below are selected solo exhibitions held in Australia, solo and group exhibitions held overseas, awards, and key texts relating to Watson's international activities.

Solo exhibitions: Australia

- 2006 Paris fashion week 2006, collaboration with Arno Caravel and Martin Grant, Pelotin, Sydney
- 1991 Jenny Watson: the woman, the bottle, the house, the horse, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- City Gallery, Melbourne (and 1989, 1988, 1987)
- 1989 Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane (and 1986)
- 1986 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 1985 Jenny Watson: paintings and drawings 1973–1985, University Gallery, the University of Melbourne
- 1981 Q Space Annex, Brisbane (and 1980)
- 1980 Axiom Gallery, Melbourne
- Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
- Ray Hughes Gallery, Brisbane (and 1975)
- 1975 Abrauss Gallery, Canberra
- Chapman Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne

Solo exhibitions: international

- 2012 Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo (forthcoming)
- 2011 Striped paintings and undercover, Gimpel Fils, London
- 2010 Jenny Watson, CIAP, Hasselt, Belgium
- 2009 American idyll, Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
- Jenny Watson, Factory Kunsthalle Krems, Austria
- 2008 Galerie Axel Holm, Ulm, Germany
- Walking the dog, Makkasten, Düsseldorf
- 2007 Illusions, Galerie Daniel Vazenne, Geneva
- 2006 Vintage paintings & new watercolours, Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
- 2005 Child's play: paintings, drawings, installations, Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
- Jenny Watson, Moka Gallery, Auckland
- 2003 Jenny Watson: child's play, Yokohama Museum of Art, and Hatano Fine Arts, Osaka
- Self portraits, Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
- 2001 Anna Schwartz Gallery at ARCO Art Fair, Madrid
- Jenny Watson: new work, Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
- Studio d'Arte Raffaelli at Bologna Art Fair, Italy
- Shinkinsville, Galerie Transit, Mechelen, Belgium
- 2000 Wild east, Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
- 1999 Hatano Fine Arts, Osaka
- 1998 Dark horse, Achim Kubinski, Berlin
- Dina Carola, Naples, Italy
- Mothership, Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
- The play room & buffaloes, College of Fine Arts, the University of Hanoi, Vietnam
- The seven ages of a playboy bunny, Gimpel Fils, London
- 1997 The bear facts, Galerie Transit, Leuven, Belgium
- Mothership, Studio d'Arte Raffaelli, Trento, Italy
- Universitätmuseum, Marburger, Germany
- 1996 Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
- Galerie Manuas Press, Stuttgart, Germany
- Rosenheim farm, Kunstverein Rosenheim, Germany
- Jenny Watson, Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Germany
- 1995 Fabian Walter Galerie, Basel
- Galerie Hilger, Vienna
- Galerie Janine Mautsch, Cologne
- Gramercy Park paintings, Manas Presse, Stuttgart, Germany
- The bear facts, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
- Recent works, Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
1994  Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
   Paintings with toys and bowler hats, Galerie Transit, Leuven, Belgium
   Jenny Watson: scrabble & paintings on hessian, Mannheimer Kunstverein, Mannheim, Germany

1993  Galerie Janine Mautsch, Cologne
   Galerie Hilger, Frankfurt
   Paintings with veils and false tails, Australian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Italy
   Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
   Jenny Watson, Roberta Lietti Arte Contemporanea, Como, Italy
   Yoshida Gallery, Nagoya, Japan

1992  Jenny Watson, Roberta Lietti Arte Contemporanea, Como, Italy
   Paintings with bowler hats and bottles, Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
   Yoshida Gallery, Nagoya, Japan

   Galerie Hilger, Vienna
   Meppener Kunstkreis, Meppen, Germany

1990  Jenny Watson: pleasures and memories, Galerie Hilger, Frankfurt

Group exhibitions: international

2011  Things on strings, Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo
      Group exhibitions: international
2007  Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery at Art Basel, Switzerland
      Studio d’Arte Raffaelli at Milano Art Fair, Italy
      Innocence and experience, Gimpel Fils, London
      Studio d’Arte Raffaelli at Bologna Art Fair, Italy
      Mommy dearest, Gimpel Fils, London
      Annina Nosei Gallery, New York

