

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: GARRY SHEAD

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JAMES GLEESON: Garry, let's begin at the beginning. Can I ask you when and where you were born?

GARRY SHEAD: Sydney, 24th June, 1942.

JAMES GLEESON: Were you born into a family that had an interest in art?

GARRY SHEAD: I was encouraged, but I wouldn't say interested in art, no.

JAMES GLEESON: Neither of your parents were practicing (inaudible)?

GARRY SHEAD: No.

JAMES GLEESON: No. But you were encouraged?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: You knew fairly early, I suppose, that you wanted to be an artist?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, I was always interested in painting and drawing. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you go to any art school?

GARRY SHEAD: Well, there was an art school at the school I went to. Then I went to North Sydney Tech for a year or two.

JAMES GLEESON: Doing art, an art course?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: What sort of things did they teach you there?

GARRY SHEAD: It was the old things like figure drawing.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, so an academic sort of background?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. The old Australian artists were still there.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

GARRY SHEAD: Harold Abbot and people like that.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah yes, yes. Then what happened? You had very early in the piece, I remember, your first exhibition at Watters Gallery, wasn't it?

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GARRY SHEAD: Yes, that was in '66.

JAMES GLEESON: How old were you then?

GARRY SHEAD: I think I was about 24 from memory.

JAMES GLEESON: Twenty-four. Yes. I remember that exhibition and then for a number of years afterwards you had shows at the Watters.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, right, every year up until about '71.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you go abroad?

GARRY SHEAD: Not until I won—well, I was given a studio in the Cité in Paris.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, yes. What year was that?

GARRY SHEAD: Seventy-three.

JAMES GLEESON: Seventy-three. How long were you there?

GARRY SHEAD: About six months.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you find it interesting?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh, amazing, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: That was your first visit to Europe?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Opened my eyes, that one.

JAMES GLEESON: I bet it did. It's a fascinating city, isn't it?

GARRY SHEAD: It really is, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Any particular thing stand out in your mind as impressing you most? In terms of, you know, affect on your art.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. By chance I saw an exhibition of Leonardo's drawings in London. I didn't even know it was on and I was just suffering from culture shock the first day and I just wandered into the gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: Where was that?

GARRY SHEAD: No, I really don't know exactly where it was.

JAMES GLEESON: It wasn't (inaudible)?

GARRY SHEAD: No, no. It was just a little gallery.

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JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Well, it mightn't have been little but it wasn't like the National Gallery.

JAMES GLEESON: It wasn't the National Gallery, one of the big public galleries.

GARRY SHEAD: I was just amazed by the delicacy of these drawings, you know. In Australia I had always been rather brutal in my kind of—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: It was rather fashionable to be crude and seeing this, you know, changed my whole—

JAMES GLEESON: Really? Well, I suppose of all artists he is the most subtle in his drawings and paintings.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: That really did change your view on things?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, much more than I realised at the time. Then when I went to Paris I was impressed by, well, most of it, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: Specially the big paintings of Delacroix.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah yes, Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa*.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: They're marvellous things, aren't they?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Well now, we've got quite a number of your works. I think all of them are on paper. We don't yet have one of your paintings. That, I suppose, will come in the future.

GARRY SHEAD: I hope so.

JAMES GLEESON: But, Garry, now they are arranged in chronological sequence and we begin with one called *Backs* for which we have, for some reason I can't understand, no card. But you told me it is a watercolour and it did come from an exhibition at the Watters Gallery around about 1974.

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GARRY SHEAD: Yes. That was the first exhibition I had when I came back. I just discovered watercolour technique again.

JAMES GLEESON: Had you worked much in it before?

GARRY SHEAD: Well, kind of gouache before that.

JAMES GLEESON: Opaque colour.

GARRY SHEAD: Opaque, and a little bit of watercolour. I really started going into it quite meticulously at this time, only in a funny kind of way just using images from anywhere, magazines and stuff, and then just—like in this one—repeating them, turning them into patterns.

