

## JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: JAN SENBERGS

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Jan, of your works that we have now in the collection, eight are oil paintings. Perhaps we might start by talking about those chronologically, from the earliest ones through. The first one is called *Packet of Two*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. That's a fair while back. That's a smaller painting, enamel on board.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What date? Can you remember?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's about '66, I think, around about that time. I was painting a whole of series of night and industrial images. They're very densely packed paintings—almost turgid, in some ways—but they were all based on that same idea. There seemed to be a whole series of them that came out at that time, the main one being a painting called *The Night Parade*, which was a big triptych. This painting, which is a smaller one, was just an offshoot of those particular ideas I was working at that particular time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When did you first start painting, Jan? Where did you study and how did you sort of become involved in painting?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Well, it's difficult to say.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A little bit of biography first of all.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Right. I always did some drawing, mainly sketching—all kinds of fantasies, like most kids do, I guess. Then I showed in *The Herald Outdoor Art Show*—no, sorry, one of the school shows. I put a couple of paintings in that at the beginning. Later on at Richmond Tech, when I was a student there, I met Len French, who was a painter at that time, as a teacher, briefly there. He kind of made me aware of painting in a funny way—more so because he was the first real artist for me. You know, one who never went through any art school at all. So he had an effect on me. Not so much about teaching me about painting for that brief period, but just making you aware that there was somebody else there who was trying to be a painter. He seemed different to the other teachers around the place. So in a sense that was a kind of an introduction as well to me. But then, of course, my earlier beginnings were I did an apprenticeship in silkscreen printing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Where was that?

**JAN SENBERGS:** In Melbourne here, at several firms around Melbourne.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I did a fair bit of painting and also there were two or three other sort of I suppose what you'd call 'artistic' types in the office, in the workshop where we used to paint at lunch time and things like this. We started showing in *The Herald Outdoor Art Show* together, and sometimes under different names for three or four different paintings and all sorts of

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nonsense like that. But it was kind of an introduction. Later on I sort of drifted around and gradually met other people of my own age who were painting.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This would be the early sixties or late fifties.

**JAN SENBERGS:** This is late fifties, yes. I had my first show in 1960. In fact, it was in a little bookshop at the Richmond Galleries in Little Lonsdale Street. There used to be a little bookshop up on the third floor. Really, when I look back on it, because I didn't go to an art school, I guess it really was a kind of a student show. At that time I was starting to meet other young people who were painting, who went through the RMIT mainly at that time. Because I was on the outside of that I had to come in somehow and show and perhaps show a bit earlier and prematurely. But still it was an exhibition, which meant a bit to me because at least at least I could sort of say, well, here I was. I had a sort of sense of belonging to that sort of art group in a way. Throughout all this time I was working at various jobs as they came through.

**JAMES GLEESON:** At silkscreen printing?

**JAN SENBERGS:** I concluded an apprenticeship in screen-printing. I suppose the day I finished my term I left. Then I did a series of jobs and I wandered around a bit. I went to Sydney and lived there for a while to paint another show later. Generally it was a very kind of lonely period working and trying to say a few things to yourself.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This must have been, I think, the first show of yours I saw in Sydney—at the Rudy Komon Gallery, wasn't it?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. The first one I had with Rudy was in 1966, I think. Wasn't it? I think it was. It must have been about that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, September, 1966. It was bought from Rudy's and must have been from the show.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's right. I had a couple of shows before in Melbourne. Well, the first one was in '60, and I had one in 1962 at the Argus, and then in '64 at the Georges Gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How did you get in contact with Rudy? Did he find your work and decide to bring it to Sydney?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. By that time I had gotten to know a few of the painters around the place. I'd also had two or three shows by then. Well, I think it's something that Fred Williams often says and I must quote him there. He says that 'painters choose painters'. I guess maybe that's something that happened. In one way it was sort of cast around that here was someone perhaps maybe worth having a look at. So Rudy came down and I was there, and he had a look at the paintings. Nothing definite happened, nothing really definite happened for a long time. My relationship with Rudy sort of grew really. You know, after a while, he said: 'Have a show.' This is where that '66 show began.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That was the first Sydney show?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that was the first Sydney show. That was the first show with Rudy at that time. Yes. Gradually, as far the gallery and Rudy go, a thing that sort of slowly occurred over the years, and we have become sort of more—

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Closer?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Closer as time has gone by.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I notice here we call it oil on hardboard. Is that correct?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's not quite correct. It was enamels really. Enamel on hardboard would be more correct.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. I thought it did have a more enamelled effect than oil.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that was just Dulux—often just clear Dulux with powder pigments.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So we'll call it enamel.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Enamel on board, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was that at all due perhaps to your contact with Len French at that time?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, I would say so. A lot of those early images were up to a certain point, you know. So, yes, certainly I was influenced by him in a direct way. But then after a while I also realised that there was something else that I had to work on myself.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. That's not really like his work except—

