



1



2

Helen Eager

Helen Eager is a colour enthusiast who thrives on the freedom abstraction offers her. Both are still going strong in her latest exhibition ‘Intersections’, which also happens to be her 34th solo show. A feat in itself which is impressive, let alone when you add that she has works in major galleries (The National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales), was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art to leave her triangle mark, with *TANGO*, on the wall of the new MCA, for its opening, and she’s still evolving and changing her work and practice. In Eager’s latest exhibition colour plays with space, shapes interlock – rather than float freely like in her ‘tripartite’ series – to make new forms and silhouettes, that give each work its own character and personality. We chat to Eager about walking the path to abstract enlightenment and how she stays inspired.

*Can you tell us a bit about the inspiration for your latest exhibition ‘Intersections’...*

The work itself has evolved out of my previous work through a slow process rather than a moment of revelation. But the titles came to me when I was in New York last year. A lot of things came together there, thus intersections.

*How do the works expand on previous ideas or themes?*

I am always working and so there is a continuum, but exhibitions tend to accentuate the difference. This new body of work takes the triangular forms I have been using, but by placing them across the surface canvas and joining them as a whole, new forms have emerged.

*What’s your process for creating a piece?*

I do a lot of drawing, sometimes months, and through that I find my way. The paintings come later, I start small, it’s free-er, and gradually the bigger works appear.

*What appeals about making abstract work?*

Abstraction to me is freedom, it’s what I do. Realism demands reference to outside things, abstraction comes from the inside, it is what it is.

*How do you choose which colours to use in a piece?*

Initially it’s instinctive but I am always observing colour relationships, and I have lots of coloured pencils and pens, which I experiment with. Colour is an important element in my work. On a painting I often do have a plan, but it plays out within itself and has its own life. Colour is always relative and you have to be open to the unexpected.

*What draws you to triangles?*

I have become known for my triangles but they come at the end of many years of simplifying and refining form. They are now very particular equilateral triangles, but they have been joined by new friends whose shapes are very different. I guess at this point the triangles are my primary forms but that may change.

*What was the most important thing art school taught you?*

Discipline, you worked everyday and it was terrific training.

*This is your 34th solo exhibition, how do you keep the creative fires burning?*

That’s never been a problem, it’s my life. Drawing is always a good way to explore possibilities, keep you moving, and I keep looking and participating, I think that’s important.



3

*Can you tell us about what you’re working on for ‘Sydney Contemporary’...*

This installation goes back to the very drawings that began defining the structures for my new paintings. I will be using coloured tape to make ‘drawings’ on the glass panels throughout Carriageworks, and I am looking forward to it.

*What are you most proud of in your career?*

Surviving is probably the first thing, but I am pleased to look back on a body of work that stands up. Of course making *TANGO* for the opening of the MCA was a pretty special moment.

1 *Park Avenue*, 2015, oil on linen, 300 x 200cm  
2 Helen Eager’s studio, July 2015  
3 *Intersections East Village*, 2015, oil on linen, 60 x 40cm  
Courtesy the artist and Utopia Art Sydney, Sydney