

materfamilias

CHRISTINA KERKVLJET GODDARD



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Materfamilias literally refers to the female head of the household. Through this body of work Kerkvliet-Goddard externalised thoughts that are both autobiographical and of universal experience. Her work follows in the long tradition of artists who utilise the human body as a metaphorical conduit for the expression of personal notions of history. The physical nature of the external appearance of the body has captured the imagination of many artists who have been enchanted by the struggle to represent flesh tone, posture and demeanour. Artists and medical practitioners both benefited from intimate knowledge of the body gained by the fifteenth century trend of dissection. While creating the work in **Materfamilias**, Kerkvliet-Goddard played with notions of the internal and external body, dissection and classification in reference to her own genetic construction (which was uncovered through her concurrent studies of genealogy). The forms she has wrought from discarded materials utilised iconic bone formations to create furniture for a house of unwritten histories. Both the nature of the internal organs of the body and the precise details of many women's histories elude finite classification. Kerkvliet-Goddard acknowledges difficulties in sourcing information concerning her female relatives as their histories were usually only recorded incidentally and in relation to male companions.

To create the work, Kerkvliet-Goddard has painstakingly recuperated copper wire from discarded pieces. Ironically, some of the wire was derived from the communications industry, as whilst the artist was creating the work she was attempting to make connections with her past, and establish a dialogue with

previously estranged relatives. Women's' history is often passed orally through generations, stories handed down at gatherings around the hearth and in the kitchen. The use of copper wire is inspired by Kerkvliet-Goddard's discovery of a maternal grandmother who lived near copper mines in South Australia. The subtitles of the wires, their varying diameters and tints, refer to their previous incarnations as utilitarian objects. Kerkvliet-Goddard's work is drawn from a history of her own body, which subtly echoes her past experiences and is etched with the marks of childbirth. Stray wires that spike out in various directions provide the works with an organic, haphazard appearance and the forms are reminiscent of veins.

The labour intensive process of stripping the plastic coating from the wire and then winding it onto makeshift bobbins in order to prepare it for crocheting has much in common with creative endeavours that have been pursued by women throughout the ages. These pursuits have often been derisively referred to as 'craft', and hence not considered or appreciated for their inherent qualities. Kerkvliet-Goddard has been crocheting and knitting since the age of three. These skills, like genes, are often passed from mother to daughter. The deceptively fragile appearance of the work mimics the frail persona traditionally assigned to women. However, subsequent considerations of both the merits of women in general and these works in particular belies this initial impression.

Anonda Bell.



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Christina Kerkvliet Goddard

Biography

- Born Seymour, Victoria in 1965
- 1991 Certificate of Art, Aldgate TAFE, Adelaide
- 1995 Bachelor of Visual Arts, University of South Australia, South Australian School of Arts, Underdale, Adelaide
- 1996 Graduate Diploma of Community and Cultural Development, Community Arts Network, Adelaide, South Australia
- 1997-00 Lecturer in Professional Studies, La Trobe University, Department of Visual Arts Bendigo, Victoria

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 1999 *Remove & Shake, 'family tincture'*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria
- 1998 *Mixed Blessings*, Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. Patrick's Chapel, Bendigo, Victoria
- 1996 *Aria*, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2001 *Linden's 10th annual Postcard Show*, Linden Arts Centre & Gallery, St Kilda, Victoria
- 2000 *The Fleurieu Art Prize & Touring Exhibition*, Fleurieu Art Foundation & Biennale Inc, South Australia
- 2000 *Celebrating the Exquisite Corpse*, Bendigo Art Gallery & selected touring venues, Victoria
- 2000 *Postcard Show 2000*, Linden Arts Centre & Gallery, St Kilda, Victoria
- 1998 *Bendigo Work on Paper Exhibition*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria
- 1998 *The Post - Postcard Show 1998*, Linden Arts Centre & Gallery, St Kilda, Victoria
- 1996 *Produce*, works by FOR-BE-TWO Incorporated, Adelaide Central market, Adelaide
- 1995 *EXIT*, University of South Australia, South Australian School of Art, Adelaide
- 1995 *Helpmann Academy Exhibition*, Institut Seni Indonesia, Yogyakarta
- 1995 *Sir Robert Helpmann Academy Exhibition*, Festival Centre, Adelaide
- 1994 *Ways and Means*, Union Gallery, University of Adelaide, South Australia

Awards

- 2000 **Project Grant: Arts Victoria - 'Materfamilias'**
- 1998 **Project Grant: Arts Victoria - 'family tincture'**
- 1996 *The Oscars - Art Exhibitions: Best New Talent: 'The Adelaide Advertiser's annual arts awards'*
- 1994 **John Christie Wright Memorial Prize**, School of Art, University of South Australia

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