

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Generational Poverty***

Kayley Irvine

My artwork explores "Generational Poverty." As a child, I lived in a housing trust area. I was sheltered and oblivious to the events that occurred behind closed doors but as I matured I became more aware, as the behaviour of neighbours became publicly violent. My "rose coloured glasses" were shattered as I realised that my own sense of safety had altered. Stewart MacFarlane's dark and disturbing narrative realism where he utilises elements of reality into themes of psychological disarray resonated for me.

The house across the street was the main source of inspiration. For fourteen years, there had been a succession of transient families, each bringing their own mental health issues. Often referred to as 'The House from Hell' by the few house owners despairing, about their property value with this "undesirable" factor nearby, I witnessed domestic violence, drug abuse and dealing, alcoholism, removal of children into foster care, theft, hit and run and attempted murder. I became aware of the sharp dissonance between their and our aesthetic.

I began by photographing houses in my old neighbourhood to see their way of living and identify core elements that could be incorporated into my practical. I deliberately included houses that had piles of hoarding of both new and old items, including furniture, play sets, dismantled cars, barbecues, and detritus that have been strewn across front lawns. Many of these houses were poorly maintained and had low street appeal.

Robyn Sweaney and Jenny Watson's paintings embody narrative fragments of suburban houses. Their shared idea of how homes can represent belief structures, influence human behaviours and aesthetics on many emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels influenced my way of processing and understanding surrounding Generational Poverty.

Sweaney's painting, *House Proud* reminded me of my old house, with the red and white roses and well-kept appearance, which is evident through her tightly refined aesthetic. Likewise, Watson displays her sense of honesty and directness through her subject matter which is symbolic of the narrative fragments of her life. Their artwork, I felt resonated with my thinking and their attention to detail influenced my own painting style which focuses on realism. My measured style is attentive to detail, like Sweaney, unlike Watson, who loosely paints her houses in an abstract form.

My painting is a snapshot of one of the many incidences that occurred across the street. The cats however are symbolic. The indoor cat represents myself and the feral cats across the street, the neighbours on a drug fuelled frenzy. The visual contrast lends itself for contemplation and analysis on the behalf of the viewer. The canvas had to be reasonably large, in order to open up the world beyond my window. Ultimately the whole painting is told through my perspective and becomes a metaphor of the circumstance which I endured. As a result, you can't choose your family but for most of us we can't choose our neighbours either.