

# Debbie Anderson



## Helix

Exhibition Catalogue  
16 October – 27 October 2018

## **Exhibition: Helix**

My first Solo exhibition is dedicated to the celebration of life, of beginnings, and endings, and of all things animate and inanimate. In Chinese philosophy, all matter contains Chi energy and in these works I express that belief. My influences are Nature, colour, family stories, and my personal journey.

## **Nature**

Growing up in Malaya, meant that the wilderness was never far away, nor was it benign. Under my father's influence, my siblings and I were imbued with wonder, and mindfulness of the world around. Why mindfulness? A hanging vine could also harbour a snake. My experience of walking down a path with the growth of plants closing around as we passed through is still vivid. An escort of monkeys and birds followed overhead. In my mind they were guardians.

## **Colour**

Colour was unrestrained. Clothes especially my grandmothers' sarongs, embroidered kebayas, and beaded slippers were exuberant. Dresses were colourful and back then people wore flowers in their hair. Houses were painted in fantastic colours. Food was full of colour so colour is in my DNA.

## **Family Stories**

The story tellers: my maternal grandmother and my father. My maternal grandmother was Roman Catholic but her pre-religious animistic beliefs were strong. Her stories consisted of how spirits, inhabited trees and permission was needed before you cut a tree down. Other such as if buildings were erected, a person had to be sacrificed for each corner. I have since found that other cultures throughout South East Asia and the Pacific have similar beliefs.

Being a daughter of a fisherman, her stories were of dangers and miraculous escapes at sea, mystical visions usually of a female spirit (Mary), and surprising catches such as Chinese porcelain, antiques and coins. The later was due to the Straits of Malacca being the grave of ship. There were also stories of her own mother who was considered a seer.

From my father there were many stories of what creatures lived in which part of the forest. He had run wild with his brothers in the jungle which was his playground. He tried where ever possible to share that experience with us.

The part that I didn't like was when he brought back wild animals and expected us to make pets of them.

## **My personal journey**

As a former nurse and acupuncturist, I have an appreciation for the spirit, drive and the determination that people have in order to triumph over adversity.

On a personal level, cancer treatment has in some respects freed me from the treadmill of life which was a comfortable place to be in. You work, enjoy your work, come home eat and rest. At the end of each fortnight, there was income available and twice a year holidays to experience.

All that changed when confronted with a change of routine, a loss of confidence and disability. Have been lucky as there has been no spread.

### **Art History and influences**

Art was always part of the curriculum at school. Whenever possible I attended life drawing, painting classes, interior decorating, and attended TAFE courses. My formal study was a Cert. in Textiles with the OCA. I Had spent 5-6 years, involved in silk painting, fabric dying, and fabric manipulation with a wonderful teacher Colleen Weste in Melbourne. She gave me more than knowledge, as she showed me how to work as an artist.

I was a member of art group OMSA, and through this group exhibited and sold my work.

Last exhibition was in 2011, with another artist at Russell gallery, Mt. Cootha.

For a time earned a living from selling hand dyed silk products.

### **My Passions**

My interest in the environment and my experience of seeing the destruction of the natural forests, more than saddened me. The feeling was more grief, and helplessness.

When the land is cleared, the orange clay soils are exposed and it is as if the land has been skinned.

With the rains which are torrential, rivers of red soil and mud, drain away like blood.

The memory of homeless monkeys wandering like orphans along the side of the roads are not something that can be forgotten.

This takes me to the issue of Oil Palms. These are tropical plants. So, the best places to grow them are where the jungles of the world existed.

When I think of palm oil, I think of food, margarine, biscuits, cake, cooking oil, but there are other plants that can provide this.

What I was not aware of was biofuels contain a large component of palm oil, hence the acceleration of the destruction and the spread of plantations.

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*Oil palms and village life 1*  
Mixed media on canvas, 50 x 40 cm \$225

This is the story of palm oil and it's intrusion on village life. It's a sad story but I haven't depicted the sadness or the ugliness. When driving past you see some forest and think that all is well.



