

Juno Gemes Introduction Speech for Patricia Casey's 'Little Secrets' Exhibition.  
Presented at the Opening Night Launch  
NG Art Gallery, Chippendale  
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Diana Arbus famously said, 'A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know.' This statement came immediately to my mind when viewing the mysterious, beautifully crafted work of Patricia Casey.

Let me try to unpick what Patricia is revealing to us in her works, 'Little Secrets'.

Patricia Casey discovered herself as an artist later in life and hit the ground running! In her second year of study, at this time also a mother of three small children, she had a work hung in the prestigious Sulman Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW. This was most unusual for any woman artist. That work, titled 'Squall', was a series of images and a meditation on discovering the truth about her father. From the start Patricia explored her inner world in her work.

Going on field trips with her husband Michael, exploring aspects of landscape sometimes in a four-wheel drive with her children, she harvested specific images for later use.

At first, like Sally Mann, she used her children as her models. Now she has widened her subjects to include her children's friends. She prefers young ones who 'still have their shine on them.'

Her subjects are all in their late teens. They are beautifully young, de-saturated now into mythic forms. Compositional clues from foraging in the country are layered into carefully structured compositions. Brought together on the finest cloth from Germany, the work is finely embellished in fine stitching with silver thread. Complex stitching, taking as long as 40 hours making French knots with metallic thread, complete the works. These complex visual strategies form Patricia Casey's unique visual language, her works unique signature.

Her work comes from pre-visualised meditations - it also comes from her dreams. Patricia told me her work is about 'being alone with yourself, having these personal secrets.' Meditations on such profound questions as 'How am I me? How is he him?'

Again the work of Judy Chicago comes to my mind. The feminist complexity of image and craft. But more essentially I see a woman artist in her prime - examining time passing, observing how our lives are written on our bodies. How our dreams and longing for the beauty which once we wore, feeling so empowered then with the optimism and boundless courage of youth...can return to us as a mythic inner secret. Now we see these inner visions, not remembered but recreated here in the consummate skill of Patricia Casey's work.

I encourage you all to delight and treasure the work of Patricia Casey. It speaks personally to each of us. It is skilfully eloquent and beautifully created.

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Hawkesbury River