

SIMONE LINNSEN

Inhabiting Two Worlds

By Annette Ong

Queensland artist Simone Linssen makes anxiety, loneliness and loss of identity the subjects of her artwork. In a painterly style, her works are an honest account of experiences associated with these conditions. Two of Simone's paintings from her *Entropy* series, *Resisting Entropy* (2016) and *Stillness in Disorder* (2016), exemplify her overall practice.

Resisting Entropy, has a single subject – a woman submerged in water with her eyes raised in supplication. Her flowing hair glows incandescently with colour. The palette is bold, with striking deep reds against the subject's peach-toned skin. Her face and shoulders are lit from above while darkness surrounds her.

Stillness in Disorder also features a woman. She lies half-submerged in what could be viewed as a puddle of water, while others walk in the background seemingly unaware of her presence. The palette of blues creates a sombre atmosphere while the reds and yellows generate a heightened awareness.

Both *Resisting Entropy* and *Stillness in Disorder* feature a submersion – a falling or sinking of self – through which the works comment on the overwhelming feeling anxiety provokes. This is particularly evident in *Stillness in Disorder*, where the world goes on around the subject. People are passing as the woman is shown to be slipping into a private place. The demarcation of private and public spaces is a strong feature of Simone's work, suggesting that those with mental health issues typically inhabit two worlds; appearing to function on the outside, while, within, a private battle ensues.

Simone's paintings are bold, visceral works; they encourage contemplation, not complacency. Her brushstrokes and vivid use of colour add texture and vibrancy, strik-

ing at the heart of the message. The *Entropy* paintings trigger a response from the viewer. By offering a glimpse into the inner world of anxiety and loneliness, these emotive works provide a visual interpretation of the experiences of those who live with mental health issues.

Simone's work invites the viewer to consider those suffering with mental health issues and how they navigate and relate to the world. Explaining what anxiety feels like, to those who have never had the experience, is incredibly difficult; at its worst, anxiety is highly debilitating and affects the individual both mentally and physically. Through her paintings, Simone has successfully offered a filter through which to view her subjects with empathy and compassion. Her work encourages an open dialogue with the viewer about the challenges of anxiety and other mental health conditions.

Simone Linssen has a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Queensland College of Art, and works as an artist and gallery manager in Brisbane. Her work has been widely exhibited in both solo and group shows and she has been a finalist in numerous art awards, including Contemporary

Art Awards 2017, 2016 and 2015, the Moreton Bay Art Awards 2015, Agendo Art Exhibition 2015 and the Milburn Art Prize 2015.

On this page, *Resisting Entropy* (2016), oil on canvas, 76 x 61cm. *Stillness in Disorder* (2016), oil on canvas, 76 x 61cm.

Images: courtesy of the artist

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