*Oil palms and village life 2*  
Mixed media on canvas, 50 x 40 cm \$225

Life continues but where the oil palms grow there is a change in the ecosystem. Monocultures create problems. Land clearing to plant the palms caused soil erosion, and the use of pesticides creates a toxic environment.



*Oil palms and village life 3*  
Mixed media on canvas, 50 x 40 cm \$225

Oil palms are grown in tropical areas of the world; this means there is wholesale destruction of the rainforest and loss of habitat for wildlife. People can no longer forage or fruit or traditional forest products. Few creatures can survive in a palm oil plantation, Rats Snakes, and wild pigs are some of them that can.



*Oil palms and village life 4*  
Mixed media on canvas, 50 x 40 cm \$225

The story continues with the people moving away as life becomes unhealthy and unsafe. The margin between the village and the plantation harbours vermin and becomes the haunt of dangerous creatures that have become displaced.



*Out of the forest*

Mixed media on canvas, 45 x 45 cm \$280

Of being in a nurturing environment and of freedom.





*Shower of light*  
Mixed media on canvas, 46 x 46 cm \$280

Renewal.



*Market*

Mixed media on canvas, 40 x 30 cm \$220

A nostalgic look at the open air market of old.



*Kuan Yin*

Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 50 cm \$360

Goddess of mercy and of what is in my subconscious. Growing up in South East Asia, this is the Goddess to go to with prayers in a difficult situation. She is not that different from Mary (mother of God) or Astarte or Hera.



*Dragon Goddess*  
Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 51 cm \$350

Looking for the Yin or female principal of life. Different cultures have different names for her. She is called Athena in Greece, Diana in ancient Rome, and Kali in India. These are not the gentle side of the female principal, but the forces that control and regulate.



*In the wild*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

Exuberance of nature, the wealth of nature, and the hope it will continue to survive.



*In the wild with heron*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

Exploring the richness of the forest.



*From the ashes*

Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61 cm \$450

An expression of hope, freedom and life after difficulty.



*Time and tide*

Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

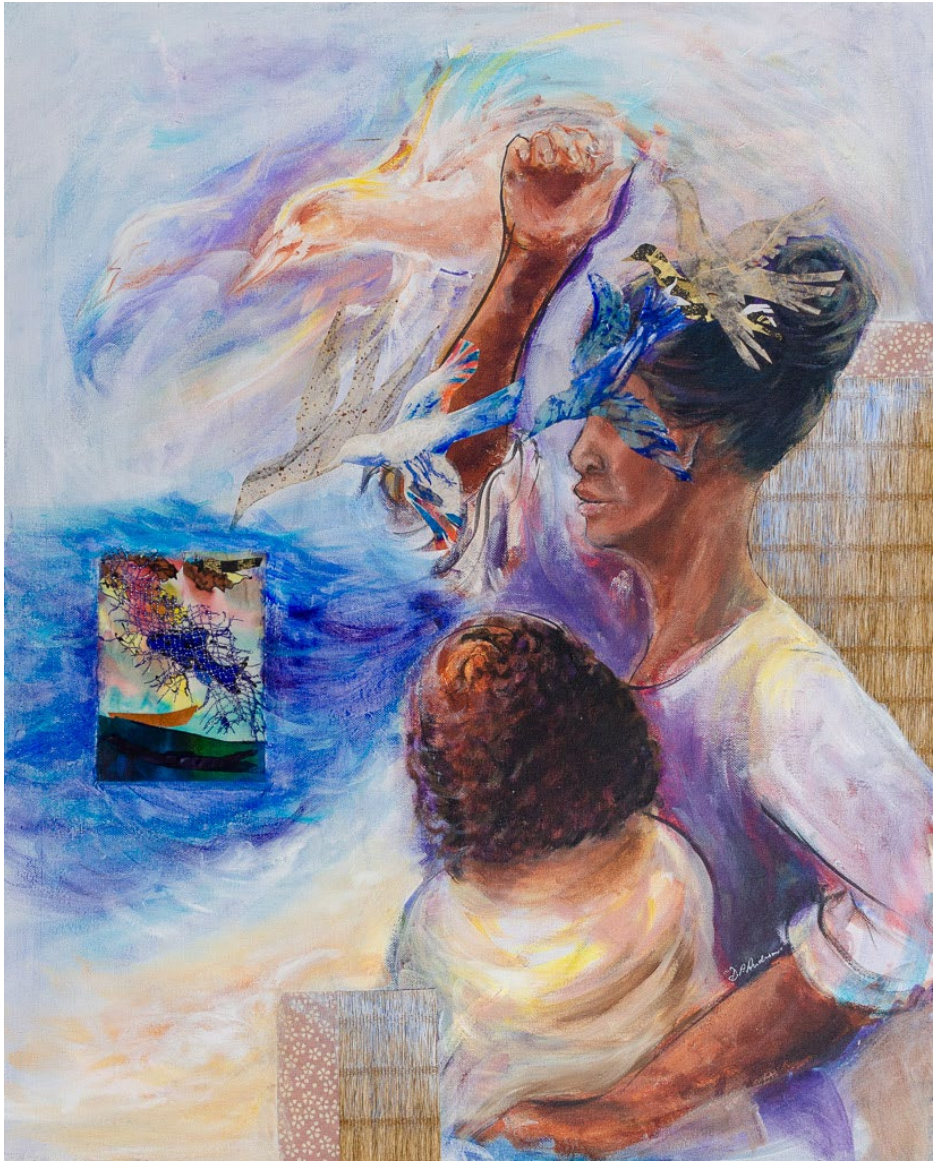
The elemental uncertainty of the coast.