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, different things, certain sort of obsessive things that re-occurred, I noticed with myself when I look back on it especially, they were occurring and that sort of drifted away.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right Jan, well, we'll go on to the next one. That is one we haven't got a photograph of, *Observation Post No 2 1968*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Nineteen sixty-eight, yes. That was at a time, I think that would have been painted when I had a studio in Chapel Street, Prahran, in Melbourne here. I used to share a studio with Peter Clark at that time. It was rather funny. You know, we were good friends and close. But we were both completely different to each other in our painting. Particularly at that time, it was another kind of a period then because that mostly The Field exhibition was around then.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, yes, of course.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Peter, I'm not saying that he was towards The Field, but he very much had a different approach to mine in painting. His was the sort of more restrained, abstracts, which he'd done so well, and I was doing my sort of other things. But I was very aware at that time of this sort of influence that was all around the place. It almost became important to sort of hang on to your beliefs and everything else, and you were challenged more often at that time. Because often you were said to be, you know, 'Well, why do you work like this, this is old hat?' and so on. But it seemed to be—well it was a period of sort of asserting your own images more and more than ever.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well I notice between this picture in 1966 and this one in 1958, there's an enormous difference in not only subject matter, but in technique and treatment, the whole way of working has changed.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How did that occur?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that happened, that was at a time when I kept on working with those enamels. I was finding myself just technically getting into a dead end after a while, and they were also becoming very busy and the blackness was so strong.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I wanted to sort of introduce some light into it. The only way I could sort of handle it at that time— I tried with the enamel technique; it never sort of quite worked out—was to switch to canvas. In a way I did a complete reverse where normally previously to that most of my paintings were mostly on dark backgrounds. Where at that stage I just, in a sense, transferred into a light ground, with a darker image, but also on canvas. This also happened just after I came back from the Rubenstein trip that I won. Previously I got the award—was it the Helen Rubenstein Award—was it '66, '65 '66? So I had to go overseas and I did, that it was my first trip overseas. It opened up a lot of other things too and naturally I looked around. I realised more and more that I wanted to sort of improve, well, mainly the technique. Out of that sort of need which I felt I reversed it and I started painting on linen and, you know, just different canvas instead of board and I gave away painting on board. Then again because of the nature of the surface being more absorbing and not like putting a sort of shiny paint on to hardboard which is easy to slip around at all time. I was slipping around too much, you see, I had to do something about it. That's what it was.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was this one of the paintings where you began to use screen-printing?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Screen-printing, yes, I introduced that too. Around about that time too because it seemed as though the images, I wanted the images to be a bit more crisper than they were beforehand. I've always tried—even those earlier ones—I've tried to retain that sort of structural form behind them. But they were becoming a bit too organic, too much sort of movement. I wanted to sort of tighten them up a bit and more and more I became aware of the image, of let's say inventing an image, because that's really what I've been trying to do most of my time, is to invent an image that is related to something. But, you know, it has a sort of ambiguity about it. So at that time I did that and I introduced the screen-printing and that was mainly because of, well, the training I had as a screen printer.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course, naturally, you knew all the techniques.

**JAN SENBERGS:** It occurred to me one day that, you know, why not? I was working as a screen printer at different times on and off and I was using all these different techniques for just normal jobs that I was supposed to do, and I thought well why not introduce some of this sort of ability that I had for that for my own purposes, you know. That's how it came about. Then, of course, before that I did do some prints but they weren't prints in a sense of editions. I just knocked out four or five prints in all kinds of tones and variations, just using the screen. It was almost like painting with a screen. I wasn't really aware of it, of printmaking as such earlier.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** The very, very earlier things are like that. It's later when I learnt what printmaking was that I started to keep editions and so on. So a lot of these had these screen-printed images in them, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now this device that you developed, and I think uniquely, was to enlarge details of photographic or printed material, and use that. Was this one in which you first began to use this?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That wasn't quite the first one, but around about that period.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Time period.

**JAN SENBERGS:** What is that, about '68?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** No. I started, well, yes, about a year or a bit before that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, around about that period I started using those, and most of them had some amount of screen-printing in them at that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What was the medium, oil or acrylic?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, it was oil and oil on canvas. But also at that time I tried to experiment with using acrylic on canvas. Some of those paintings, I think that particular one—I'm not quite sure now, I can't remember it quite—but around about that period I did do some acrylic paintings. See one reason was I wanted them to dry because I was using screen-printing. I had trouble with the oil drying before I could print on top and so on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** So I tried acrylic but the thing I found with acrylic was that it was running short on a brush too much for me. I didn't like that, so I gave it away. But there were several paintings. So I went back to oil after that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So there were only a few.

**JAN SENBERGS:** There were a few at that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Now the next one is *Dark Landscape* and we've got an alternative title.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the *Black Garden*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Black garden*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I think it is, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Could you check in your catalogue?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Where are we? Yes, it is the *Black Garden*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah, so its proper name is—

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**JAN SENBERGS:** Is the *Black Garden*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The *Black Garden*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, it's 1972.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oil on canvas on plywood.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So the measurements will be right. That we bought from the Gallery A in Melbourne.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's right, yes, I remember that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In 1973.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's right. That's right. Yes, that was my show in '72 at the Gallery A. The reason for that one being on plywood was because it was another kind of innovation I was trying to do because I was using more screen printing surfaces on these paintings. I found that it was difficult to print on canvas when it was stretched, because you have to have a hard surface naturally to use, particularly when you're squeegeeing across. I mean, the alternative is to take the canvas off the stretcher and then pin it down to a board and then do your screen printing on a table and then re-stretch it. But there was this terrible technical difficulty of re-stretching and mucking around, coming and going. One of the ways, it occurred to me that time, was why not have a hard surface, and glue down the canvas to a board in this case, which then you'd have a hard surface to print on, and paint at the same time. But that was okay but there again in the end there was this weight, I didn't like the weight of it. Somehow it made the canvas feel a bit different. It didn't have that sort of looseness that you could put paint on to as well. So in the end I went back just simply just putting canvas on to a stretcher and then working out a system of putting some sort of boards underneath, slipping them underneath, then putting it on a floor and having a series of planks and usually crawling all over it and falling through the canvas trying to print the damn thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Dark Garden* is that part of any sequence?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, they were paintings based on—all my paintings, I suppose, have kind of indirect associations with where I am doing at that time. I was reading—it was sort of a part literary thing at the time—sort of reading Bartholme, Donald Bartholme, a writer, American writer. I was very interested —

