

## Reviews

"I bought your print "Murmur" from Davidson Galleries a number of years ago and just love it. I showed it to my students when I did my mezzotint class at New York Academy this week and they just loved it. I get that reaction whenever I show it in a class. (It was an online class since the corona virus). In fact 2 years ago one of the students contacted Davidsons Gallery and purchased one... working on an intaglio book. I hope to approach a publisher in the next year. If I get a contract I would love to use one of your prints as an example."

**Frederick Mershimer – World Renowned Brooklyn-based printmaker and painter, known for his mezzotint prints of New York City and New Orleans. NYC USA 2020**

"Cleo Wilkinson's figures in black send chills down my spine. In *Then IV*, the boy's skin is velvet against the black circle. You can make out the fuzz of his short hair and maybe even a few goosebumps on his back. The circle perfectly frames the quiet scene and draws your attention in to the beautiful shadows and transitions. Wilkinson has a unique eye for the perfect moment to zoom in, the right glance or breath. *Then IV* is a calm, beautiful moment that I love to get lost in."

***Recommended by Paige (Collections Manager): Davidson Gallery USA 2022***

**Cleo Wilkinson** (Australian, b. 1959) was born in Melbourne, Australia. She received a BFA from Auckland University, New Zealand and a Graduate Diploma of Information Science from the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. Wilkinson has exhibited internationally and participated in artist residencies including at The British School at Rome, Proyecto Ace in Buenos Aires, Guanlan Original Printmaking Base in China, and Experimental Graphics Workshop in Havana. Wilkinson is known for her mezzotint prints that focus on everyday objects and the human body with exquisite detail. Emerging from the deep black background, faces, backs and hands appear in delicate gradients. Wilkinson provides only slices or glimpses of these people and objects in a liminal space, using mystery to intensify the complexity of their expression, their placement, their presence. While the figures can be beautiful and fragile, they can also be tense, confrontational, and powerful. Wilkinson's work is held in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Machida City Museum of Graphic Arts in Tokyo, the Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts in Russia, and others.

***Davidson Gallery USA 2023***

**"Silent Revelations"- Solo Exhibition : The Mezzotints of Cleo Wilkinson**

**SEPTEMBER 11- NOVEMBER 20 , 2022**

***Silent Revelations*** brings together a selection of 26 prints by Australian mezzotint artist Cleo Wilkinson made over the last 18 years. Evocative of the process of making mezzotints, Wilkinson's

subject matter delicately emerges from the darkest depths of tone on the plate revealing through shadow what appear to be isolated frames of an unknown story. Each piece illuminates an intimate moment captured in hushed silence, making the viewer a voyeur. The images and single-word titles taunt us like clues in a mystery, almost daring us to piece together a narrative that never quite reveals itself. These still frames encapsulate the gravity of an entire scene, conveying anticipation, tension, isolation, confrontation, elements that beg for context yet only exist as an asynchronous chronology, like torn pages from an unknown, discarded book. This opportunity to exhibit such a large number of Wilkinson's prints within the same space provides a unique experience giving her body of work a boundary within which to tell its story, even if it is revealed a page at a time.

**Center for Contemporary Printmaking**  
**Mathews Park, 299 West Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06850- USA 2022**

"I must be transformed in some way in order for a work of art to claim my heart, mind and vote. I am proud to have awarded Cleo Wilkinson the Cash Award because all of her entries moved me. They were solid, innovative, superbly executed and to create mezzotint prints is a challenge not many artists are willing to face today"

**Renee Phillips : Manhattan Arts International NYC USA**

"Your artwork is, in my opinion, some of the most brilliant I've seen in the mezzotint medium, as it is not only technically proficient, but the images themselves are thoughtful, and deeply profound visual statements.. they are truly magnificent - you have so mastered this medium ".

**Deborah Maris Lader**

**Founder/Director of the Chicago Printmakers Collaborative, Chicago USA**

Cleo Wilkinson, a graphic printmaker from Australia exhibiting for the first time in Serbia prints realized in the well-known classic graphic discipline of mezzotint. I said well-known, but unfortunately rarely practiced technique, so rarely that those who have chosen to deal with it are considered passionate, something like ornithologist or devotees in some rare secrets. Interestingly, the prosperity of mezzotint occurred in the 17th century as a guild secret of prominent craft workshops dealing with copper-etching. It was before photography with its processing and possibility of high-volume printing, nearly sent the mezzotint into oblivion.

But fortunately, there are fans who have not forgotten the magic of mezzotint. Well known to them are replicas of Raphael's Madonna's rendered in this technique which were the privilege of the royal collections of prints and other treasures.

The human eye in relation from light to dark (*chiaro-scuro*) and vice versa has always found its inner peace and balance. Tender light sources that is born from the darkness of a plane and then swell to

form a volume with all concealed yet constructive half shadows yield an overwhelming sight and satisfaction to the human eye.

Mezzotint plate is prepared, or ground using "rocker" a curved notched blade made of fine steel which makes the surface of copper or zinc plate pitted. Such prepared surface creates an absolute saturation of black. Then the plate is flattened by the artist using a *scraper* or *burnisher* to gain fine lighting effects. The modeling of volume is then built out from the harmony of light and dark. The possibility of finding the most delicate gray value difference makes mezzotint technique fully comparable with the highest quality photograph.

This is a starting point from which Cleo Wilkinson pursued the beauty of graphics. Her prints look as they emerged from the dusty corners of a glyptothèque of some sculptor. This genre is her attempt to inspire of all the expected capabilities of the camera to make this technique anachronistic --if not even meaningless ; challenges and clearly indicates that despite the technical capabilities of the camera, mezzotint still supremely dwells on a higher level - just above photography, which is called ART.