1999  Annina Nosei Gallery at Bologna Art Fair, Italy
      Stalke Galleri, Copenhagen

1998  VOXX, Chemnitz, Germany

1997  Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
      Art Apero Bildtauber, Fabian Walter Galerie, Basel
      Annina Nosei Gallery at Art Basel, Switzerland
      Hotel on fire: Brad Buckley, Geneviève Cadieux, Via Lewandowsky, Ken Lum, Jenny Watson, Kelowna Art Gallery, Canada

1996  Fabian Walter Galerie at Art Basel, Switzerland
      Janine Mautsch Galerie at Cologne Art Fair, Germany

1995  Fabian Walter Galerie, Basel
      One world: many visions, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, Silvermine Guild Arts Center, New Canaan, CT, United States

1994  Annina Nosei Gallery, New York
      The body, the human measure, Galerie Gabi Kraushaar, Düsseldorf
      Power works from the MCA Collection, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; Waikato Museum of Art & History, Hamilton, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand
      Yoshida Gallery at Nagoya Contemporary Art Fair, Japan

1994–93  Confess and conceal: 11 insights from contemporary Australia and south-east Asia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; National Art Gallery, Singapore; National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur; the Australian Centre, Manila; Australian Embassy, Jakarta

1993  Prospect 1993, Frankfurter Kunstverein and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt
      Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
      Yoshida Gallery, Nagoya, Japan

1992  Sinnlich, Janine Mautsch Galerie, Cologne

1991  Aufzeichnung, Janine Mautsch Galerie, Cologne
      Personal portraits, Annina Nosei Gallery, New York

1990  City Gallery at ARCO Art Fair, Madrid

1989–88  Australian Bicentennial Perspectives, Frankfurter Kunstverein and Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany

1986  Sixth Triennale of India, New Delhi

1985  3rd Internationale Triennale der Zeichnung, Stadt Kunsthalle, Nuremberg, Germany
      Isoustralia, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice
      Art of Peace Biennale, Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany

      Australian art in Amsterdam, Galerie Biederberg Muller, Amsterdam
      D’un autre continent l’Australie: le rêve et le réel, Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris

1978  Powell Street Gallery artists at Cunningham Ward Gallery, New York
Awards
2011 Arts Queensland grant
2005–06 Visual Arts/Crafts Board, Australia Council, fellowship
2005 Arts Queensland grant
2003 Visual Arts/Crafts Board, Australia Council, grant
2002–03 Residency, JASKA, Kellerberrin, Western Australia
2000 Arts Victoria grant
1999 Parque de la Memoria Sculpture Prize, Buenos Aires, semi-finalist
1997 Deacons, Graham & James/Arts 21 Award
1990 Portia Geach Memorial Art Award
1987 Newcastle Art Prize (joint winner with Mike Parr)
1986 Gold Medal, Indian Triennale, Delhi
1980 Visual Arts Board, Australia Council, grant
1979 Alliance Francaise Fellowship
1975 Georges Art Prize (shared)
1975 Visual Arts Board, Australia Council, grant

Further reading
Lindsay, Robert, Vox pop: into the eighties, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1983.
Paroissien, Leon & Frances Lindsay, Jenny Watson: paintings and drawings 1973–1985, University Gallery, the University of Melbourne, 1985.
Puvogel, Renate, Brigitte Reinhardt & Hanna Stegmayer, Jenny Watson, Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Germany, 1996.
She sold schoolgirls all over Tokyo.
She... 1999 (detail)
watercolour on Japanese magazine paper
6 sheets: 42 x 30 cm each,
overall dimensions variable

Detail from 'Lilydale, May 3, 1985' from the series 'Mothership' 1997
watercolour on paper, 75 x 57 cm
Courtesy the artist and Studio Raffaelli d'Arte, Trento, Italy