

INSIGHT

Jocelyn Girle

The
Cottagey Look

Edited by Trevor Lang

An artist from country Queensland chooses to paint in browns to inject warmth into her woolshed works. These colours are also attuned to the wooden structures in her favourite subject matter.

Now in her sixties, Jocelyn Girle is a latecomer to the fascinating world of art. Seven years ago she was asked to contribute to an art and craft exhibition at Goondiwindi.

Life was challenging for Jocelyn at that time ... her second husband (who has since passed away) was being treated for cancer ...but she accepted the invitation to submit some creative work.

"I exhibited about 30 pieces of fine embroidery and about 20 paintings," she reveals. "The pieces which sold most readily were my pen and ink pictures, using Burnt Umber acrylic ink. My motto, since then, has been: 'When you're on a good thing, stick to it'."

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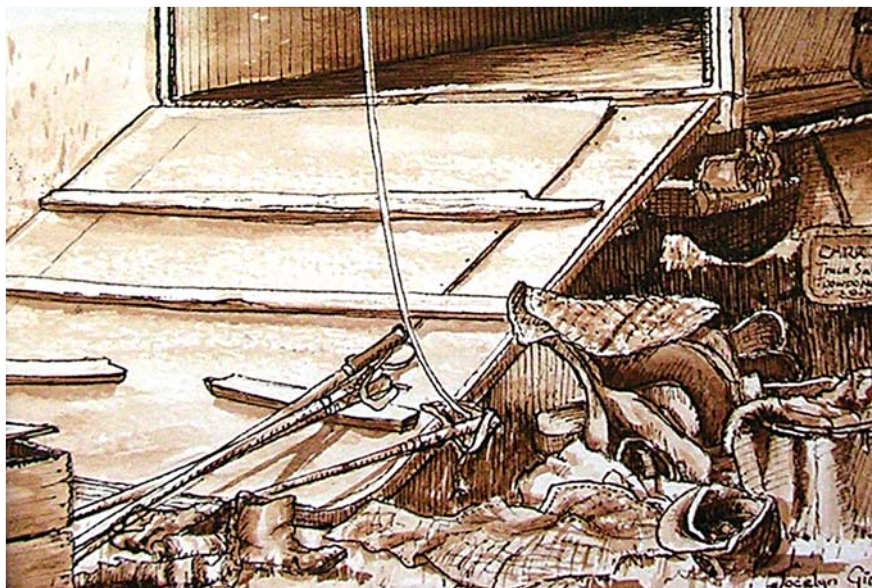


Jocelyn and her husband, at that time, had a mixed farming business – broadacre cropping (mainly barley for the local cattle feedlot), some summer crops, sheep (wool and fat lambs) and Angus cattle. The property featured one of the original buildings in the Goondiwindi area – established in 1842 on the banks of the Dumaresq River which forms part of the New South Wales/Queensland border.

