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Wednesday, 24 April 2013

Abstract Artist- Margaret Dredge



Dredge in her studio, Sandringham, Victoria, 1972. Richard Beck vn3533012, National Library of Australia

Margaret Dredge is an artist who quietly went about the business of art making and was an important figure in the development of modern art in Australia. She has been introduced to me through her retrospective which is currently being exhibited at Shoalhaven City Arts Centre in Nowra.

Margaret Dredge was born in Victoria in 1928 and she had quite a challenging childhood. Her mother died when she was born. Her father was a WW1 veteran and the two of them boarded in 17 different houses. As a teen she was very interested in art and wished to study it but her father wanted her to have a more conventional education and a steady job. She became a secretary and married but then did begin her art education in the mid 1950's.

Margaret Dredge's early work was figurative or still life and this led to abstraction which was to be the focus throughout her art making. She

exhibited regularly in group and solo shows throughout the 1960s and 70s. She was well received, winning prizes and critical acclaim. Margaret then withdrew from exhibiting after the 1979 solo show. The reasons were many but included the pressure she felt to produce more of the same style of work as well as issues regarding art politics and attitudes toward woman artists.

Margaret continued working after 1979 but exhibited only a handful of times. In this retrospective it is fascinating to see the development of an artist. Margaret was beating her own drum but was, of course, influenced by the time, the trends and the work of other artists.



Death of Patroclus, 1964

I cannot begin to discuss Margaret Dredge's paintings and etchings except in the most simplified terms. Max Dingle and Rhonda Dredge have discussed her work beautifully in the essays included in the catalogue for this exhibition and I would encourage you to read them.

Here are a variety of paintings from the exhibition throughout the 1960s, 70, 80s and 90s.

If you have a chance to go to Nowra to see the work of this important Australian artist please do. The exhibition is open until May 21. Please find the details on the website www.shoalhavenartscentre.com.au