*If fishes were wishes 3*  
Mixed media on canvas, 77 x 61 cm \$510

Thinking of members of my extended family that are still fishermen.  
Reflecting their tenacity and optimism are the flying fish.



*The Seer*

Mixed media on canvas, 77 x 61 cm \$550

From a story told by my Grandmother of her Mother, 'the Seer'.  
She was a prophet for her community and able to foretell the future for her family.



*If fishes were wishes 2*  
Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$600

Musing on a poem 'If fishes were wishes'. My family comes from fishing stock. Hard work and danger is a part of life but optimism always prevails. There will always be fish to be caught and sometimes even treasure from an old shipwreck to be found.



*If fishes were wishes 1*  
Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$600

The depth of wishing for all needs and wants. If it were as simple as casting that net.



*Beach life*  
Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 91 cm \$580

Australian lifestyle.



Nosy

Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$500

Cocky wants to be in on the action.



*Tradition*

Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$600

This represents the Luso Portuguese of South East Asia. Those who speak the old language and maintain the old customs, which are music, dances, and religion.



*Fire that creates*  
Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$600

Having been through fire to find there is life on the other side.





*Phoenix and the circle*  
Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 61 cm \$600

Understanding that life is a never-ending circle of birth and rebirth.



*Worlds within Worlds*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 50 cm \$350

Contemplating the circularity of all things. Taking the atom for instance electrons revolve around the core. Our solar system consists of planets revolving around the sun. It is the fascination of things that we can only imagine, but actually place.



*Vision*

Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61 cm \$450

Seeing blue through the flickering light.



