

NICOLA REAVLEY: *THE LONG GARDEN*

SUZETTE WEARNE: *BPD*

18 July – 12 September 2026

***ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION* with Mark Chapman 25 August 4pm**



We had a great crowd for our **Artists in Conversation**, thank you to everyone who came along and added to such a lively and profound discussion.

Mark Chapman's thoughtful questions coaxed out some fascinating nuances behind the artworks and their appearances. We've included a few snippets from the conversation below.

Special thanks to **Robert Nelson** for attending and contributing what he modestly called his "ramblings" — which brought some extraordinary perspectives to the conversation.

When the conversation turned to **Suzette Wearne**'s embroideries of "sad Diana" photographs from tabloid magazines, it was discussed how these public images of Princess Diana were mainly unguarded moments and not necessarily consented to. The paparazzi were feeding the public appetite for behind-the-scenes images at a time before social media.

Robert shared, “So it was fateful that there was this scrutiny on her that she could actually carry out that like a sacrificial lamb... So her abjectness was industrialised through the media and what this body of work does is redeem her.”

NR: Painting is very freeing for me because I’m an academic in my professional life. So everything has to be defined, clarified, justified, cited. Rational!

If I want to paint the sky Quinacridone Rose, I can, and no one’s going to tell me that is somehow wrong. So that’s part of the appeal to me, to just follow my impulses and instincts.

MC: What about the process of making, it that a release?

I look at a lot of art. I travel a lot and I’m always in a museum somewhere. Art uses a different part of mind, so in that way it makes me a more whole person.

In the way that I choose an image or the way I use paint, I’m always trying to inject some kind of strange uncanny into it, even though these paintings can be based on real photos, either images I’ve taken, or found. This one is from a photo of Black Mountain in Canberra, although you wouldn’t know it.

I drip things or pour things. When I use a brush and it looks very smooth, I like to disrupt it so you can be jolted out of looking at the thing to know that it’s a painting. I always try to play on that boundary. – between illusion and physicality.

I like the unexpected things that remind you that there is a process going on.

MC: And what about the moons?

Is it the moon or is it a portal? It could be either. I keep it ambiguous about what they could be. I try not to use obvious brush marks. I’m trying to get the materials to do things that I’m in some control of but not complete control. Dripping paint in a thicker solvent like gel medium and tipping it. Leaving the drips that just happen. It’s all oil.

MC: Moving into the subject matter of the work, why the princess?

One of my pet peeves is privileged people who grow into a sense of entitlement, they often end up doing horrible things and being assholes. So to take someone who is a figure that embodies some of the most privileged people in the world, ever, and dedicate myself to representing her, there’s something (ironic) there.

But for me I don’t think she was an asshole, I think she was a good person. I think she was incredibly charismatic, and bent on, despite her limitations, of using her powers, for good.

Diane was aristocracy. She grew up quite privileged, and she could want for nothing materially, but her parents were both quite lousy in their different ways. And her emotional needs were not met as a very young girl.

One of my favourite works is the button portrait of her at about three years old, she looks so much more optimistic and open to the fullness and wonders of the world. As a direct result of

not having her emotional needs met, she became quite unwell, mentally. Then when she was 19 years old she married into a family of batshit crazy people who regarded her struggles almost as a Victorian hysteric.

The writer Hilary Mantel wrote a really salty piece on the royal family in 2013 and she wrote that Diana was “emotionally incontinent” which is the most British expression.

MC: Visitors who see the show often say, “Wow she’s painting with thread, how does she do it?”

SW: (in embroidery threads) there are a finite number of colours. There’s like ten strands in a thread. So you have to mix the colour in the thread, mix different colour strands, through the needle.

Researching Georges Seurat, the Pointillist, or rather Chromoluminarist, (I saw) how he would apply complimentary colours on the canvas, it would be cobalt, ultramarine blue then an orange or a yellow and then that would mix in the eye of the viewer to create the green. His practice and that development in art coincided with a more nuanced understanding of optics and perception scientifically, and light.