Dear Cleo (if I may),

I am writing to tell you how much I love living with your *Pomegranates* which was exhibited during the IAM (*Internationale d'art miniature*) at *Espace Diffusion Culturelle de Lévis* this year (<http://www.artmini.com/en/>).2023

I visited your web site and read your Artist Statement, which makes me love your artwork even more. I also visited your studio thanks to the video.

I have to tell you that I was one of the three judges for that show, and all three were unanimous in awarding you this first prize. Congratulations!

It was during the opening of this exhibit that I bought *Pomegranates*.

With great appreciations,

hélène A.

[heleneallard@weebly.com](mailto:heleneallard@weebly.com)

## **Mr. Miodrag Andjelkovic Serbia 2014**

### **LIGHT OF REMBRANDTESQUE SUBTLENESS**

Cleo Wilkinson belongs to a small group of artists practicing mezzotint with a high success. Undoubtedly the most difficult among graphics techniques, mezzotint seems to be making no obstacles for this Australian artist to evoke any shade of grey she may imagine. In this way, Cleo synthesizes light like piano yields music. I think we are not far from truth by saying that she feels light under her fingers while handling rocker and burnisher. Overmastering such kind of manipulation leads to a fairy world of subtle interplay of light and shadow, which always was one of essential demands of visual arts. Without exaggeration, Cleo's *chiaroscuro* compares to

Rembrandt's, but the psychological atmosphere it radiates is quite different. For example, her prints cannot be watched otherwise but in dignified silence. They insensibly hush us, imposing a special *stimmung* that contains something irrational or surreal. Lonely female dress on hanger, an egg or empty chair with its shadow on the wall, "cat's cradle" string figure over someone's face, shoes, emptiness of a corridor, eye-closed face immersed in silence, all of this rise a complex of emotions of a specific visual world. This is the same world, from which came, each by his own way, Max Klinger, Franz Kafka or Giorgio De Chirico, the world of deep melancholic metaphysical truth, permanently escaping from our understanding.

#### **Ljubiša Kocić Serbia 2014**

"The extremely complex and labour intensive process required for its creation has ultimately produced a work which is intimate and tender. We must credit Cleo for producing such a powerful work in a difficult medium".

#### **Winner of the Hornsby Art Prize in Printmaking 2015 – NSW – Australia - Judges comment .**

"In her mezzotints , Cleo Wilkinson shows a good classical technique . The figures on the pictures are portrayed from unexpected viewpoints . There is reflective melancholy which is amplified by the night-black background of the mezzotint. The highly controlled mezzotint shows a lonely, silent figure. The backward position creates a tangible tension. The intention is hidden and it makes this work larger than its size."

#### **Miniprint International Print Show Finland 2010 –Awarded Judges Honourable**

#### **Mention .**

#### **SPACES OF REAL AND IMAGINARY**

From the biography of Cleo Wilkinson, an Australian artist, we learn that she used to incline to sculpture by nature but still decided to study graphic, because she felt great similarity between sculpture and mezzotint graphics. Where is this similarity? "The relations between the light and dark areas" reveals Wilkinson in one of her interviews. One might add that this similarity also lies in the way how a work of art is created. Namely, a sculpture, especially classic ones, rendered in natural materials (stone, wood), and works in mezzotint technique, come out on day light from the closure of matter from its natural undefinedness, that is, from its dark womb. Therefore, the final result in classical sculpture and mezzotint technique is darkness and light play.

There are two dominant motifs in works of Cleo Wilkinson. Primarily, it is human being, then surrounding objects. When it comes to the first motif, it is primarily women as a human, in many cases her face, particularly eyes expressing fear emphasized by astonishing and touching light in them, rather than curiosity and joy. And hands of course, interlaced fingers again in fear or despair, in any case in weakness and in premonitory danger or uncertainty. As far as objects and things are concerning, there are separate pieces of clothing, airy and light, as part of women's intimacy, footwear, then these we like to keep, such as a cup or seashell, or to touch by hands or by glances, due to their specific appearance, such as egg or fungus. Featured is the space through which the artist moves and who calls us and introduces us, the area with pronounced atmosphere and mystery as we find in De Chirico in the compounds of the real and the imaginary.

Physical movements are very rare on Cleo Wilkinson's graphics. If they anyway are present, they are stopped and repose quietly. And the scream at one of graphics is not Munk's scream making sky echoed over the bay, but scream in closed space, the cry that is not heard, causing yet more pain due the knowledge that help will not arrive.

It is hard to imagine, and even harder to state, how much Cleo reveals and conceals herself, her sensitivity and fragility, her silences her hopes and calmness, but what is certain is that she found a way to each of us.

#### **Zvonimir Kostic Palanski Serbia 2014**

"Cleo Wilkinson (Australia) also combines skill and empathy, giving her everyday objects(a mushroom, a pair of children's shoes, two eggs) a larger meaning, the eggs evoking the beginning of life; the shoes, growth; and the mushroom, perhaps survival..."

#### **Judith K. Brodsky Distinguished Professor Emerita in the Department of Visual Arts at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey USA - Judges Comment 8th International Miniature Print Exhibition 2011 , Centre for Contemporary Printmaking , Norwalk, CT USA**

"I very much appreciate the opportunity to exhibit your wonderful and conceptually demanding work. Your print was very well received in the exhibition with many visitors commenting on the quiet surreal dimension between subject and process. Also it is a rare treat to exhibit your work as the mezzotint is practiced by very few artists internationally

.. it is a rare pleasure to have a mezzotint with such extraordinary conceptual impact".