JAMES GLEESON: So, yes, it becomes almost like an abstract pattern, doesn't it?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: You've left—what is it—the shoulder strap or whatever it is, just the raw paper, is it?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: So that the thing does emerge as a pattern of positive and negative shape, so you've got one surface.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Well, the second one we do have a card for. *Orpheus* of 1974, it's a coloured screen-print. Can you tell me when you studied the screen-print technique?

GARRY SHEAD: Through Bruce Latimer.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I got to know him and he liked my work and he thought it would be interesting if we did something together. He actually just agreed to be my technician on it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: And anything I wanted to do. So we just got together on it and I wanted to create a print that had the effect of a comic strip with the colour mis-registering, but using a kind of more classical theme than an ordinary comic. Although it's got bits of recognisable comics in there, I think, a bit of Tarzan and things.

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JAMES GLEESON: So you've sort of grafted the classic mythological subject on to a contemporary theme and done it in a comic strip form.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do many works of this kind, in the strip form, comic strip form?

GARRY SHEAD: No, just the one. Once I'd done it that was kind of it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: That was as far as I was interested in going. Screen-printing's nice but it's a fairly light weight, you know, you can't really get anything strong in it.

JAMES GLEESON: You don't feel involved in it. You don't feel you want to do more?

GARRY SHEAD: No, not any more, no.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do many at all?

GARRY SHEAD: I think they've got all the ones I've done here. The one I did with Tony Coleing, that was a joint one again. Then there's another kind of one with the Phantom.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, we'll come to that in a moment.

GARRY SHEAD: That's about it, I think.

JAMES GLEESON: They were all done with Bruce Latimer?

GARRY SHEAD: No. The Phantom was, and the other one I did with Tony Coleing and I did another one by myself.

JAMES GLEESON: Where did you work on that? You don't have a screen printing set up here, do you?

GARRY SHEAD: I don't. But it's such a simple process, you can do it in a laundry, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Really? Good. Now, another watercolour we have of yours, again for some inexplicable reason, no card. It's a palm, I think called *Palm*, and watercolour again, and must have been bought from the same exhibition at the Watters Gallery in '64.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: That's straight out watercolour technique?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. That was from a real palm.

JAMES GLEESON: Whereabouts?

GARRY SHEAD: I've forgotten. I've forgotten where it was.

JAMES GLEESON: Not around here where you're living?

GARRY SHEAD: Not where I'm living now. I lived in a different part of Sydney then.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Does the influence of Leonardo come out in these?

GARRY SHEAD: No, no. It's taken a long time for that to start coming out.

JAMES GLEESON: It just occurred to me that Leonard was, you know, very interested in—well, among other things—natural forms.

GARRY SHEAD: Natural forms, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I just wondered if that might have set your mind thinking along those lines.

GARRY SHEAD: No. I think it's a long-term thing with Leonardo. He's just been beyond me because I couldn't draw very well in those days.

JAMES GLEESON: So it's a long process. Now, this is *You've come! At last!* That was the other silk screen.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: This was done by yourself?

GARRY SHEAD: That was done with Latimer too.

JAMES GLEESON: With Latimer too. Again, the pop imagery, the comic strip imagery.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. I don't know what you can say about it.

JAMES GLEESON: No sense of irony in it? You're not in a way sending it up, or are you interested in the comic strip forms and characters for their own sake?

GARRY SHEAD: I was very interested in comic strips, the Phantom particularly. I was making a film at the same time. I did a film on the Phantom. He's become a bit, or had become a bit of a cult kind of figure.

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JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Did the film come before this?

GARRY SHEAD: I think around about the same time. No, no, that came before. Yes, the film came before that.

JAMES GLEESON: So that this is a sort of spin off from your interest in the film?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I think I saw that film. Did they show it at Gallery A at one time?

GARRY SHEAD: Probably, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: I think I saw it there.

GARRY SHEAD: Everyone was in that.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Good. Now, an untitled watercolour. This is of a seated woman and we've got a date of 1975 on it. Is that correct?