**JAMES GLEESON:** Donald Bartholemew?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Donald Bartholme.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Bartholme. Oh, yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** He's a short story writer. I was very impressed—not completely but there were associations of him in it, although they may not be obvious. But he wrote these very strange sort of absurd stories around—well,

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he's a New York writer, nothing to do with me at all. But to me he set up certain images in words, and some of the things were sort of related. At the back of my mind I had him in mind when I was creating some imagery at that time, plus the fact that I was interested still in that same sort of surround of being in Melbourne around that sort of industrial area. We used to go and draw around Port Melbourne and places like that. It's a combination of things. Also the companion painting to that particular one was a bigger one called *The Holiday Resort*, which was based on this sort of thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Do we own that?

**JAN SENBERGS:** No, I think the South Australian Gallery's got that one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah.

**JAN SENBERGS:** But that was the main one, and this was the other one that was offered. They were the two main paintings in the show as far as I was concerned—to me, anyway.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** The other one was kind of just set off on an idea, when I drove along the coast at that time, and I was fascinated by all these caravan parks everywhere. People, you know, travelling thousands, hundreds of miles, and they sort of clumped together next door to each other. What really sparked it in a funny way, the height of this absurdity, was when once driving past one where there were all these caravans all next to each other and there was this one bloke in front of one of them mowing the lawn in front of his caravan. So I mean he couldn't get rid of his sort of suburban habits. But in a strange sort of way there were sort of images, the sort of the absurdity came into it, and in an indirect way that was all part of it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now this one we don't have a photograph of but you remember it.

**JAN SENBERGS:** *Four 2*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Four No. 2 1973*, oil and silkscreen on canvas.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Completed in June '73.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, well that period from '72, that previous one going into '73, which lead up to the Biennale, the Sao Paulo Biennale paintings for me—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Are still working mainly on that same idea. I think basically the same sort of things, except I was more conscious of trying to invent in these paintings more sort of solo images. Sort of small, singular images not as crowded as, say, the earlier ones with that *Garden* and *The Holiday Resort* which were more crowded paintings. Here I wanted to sort of have more of a —

**JAMES GLEESON:** Monolithic?

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**JAN SENBERGS:** Monolithic image, and then sort of have details within it. Perhaps sort of details which didn't sort of match up together and perhaps sort of hoping to create some sort of visual surprise here and there. They were mostly that type of imagery at that time, still working with the silkscreen and that was one of the ideas. I did two paintings of that, I think. Yes, there's a second one. It was just based on this sort of upright figure, with a prop in a sense, it sort of was, and it became like a sculpture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's this one is it?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, this is this *Fort* and the other *Fort* had it too. The other *Fort*, that's it here. That's the other—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, yes, yes. That's a vertical painting, and this one is a  
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**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the vertical there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's the vertical one, and the other—

**JAN SENBERGS:** But the same sort of image. Often when I try to, I like to say invent and image—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Then sometimes I'd set it in different situations for two or three paintings, then I'd leave it and then go on to another one and make a sort of variation of it. That's what that particular painting was mainly about.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Its companion piece is on the cover of the Rudy Komon exhibition?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Catalogue.

**JAN SENBERGS:** In a way at this stage—this plaza one too, these are the Sao Paulo paintings.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This plaza in Sao Paulo?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I thought it was.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that was one too. By this time I was handling the technique of screening, I had it worked out much better technically and I felt more confident in its usage. The first ones were sort of attempts and, you know, hit and misses, and here I was handling it, I was more confident of its use. Then at the same time I guess they were at the peak of using that screen image and one of the things I'm trying to do now is to sort of reduce it a little bit more and bring it back to the painting again—the board to the painting and away from that printing.

But that printing technique was very important to me because I was like a kind of scavenger of odd sort of images. I mean a lot of those sort of shapes and forms that come through it were with things that one saw perhaps in an old engraving book, a little detail of a section of some background somewhere



