



Madeleine Winch, *Dreamer* (left) in *Mysteries of the heart* at Beaver Galleries; and (below) *Together*.

The paintings are generally modest in scale, which invites an intimate and personal examination.

Gentle, affecting celebration of love

ART REVIEW

MYSTERIES OF THE HEART

By Madeleine Winch. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until August 12.
REVIEWED BY Sasha Grishin

There is a refined, distilled beauty in the work of Madeleine Winch that stems from more than 40 years of thought and artistic practice.

She is an artist who has developed an idiosyncratic and immediately recognisable stylised pictorial language through which she communicates a particular narrative. The forms are simplified with all extraneous elements deleted, the linear articulation is crisp and tight and the colour saturation is rich and sonorous.

Although they may be described as storytelling images, the narrative itself is multilayered and symbolic – something akin to an allegorical tale that will be interpreted differently by each viewer.

The story is seen through the innocent eyes of a child and is related with a visual lucidity, but on further examination it also evokes a dream-like state where it becomes unclear whether this is something seen or something yearned for and imagined.

If her previous highly acclaimed exhibition at this gallery dealt with the idea of the home as a bastion of safety and the focus of physical and spiritual being, this exhibition explores the idea of human love.

It is examined on physical, spiritual and philosophical levels. The artist observes, "The sense of belonging and deep human connection, the need for both intimacy and solitude, are all subjects I'm instinctively

drawn to explore in my art. 'In effect, they are studies of the inner life. They are personal in nature but are also, I hope, universal.'"

The paintings are generally modest in scale, which invites an intimate and personal examination.

Together is a small canvas, 75 centimetres by 75 centimetres, with a simple and hieratic composition of two young and attractive figures of a man and a woman set against a vibrant floral background.

The man is in the foreground and stares out of the composition, but does not engage the gaze of the viewer, while the woman stands behind him, posed frontally, like a protective presence, but her eyes are closed.

The title, *Together*, does not provide additional clues for an interpretation, but it may suggest that being physically together may also imply a degree of spiritual separation.

Possibly, as the artist tells us, there is this need for both intimacy and solitude for complete happiness in a relationship.

Mysteries of the heart is one of the key paintings in the show where a half-length frontal female nude, surrounded by roses, is depicted with her eyes closed.

Like the *Dreamer* image that appears in several manifestations in this exhibition, there is a suggestion that in love and in sexual intimacy there are things that can be felt, but not verbally articulated and that some of these things are irrational and mysterious.

Although some viewers will find the imagery in this exhibition too literal, even a little too confronting and revealing, the prevailing sense of affection and gentleness suggests a celebration of love as a spiritual and physical bond.