It is with pleasure to receive your exceptional work into the Pacific Rim International Print Collection.All the best with your future artworks.

Cathryn Shine Associate Professor - School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury , Christchurch New Zealand – **Pacific Rim International Print Exhibition 2014**

"Mezzotint works by Cleo Michelle Wilkinson emphasize an absolute dedication to traditional printmaking, while integrating modern imagery into classical technique".

#### **New Prints 2014 /Summer – International Print Centre New York & Christies Showroom NYC , USA**

"..the materials and treatment of space in Cleo Wilkinson's *Abeyance* exist between the formalism of Vermeer's interiors and the iconography of French symbolism – peculiarly sustained by a purposeful and commanding ambivalence."

#### **The Pacific Rim International Print Exhibition 2013**

Dr. Warren Feeney PhD, MA, Dip. Teaching

Director at Centre of Contemporary Art **Christchurch New Zealand**

<http://chambers241.wordpress.com/2013/11/20/the-pacific-rim-international-print-exhibition-2013/>

Dear Cleo Wilkinson

I am glad to tell you that your work *Arcane Message* has been selected for Fifth Beijing International Art Biennale 2012, This Biennale is a very important Biennale in the world for fine art.

Congratulations!-With our director Mr. Li Kang's nomination, Guanlan Original Printmaking Base recommend your work the Biennale. And now your work was showing on the wall in October 2012 in the highest art Museum of China in Beijing -- The National Museum of China. Thank you very much for your great support for Guanlan Original Printmaking Base. We will try our best to do what we can for you and for the printmaking world.

**Zhao Jiachun**

**Director of Academy & Exhibition Depart.**

**Guanlan Original Printmaking Base**

**Guanlan International Print Biennial / China**

"..This work displays great technical expertise , and expresses a deeply resonant sense of quietude and transcendence , finding a delicate balance ..."

**Cancer Council Arts Awards – Australia 2013 – Commended Prize Judges Comment**

"The Australian Cleo Michele Wilkinson presented mezzotints with intimate frames of human figures . Tranquillity and modesty of these compositions , their simplicity and reference to art of the past attract and thrill"

Boguslaw Detula (judges comment) - **15th International Triennial of Small Graphic Forms - Poland Lodz 2014 ( Winner of Distinguished Honorary Medal 2014)**

"The mezzotints of Australian Cleo Wilkinson are classical, serene, intimate and wonderful.."

(International Juried Printmaking Exhibition 2013 – New Grounds Print Workshop)

**New Mexico Art Review USA- <http://nmartreview.com/reviews/>**

"Cleo Wilkinson achieves a velvety softness with a fairly monochrome canvas and focuses on the shadows that give form and substance to her subjects. Added text intertwines and adds interest".

**Artrom Gallery Rome Italy**

"Cleo Wilkinson delves into the deeper aspects of the human condition in her works "Trust", "Third Farewell" and "Seek". The warm earth tones help to portray these heartfelt emotions. Her facility to work in various media is certainly a mark of talent.

Cleo Wilkinson has a virtuosity of skill and expression, especially strongly felt in her drawing "Neville Bonner Portrait". The interesting facial characteristics of the person played against the soft and even glowing hair makes for a deeper message than just a portrait".

Cleo .. masterfully positions the figure in a dark environ. "Clandestine" is not an expected view and is sensitively done. And "Discarnate" is also significant. Both are wonderful achievements as mezzotint

prints". Cleo creates a strong statement in her "Discarnate" mezzotint print. The subtle texture and the stark black setting sets a striking mood enhancing the contemplative nature felt in the face. All of her works are quite strong with deep messages.

**Larry Bradshaw Curator, Professor of Art University of Nebraska, Omaha USA**

"Cleo came to us as an undisputed master of this difficult technique, bringing with her several innovative applications which she had developed over her years of practice. While she was at Malaspina, she worked daily in close cooperation with our local artists, generously sharing her expertise with those around her. In all, Cleo was considered one of the greatest participants in our long-standing Artist in Residence program. Her commitment to her art, dedication to excellence and sense of exploratory growth left a strong and lasting impression on local artists".

**Carol Nymark past Executive Director Malaspina Printmaker Studio Vancouver , Canada**

"When I first learned of your work two years ago I was immediately struck by your unique handling of the mezzotint process, which can be very difficult and time consuming. That you designed your own roulette to grind the plate, creating a very unusual stippled texture, proved to me your dedication to the mezzotint process".

**Cara Forrler**

**Director, Contemporary Print Center Davidson Galleries**

**Washington , USA**

"The Old Print Shop has been in business for over 110 years and we are always on the lookout of talented new printmakers who are not only creative but use the printmaking medium as their main source of expression. I was pleased to meet and see the work of Cleo Wilkinson several years ago as her work fits into the criteria of contemporary printmaking that the gallery is promoting"

**Robert K. Newman**

**The Old Print Shop, Inc Manhattan New York USA**

"You can see how extensively we used your work. Your works are brilliant".

**Nikita Korytin, Director of the Publishing House "Artifact" -Mezzotint Festival Travelling Exhibition  
Yekaterinburg ,Russia**

"..and once again I thank you for being part of SW09 and congratulate you on creating such exceptional work. "

**Mark Jamieson Director Brunswick Street Gallery Melbourne ,Australia**

"..Brunswick Street Gallery just loves your work , I heard so many visitors oohing and awing over your miniatures. They are so delicate and intricate- people find it astounding that you work in mezzotint..."