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and I'd look into it and I'd see certain sort of forms there. I knew if I took that away and I combined it, you know, took it and blew it up and changed it, they became sort of stock images I had. I collected them. I was a collector, a scavenger. I used to go to libraries and collect these images and I used to buy a lot of books. A lot of books I'd buy were all sorts of subjects. Like, for instance, that one there, that's one that was bought for that reason. Deep diving, deep sea diving, has a whole series of you know, odd photographs. You know, I might be interested, say, in just little forms around here or, you know, little sections of things.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Equipment and details that could be changed, blown up and given a different context.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's right. Most of these paintings are full of these kind of things.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In a way it's almost like a collage type thing.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, in a sense it is. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You don't actually cut the pieces out, you photograph them and print them and transpose them.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, transpose them. Sometimes I mix them up and then I paint on top of them and change them. I mean, well, looking at a painting perhaps, it could be hard to tell—impossible, in fact, most times—where actually each piece came from. But they all come from different sources like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. That's fascinating. The Sao Paulo paintings are in effect the sort of climax of this whole process for you.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. I used it since. Well, that was leading up to that. This one and that *Plaza* and also the same thing applies to this *Garden Plan* with the short path. There's certain images that fascinate me, you know. You might go along an industrial area, for instance, where there's steel and dirt and structures everywhere. But you might be leading up to some little office there, and someone's attempted to make a garden, a little garden. Obviously that person has sort of cared for those plants and they've trimmed them, they've almost made the plants artificial. You see these plants growing in this completely alien sort of an atmosphere. I mean, there's vegetation growing there. They stand out. If you ever look at them, if you stop to look at them, you know, they become something. You can look them very closely and they become sometimes quite monumental if you want them to. It's depending on how you see it, you see. It was things like that that came into paintings like this one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This is certainly the effect you've got in this painting, *Garden Plan*, yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, *Garden Plan* was the short paths. The whole thing is sort of absurd in a way if you look at it in a particular sense. It was ideas like that that made me work in that particular image there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, *Moundhouse* is certainly one of the most monumental of all your paintings. It stood out in the Sao Paulo exhibition as one of the most important things there, I thought.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** That's a sort of re-occurring image for me, that one. In a funny way that particular *Moundhouse* idea I've used since the first time I've painted a painting in '69. I forget what I called it. I think it was *Mound Collapsed Object*, I think it was. What it really was, it was just a big, well, something that's collapsed, like a pile of rubbish. In a way it's just that. But then if you look at it again in another way it has all sorts of connotations and, you know, it can be big and can take all kinds of forms. I mean, often you see steel sheets or rubbish piled up, you know, on a site. Sometimes you see it around Port Melbourne there, around Fishermen's Bend way. I sometimes go on Sundays I love wandering around there Sundays when it's quiet. I drive up there and I used to walk around there and just look at all these things and there's often sort of big piles of rubbish, black piles of rubbish piled up. They have this sort of presence, a real tremendous presence about them. I sort of think of them and based on things like that I sort of twist them around and weave other sort of structures within them, you see. That's the sort of thing that that particular one is of.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Very powerfully structured, you know, on the sort of base, these legs supporting the whole thing give it a structured feeling, the mound of rubbish.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. I find it interesting. I find that sort of crumpled heap idea fascinating, and there's so many variations. I guess, well, I suppose like with anything, you can make all the variations just on a still life, like say Morandi did all his life. Well, I could quite easily make variations on that manner if I wanted.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I'll tell you something, and this is quite interesting. Christmann, Gunther Christmann, discovered rubbish, piles of rubbish. I think his more recent paintings have been studies of rubbish, rubbish in New York, rubbish in Sydney, and he says there's a difference according to the city.

**JAN SENBERGS:** There's a difference. I suppose so, yes. I suppose there would be, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** His treatment is quite different to yours, you know. You give it this sense of structure and all sorts of paradoxical qualities.

**JAN SENBERGS:** In a way it's not really rubbish for me at all. It's the visual image. I mean, it is rubbish in one way. In another way it's a structure. I'm looking at it perhaps for that sort of reason, the structural reasoning too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When one think of mounds, in my mind the idea of the ancient burial mounds come to mind, where they were just a mound of earth outside, a tumulus, but inside was the structure of the tomb.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, I'm aware of those things. Actually, yes, I'm very aware of all those things and I browse through books often to look. Also particularly there's a lot of primitive cultures, they're sort of structuring, the structures they made, those sort of mound houses. Also things like Cappodocia in Turkey, it comes to mind as an obvious one; some of the hill houses in Africa. Yes, I'm aware of all those. They all interest me in a same sort of way as this industrial mound. There is a kind of a connection, I suppose. In a funny kind of way I'm interested in them from reproductions, as they are in reproductions, because then I can sort of add my fantasy to it and change them around.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** I think when you actually see them, as I've seen one or two sort of structures like that in my travel, they're too real. I like to sort of just go back to the hotel room and look at the catalogue of it, after seeing it, and then I can sort of work on it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You're one step away from the reality.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. That's the sort of strange thing about, it's a sort of visual thing to me.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now the latest one I think we have of yours, a painting [telephone interruption]. Jan, *Altered Parliament House No 2* is the latest in a series that we have of yours. You were living in Canberra for some time.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, I was at the ANU on the resident artist—

**JAMES GLEESON:** How long were you there?

**JAN SENBERGS:** About two years.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Two years.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Two years, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Obviously the effect has come out in this sort of picture.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Well, yes, that's right. As I was trying to say, most times when I'm in a place, I am really aware. I suppose in a way I like to work with things that are around me, the area, the environment. They do come out in my paintings. Perhaps very obliquely and vaguely sometimes, but I've personally felt they're always there though, like the industrial ones in Melbourne. Well, this case when I was there in Canberra that atmosphere of Canberra came through to me. Also now that I'm back here again in Melbourne, I happen to have a studio in Port Melbourne, so actually I'm going out and drawing, just doing small drawings of the area. In a way probably I'm looking forward to make a series of paintings based on that particular thing that I'm here now at this moment. But this one here, the Canberra ones, there are several paintings like that. This Parliament House, I did two of them. Actually I wanted to do three of them. I tried a third one and I couldn't, I had too much trouble with it, so I ended up giving it away and, well anyway that was that. I used to live in Campbell, across on the other side of Anzac Parade, and I had the studio at the University. I'd always—well most times—walk in the mornings across Campbell, across Anzac Parade, and look at the Parliament House, across the lake in the distance in the morning.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know the view.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, sort of half way down there from the War Memorial, and then go to the studio, work all day and often come back at night time. When I came back at night time, I'd walk back the same way. As I crossed Anzac Parade I'd see this white glowing dreadnought in the distance. Well, that's the way it appeared, sort of flowing, just this whiteness because it was lit up. Then, of course, it looked completely different. When you looked at it and you squinted your eyes—you didn't even have to do that because of the distance—if you stopped to look at it, you had this sort of floating ships and the turrets and it took on another sort of form and this sort of whiteness floating in this black. This form fascinated me, you know, up and down. I used to look at it often. With a combination of that sort of neat manicured lawns and