GARRY SHEAD: That's probably correct, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: There's pencil squaring up of the image. Did you, in fact, make it into an oil?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh no, the pencil squaring up was a thing I got from looking at Chuck Close.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, yes, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I started off making each square like a little painting in itself and just working from one corner to the next.

JAMES GLEESON: Ah, I see. Using Chuck Close's technique of working segment by segment?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. But I found it very limiting. It's a thing that you become very cold and the image loses its life.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. It is a painterly means of recreating a photographic image, isn't it?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Yes, that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: In the final one—and you can't see the squaring up here—is it noticeable in the painting?

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GARRY SHEAD: I think I didn't like it because this painting's become more of a—I started painting more, because I didn't really like it then.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

GARRY SHEAD: Some of them I did actually leave the squaring on, but this one kind of—

JAMES GLEESON: You worked over it?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you do many in that kind of way, that sort of Chuck Close sort of photographic image?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: For several years you were interested?

GARRY SHEAD: Probably. While I was interested in watercolours at that time, I kind of used that method.

JAMES GLEESON: You worked from photographs a lot at that period. I seem to remember in your shows at the Watters at that time there were a lot that seemed to be taken from snapshots and photographs.

GARRY SHEAD: That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: Is this anyone in particular, or an anonymous?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh, it is somebody, yes. Somebody I knew.

JAMES GLEESON: Anyone of importance we should know the name of?

GARRY SHEAD: Just a minor actress, I think. No, it is no one of importance.

JAMES GLEESON: You don't want a name to go down to posterity?

GARRY SHEAD: No.

JAMES GLEESON: *Figures and car*, 1975, watercolour on illustration board, bought from Ray Hughes in Brisbane in—what's that?—October '76. Did you have a show at Hughes at that time?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh yes.

JAMES GLEESON: We've no photograph of this one. Can you recall what it looks like?

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GARRY SHEAD: I'd say it was a snapshot, kind of a forties snapshot I used for that.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Was it done with the squaring up process or a more free interpretation?

GARRY SHEAD: I think the squaring up became kind of less important, mainly just like squaring up a painting.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I think I used it like that by that stage.

JAMES GLEESON: But you didn't deliberately deal with each little square complete in itself before moving on to the next one.

GARRY SHEAD: No. I got tired of that.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, there are apparently two drawings of Gordon Shepherdson, both of which we got from the Ray Hughes Gallery in October '76.

GARRY SHEAD: They'd be fairly similar.

JAMES GLEESON: They are both crayon?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: When did you first meet Shepherdson.

GARRY SHEAD: During that show he came into the gallery and said he wanted to get me on to a board or something. I didn't know what he was talking about at first. But he used to grab people he thought he could get something out of and paint them.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, in that little studio of his. It's so dark.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Have you been down there?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: Have you been painted?

JAMES GLEESON: No.

GARRY SHEAD: A wise man.

JAMES GLEESON: So you retaliated and did a couple of drawings of him.

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GARRY SHEAD: Yes. I was only there for a day and he knocked a painting off, and he was quite happy with it. So, just as you say, I retaliated and did him.

JAMES GLEESON: You never carried it any further. You never did a painting of it?

GARRY SHEAD: No.

JAMES GLEESON: No.

GARRY SHEAD: No.

JAMES GLEESON: No. So it's the two and they're both lithographic, a crayon on lithograph paper. Good. Now, *Anima* is an etching, No. 13 out of an edition of 25. When did you take up etching? Where did you sort of study the technique?

GARRY SHEAD: Well, I didn't. Port Jackson Press, that's David Rankin.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: He approached me and said would I like to do one. Sort of gave me a plate and I just went away and etched it. I think it was only put in the acid once.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

GARRY SHEAD: I didn't know much about working them up or anything.

JAMES GLEESON: It wasn't one of those complicated ones that you bite and re-bite?

