



Vivid celebration of life

Wendy Sharpe has been reunited with an old friend, writes **Elizabeth Fortescue**

WENDY Sharpe is asking for a damp Wettex. She has noticed a thin coat of dust all over *Self Portrait As Diana Of Erskineville*, the big, unframed canvas that won her the coveted Archibald Prize in 1996.

This week, *Diana Of Erskineville* will be taken from Anne's Lower North Shore home to the National Trust's S.H. Ervin Gallery in The Rocks for Sharpe's first survey exhibition, *Wendy Sharpe: The Imagined Life*.

Diana will take pride of place in the gallery among a large selection of other artworks from Sharpe's prolific and successful career. She has won many major art prizes, exhibited to acclaim all over Australia, travelled to East Timor as an official Australian War Artist, and produced a suite of huge mural paintings for the Olympic swimming pool at Cook and Phillip Park in the Sydney CBD.

Sharpe is an enthusiastic

traveller and many of the exhibition works were inspired by Venice, Cairo, Rome, Paris and other destinations where she has had artistic residencies or just travelled privately with her partner, the artist Bernard Ollis.

Until recently, Sharpe taught part-time at the National Art School in Darlinghurst. It was there that, some years ago, Anne enrolled in Sharpe's painting class.

Sharpe did not know Anne was already the owner of *Diana*, Anne having bought it from King Street Gallery on William.

Reunited, the pair embrace warmly, with Sharpe just as thrilled to see her portrait again 15 years after it was painted.

"I'm glad I used that pink above her head, and that it's different from the red of the trolley," she says. She also points out a toy arrow at Diana's feet, and a reference to the moon with which the goddess is associated.

Sharpe is "really pleased" the painting is owned by an artist and hung in a family home where it is seen and enjoyed every day.

Anne bought the work after

falling in love with it years earlier and determining that one day it would be hers. The gallery allowed her to pay it off in instalments. "It's a gorgeous, exciting painting," Anne says.

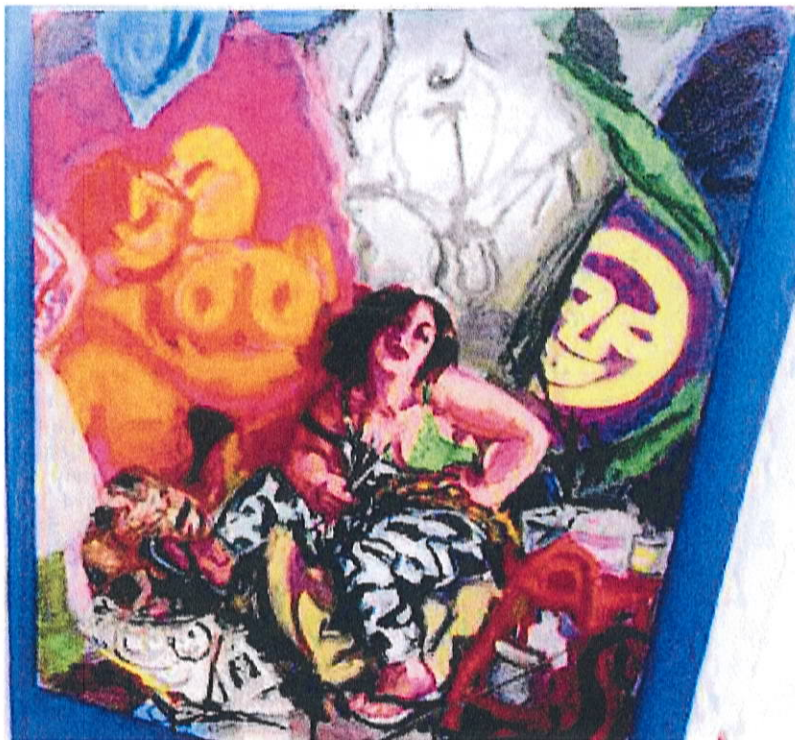
Diana was a popular Archibald winner that prompted no controversy and became a landmark painting for the Erskineville artist.