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plans around the place, it sort of set up this sort of imagery for me for this painting. But also, and on the other level, I was there in '75 when all the political things happened and, in a sense, that Parliament House, you know, not only was it just that sort of visual object, which it was, which sort of prompted the painting in the first place, but then after those events it had another kind of image after the events. It didn't have that sort of purity and whiteness that it, you know, appeared to have beforehand. In a way it also gave me more liberty to change the imagery of that building. Hence I've sort of worked into it a bit and changed it around. That wasn't the reason why I called it *Altered Parliament House*, because it was altered in many senses. It was not only altered by me as a painting, but to me it also seemed to be altered after the events of '75. So in a sense that's what that focused on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You have presented in this image a kind of dreadnought as you've called, but on a rocky acropolis almost, surrounded by very high angular sharp walls.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, well, there is that sort of remoteness. There's a lot of associations. I mean, I suppose one could read a lot of kind of associations. I don't want too many of them read into it but, yes, it can. I mean, there's that sort of remoteness of it in one way. In a sense the very remoteness of Canberra is kind of another—

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it combines a lot of your feelings about—

**JAN SENBERGS:** There's a lot of things in there. I tried to sort of make it work. But then again, on the other level, it's simply structuring for a painting. I don't intend that there's a message in every piece at all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**JAN SENBERGS:** A lot of these shapes and forces are simply to make the structure and make the painting work in terms of you know, I hope—

**JAMES GLEESON:** A visual experience.

**JAN SENBERGS:** As a visual image, yes. When I talk like this about sort of describing the paintings and giving off the symbolism and whatever, really all these pictures really start basically from the visual first, and then if there is to be any kind of a content story—I mean, sometimes I want to add some sort of a content, as it there—I have to have that sort of visual structure running first. I've got to work around that. I can't do it the other way, because then it becomes just pure sort of rhetoric, you know, and there's no structure. I mean, I suppose what I'm saying is I need a structure first, a visual structure to make any kind of other comment that it may have.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which is there, but it's not of fundamental importance.

**JAN SENBERGS:** No, no.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Well, Jan, I think covers the paintings very well. Now I think we can start on the very large group of graphic works of yours that we have.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So we'll go back to the beginning to the earliest ones there. Are they in sequence now, or shall we arrange them in sequence?

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**JAN SENBERGS:** I'll put them in sequence I think, if I can.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Right. Well, I'll switch off until we do that. Jan, graphic works, silk screen prints really constitute a large part of your output as an artist, obviously because you know a great deal about the technique and are interested in it. But the first ones, I think, we have of yours dating from '63 don't involve silk screen-printing, do they?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Oh, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** They do?

**JAN SENBERGS:** They are screen-printed.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** But they were done at a time, as I said before, when I wasn't even aware of such a thing as prints, because I didn't go to an art school. You know, I was aware of prints but only very little of them. So this was sort of attempts which I made using the screen, treating it almost like a painting. They were only small editions, two or three, three or four, changed a lot, paper stencils and then after a while I started to, you know, keep editions, and that's how these ones began.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When did you actually begin this process? Earlier than this, '63?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Oh, yes, much earlier. Most of these I didn't take seriously at all in any way. I used to do them and lose them and destroy them and so on. I suppose that I began it when I was an apprentice in a silk screen factory in Melbourne.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Often, you know, at work there used to be bits of card around, you know, spoils from runs, and I'd make a few stencils. Do things like this and gradually it sort of came about like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Now this one we got, it's called *Study No. 1 Inside a Machine*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now that was part of a sequence, I believe?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Well, there were only about three or four of them. That was of that earlier period where I used paper stencils and I just printed it across, used lasers and sort of really worked the squeegee. It was very much sort of manipulating the squeegee. In a sense just, in a way, painting with the screen.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I don't really see them as a sort of prints as such. They are just works on paper, those early ones.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. All right.

**JAN SENBERGS:** And this one is the same, *The Head*.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** *A Small Head of '64.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's all around about that same period. That's using a sort of dry—setting up all paper stencils there, you know, some are sort of half drying a squeegee and running it across two or three times.

**JAMES GLEESON:** They weren't done in editions?

**JAN SENBERGS:** There were perhaps about three or four of them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Would they be exact copies or would they vary?

**JAN SENBERGS:** The stencils were exactly the same.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** But the variations as the squeegee went across changed all the time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** In fact, even in the prints that I do now, now that I am a bit smarter with my techniques, I still do vary them, I do vary them, but more subtly perhaps.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** They do change. Sometimes I start off—particularly when I'm running a blend. Well, you can only keep a blend going for about, say, six prints on a certain area, and it tends to change. Then because of that sort of difficulty of keeping it I'll think, 'Well, why not just deliberately change it?'. So you have the same stencils but often variations. I guess what I should be doing perhaps, and sometimes when I sort of do it in more extremes, is perhaps I should sort of note that on some of the prints. Like say, you know, such and such a print, dark version, and such and such a print, light version perhaps. Maybe I should do that, but it hasn't occurred to me before.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's the *Large Head*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that was again the same period as I guess three or four of those. Actually this one was the one that there was a book out that Brian Sidel produced years ago on printmaking, I think. I think that appeared in that one, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That was one of those very, very early pieces too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was one of a group we bought from the Crossley Galleries.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Yes, it must have been. That's a head. See, the prints right throughout—well, to me naturally—have always been concerned with the same things as what I've been doing in paintings at that time. They were just sort of extensions. Just another medium of working, you know, at the same time.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** What date would these heads be? Have you any idea? Sixty-four?