**Miriam Arbus – Director/Curator Brunswick Strett Gallery Melbourne , Australia**

..”Your work is exceptionally beautiful.”

**Leah Crossman Assistant Director Brunswick Street Gallery Melbourne ,Australia**

“...as all your works -it makes you tremble since you can see it comes from the very depth of your heart....”

**Gianfranco & Stefano Gorini – Venice Printmaking Studio – Venice Italy**

“Your mezzotints are awesome. I know it takes a lot of time to do one.. Your work is beautiful. There are always very strong comments from your two prints 2008 and 2009. Thank you for participating.”

**Dra Guadalupe Victoria**

**Segunda Convocatoria Internacional Grabados por la Paz Mexico 2009 IMNRC**

“So your prints were so distinct from others in terms of including some feelings into your work - mostly anxiety or indecision (that's what I found there...), whilst most of others simply pictured the ambient nature... The one work attracted me particularly - "Then" - it is so tiny in size and in the same time so deep and huge...” Well, thank you for what you're doing in your life! **Irina Kostyleva.**

**Mezzotinto Exhibition Tyumen - Russia**

“Your work is amazing”

**Barbara Mason**

**PAN – Print Arts NorthWest Portland Oregon ,USA**

“ Those prints are awesome!”

**Rahman Mohamed Penang International Print Exhibition 2010 Penang State Art Gallery, Penang, Malaysia**

“Today we have received your beautiful prints to the VII International Small Engraving Exhibition "L'Arte e il Torchio / Art and the Printing Press" Cremona 2011..

Thanks for your precious participation..

**Vladimiro Elvieri**

**General Curator "L'Arte e il Torchio" Cremona ,Italy**

“I very much enjoyed viewing your selection of mezzotints . You’ve worked the medium well, accomplishing a beautiful array of dark and light tones “.

**Samantha Rippner**

**Metropolitan Museum of Art NYC USA**

“Finally , a little jewel : the enigmatic and tender portrayal of a young boy’s back in the mezzotint “Then” won Cleo Wilkinson the Jamie Evrard prize”.



**Joseph Montague – Jurors’ Statement Biennial International Miniature Print Exhibition VI 2010  
Canada**

“Congratulations for your work that has been highly praised both by the jury and visitors “ **Finalist  
Award ADOGI Mini Print International Spain Barcelona 2012**

“Your prints arrived safe and sound. They are quite stunning. Thank you so much for participating in our exhibition”

**Robert Peters -Seacourt Print Workshop – Centre for contemporary Printmaking – Ireland 2014**

“.. three small mezzotints by Australian Printmaker Cleo Wilkinson , those printed visages emerge from a velvety black with tonal richness and striking subtlety ..”

**Press Release 2014 Winter Contemporary Show – Old Print Gallery -Washington DC- USA**

“The mezzotints Cleo Wilkinson A notable participant in the latest round of the small graph IEC was the Australian Cleo Wilkinson . Her art training she received in the UK ( Oxford ) , in the United States ( New York ) , New Zealand ( Auckland ) and Australia ( Queensland ) . She was more than thirty international locations artist in residence , her mezzo tones were presented in more than two hundred international exhibitions and won dozens of times . In the last two years alone , she was awarded in Argentina , Australia , Bulgaria , Canada , China , Argentina , United States , Serbia and Spain . In her graphic work she strives to portray. Disturbing and fleeting moments with delicate nuances of hope The play of light that makes the mezzotint technique possible , she thinks this is best suited . Even though she has specialized in mezzotint , she paints, photographs , draws and sculpts . Whenever she tries to retrieve it objects out of the darkness like a thought in someone's memory may emerge. She calls herself an explorer of twilight zones and ambiguous spaces . Her most recent work examines situations in which understanding and doubt , hesitation and conviction compete with each other , in short : the difficulty of existence . She gives moments of isolation and dislocation again , stillness and silence, where introspection and alienation are constantly present . The most disturbing images are those where people are waiting in the dark , caught between hope and fear . Because she has verified constructed to create thumbnails in mezzotint she is fascinated by the power of the small chart, more intimate and more exclusive than other disciplines and lots of control and concentration demands , because you only have a limited space for visual impact to reach . Wilkinson tries to emphasize that by transforming something banal into something deep . Individual silence and solitude of a form Her main sources of inspiration are her memory and her subconscious , which again are assigned shape in her visual language . Her big challenge , claiming Wilkinson , just what is to portray what is suggested in the twilight , but is not available. The " manière noire 'that the mezzotint is , requires patience , perseverance and precision . The technique requires much time and is extremely labor intensive and meditative : the artist disappears as it were, in his work and is completely absorbed by the process of creation. Often there are in the preparation of a plate over a hundred hours before an early proof can be made . Ultimately it is the mezzotint technique to a contradiction : you go from absolute black (instead of white emptiness ) , traveling from the darkness to the light and you create by deleting . It is her aspiration to the light to understand and to travel there . Because she was so intrigued by the mezzotint , her admiration initially goes to artists who art in almost perfect manner have made their own : Peter Ilsted , Yozo

Hamaguchi , Mikio Watanabe , Konstantin Chmutin and Fred Mersheimer . For the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi she (like Melanie Geray ) much appreciated . For her , the ex libris - according to our correspondence - a total unknown medium that really fascinates her nonetheless . She would like to hear about features, procedures and conventions , and is considering to design when she has a less hectic schedule . A book mark When it comes to financial aspects , she startled especially if they put in front of the labour- intensive nature of its work and the price that is common for a small sheet of graph her hand . That price would they initially also apply for (individual ) book marks , making a run would be unseen. Duration Maybe she is still there to back ? “

**Karl Vissers translated from “De Mezzotinten Van Cleo Wilkinson” . Boekmerk –tijdschrift voor ex-libriskunst (Belgium): 2014 : 43 (1) : 34-35**

“..It is utterly sublime , mysterious, fragile and silent in its presence... a beautiful example of your work.”- (comment on “Inception III” mezzotint )

“Your work always hits a territory of skill, sensuality, imaging, and a love of the media”

Queen of the Mezzotint ! - But it is your image sense that prods at the beach rubble...

