

VRINDA GLEESON

The Highly Commended for Contemporary Art Awards 2016

Women's Sensuality

By Dr Julie Rees

Situated in Bangalow, New South Wales artist, Vrinda Gleeson (b.1993) looks to her identity as a woman for inspiration. She creates paintings that depict the body and human relationships while focusing on the role art plays in creating change for women. Although women have made significant advances in the past decades, women's bodies remain an object of obsession in western culture. Vrinda believes that women's bodies are caught between sexual advertising tropes and superficial feminist critiques. As a result, Vrinda's practice shows interest in how figurative art can contribute to a diverse understanding of women's sensuality.

Her position is most clearly expressed in her work *Bath-Time* (2015) for which she received a highly commended in the 2016 Contemporary Art Awards. Forming part of a series titled 'Pose and Otiose', *Bath-Time* (2015) is a figurative piece portraying two women in a bath, one reclining nude while the other sits on the edge fully clothed. The work explores the intimate relationship between women as artists and women as models. The windowless bathroom is a visual strategy to represent a comfortable and safe working space for both artist and model. With this in mind, Vrinda created a controlled scene where women can experience an intimate collaboration not subject to the constraints of media conformism. By depicting a neutral relationship between artist and model, it provides an alternative

view on women's sensuality and contrasts to the sexualised representation of women's bodies often seen in advertising media. The work expresses her concerns around culture's perception of women's bodies and draws attention to the problems women face in a highly media-saturated world. Therefore, *Bath-Time* (2015) invites the viewer to consider their own perceptions of women's sensuality and how these views might contribute to cultural attitudes.



Vrinda is currently exploring ways to extend this line of research by approaching the mutuality and involvement of women within the visual arts through other collaborative processes. With this, she hopes to facilitate a range of women's voices and continue to open a discussion on women's body image and sensuality.

In 2015, Vrinda graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours Queensland College of Art. Her art-school training, together with a stint as a model, gave her the skills to create works shaped by her own and other women's experiences. Vrinda was born and raised in Australia but spent much of her life going back and forth between Australia and India. With this early exposure to a trans-cultural community within both countries, she recognises that meaning can often become fluid, ambiguous, and lost in translation.

On this page, *Bath-Time* (2015), Oil, acrylic, and charcoal on board, 90 x 120cm.

Image courtesy of the artist

Vrinda Gleeson's artwork can be viewed at:
www.contemporaryartawards.com/finalist-exhibition-2016