*Butterflies*

Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61 cm \$450



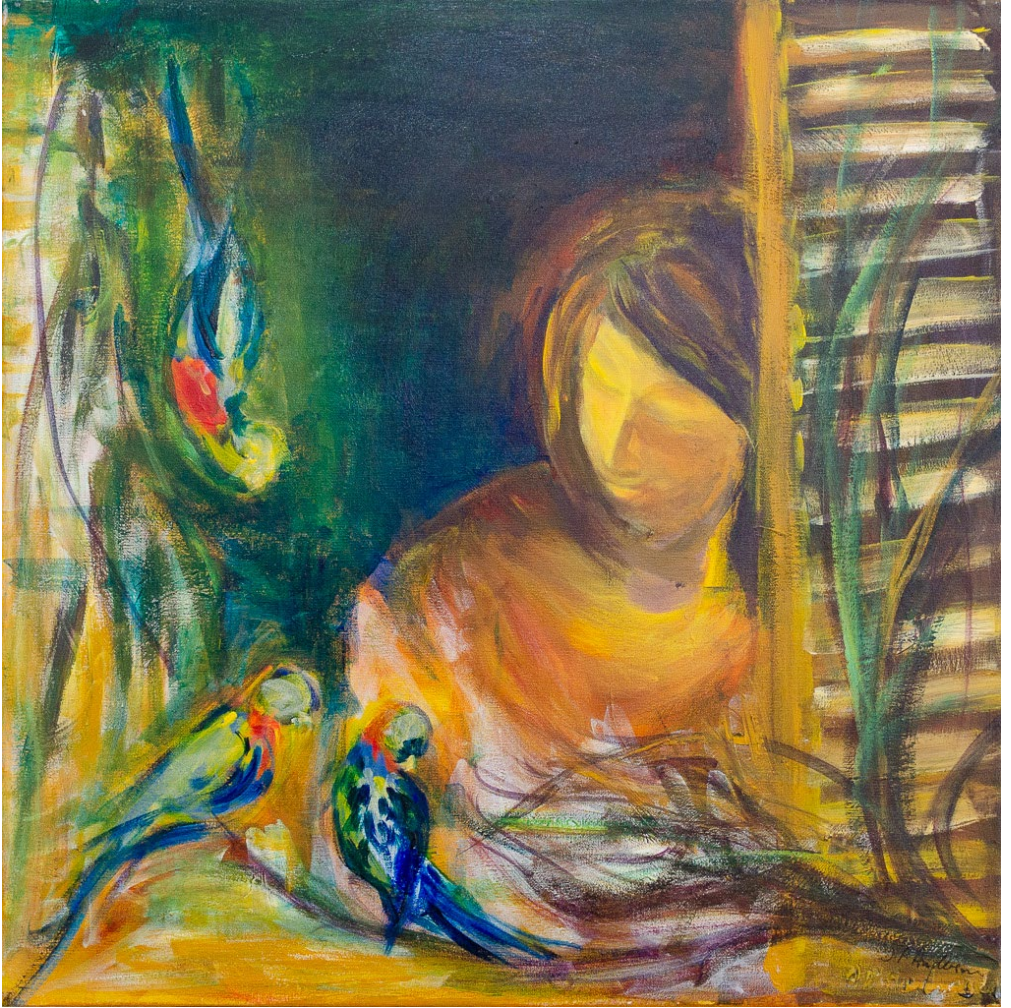
*Old songs*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

In memory and love for all those who made the music that we sang to.