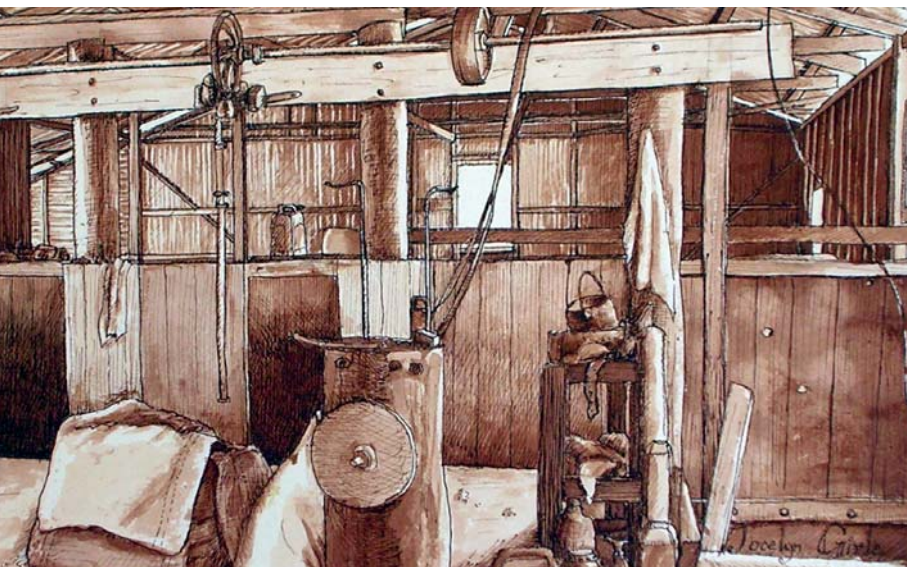
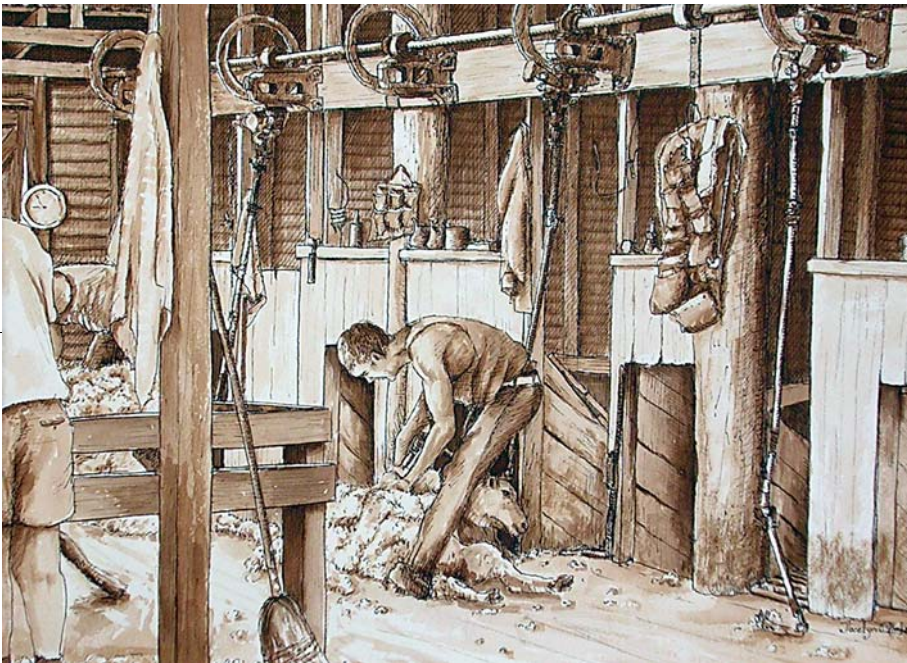
“We had a large eight stand woolshed, complete with an old Koertz wool press,” Jocelyn says. “My husband was very supportive of my interest in taking photographs and working them up into paintings. Originally, I only painted scenes without people ... but as I progressed I began to include the shearers at work.”

“I had no-one to teach me,” she reveals. “But I did school ‘art’ to Year 10 level – and I have a very accurate eye. I find it difficult to measure using my eye and a pencil ... I keep getting different measurements! Now, I just do ‘what feels best’.”

Jocelyn Girlie initially chose to paint in browns because they are warmer than black, and more attuned to the wooden structures of the woolsheds. She liked the warmth provided by the brown tints, and found that the whole effect seemed to attract the interest of buyers. She calls it the ‘Cottagey’ look.



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“This style of work rated very highly in the Goondiwindi area, especially ten years ago,” she says. “Dark brown is more ‘Cottagey’ than black – particularly if it is framed in a dark wooden frame.”

Since her husband died, Jocelyn has attended a number of summer schools. The first of these were associated with craft activities (glass bead making and silver smithing), but she has also done some art courses – learning how to use pastels for landscapes and portraiture; and gaining an introduction to the fascinating world of drawing from life, including measuring and recording.

“This is a world which was completely unknown to me, and I love it!” she enthuses. “I will keep doing woolsheds and haysheds, and shed memorabilia, because these works sell readily. They appeal to many people for many reasons: Nostalgia; recording times and places; and recording rural lifestyles. They also look equally good in a man’s world – on office or den walls – or hung in formal family living areas.”

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Jocelyn Girlie's pictures do not rely on colour to catch the eye or represent detail. She feels that they are reminiscent of old etchings – something which many viewers enjoy.

"I delight in making things, and doing things with my hands, and involving my mind as well," she explains. "Painting does all of this. I become quite involved while I am working. My style of art isn't very innovative, but it takes concentration – together with self-

criticism of line and tone – working towards creating a realistic yet not photographic interpretation of what's going on."

Her work involves many of the real basics of high art: Perspective, accurate drawing, tone, light and shade, and composition ... all of which can be exercised in miniature or on large-scale pictures.

"Personally, I would prefer to draw in the shed," she says. "But realistically, working from photographs gives me a

record (in a flash) of the lighting of that moment – while also giving me an unparalleled reference for proportions and details."

Jocelyn believes it is far more convincing to draw what she is familiar with ... rather than trying to make sense of something she has never seen or used before. Clearly she is very familiar with her chosen subjects, which she illustrates in a charming and convincing style that few could hope to emulate. ■