GARRY SHEAD: No. While I was in Paris, actually, I did get interested in the process. I think I might have mentioned it to him.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: Mirabelle Fitzgerald was over there and she was working in a little etching studio near the Cité that they gave her. I was quite fascinated by it, and I really liked Picasso's etchings at that time too. But she was amazing. I mean, she used to work almost the whole of her stay there. She was in there every day kind of digging, you know, engraving these things deeper and deeper. You know, just that process. You know, it was very funny. I wouldn't like to work like that on metal.

JAMES GLEESON: How many etchings have you done?

GARRY SHEAD: I've done those two big ones, and I did etchings for a book of poetry called *Cross the border*. I'll show it to you later.

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JAMES GLEESON: Right, fine. Were the two big ones done for the Port Jackson Press?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. They were done fairly closely.

JAMES GLEESON: What about the ones for the book of poetry?

GARRY SHEAD: They were done when I had my exhibition of *The Grail*. Robert Adamson wrote this book of poetry. I just did them for the book and did them very quickly.

JAMES GLEESON: Where were they printed?

GARRY SHEAD: They were printed at Port Jackson too.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see, so they were all printed there.

GARRY SHEAD: I've always used them.

JAMES GLEESON: The Port Jackson.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you do your actual printing yourself or do they?

GARRY SHEAD: No, they did it.

JAMES GLEESON: They did it?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, the only thing I know anything about really is oil painting and, I mean, there's so much to learn about that, that I'm not interested in learning about processes, the graphic processes.

JAMES GLEESON: No. no. So your basic interest is in oils?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh, yes. It's only in the last couple of years that I've really got into oils and I've just studied as much as I can about the old techniques.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. I remember paintings from earlier shows at Watters. Were they acrylics?

GARRY SHEAD: No, I've always used oils.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, they were oils?

GARRY SHEAD: But in a very uninformed way.

JAMES GLEESON: Direct sort of—

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GARRY SHEAD: Yes. Just linseed oil and turps.

JAMES GLEESON: Now you're more interested in the technical?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh, yes, I want my paintings to last, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: It's just such a complicated medium. I'd really like to ask you a few questions about how you did your paintings.

JAMES GLEESON: *Enigma*. Oh, this is the second etching then.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: From the Port Jackson Press? There's No. 12 of 25 and that, I take it, would have been done at exactly the same time.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. That's was a bit more—

JAMES GLEESON: More worked on.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: What, bitten several times?

GARRY SHEAD: The image was altered too, played around with. The other one was very kind of clear and simple image and that one's got a bit complicated.

JAMES GLEESON: Is it a pure etching or have you used any dry point in it?

GARRY SHEAD: No, just pure etching. Oh, actually, I might have used a bit of dry point there.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. What, in the lower left corner?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: That decorative element?

GARRY SHEAD: Some of those little bits of drawing there, I think, might have been—

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, faces, yes, yes. Dry point. Good. With an edition of 25 you can probably get away with a dry point. It doesn't, you know, blur.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: Now, this one is a pen and ink drawing from the *Byron series*, also from the Ray Hughes Gallery bought at the same time. What was the *Byron series*, Garry? Can you tell us something about this? Did you do a number of works in this series?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, I did about four or five drawings. They didn't get to paintings or anything. I remember after doing them there was a play about Byron put on Sydney. Someone had written a play about him too. I started getting a bit into the literary thing, the romantic. I don't know what. I got quite interested in him for a little while. But, I mean, that was about the end of it. Once I'd done that there was nothing more there for me to do.

JAMES GLEESON: They weren't, say, illustrations of definite poems of Byron?

GARRY SHEAD: No, no. More of his life.

JAMES GLEESON: An evocation of just what sort of person he was.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: So they're not in any sense illustrations of Byron's works?

GARRY SHEAD: No, no.

JAMES GLEESON: They were all pen and ink?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. To get that darkness I think I rubbed something into it, charcoal or something.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. It does have a very, you know, velvety darkness which would be very difficult to get, I think, with just zinc alone.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, I think so. I mean, it would be an etching process to get that richness, I think.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Just to look at it, it looks like an etching. You didn't have an etching in mind when you did the drawing?