*“You have an undertow pulling at your work,*

*a narrative that hides under the bed in the dark with door slightly ajar,*

*a dream-like stillness that pervades the air and a disquiet that causes*

*one to feel the little hairs on the neck and arm to raise as you check over your shoulder. “*

**Derek Michael Besant RCA**

**Professor of Fine Arts ACAD**

**Alberta College of Art and Design , Canada**

“Pledge” is absolutely stunning – thanks for entering it into the prize and good luck!

**Simon Gregg**

**Curator Gippsland Art Gallery , Australia**

“Three small mezzotints by Cleo Wilkinson *Fruit III*, *Entropia I*, and *Witness II* round out the show and bookcase it with mezzotints: atmospheric peaches and somber faces emerge from the small pools of darkness, conjuring up classic notions of a muse”.

**CAN Journal, by Christina Turner : review of Divergent Ink: Black and White International Print Exhibition (Rubber City Prints) , 2017, Ohio , USA**

**Awarded Third Prize in the Collins Place Sumer Salon , Melbourne (Australia) for “ Vestiges” Mezzotint 2018 .**

**The Judges gave the following feedback:**

*"There is an intimacy between the space and the object. The sensation of light transforms the object into something almost ethereal, to the point where object and air seem to be made from the same thing. The image is mostly space, but it is more than a blank area, and the balance between air and object is just right."*

**2018 – Finalist Mini Prints Berlin 2018 – Galleri Heike Arndt – Berlin ,Germany**

*"Cleo Wilkinson (AU): Cleo Wilkinson is an Australian artist passionate about the mezzotint technique. This print technique gives Wilkinson the perfect opportunity to explore light and the absence of it. In her works, the light emerging from darkness captures strong feelings of loneliness, emptiness and silence. Almost like a crystalized emotion, the highlighting of the singularity of the moment renders the image with a memory-like quality, in which the surrounding details fade into the shadows".*

**19th Mini-Print International Exhibition – (2016 November - January 2017) The Inkshop, Ithaca NY , USA**

"The first-place winner of the exhibition was a mezzotint done by Cleo Wilkinson called "Murmur II." It is a close-up of the face of an androgynous individual. The eyes of the subject are pointed downwards and the lips are slightly parted, as if the person wanted to utter something. The face is expressionless, which gives the print a somber and contemplative feel. The piece was printed with black ink, which allowed Wilkinson to simulate the person sitting in a dark room with a soft light pointed at the face from above. The highlights were subtly accented using smooth tone gradients, demonstrating full mastery of the art of mezzotint. The black overlay broken by tiny dots of light gave me a sense of emptiness, which left me wondering what was left unsaid by the subject. The print left my curiosity unfulfilled, yet also put me in a place of content".

"The Tattler " (Arts Section ) Vol 126 #8 December 2016 - By James Yoon .

**Peebles Print Prize –Awarded People's Choice 2017 (for "Pledge" Mezzotint)**

"I can't tell you how many people stood in front of the portrait in absolute awe. Your technique is exceptional ".

**Soula Mantalvanos - Queenscliffe Gallery and Workshop – Melbourne Australia**

"I try to emphasize the silence of a form . This is the goal of the "Black or half tone mode " used by Cleo Wilkinson a form which in the specific case of the week subject of the competition

announcement does not correspond to a formal unit but generates a broader and more articulated figurative language. Certainly the "night" exemplifies the profound cosmos of the artist's soul. The flashes of light on the other hand break the continuity of the dark producing a metaphysical confirmation of the image. Two hands hold a wire at the end of which is tied a toy airplane. All this is in line with Dante's verse. He seeketh Liberty, which is so dear (Purg I, 71). Therefore the impulsive creativity breaks the "silence" when the long operational path allows it a way out of the "night". It should be added that Cleo Wilkinson has a complete awareness of the technique that joins the creativity of her poetic world.

At the origin of the "black manner" remains the lesson of German Ludwig von Seigen (1609-1680), then the invention of Blotting who built in 1671, the well known instrument of the rocker for graining of the "mezzotint" plates. The spread of lithography of chalcographic and rotogravure printing have certainly reduced the interest for engraving in the various artisan declinations. The Australian artist can, therefore feel disillusioned with industrial and post-industrial innovation. With "Elsewhere" the artist strongly and decisively underlines the importance of original engraving based on a highly professional and spiritual artisan profile, while remaining an artist of our century.

**From the Catalogue : 2019 CELOMMI AWARD : International Biennial of Engraving and Sculpture**

**Pages 36, 37**

Cleo Wilkinson is a master of capturing expressions and minute detail of the human face in mezzotint. Here, the figure is as striking as it is imperceptible. The black space consumes the figure while also drawing out the position of the hands, the light on the clavicle, the room that surrounds them. —Paige

***Staff Selections Exhibition 2020 : Davidson Galleries – Washington USA***

Dear Cleo,

Today Professor Llobet wrote to remind us that your mezzotint (Then IV) is magnificent and that we send you an effusive congratulation, which we do.