Although she had already won the prestigious Sulman Prize at the Art Gallery Of NSW, it was the Archibald that put Sharpe on to the front pages.

"It was the event that gave me more publicity than anything else possibly could," Sharpe says.

The exhibition will include paintings, drawings and some of Sharpe's vibrant sketchbooks from her travels.

Wendy Sharpe: The Imagined Life, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Watson Rd, Observatory Hill, The Rocks; Saturday until April 10, adult \$7, conc \$5, under 12 free, 9258 0173, nationaltrust.com.au



Together again: Artist Wendy Sharpe with her Archibald Prize-winning painting, *Self-Portrait As Diana Of Erskineville*

Also showing

Hard Sleeper at Damien
Minton Gallery, until Saturday
Defiance Summer Show at
Defiance Gallery II, until
March 19

Hand On Heart, Alternative
Process Photography at
Meyer Gallery, until Sunday

Ivor Fabok, Paul Higgs and
Bruce Radke at Stella Downer
Fine Art, from tomorrow



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WENDY SHARPE

RECOGNISED for her expressive and exuberant paintings of voluptuous and sensual women – often imagined depictions of the artist herself – this exhibition traces the artist's oeuvre from her early work through to the present, as one of Australia's leading painters.

WHERE:
S.H. Ervin Gallery Millers Point

WHEN:
Until April 10

INFO:
nationaltrust.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE

WENDY SHARPE: THE IMAGINED LIFE

Survey Exhibition S. H. Ervin Gallery, 26 February – 10 April 2011

Wendy Sharpe is one Australia's leading artists, recognised for her expressive and exuberant paintings of voluptuous and sensual women, often imagined depictions of the artist herself. Sharpe's observations of daily life are compelling and theatrical, while displaying confidence and self assuredness in revealing her inner world to the viewer. This is the first survey show of Sharpe's work, celebrating 25 years since Sharpe won the Sulman Prize in 1986, for her painting *Black Sun Morning to Night*.

Wendy Sharpe: The Imagined Life traces the development of the artist, from her early work through to the present and demonstrates her dedication to historical art, the human figure and to painting. It will be the first opportunity to examine the artist's work in depth and allow appraisal of her enormous contribution to recent Australian art. Sharpe was awarded the Archibald Prize in 1996 for her self portrait, *Self Portrait as Diana of Erskineville* and has been awarded the Portia Geach Memorial Award twice, in 1996 and 2003. She was also commissioned as an official Australian war artist by the Australian War Memorial, to document peace keeping activities in East Timor.

Sharpe first ventured onto the Sydney art scene in 1985 at the age of 25 with a rather provocatively titled solo exhibition, *Sex and Death*, and has since been an important presence in Australian visual arts. Her ascent continued the following year when not only she was awarded the prestigious Sulman Prize, but also received the Dyason and Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarships and residency at the Cite International des Arts Studio complex in Paris, allowing her to immerse herself in the great galleries and museums of Europe. This early opportunity imprinted deeply on her psyche and has been an important reference in her work ever since. Months of obsessive drawing in numerous sketchbooks – a practice the artist continues to this day – in cafes and in the streets, confirmed her commitment to figuration. The exhibition includes paintings, drawings and colourful sketchbooks from her extensive travels.

To coincide with the exhibition, Sharpe will launch her lavishly illustrated 128 page monograph *Wendy Sharpe: The Imagined Life*, written by Courtney Kidd, as well a DVD by Catherine Hunter.

-Ends-

Media Enquiries- For further information, additional digital images and interviews with Wendy Sharpe please contact: Kathryn Lee Beattie, Public Programs Coordinator, Telephone: (02) 9258 0150 Mobile: 040 339 1026, Email: kbeattie@nationaltrust.com.au

Public Information: S. H Ervin Gallery, Watson Road, Observatory Hill, The Rocks, Sydney
Gallery Front Desk: (02) 9258 0173 Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am–5pm
Admission: \$7/ \$5 Concessions/ \$4 National Trust members/ children under 12 free

Visit us on the Web at: www.nationaltrust.com.au



Wendy Sharpe, *Paris Studio*, 2007, Oil on linen, 80 x 378cm