**JAN SENBERGS:** I think they're about '63, '64 most of them, yes. They're all about that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Now we come to a—

**JAN SENBERGS:** They're all the same period, the two untitled ones.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's about '63, '64. Actually, that's sort of medium size like most of them of the period. But this particular one, that was a bigger one, it was more of a poster. I wanted to do a couple of sort of more poster scale ones.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Is it a vertical one?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It is? Are they both vertical?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, they're both vertical. Actually, the titles, that's the wrong way. But the thing is, I mean, a lot of these prints were as rough as anything when I printed them. I mean, I was, when I printed these, a real roughhouse printer, you can say. Because there were stencils and I ripped them and I cut into them and I used to draw—say, a particular one like this—with oil pastel and then coat the screen with glue and then wash out the oil pastel to create the image, which gave a very sort of rough sort of an image. A lot of those were like that at that time. In a way looking back on these, in a way I don't mind that now so much because I, you know, wouldn't mind sort of —

**JAMES GLEESON:** Exploring that possibility.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Exploring that sort of thing again instead of getting too aware of the technical thing, which I think is one of the problems of print making, in fact. That's also the same.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *The Main Body*. Is that a vertical one too?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's the same as that last one, of that same sort of period, using the same techniques as I described in the previous one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You mentioned that this one, *Detail for Artificial Garden*, was the first time you'd used—

**JAN SENBERGS:** Well, I started using sort of half tone stencils for the first time. Previous, all those other prints before that are all just simply paper stencils, that's all. That's about as basic as you can get in screen-printing. Then this stage is just about '66, '67, I think, '67 probably. In this particular print I decided to introduce this sort of half tone. Also one of the reasons also for all this was because I couldn't afford a lot of the more expensive film at that time. This is why I used very basic sort of paper stencils because, well, actually I moved around a fair bit from place to place and I used to have studios in all sorts of odd rooms. You know, the usual thing when you're moving like that. All you could do, if you wanted to do a print, just set up a

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table and bring a small screen and just screw it down to the table. I used to do that even in boarding houses and screwed it down to a sort of little, you know, just a table you had in a room next to your bed. The only way you could do was with paper stencils and stuff like that, so that's one of the reasons why I guess a lot of them were like that. But this one here—

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Detail for Artificial Garden.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Well, I bought, you know, some film. See, film's expensive, photographic stencil film is quite expensive. So, you know, I could afford that at that time, so I bought that and I started. That was the first time I experimented with that and used that. From then I used a combination of photographic stencils and the paper stencils. I still do, I still use a combination of both of those.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Dream House.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Actually, that should be before the other. That's just a paper stencil.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, is it?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Just a simple sort of block image, which doesn't really look like a dream house, does it? That's all I could say about that. Maybe to some it does.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, *Collapsing Structure.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's on that same basis. Actually, that *Collapsing Structure*, when I was talking about the paintings, you know that collapsing structure of that *Moundhouse*, this is sort of an inter-relation there of that sort of broken object, things breaking up and the kind of form they throw up and I suppose that was a print based on that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Very strong relationship between your graphic work and your painting. I mean, there's no real distinction between the two, except in scale and technique, I suppose.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Well, it seems to me that the things that I'm obsessed with at a particular time carry right through.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes

**JAN SENBERGS:** You know, all the way through and all the different works. I suppose that was around about the same time as the first of those *Moundhouses* and the collapsed sort of heaps of rubbish that I was working with.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Three (inaudible).

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, we'll just stop it for a moment.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's also a very plain, simple image. I was interested in this—what can I say? Well, it was a sort of thing of neatness and one was slightly—I mean, they all look neat and tidy except one's just a little—



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**JAMES GLEESON:** Nibbled around the edge.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Nibbled around. It was just an idea, an idea, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the *Observatory*; it actually goes that way. That's also of the same period. I find it a bit difficult to discuss each one individually, maybe what they mean.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no need to.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Because most of these are all of a certain period and I did quite a number of them. They all relate to the sort of imagery that I was working on. This next one here is *It's Not Easy* is a thing that I've sort of—I always liked that image. That was the sort of image that fascinated me in a way.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's like a trolley going uphill.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, going up or down hill. It's a print. I did that in '69, I think it was, and it's a very sort of simple, pretty crude print in many ways but the idea and the idea of it interested me a lot, still does. There again, that again is on that same sort of *Moundhouse* theme.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** In fact, I have done a painting recently based on this very print.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Have you?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, because I've always wanted to do a painting as well on this idea of this pile, this mound either going up or downhill. You know, perhaps just sort of pushing shit uphill or something. You know, it could be anything, just nowhere. To me it sort of had a particular pass. There's something about it just fascinated me about it so I've just sort of worked with that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it's an image that's recurred over a period of time.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Yes, that particular one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What time would that be?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Sixty-nine, I think it was.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Sixty-nine.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Your painting is just quite recently?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, I did one of that very thing. Also the idea of *It's Not Easy*, sort of is part of that absurdity that I like which works right throughout. Actually, you know, when you hear someone say, 'It's not easy you know. There's something about those words. Words sometimes give off images to me. It was just out of a comment like that that I heard somewhere, where

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somebody said, 'It's not easy. Not damn easy'. But that sort of started this image and, of course, the reason why I also wanted to paint this other picture was, well, the other reason was because it's not an easy period at the moment, hard times, and so on. There's a lot of connotations that goes with it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. But the images—

