



CREATIVE BLOCKS SIMPLY DON'T EXIST, THANKS TO A PLETHORA OF INSPIRATIONAL PHOTOS TAKEN ON TRIPS TO THE ALPINE HIGH COUNTRY OR ALONG THE MURRAY RIVER.



what comes naturally

Albury artist Alison Percy has steadfastly maintained her passion for art, colour and design.

Alison Percy's inspiration comes from the natural world – the land, the figure and the flower.

“Above the tree line, the landscape is sparse and seemingly barren but I see the subtle shift in colour and the nuance of form. The more you look, the more you see,” she says from her delightful home and studio, which overlooks the back garden.

The High Country is her muse and the perfect place to sit still among nature.

“When you immerse yourself within the landscape and paint plein air (in the open air), the depth within the landscape and layers of colour are truly seen. Painting in the elements is an exhausting yet exhilarating experience.”

Alison's work is a sophisticated study of colour, juxtaposing vibrant and muted tones within a distinct visual rhythm. Referencing traditional Japanese calligraphy, she combines her fascination of fluid forms with her knowledge and passion for colour.

It wasn't always like this. In 2017, she was invited to tutor Visual Art painting units at Wodonga TAFE along with tutoring Life Drawing and Acrylic Painting at Murray Art Museum Albury.

Her passion for tutoring is an extension of her own artistic journey and love for sharing “what I wished I knew when I started painting”.

Within a year, she took a giant leap of faith, removing all design links from her website to commence work as a full-time artist. This pivotal moment was a long time in the making.

Blessed with a strong work ethic, Alison paints for herself and not simply to please others. Working with complete freedom allows “a feeling of absolute joy” that sneaks into her work. Creative blocks simply don't exist, thanks to a plethora of inspirational photos taken on trips to the Alpine High Country or along the Murray River.

Alison's ability to jump straight into a painting and move with ease from one task to another comes from her early grounding of working to deadlines.

“I've been illustrating and drawing my entire working life. Perhaps it's why I find myself drawing with paint. This fascinates me and could stem from being a calligrapher and my time learning shorthand.”

It's a memory close to Alison's heart. Her beloved mother, Glenda, also studied shorthand and still scribes a sentence in the air when the topic comes up.

Capturing the human figure from the live model, mostly using ink, Japanese watercolour and charcoal, is her way of exploring without expectations.

“This is where the growth happens,” she says. “This intuitive work flows into my landscape and floral works using fluid acrylic paint.”

A REWARDING CAREER

Alison was raised on the Scholz family farm, first settled by her German ancestors in the small farming community of Jindera in 1860. Her 95-years-young father, Wilf, was a fourth-generation farmer and one of 13 children.

After graduating from Albury High in 1980, Alison commenced Advanced Secretarial Studies at the local TAFE. Midway through the course she was offered a job as a trainee designer at the then *Border Morning Mail*.

The next decade was spent in the art department, designing logos and advertisements, stylising photo shoots, writing copy and producing illustrations for a wide range of products for local businesses and editorial features.

During her time there, she learnt many skills that helped shape her future career. Evenings were devoted to study, as Alison applied herself to two years of showcard and ticket writing, learning calligraphy with pen and ink and hand lettering with paint brushes. This was followed by a year exploring ceramics.

Later, she devoted a further four years to complete an Associate Diploma in Visual Arts, majoring in painting at the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education, now Charles Sturt University.

Her next job was as a designer/account manager for Ross Graphics, which proved an amazing opportunity for further growth at a national level.

“I'd never seen 200 employees working alongside each other in one large, open-plan office,” she says. “I had to walk through the middle of them all. At first it was all a bit daunting but I quickly found my feet.”

After two years, she left to start a family and work freelance from home. Alison and husband John have two children: Emma manages a Yoga and Pilates studio in Sydney while Jack, after many years as a ski instructor in Japan and Falls Creek, works on the mountain as a treatment plant operator.

“They've grown up seeing illustrations on the drawing board at the kitchen table and have learned to see with an artist's eye,” Alison says. “The dialogue in our home has always been about art, colour and design.”

John is a builder and loves working with wood as much as his wife enjoys playing with paint. They've always been a great team, designing and building their first home soon after marrying. John

makes Alison's “artisan” Australian mountain ash float frames by hand and stretches the fine Italian linen onto custom stretcher bars.

The pair first met in Year 10 through a mutual friend who lived across the road from where John grew up and where they now live. John is the third generation of his family to live in the home. In Year 12, they ran into each other at roller skating and married many years later during Alison's semester break from art school. John had earlier returned from a once-in-a-lifetime building opportunity in the Antarctic.

By the time their children were in high school, Alison found herself with more time on her hands and in 2005 finally picked up a paintbrush. A chance meeting at Wodonga TAFE turned into two years tutoring Illustration and Design for Interior Design, Visual Merchandising and Design Fundamentals courses.

“The learning curve was steep and the workload intense, but research rekindled my love for visual arts, and sparked a passion for inspiring students,” she says. >

FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Across the Lagoon*; Albury artist Alison Percy is fully committed to her art after a lifetime working in creative fields; *High Country Seclusion*.

ABOVE: Two recent works, *Along the High Plains Road* and *Hydrangeas from the Garden*.

ALISON HAS PARTICIPATED IN 11 SOLO SHOWS AND 38 GROUP EXHIBITIONS.

With TAFE funding cuts in 2014, Alison went on a self-imposed artist retreat in Melbourne, taking a range of art materials including a visual diary, heavy paper, watercolours, pen and ink. The resultant works were reproduced as limited edition fine art giclée prints on beautiful German etching paper.

While designing her own website, she added a new area called “Artwork” and was soon attending local and interstate galleries to reacquaint herself with the art scene. It was about this time she began life drawing, after a 27-year hiatus, at the Albury Wodonga Artists Society.

“I began volunteering at Murray Art Museum Albury and GIGS Art Gallery, Wodonga. It was a thrill, meeting gallery visitors and connecting with artists who I’d studied with all those years ago.”

In 2015, a vacancy became available for a solo exhibition in the main gallery of GIGS Art Gallery and Studios. By that stage Alison had been back life drawing for 18 months with enough work to fill four gallery spaces.

“It was never on my radar to have a solo exhibition – and one with all nudes would be a first for the region, I believe,” she smiles. The exhibition was well received, leading to a renewed confidence to continue her artistic pursuits.

Making up for lost time, Alison has participated in 11 solo shows and 38 group exhibitions, while taking on numerous commissions, including seven at various stages of progress currently in her studio plus other works scheduled in.



New works need to be completed for an art fair scheduled for September 2021 at the Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, before a solo exhibition in Sydney.

It has been a winding yet wondrous journey to achieve her dream of becoming a full-time artist but Alison Percy is living proof that good things happen to those who wait. **RLM**

ABOVE: Alison Percy's *From Last Spring*.



ALISON PERCY
AUSTRALIAN ARTIST

Capturing the land,
the figure and the flower

www.alisonpercy.com.au