**Kind regards! Roser & Joan-Lluís**

***2<sup>nd</sup> Prize First Graphic Art Contest "Hommage à trois Associació Internacional Duana des les Arts (AIDA) Barcelona, Spain (Juried) 2020***

Cleo Wilkinson is an internationally recognized graphic artist, priorly specialising in mezzotint technique. After the years of practice, she has also designed a unique handcrafted roulette to grind the plate which creates a rare stippled texture to the images.

In her mezzotints, Wilkinson accomplishes a beautiful array of dark and light tones. The everyday objects on her graphics are given a larger meaning, when embedded in a mysterious fragility. Another theme that is often present in her graphics is mankind, in particular the human face. Besides being depicted soft and vulnerable, drawn faces harbor strong expressions. Through these emotionally complex glimpses, the viewer can explore the implicit story of the protagonists that seems to be covered, hidden or even suppressed.

The monochromatic graphics of the Australian artist show a great range of tonal depth. Using deep black as a background color, while presenting the subjects of her interest in white, it creates a dreamlike, spaceless atmosphere. As her drawings appear blurred and obscure, precisely placed flares become a central point for the viewer.

With the use of such technical manner, Wilkinson achieves to get her themes clearly across to the viewer in quite small mezzotint prints. Representing a combination of skill and empathy, her graphics are comprising an utter sublimity and quietness.

[Galleri Heike Arndt DK](#)

**International contemporary art in Berlin (DE) & Kettinge (DK) 2020**

“First Place “ – “For the great communicative charge that comes from the technical mastery and artistic sensitivity of the author who has been able to combine, with balanced minimalism, tradition and expressive freedom” ...The first FIIC with a female winner, the first FIIC with a foreign winner. The Popular Jury, made up of actors, directors and operators in the theatrical sector, declared the work *Then IV* by the Australian Cleo Wilkinson as the winner of the third edition of the FIIC!.. An exhibition for her in our space during 2021

**FIIC 2020 - International Festival of Contemporary Engraving 3<sup>RD</sup> Ed . Trento , Italy**

**Closing out our Artist Features for *The Contemporary Print: 5x5* is Australian-based artist Cleo Wilkinson.** Working primarily in Mezzotints, Wilkinson brings out subtle images from the rich black background that can only be achieved with this form of printmaking.

Often taking hundreds of hours to complete a print, Mezzotints require the artist to meticulously prepare a metal plate by rocking a special curved serrated tool back and forth to create a stippled texture across the entire surface. This rough texture then gets smoothed by a scraper or burnisher revealing an image out of subtle gradations. The various burrs left on the plate have different capacities to hold ink, which creates the velvety textures characteristic of Mezzotints. Wilkinson

describes the process as “very challenging, frustrating and unforgiving.” However, she shares that “the reward of nursing the life of an image out of its pitch black has a primordial spiritual magic.”

Wilkinson came across the Mezzotint technique in a book while attending Elam Art School at Auckland University in New Zealand in the 1970s. She became fascinated by the tonality that can be achieved and taught herself the technique, even assembling her own “rocker” out of a knurling tool normally used to create a grip pattern on screwdriver handles, since the traditional tools were not readily available to her. She wholeheartedly took to the slow and meditative process and has been working in Mezzotints since. “It slows and quietens the mind,” she wrote in an email to us.

Wilkinson’s fascination with the relationship between light and dark, informs not only her work in printmaking, but also her figurative realist sculptures and drawings. She notes, “In sculpture, I am forever training my eye to sight subtle changes in tonal values, shapes, structure and sensitivity to the infinite changes and nuances of light and shade.” In this spirit, she carves light out of the roughened Mezzotint plate, as if working on a two-dimensional sculpture.

The intimacy she appreciates in this demanding printmaking process has inspired her to scale down in size. Measuring as small 4x4 inches, her miniature prints aim to produce quiet, private experiences for the viewer, truly “creating visual impact out of proportion to its size.”

**To view more of Cleo Wilkinson’s work, visit [cleosart.com](http://cleosart.com) or the virtual iteration of *The Contemporary Print: 5x5* through the end of February 2021**

**Work was winner and featured in the Contemporary Print 5x5 : Austin Texas USA ,Feb 24 2021 \_ <https://printaustin.org/the-contemporary-print-5x5-artist-feature-with-cleo-wilkinson/>**

**Ottawa School of Art – Director Pick Prize Ottawa , Canada – 2020 Interview**

Cleo was unable to do an interview but kindly provided responses to some questions we had about her experience as an artist and printmaker.

I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) from Elam Art school Auckland University (New Zealand ). Majored in Printmaking and Art History . I wanted to study figurative sculpture however it was not offered . I become an accidental printmaker after discovering the Mezzotint. It was able to appease the frustrated sculptor in me as it was all about chiaroscuro / tonal graduations and light and shade .I’m completely self taught nobody was teaching or practicing Mezzotint at Art School and there were no tools so I had to source them or have them made .

I have also studied figurative sculpture privately with a Russian monumental sculptor for over 10 years . I have attended numerous figurative atelier workshops worldwide (New York , Paris , Barcelona etc ).(see attached CV for more details).

I have been practicing Mezzotinting for approx. 40 years and I work completely alone – I have a small art studio at home.

The Mezzotint Technique allows me to nurse an image out of its black womb into light it has a primordial spiritual magic – like a birth .

