**Further information for teachers and students**

Mandy Martin’s artistic career, focus and techniques evolved over a short six-year period. Mandy Martin transitioned from exploring the surreal aspects of suburban life to environmental activism through art. The exhibition, [*Mandy Martin From Queanbeyan to New York: 1978 – 1984 / Art & Life*](http://www.cmag.com.au/exhibitions/mandy-martin-from-queanbeyan-to-new-york-1978-1984-art-and-life) explores six themes to illuminate the artist’s life and work at that time:

*Leaving Adelaide 1977*

Mandy Martin moved to Queanbeyan with her husband, artist Robert Boynes in 1978 when he started working at the Canberra School of Art. Mandy had trained at the South Australian School of Art and her print making work was motivated by progressive politics and activism.

*New Brides of Queanbeyan 1978-1979*

In Queanbeyan Martin developed relationships with her neighbours, other young newly married women like herself. In her home studio she began a series of portraits of these women based on photographs she had taken, using gouache, watercolour and coloured pencil on paper that expressed their suburban experience.

*Veiled Stories 1979-1980*

By the end of 1979 Martin no longer depicted figures in her work. She had become uneasy about the portraits, feeling they could be interpreted as voyeuristic. Instead, her focus turned to the details of increasingly industrial places, repeated patterns and grids in objects like window frames, brick walls and fences. Martin’s colour palette, materials and technique changed from delicate gouache to oil stick then to acrylic paint, heavily applied with expressive brush marks.

*The best and worst of times 1981-1983*

Drought, unemployment and protest marked the early 1980s and Martin explored these concerns in increasingly larger painting of bleak and apocalyptic landscapes. Martin travelled to New York and Europe and was inspired by the new large [neo-expressionist](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/neo-expressionism) paintings she saw. After being selected for the Paris Biennale in 1982 she encountered sexism, when introduced to George Boudaille, the Director of the Paris Biennale, while feeding her baby son, obviously taken off-guard, he had exclaimed, ‘Why! But you paint like a man.’

*The big break 1984*

By 1984 Martin was receiving positive critical attention and was selected to be part of a major exhibition of Australian artists at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, *New Visions*. By this time Martin’s work was on an increasingly larger scale with a strongly brown and black colour palette exploring the impact of mining on the landscape. Martin’s work at the Guggenheim was seen by architect Romaldo Giurgola, who had just won the competition to design the new Parliament House of Australia, who offered her a major commission for this new building.

*Speaking it out loud 1978-1984*

Martin was a Lecturer in the Printmaking Department at the Canberra School of Art and influential for a generation of printmakers. She encouraged students to be creative, resourceful and to engage with the community through their screen printing work assisting in the establishment of ACME Ink in Gorman House in Braddon in 1981 and Bitumen River Gallery in a car park at the Manuka shops, which continues today as a venue for Canberra Contemporary Art Space. Martin’s print table remains in use at Megalo Print Studio in Kingston.