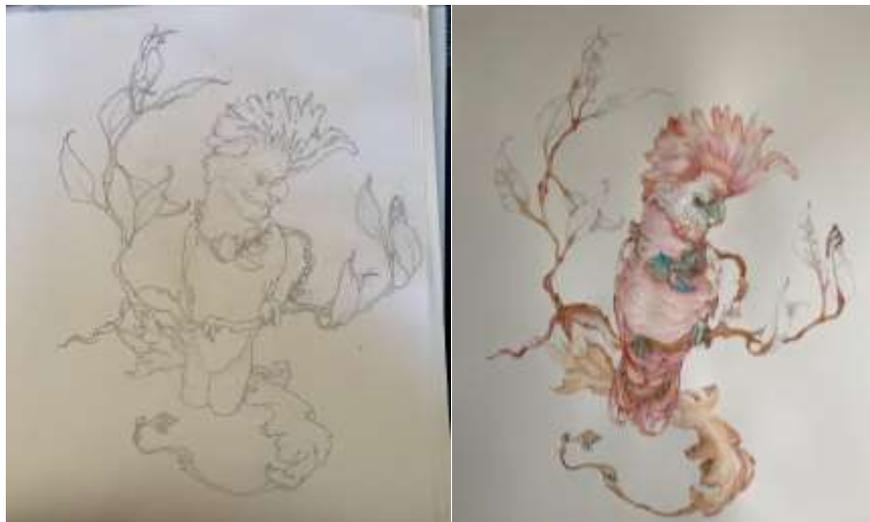


September 2021

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Artists in lockdown series

At home with Nicola Dickson



“Firstly, my lockdown experience I’d say is running a different course to many people because I managed to fall off my bike and break my arm two days before it started. I came home after surgery to the lockdown situation. Like everyone else, I had been expecting COVID to eventually arrive, but the turn of events left me unprepared. I suppose I gratefully settled into a slightly slower pace of life as I convalesced. Luckily my dominant arm is okay so I can still keep busy and stimulated with one armed art making. Being able to continue with my art practice, albeit modified, coupled with my daily walks and having my partner, daughter and cats around during the lockdown makes an enormous difference to how I feel despite the restrictions and uncertainties.

“Much of my daily ritual is similar, I just don’t get to go to my studio and household jobs nag at me a bit more than usual. A routine of physio exercises are also now slotted in three times a day. I usually rise fairly early, starting the day with coffee and my on-line French lesson. After I do enough domestic chores to keep chaos at bay, I then set up whatever I’m working on for the day. The light is much better in the morning in our house, so I work as much as possible until it gets dull in the mid-afternoon. There are a couple of breaks-for the daily ACT news broadcast and lunch, but otherwise it is a pretty focused period of working. I leave about 4:30 to walk on the reserve close to our home, I love to watch the sky change colour and listen to the chorus of currawongs. It’s absolutely beautiful and calming.

“Just prior to the lockdown I had been turning around ideas in my mind about what I could base my next body of work on- What would be the subject and what techniques I would use. I had been very inspired by the countryside, birds and history around the Murray River at Mildura when I had been there in June for a residency. I had taken hundreds of photos then and since visited the National library to collect historical images. I’m working to find a way of combining these inspirational images and stories.

“The lockdown (plus broken arm) has definitely changed how I’m working. It’s not really practical for me to paint at home-so I’m working on paper, using watercolour and/or pencil. It wasn’t quite what I was planning on doing -but in the past when circumstances have necessitated forms of innovation, there have been benefits to my practice. I have treated myself to a big beautiful set of Caran d’Ache pencils that I’ve had my eyes on for a while- I’m excited to try them. One of the biggest challenges is keeping the paper safe from my two badly behaved cats, who don’t respect tables or palettes”