The mezzotint technique is meditative and it slows and quiets the mind . It is extremely time-consuming – during this long time a delicate intimacy with the plate develops that brings out the sensitivity inside me. Giving form and light to what was absolute darkness .The Mezzotint Print technique remains unchanged for the last 300 years it achieves tonality by roughening the metal plate with a rocker or roulette to produce a rich black creating a high level of tonal richness then painstaking burnishing of the plate and many trial printings to create the image .The tiny dots created on the plate by the roulette are the ancestor of the Pixel.

about “then v “

This work and all my images are intuitive and visceral – they grow out of instinct rather than any planning or reasoning .

I’ve always been interested in elusive and mysterious aspects of our human existence. My figure-narratives are characterized by an arcane -like quality. Figures suggest memory, longing, or emotional thresholds and the human condition . They occupy timeless psychological spaces not any specific ‘place’ often they are lost in their own thoughts and surrounded by darkness.

As with this work and my other works I continue to explore ideas focusing on the theme of existence .Visual statements about our vulnerability ,aloneness and existence . The way creation and life emerges from complete darkness .

I try to emphasize the singularity silence and loneliness of a forms- exploring stillness , silence , simplicity quietude , fragility (an antidote to this hurried ,noisy world) . What is missing in the shadows and is suggested provides the greatest potential .

did you have support from family when you were starting out?

My family were indifferent and generally disinterested. I guess the positive of this is that the art that I did was not influenced or affected by family members – it was truly my own. Also, decision to develop it or not was mine alone.

how long has it taken you to be successful working with your medium?

I’m not sure what the definition of “successful” means ?- I feel I’m just beginning (after 40 years of working with the mezzotint ) and have a very long way to go . Working with mezzotint ebbs and flows . Sometimes it feels like two steps forward 3 steps back.

What I would like to say is that the mezzotint technique is over 300 years old and has remained unchanged – this is a very special and unique feeling.

It is a hugely sensual, intimate and physical experience .It is extremely tactile – the rough copper plate being smoothed by the burnisher to create light and touched carefully by the fingertips (you

can read the image like braille with your fingertips ) , the softness and moisture of the paper , richness and smell of the ink , and subtle indentation of the final print. The physicality of the press.

However the process and technique is very challenging , frustrating and unforgiving – which creates a love /hate conflicted relationship – even though it is an enduring one .

There is also a slow methodical , rhythm of the process. The need for the solitude when giving birth to the print and working on the image , soft gentle melancholy of bringing the image into existence.

I believe the mezzotint has a timeless soul, it is deep and black and it reaches down and touches the light.

why do you use the subject matter, or imagery, you've chosen as it relates to your 'artistic message' or what you're trying to communicate ?

I do not consciously choose my subject matter /themes etc – working intuitively /viscerally they grow out of instinct rather than any planning or reasoning.

Simple objects like the egg are related to the very deepest roots of our existence .They can be given a mystery , visual purity and poetry by manipulating their delicate shadows and reflections. They can transform from ordinary into something more profound. The egg holds particular symbolic significance, it is visual shorthand for new life and pure potential.

We live in a world drowning in noise and frenetic movement and distraction . The whole culture is telling you to hurry and how you should think and feel.

In our busy noisy world quiet places and images to allow you to pause are disappearing .I explore stillness , silence , simplicity quietude – to stop and pause is a gift to give ourselves .

In this stillness and the silence everyday objectives get their power. I like to suggest not prescribe – what is missing in the shadows and is suggested provides the greatest potential for me and deepens the mystery.

The blackness is the most important part of the print – this leaves the observer to fill it with their imagination ..then observer is a creator of the image as much as the artist.

The Figure serves as a cover surface for implied projections. The figure might be the motif but the real subject is the human condition .They are not in action, and remain unmoved by their surroundings, they are restrained and inwardly focused. An impression arises of intimate isolation. Meeting up with ourselves is rare in today's world it is a gift and a great challenge : an encounter with one's self is complicated but also the most inevitable of all our relationships.

I love the work of by Peter Ilsted and Vilhelm Hammershøi leading artists in early 20th-century part of the "Denmark Copenhagen Interior School' They are famous for painting images of "Sunshine and Silent Rooms" their figures turned away from the viewer project an air of slight tension and mystery. similar to Vermeer . Their interiors evoke a sense of calm and mystery.

what inspired you to participate in this print show?



Recently, I have become very interested in exploring the miniature format and fascinated by the power of the small print – it is a more intimate, quiet, private experience, demanding control and focus and creating visual impact out of proportion to its size. The viewer is invited into an intimate and immense universe creating a very private experience as the viewer must come close and experience it alone. Small works have a graceful gemlike quality .Thank you for supporting the miniature print format!

what advice would you give to someone thinking about trying printmaking?

Explore, experiment and expose yourself to as many techniques as possible when starting – keep it as broad as possible – don't limit yourself .–This provides a foundation and library to draw from but it also allows you to discover which technique/medium to channel your voice the most fluidly. Sometimes it is not what you planned or expected.

Sometimes it's the technique that chooses you and you augment its expression and materials .

Be true to your own personal expression don't follow trends, fashions, movements, find your own voice

#### **Ottawa School of Art – Director Pick Prize Ottawa , Canada – 2020 Interview**

“Another corporeal themed series that utilizes the mezzotint method of printmaking is by Cleo Wilkinson . Glance I (2019) in which the subsection of a face is captured once again in monotone but with a luminosity and a unique richness of tones that shines like metallic silver .Glance II (2019) depicts a close-up of eyes in luminescent mezzotint, reminiscent of a classical work of art but deconstructed and fragmented adds another dimension of mystery “ .