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, the images that weren't there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Observatory 1.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that was also one of those earlier ones where I used the photographic screen. I think I used it pretty badly in that. I don't really like this print. That was around about the same time as I mentioned that other print. The one where I said I used the photographic techniques first. This is around about the same time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That one?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Detail for Artificial Gardens.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. That was more valid. But this one, well, I was just interested to see how I could use that photographic image at that time. Really I used an actual head. It was something I've never done. I've never wanted to sort of state it as literally as that, in relation to the other shapes around. I suppose it's all right, but I'm not too happy with it. It's one of those things.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Testing.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's later. That was a show I had with Tate Adams at the Crossley Gallery. That went on from that period, about 1970, I think it was. Well, there was about eight prints of that period. I don't know what I can say about them. Well, they were tied up with the same sort of ideas as I was painting. That's the other one, *Structure of Red Roof*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's that same period, from the same show?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, except this is a very colourful one—a very, very colourful one, this one. Sometimes I break into colour, through the gloom. You know, once every two years, and that was one. I don't mind doing that. Usually I work with tonal with the whole thing. I feel that the structure is stronger when you work tonally. But occasionally I feel like sort of seeing what it looks like in colour.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Breaking out, letting yourself go.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's one of them. That's still occurring from time to time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Monument.*

**JAN SENBERGS:** *Monument.* Yes, that's just a simple image similar to that sort of image. The kind of imagery I was doing in the painting of—what was it—*Observation Post*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Observation Post.*

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**JAN SENBERGS:** *Observation Post*. Those kind of things are sort of structures standing on legs or single structures, and there again it's the same thing on a sort of platform, a sort of monument form. Titles like that, well, they're sometimes just their identification.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Exactly.

**JAN SENBERGS:** It's the structure. That's called the *Hill*, around about the same period, a bit later. I don't mind that print. I suppose with everyone there's certain things that you—there's sort of key ones. I feel that one is one that at that time the image of that interested me and I feel it sort of lead on to a few other ideas afterwards.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I seem to think we had two versions of the *Hill*. Were there versions of it that altered in some sort of way?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Not that one, I don't think. I think that was the only one. But, see, that introduced to me that sort diagonal going down.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** And sort of objects on the hill. There was a painting that was based—I think the painting, the *Black Garden in the Plaza*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** In a kind of indirect way came from this sort of idea. Like sometimes when you pick up an image, a certain image, once in a smaller work, it sort of reoccurs. Not quite as directly but there were certain things about it that sort of, you know, you use in other paintings. Well, naturally you know one learns from one picture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I suppose—I hope—and goes on to the next one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Mound*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** *Mound*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** One of the recurring themes in your work.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the recurring theme again. Yes. That was just another about the same period as the previous one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Again, a mound of rubbish which is given this extraordinary sort of structural sort of feeling about it with the windows and veranda or whatever.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. Well, there it is. That's the same print, is it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. Well, that seemed to me to be a different one.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Oh, I see. There are two versions.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** That's what I was talking about beforehand. That's when I was printing, one was a light—see, that's a light tone here, that's a darker sky. It's got this sort of tonal change and marks here that these haven't.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, and varies quite considerably.

**JAN SENBERGS:** It varies, yes, on the colours. But the stencils are absolutely the same.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The same.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Except that in the actual printing you've involved a different effect.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's right. Yes, that's what I was talking about when—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. So it's good to have those two examples to show just how changes can occur.

**JAN SENBERGS:** The variations. Yes. But that's the same one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The *Incoming Ministers*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the *Incoming Ministers*, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A Canberra one?

**JAN SENBERGS:** No, actually it was done in Melbourne. But there again these sort of associations that I have with words. When I work in a studio I often have the radio on and there was a news bulletin that came and it said something about, 'And the incoming ministers have arrived or are in Canberra'. And just the two words 'incoming ministers'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Stuck in your mind.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, things like that. So I had this little space platform with little ships sort of coming in to this landscape.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** It is just a word really that sort of sticks in your mind and you do an image to it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** *Incoming Ministers*, that's quite absurd, isn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** *We Are Moving*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's of that same period again. It was with different sort of structures using photographic half tones and line work and paper stencils right throughout. Mainly the same.

**JAMES GLEESON:** By this time it's getting much more complex, your handling of the technique.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's right. *Women's Building, University of Oregon*. Well, that came simply off a postcard. Somebody gave me a postcard, it seemed to be a 1930's postcard, or series of postcards of the University of Oregon. They were, you know, those postcards that are tinted.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I know.

**JAN SENBERGS:** There's that long strip of grass and buildings tinted with pink and vivid green and all, you know, those sort of type of postcards. But, anyway, this particular one I was looking at was of this building. It was across this playing field obviously and a couple of sort of side buildings to it and sort of odd, neatly planted trees, all very tightly tinted. Well, the title of it was *Women's Building, University of Oregon*. I was fascinated with this, and I based the print on that postcard. That's how that came about.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Window*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** *Window*. That's based on a painting, or I forget which way —

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was it a painting in the Sao Paulo?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, there was. Yes, of that, a big painting, eight foot painting. That's the print of it, I think. You know, sometimes it occurs that the prints come first and then you try—I usually work both in a way, never the same. I mean, there's quite a bit of difference between that and the painting.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The painting.

**JAN SENBERGS:** But, you know, quite often I like to do a print and work out the idea in painting and reverse it. Often from drawings I do a lot of little thumb sketches and build them up. They could be worked both ways.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Talking about these thumb sketches, we've recently got this whole pile of material which is not for exhibition but for study purposes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Oh, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, those are the sort of things you work from?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, those are the ideas.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, they're valuable for us, for students to have to see in the future, just how you work from these notes, these brief sketches through to prints and paintings.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, and they become sort of quite finished by the time I get through—sometimes too finished. But that's true, that's how they evolve.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So we do have a very good coverage of you because we not only have your working models, your work in graphic form and in painting form.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, it's funny.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Performance*, three pieces.