GARRY SHEAD: No, no.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. Now, the last one of the series is something you did with Tony Coleing. *Something strange at the Greek's tonight*, 1976, a lithograph.

GARRY SHEAD: No, that's a screen print too.

JAMES GLEESON: It is?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

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JAMES GLEESON: Ah, so we're wrong there. I must change that. It's not a lithograph. A screen print. Can you tell me the circumstances under which it came about that you and Tony worked together?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: And how much each of you did?

GARRY SHEAD: We went to a Chinese place for lunch, and ended up staying the whole afternoon and got talking about things. He said, 'How about making a print?'. I said, 'Oh, that's good'. He said, 'Where could we do it?'. I tried to think. Anyway, we went up to The Cross and Mary McMahon was up there at her studio. So we knocked on her door about 8 o'clock and said, 'We'd like to do a print'. She told us to come in and we got bits of paper from everywhere and just got straight into it and worked all through the night. We both drew it together. Hang on. Wrong. Cross all that out. It's another etching because we did two together.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

GARRY SHEAD: So this actually comes out of that night, because he liked the idea and said, 'We must do another'.

JAMES GLEESON: So this is the second one you did with Tony?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. He sent me this drawing of all the tables.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: And the waiter and things.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: He said, 'Now you do something to it and we'll make a print'. So I did all the lines, the tone, and added this woman at the table here.

JAMES GLEESON: In the top right hand corner?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: Sent it back to him and he printed it, that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: That's how it came up.

GARRY SHEAD: So he's added the bits of colour.

JAMES GLEESON: Now, is it a lithograph?

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GARRY SHEAD: It is a screen print.

JAMES GLEESON: It is a screen print. Both ones.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. He did it at his place.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Well, thanks very much. Now Garry, before we close, is there anything you'd like to say, you know, about your current interests?

GARRY SHEAD: Oh, yes. Would you like to hear it?

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, please, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: See, this all finishes around about the end of my time with Watters. I left there.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I started giving away all these extra other things like films and printing.

JAMES GLEESON: And really concentrating on oils?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, I got quite mad actually with painting. I left Watters after a fairly successful show of water nymphs and things, kind of romantic stuff.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I remember the show.

GARRY SHEAD: I rented a place down at Neutral Bay and suddenly was hit by the—I was kind of painting The Grail. Now, I knew nothing about The Grail. My marriage broke up and everything just before, so I think I was in a highly susceptible—

JAMES GLEESON: Emotional.

GARRY SHEAD: Emotional state. But it's more than that because it's lasted ever since, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

GARRY SHEAD: It's made painting very real to me now, whereas before I was experimenting with lots of things.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I painted these nine paintings of The Grail. Each one was like making an enormous step into reality or something.

JAMES GLEESON: So it was a sort of spiritual experience?

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GARRY SHEAD: Very spiritual, yes. I made this deadline. Well, I had about six weeks to do these paintings, and I just did them. Locked myself up for all this time and just worked. Well, each painting, as I said, was a big step into myself and the paintings themselves weren't that well painted. They were painted in such a state and so quickly, they were just images I'd put down. But each one was successful as far as, you know, I finished it. I went through to the end of it. It was kind of like over the borders of sanity.

JAMES GLEESON: Really?

GARRY SHEAD: I was quite exhausted when I'd finished them.

JAMES GLEESON: I can imagine, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I was involved with Robert Adamson at the time. I was quite in touch with him. He used to come round and he'd look at the paintings. Every few days I'd have another image up, and he'd come. He's actually a ex-criminal and, like they always are, he'd steal these images and turn them into poetry. I'll show you those poems later.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I'd like to see them.

GARRY SHEAD: Every couple of days he'd come by and he'd come back the next few days with this poem he'd spent two nights kind of writing because he kind of—

JAMES GLEESON: Really? So it was very fruitful?

