



SALLY PARNIS

Establishing a
new practice

DR SALLY PARNIS GAVE UP HER WORK AS A paediatric anaesthetist at the Women's and Children's Hospital to explore the art part of her brain. "Being a hobbyist was frustrating," she says. "I had always enjoyed drawing, painting and making. The change was something that had to be done."

For her generation at school, Sally says, if you didn't have academic ability you were allowed to do art. If you did have academic ability, you did something "sensible". Which, for her, led to 20 years in medicine. But once Sally started studying at Adelaide Central School of Art as an adult, there was no looking back. "I had found somewhere I wanted to be," she says. "I don't believe in doing things half baked."

Six years on, Sally is at the beginning of a new career in art. So far she has been involved with video artist Lisa Harms's *Little Weeds: Small Acts of Tenderness & Violence* at this year's Fringe, and is preparing a series of site specific paintings for Goodine Bistro at the new Tennyson Centre medical facility at Kurralta Park. The paintings will be themed on food in fairytales using her own children (Roger, 16, Joseph, 13, and Teresa, 10) as models. "But they won't be style princesses," Sally says. "They'll be real kids."

Along with other recent visual arts graduates, Sally worked for more than two weeks on international contemporary artist Jorge Orta's worldwide heart fabrication project during this year's Adelaide Festival. "Anatomical hearts," she says, "not Valentine hearts. We made them out of papier mache and plaster. The heart has connectivity with people all over the world. Jorge gets communities to make the hearts, who then let go of them. The hearts are then taken away and connected with someone else. Ours apparently have gone to Paris to be finished off."

"Jorge usually works in remote villages, with disadvantaged people and children. We were the first group of serious artists




on the project. The idea is you don't take individual ownership of the objects, whether you are artists or not. They are in the community. I am interested in community art work."

Sally's final art school project was based around family and community life in and around her home. *Little Weeds* also involved several artists and art in everyday life. "In my case it was art in the domestic space," Sally says. "People who went to the exhibition were given a URL (internet site) to see what I was drawing every day. The point was to try to give an indication that art can go on outside the usual places. It can be in the home or in the community."

Like artists all over the State, Sally has an eye on an SA Living Artists Festival show beginning in late July, all part of keeping her home studio activity going and developing "a healthy artistic practice". She says she's most comfortable in 2D art and has gone back to realism in her work. "I think a lot of issues will be resolved for me by going back to basic painting with a very limited, restrained palette."

Last month, Sally contributed to the Women's and Children's Hospital Foundation *Mother's May Exhibition* at her old workplace. It's that community interest again. "I'd like to develop something with the foundation's arts in health programme," she says. "I have a feeling I have an active and dynamic function to play in the community over and above making things to buy and sell. It's not just to do with producing objects. It's to do with producing something else, some sort of community connection.

"I would love to go back and combine the things I learnt as a medical person with the skills I have now, to move into another realm. I don't know what that will be yet. As artists we are always trying to find out what we don't know." 

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