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**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's from the last lot. Well, this is the last series which I did in Canberra in '75, I think it was. I had a very good set up there in that studio and, you know, they were very helpful as far as setting the place up, giving you material, helping you with material. So I really used it. You know, I got all the best materials. All the things that I decided to sort of produce. In a way the printing on these, as far as techniques goes, probably the best, you know, technically, and some of the ideas are okay, and some are not. One of the things I'm sort of concerned about printmaking as such—in a way the result of this print came about. It's called *The Good Looking Print* or *Harry Was Right*. The thing of printmaking is I just feel that it's become so technical and so professional. I'm probably to blame partly myself, you know, as well. That they just become like large reproductions almost, particularly with workshops producing work. Often you get the idea, overseas particularly, you have artists who very rarely understand printmaking at all, don't know anything about it, go into a workshop and say, 'Look, I want an edition of 600' and the technicians produce it. That's all very well, you know, the idea is there's prints for the people and so on, but somehow the quality and the understanding of the actual printmaking process suffers and it all becomes a bit too slick technically and the whole thing loses something, I feel.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** One of the reasons why I try to print my own prints is because I'm aware of that. Well, secondly, I couldn't get people to help me in my case even if I wanted to because they vary so much because of all those internal things. But I think it's important to retain sort of the hand in it somewhere.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Sure.

**JAN SENBERGS:** I think printmaking as such is becoming just, I don't know, too slick. I lose interest in a lot of prints, even though I make a lot of prints too. I'm always looking for someone who's, you know, who can't print properly.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Showing he's bad.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Or something's the matter, but he's got an image somewhere and stuff like this. In a sense this particular print, *The Good Looking Print*, in a sense, I was sort of sending myself up perhaps a bit. I called it *The Good Looking Print* because I think there's so many good looking prints around. So I made it very more colourful and, I mean, I particularly worked on a sort of tonal values there and the blends, I made them sort of more attractive than usual. You know, I was sort of aware of this—

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were reflecting what you were thinking.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. In a sense, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How does *Harry Was Right* come into it?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That is just one of my overheard sort of comments that stuck in my mind.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Incoming Ministers*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's right, yes. On a train once, yes. Somebody was very emphatic about it so I couldn't forget it.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** *Structure on Legs*, proof copy.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the same period again. I think all these last ones are.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, yes. *Structure, Cloud*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's also the same, yes. This is the one probably I like best of that period.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *A Vision for Builders*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** *A Vision for Builders*, yes. Because in a way it related to that Canberra period and that sort of planned, curved and sort of structures. It's all about building and planning and vaguely it's to do with that but also in the imagery. Right throughout all these prints the images, I'm very conscious of the images in these last lot of prints and I've worked to try to make them, well, their own, whatever they are. I like them to be sort of—how can I say? Well, they're particular images which are my images, in a sense. It's hard to say. I can't explain it quite. These ones have that. I try to sort of put that into it, yes. I'm not explaining myself too well.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I understand what you mean, yes. *Gateway*—from the same period?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's the same.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All these are Canberra works?

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. These are all the Canberra periods, yes, and also *Dark Structure and Windows*. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There's a kind of relationship going right through them, you can tell that they belong to the same.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's a big *Moundhouse*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** That was a very big print that one. What happened? George Baldessin got a batch of Japanese paper, large sheets. He said, 'Do you want some large sheets?' and I said, 'Yes'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A hundred by 175 centimetres.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes. So I said, 'Yes, I like to do a big print', so that's it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And *The Flyer*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's *The Flyer*, same period again.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Well that covers that. Now we come to the problem areas, ones where we have some cards for but no photographs of. I wonder if you can help us here? There was one, no title, 1966 screen-print, two of three, number two of three, a long narrow one. Does it ring a bell?

**JAN SENBERGS:** That's hard. Silkscreen on paper one. I can't think of it off hand, no.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** All right we'll have to try and—

**JAN SENBERGS:** I'll try and look at that sheet. I did make up a sheet when a lot of those earlier prints were sent to the Gallery. I think it was in Canberra at some time I was in Canberra. I've got that sheet somewhere, so I'll just check that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Would you? Ah, great. *Head '63*. Now that must relate to those head periods.

**JAN SENBERGS:** It could be one of those two heads there, that you've got there. I think it could be.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, often we do have several prints of the same subject, so it could be that.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Could be, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Study for Inside a Machine*, number two and three.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Number two and three. I'll have to check those, too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Because we have another one that we have identified as number one.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that's right. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, this doesn't help us much. No title, 1963, silkscreen on thin white paper.

**JAN SENBERGS:** These are all in the Gallery, aren't they? They're all there, aren't they?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Later on in the year when I go up there for the High Court, I will be there for a few weeks installing the thing. If you like I could go up there and if you showed me the prints and I came up with the sheets.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, that would be an idea.

**JAN SENBERGS:** We could probably identify them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What I might do, Jan, is to leave with you these groups.

**JAN SENBERGS:** See, that's familiar.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Two Elders*, 1966.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, I could probably pick that, I could pick that, but I can't pick it now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No title, 1968, *Broken Mirror* or mirror silkscreen nine. I think the best thing to do is to leave these groups with you. *Fort '73*.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Colour screen print. I'll check that too.



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**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Well, I think that's the best plan. I will leave those with you and you can check them through with your files. We can then have another session when I come down next time.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Yes, that would be good.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Okay. Well, thank you very much indeed for that.

**JAN SENBERGS:** Thank you.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It is a great help.