

Jenifer Herde

Artist, 82, Brisbane

Interview **TONYA TURNER**

I could always draw and paint, even as a small child. The first oil painting I ever sold was a still life of marigolds when I was 17 years old. Drawing is all I ever wanted to do.

I was born in Adelaide and grew up in Mount Gambier. When I was 18, I felt I needed to branch out, so I trained as a nurse at a children's hospital in Adelaide. I used to paint Walt Disney characters and draw pictures in shaving cream on the glass windows for the children.

My husband Jim worked in insurance and we met at a hospital dance. We loved travelling and took regular holidays overseas together for 30 years. One of our favourite destinations was Italy. We went on many occasions and when we came home I did watercolours of places we'd been.

Classic art is my passion. I've copied some of the old masters and impressionists including Rembrandt, Barocci, Renoir and Monet for my own learning.

I enjoy the challenge of doing it.

The painting I'm proudest of is my copy of Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*. It's 4ft x 5ft and I have it hanging in my dining room. I also did a modern version of Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. A friend asked me to paint it in 1987 with all of our friends as the people at the party.

In 2011 I put an entry in the Archibald Prize. My subject was Barnaby Joyce and



PICTURE: DAVID KELLY

I had to meet him personally to take part, so I drove to St George. He hadn't hit notoriety in those days and he was very laid back and accommodating. I didn't win the prize, but it was a great experience being part of it.

All my life I've been commissioned for paintings. I've painted portraits, farms, houses and lots of landscapes, especially in the Barossa Valley where I lived before moving to Brisbane.

I'm not driving now because my sight has diminished, so I use the garage as my studio. It's nice and airy with a window. I have over 100 works in my studio and on the walls at home. There are so many things I can't do now, but I can still

manage to wield the brushes and produce some paintings.

Jim and I had 53 very happy years together before I lost him five years ago to cancer. We had two boys but my eldest son, Stephen, died in a car accident when he was just 18.

After Jim died, I sold the house in the Barossa Valley and moved to Brisbane to be closer to my youngest son Tom, 55, daughter-in-law Sharon, 53, and my two grandchildren Sam, 26, and Britta, 22.

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I love living at Blue Care Wondall Gardens retirement village.

It's very quiet and in a very good position. Being close to my family is the highlight of my life now and painting is still my passion.

I just received a commission to paint some hydrangeas. I think largely why I love painting is because it makes people happy.

To see more of Jenifer's work, visit her Facebook page @jenisherde-artist