GARRY SHEAD: It was fruitful, yes. I don't know if it's good poetry but it was a very kind of wild time. Anyway, the exhibition was very badly received. I mean, everyone just thought I was doing storybook pictures of Arthur and his Knights.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: It must have seemed like that. I mean, I don't think there was that much quality in the paintings, although they're not that bad. So anyway, when that was finished about six months went by and I kind of got back into painting, because I was really exhausted after it and started painting what I'm working on now still after about four years. There are 12 titles and they're kind of like Michelangelo concepts. They're creation, beauty, love, devotion, things like that.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: Which are really very hard to make without being laughable or, you know, it's hard to paint those things.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, without being either banal or—

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GARRY SHEAD: Right, exactly, yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, or pinching something that's been done before.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, and it's got to go beyond any kind of Christianity or all those kind of things.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: So these images, I mean, the importance of these paintings is just as strong as *The Grail* was, only where I did *The Grail* in six weeks, this is like—

JAMES GLEESON: Four years.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. It's really, you know, like sometimes I feel like giving up but I can't give up. Anyway, I painted the first three and the one behind you. So I found myself painting this lion. I mean, it went through several things before it got to that because I paint not intellectually but—

JAMES GLEESON: Instinctively.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. I've realised that half these paintings—well, I've done six of them—are instinctive but the other half aren't instinctive. You get to the point where it has to be understood intellectually too.

JAMES GLEESON: I see, yes.

GARRY SHEAD: It's kind of a balance. So that one's *Love*. I've done *Creation* which is a bull. I'll show it to you. So that's where I am now. I'm just working. But I want to make the images very beautiful but also they have to be technically good too, although that's not particularly technically good. I can't go back now. I mean, as the painting's progressed they get better technically.

JAMES GLEESON: I'm interested in the fact that, you know, half of them come from within quite spontaneously, like almost a surreal image, irrational flooding through the mind.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: The other half are very considered and worked out?

GARRY SHEAD: Yes. I mean, it's still got to be the inspiration, but it's got to be more than that. It's hard to put into words exactly what it is.

JAMES GLEESON: You think through the images before you really put them down?

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GARRY SHEAD: Yes, I suppose it is that. I mean, where I painted the lion, I knew it was a lion as I was going, then I started painting. Yes, these ones, it's the way you paint it or something.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

GARRY SHEAD: I suppose I'll have to paint them to be really clear.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you start with the idea in your mind of the theme, say, love or devotion or whatever the theme is? You have that fixed in your mind and then the image arises that seems to click.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, that's right.

JAMES GLEESON: Be right for you.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes, yes. It's something, a seed that grows. I mean, I know devotion is about a battle. Now it's a way of making that battle a classic but also some, you know, romantic inside image.

JAMES GLEESON: So the whole sequence becomes both intensely personal but at the same time objective in the sense that you're—

GARRY SHEAD: That's right, yes, yes. It's funny, I mean, I wish there was somebody I could talk about it to. But I seem to be out on a limb really.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, well it's not the sort of art that's currently fashionable or that people are practicing much.

GARRY SHEAD: No, no.

JAMES GLEESON: So that you are really working in an area that wouldn't create a great deal of understanding or sympathy with other artists.

GARRY SHEAD: I suppose everyone's got beyond making the Australian theme. I mean, but we have to get past that and make it a universal. Australia's, I mean, I love Australia. I think it is something that has to be got out of it.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, you're dealing with basic things, human emotions and experiences, and they're the same anywhere.

GARRY SHEAD: Yes.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, how many have you done so far?

GARRY SHEAD: Well, I've done six.

JAMES GLEESON: Six. You plan 12? Are they a uniform size and shape?

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GARRY SHEAD: No. They started off huge. Well, fairly big, *Creations* is very big. But as I pass the six, it's not really important. Size is coming down. So I don't want it to be very big at all by the end.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no, no. Well, Garry, thank you very much. Anything else you'd like to, you know, put down on tape while we're here?

GARRY SHEAD: No, I think that covers it, Jim.

JAMES GLEESON: Thank you very much indeed. That's going to be very useful.

GARRY SHEAD: Good.

JAMES GLEESON: Thank you.