

Smith&Singer

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CAROL JERREMS

PORTRAIT OF A DECADE

Most Comprehensive and Fully Documented Commercial Exhibition of Jerrems' Work Ever Held to Commence Smith & Singer 2020 Program



CAROL JERREMS 1949-1980

Vale Street (1975)

gelatin silver print, edition of 9, plus artist's proofs, 20.1 x 30.4 cm (image);

30.3 x 38.1 cm (sheet)

© Courtesy of Ken Jerrems & Estate of Lance Jerrems

MELBOURNE, 4 February 2020 – Over the coming months, Smith & Singer – formerly Sotheby's Australia – will host the most comprehensive and fully documented commercial exhibition of Carol Jerrems' work ever held. *Carol Jerrems: Portrait of a Decade* will be presented in Smith & Singer's Melbourne premises from 27 February – 20 March 2020, before touring to our Sydney galleries from 26 March – 17 April 2020.

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The 26 works in the exhibition trace the extraordinary iconography of one of the most revered and rarest of all Australian photographers, who in her brief but intense career, produced gritty and luminous images that continue to challenge and inspire. Bookending a decade, these highly personal and purely figurative compositions include some of the most sensitive, revealing, forceful and compelling images of 'Living in the Seventies' in Australia. (1)

'Although Jerrems worked within the documentary tradition she did not photograph the "exotic" in social terms. Her subjects were not the very rich or the very poor, but were her friends, her students and so on. Her subjective documentary style was wedded to an explicit feminist project, that is, her work as a woman and her creation of positive images of other women. She was also committed to a broader social project summed up in her declaration: "This society is sick and I must help change it." Her task is thus conceived as a moral one, her photographs a means of "bringing people together" and of initiating social change. She was concerned with legitimising the new generation, male and female, in images which present modern heroes, confident young people fully entitled to own the world. Jerrems' photographs are a hymn to youth, to life, to the future.'

(Helen Ennis, 1990, quoted in Helen Ennis and Bob Jenyns, *Living in the 70s: Photographs by Carol Jerrems*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1990, n.p.)

The art created by Carol Jerrems remains firmly located within the documentary-autobiographical-confessional strand of photographic practice. It is not therefore surprising that the most recent major exhibition devoted to Jerrems, curated by Natalie King at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne in 2010, showed the artist alongside Larry Clark, Nan Goldin and William Yang – artists synonymous with recording the cultural/social milieu of their time and place. (2) Within this context the full range of Jerrems' imagery was explored, from her most famous to her less well-known compositions. Many of these works appear in the present exhibition, subjects that traverse cities, suburbs and rural towns, including public buildings and private domestic spaces, and all populated with the artist's wide and interesting circle of friends, lovers and acquaintances; many of whom were artists, writers, activists, filmmakers, actors and musicians and significant counter-culturalists of the 1970s.

Due to numerous factors, including a severely limited and curtailed production, combined with a small number of private and public collectors of photography during the 1970s, photographs by Carol Jerrems rarely appear on the market. Following Jerrems' death, Mrs Joy Jerrems donated the archive of her daughter's photographs to the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, which remains the largest and most comprehensive representation of the artist's work and has formed the basis of several important exhibitions and publications.

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LONG-DESERVED COMMERCIAL ACCLAIM

In November 2019, Smith & Singer (then Sotheby's Australia) achieved a world auction record for an Australian photograph when a version of *Vale Street* (1975) (cat. no. 5) realised \$122,000. This represented a significant milestone in the art market for Australian photography and also publically recognised and acknowledged the enduring legacy of Carol Jerrems within the history and development of Australian art.

This exhibition, and its accompanying catalogue, present the most detailed research to date on the specific exhibition history and literature for each image within Jerrems' oeuvre. The entries also include references to additional versions held in Australian public collections. We hope that this will provide the basis for additional research into the future.

Geoffrey Smith, Chairman of Smith & Singer commented: 'We gratefully acknowledge the existing and continued research undertaken by numerous individuals and organisations on Carol Jerrems, and in particular the assistance of Helen Ennis, Natalie King, and Gael Newton AM, in preparing this catalogue.

Carol Jerrems: Portrait of a Decade honours and celebrates the 40th anniversary of Jerrems' death on 21 February 1980, aged 30. We hope that this exhibition reaches new national and international audiences and ignites their interest and appreciation for this remarkable Australian artist.'

'Carol was honest. Honest people are extremely rare. Her photographs are honest and therefore penetrate other layers. Every image carries her heart and soul and thus becomes a self portrait.'

(Paul Cox, 'Introduction', in Helen Ennis and Bob Jenyns, *Living in the 70s: Photographs by Carol Jerrems*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1990, n.p.)

(1) This phrase, the title of Melbourne band Skyhooks' debut album and hit single of 1974, was also the title of a touring exhibition of Jerrems' work organised by the Australian National Gallery in 1990-1991

(2) Natalie King (ed.), *Up Close: Carol Jerrems: With Larry Clark, Nan Goldin and William Yang*, Heide Museum of Modern Art and Schwartz City, Melbourne, 2010

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EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS



CAROL JERREMS 1949-1980

Boys (1973)

gelatin silver print, edition of 9,

plus artist's proofs

15.3 x 20.3 cm (image);

25.4 x 30.4 cm (sheet)

© Courtesy of Ken Jerrems & Estate of
Lance Jerrems



CAROL JERREMS 1949-1980

Self Portrait, Kingsgate Hyatt

Hotel Room 1973

gelatin silver print, edition of 9,

plus artist's proofs

17.8 x 25.4 cm (image);

28 x 35 cm (sheet)

© Courtesy of Ken Jerrems & Estate of
Lance Jerrems



CAROL JERREMS 1949-1980

Cronulla (1977)

gelatin silver print, edition of 9,

plus artist's proofs

20.1 x 30.3 cm (image);

30.4 x 38 cm (sheet)

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Jerrems

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AT A GLANCE

Carol Jerrems: Portrait of a Decade

26 works

Exhibition in Melbourne, 27 February – 20 March 2020, Monday-Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm,

14-16 Collins Street, Melbourne

Exhibition in Sydney, 26 March – 17 April 2020, Monday-Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm,

30 & 34 Queen Street, Woollahra

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