*Rasa Sayang*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

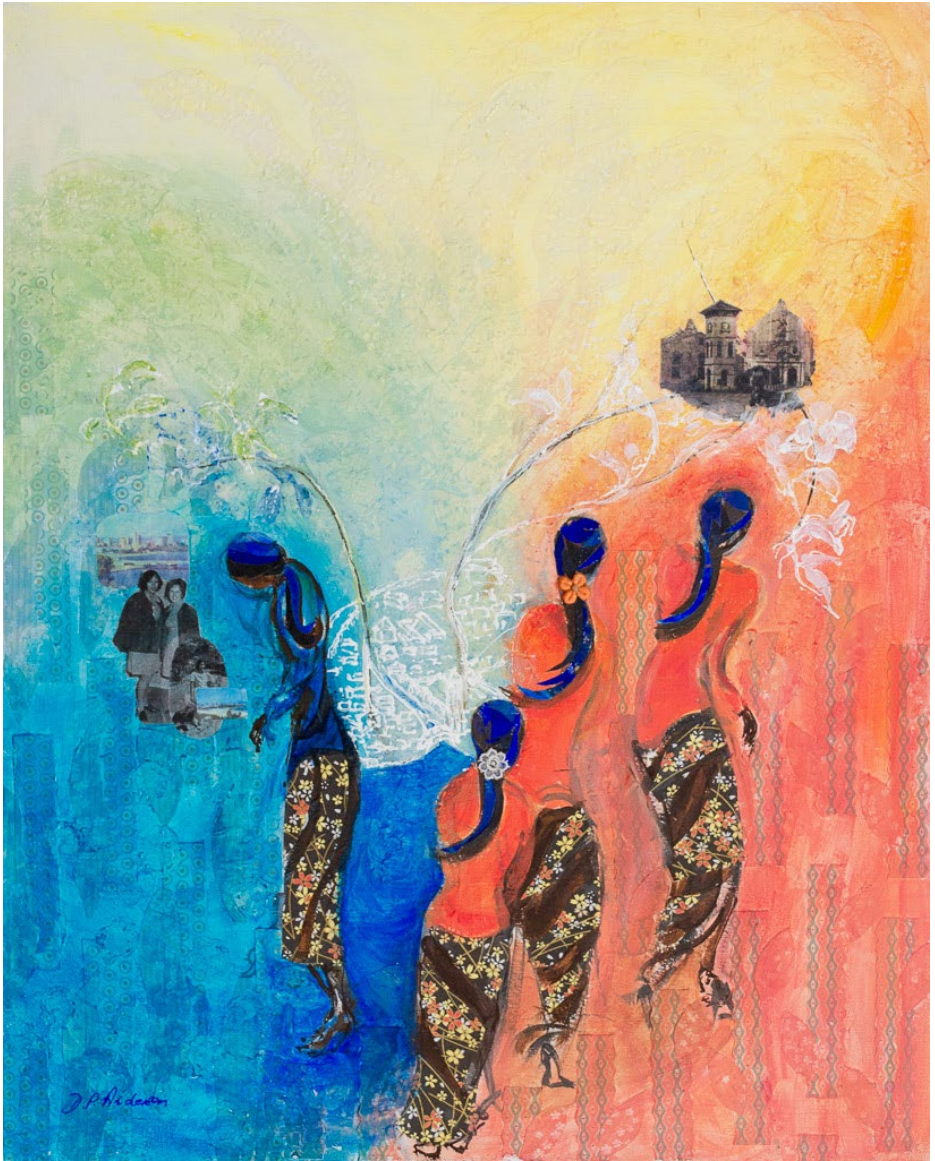
Music and love.



*Visiting friends*

Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

Enjoying the connection with lorikeets.



*A different path*  
Mixed media on canvas, 76 x 61 cm \$510

A story of leaving familiarity and home for a different path. It is the path of being a migrant through necessity for education and employment.





*Jungle*  
Mixed media on canvas, 76 x 60 cm \$550



*Dancing with Lyre birds*  
Mixed media on canvas, 76 x 61 cm \$550



*Disturbance in the clearing*  
Mixed media on canvas, 61 x 61 cm \$450

Escape from prowling Tiger.



*Monkey and Tiger*  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm \$450

Seeing monkeys again reminded me of the Monkey God Hanuman. As his abode is the forest he comes into contact with Harimau the Tiger King.



*Monkey 2*

Collage and water colour on paper, 50 x 40 cm \$150

Influenced by the story of Monkey (Hanuman) in the Ramayana, Monkey is approached by Rama (the king in exile) to assist in the quest to rescue his wife Sita who had been kidnapped by the demon King. Monkey was said to have regained his powers, which he had forgotten. Illustrates Monkey regaining his divine nature.



*Monkey 2*

Collage and water colour on paper, 50 x 40 cm \$150

Monkey (Hanuman) in the tale written by Wu Cheng An, was imprisoned in a mountain for millennia due to misbehaviour, but is freed when his skills were needed by Buddha to help guide a journey to the west. In the epic poem Ramayana Monkey is the son of Shiva (the destroyer) and Viraya (Goddess of the Wind) due to them consorting in monkey form. Born in the form of a monkey he received special powers. It is the hidden and the inert that spring to life to find hidden abilities such is Monkey.