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Okanagan Print Triennial 2021 Review by jury member Dr Stacey Koosel (Printmaking and the pandemic pg 20 catalogue)**

“The human face features prominently as a fragment of synecdoche of the body as a whole. Cleo Wilkinson uses the technique of the extreme close- up to represent seemingly fleeting faces that are at once familiar and estranged . Much like the masked faces we encounter on the street today , her lonely figures are mysterious and unknowable”.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Okanagan Print Triennial 2021 Review by jury member Stephanie Bailey and Daniel Harvey (The art of making strange pg 15 catalogue )**

“Cleo Wilkinson's mezzotint breathtaking in its attention to detail” - “Scale was often a point of discussion for the judges and most remarkably , we found the most impactful , Cleo Wilkinson's Then IV depicts the rear view of a young boy's neck and head . An exquisitely vulnerable and intimate image . Wilkinson says “I love nursing the life of an image out of its pitch black womb into hope” . A poetically apt description of the slow and highly skilled process of Mezzotint”

#### **Judge's Comments 45th Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award 2021**

“Stripped of all ego, privilege, politics and pride , Cleo Wilkinson’s “Inception V “ takes us to our origins as an ovum and all the potential within.” (Comment on “Inception V” Mezzotint 2020)

**Curator , Chloe Waters “Still” -National Still life Award 2021 , Catalogue NSW , Australia**

“The work demonstrated excellence in all 5 criteria areas and powerful and emotive quality . The strength of the stare coupled with wonderful use of graduations of light areas and shadow to move the eye of the viewer around the face is powerful and done with excellence and precision . We appreciate you submitting such a wonderful Mezzotint Print .”

**2<sup>nd</sup> 2021 Annual Juried Fresno Print Guild Print Exhibition , (California USA )comments on “Witness “Print .**

This year’s exhibition, the fifth biennial of its kind since the establishment of InkMasters Cairns in 2011, included works that featured a sense of noticing and appreciating local, immediate, even domestic environments. This was evident in intimate prints which had a quiet peace, despite our stormy times. Cleo Wilkinson brought us another of her beautifully rendered mezzotints of the human form in “*Then iv*”.

**Review of the InkMasters Print Exhibition 2021 by Andrea Huelin in Print Council of Australia's blog:**<https://www.printcouncil.org.au/inkmasters-pleasure-and-wonder/>

“Wilkinson’s entire figurative layout is studded with details that she investigates minutely and skilfully. The result is an intriguing formal essentiality. The chosen object, by virtue of the full-field mezzotint, completely merges with the image offered to the observer, remaining in complete harmony with the surrounding environment, barely visible. It could be said that a mask or a human face, a female back bust, dice, eggs, children’s shoes, a toy, and anything else the artist requests, emerge like inverted funnels, with formal realism, from a homogeneous, yet dark, cosmic depth. Actually, *Glance I* is a significant cut of a woman. Those who look at this face will find, incisively and with realistic precision, a composition in which an eye and an ear stand out; secondly, nose and lips, which are barely outlined; thus, the cheek, which is plump. The choice of these features is refined and tormented, but also demonstrates an exceptional quality of execution. In the cross-section: the subject, the formal translatability, the appreciation of the work, imply an assertive, functional, and persuasive language. The sight, the listening, the inspiration, the formal aspect, connect the artist to the work and the work to the viewer”

Honourable Mention” *Glance I*” 2nd International Biennial of Engraving FONDAZIONE PASQUALE CELOMMI ONLUS ,**Teroma , Italy**

**Review “Penombre” Solo Exhibition Spazio ForEr Trento Italy 1-15 October 2021**

About thirty small works, all engravings in the black way, give shape to the exhibition "Penombre" visible at the Spazio FoyEr in Trento from 1 to 15 October(from Monday to Friday, 10-12 and 16-19;

www.spaziofoyer.it). They are engravings by the Australian artist from Melbourne, Cleo Wilkinson, who has one of his greatest artistic expressions in the mezzotint or black manner. «I am an explorer of darkened areas and ambiguous spaces - she declares. - My interest lies in the power to evoke disturbing and elusive moments with subtle shades of hope expressed in the form of light, which the richness and midtones of the black manner can reveal ». The exhibition shows a broad overview of his works, with different subjects ranging from figurative, to portrait, to still life. Engravings than in the press - for example *Witness* (Testimony) - they show themselves in the tiny points given by the burnishing of the plate, in those more or less dark tones that recall the pixels of computer graphics.

What connects the works, however, is above all the intention of wanting to emphasize the silence and solitude of the form to "transform it from ordinary to something deeper", to translate the atmosphere that surrounds it into poetry. The source of inspiration comes from memory and from the subconscious - as Wilkinson herself admits - to then rearticulate in her visual language. Paintings such as *Whisperer* (The Whisperer), *Obsolescence* (Obsolescence), suggest and do not completely describe the figures: the shadows, the subtle and infinite shades of black evoke what is missing, what cannot be seen. A contrast also underlined by the very small sizes of some of the works on display, the result of recent experiments by the artist in miniature format. «I was fascinated by the power of the small press - confesses Cleo Wilkinson - it is a more intimate experience, which requires control and concentration». After all, the spectator too Cleo Wilkinson has participated in over 500 international exhibitions, has won more than 80 awards and is present in over a hundred art galleries and museums around the world.

### ***Silvia Vernaccini***

“These works of yours continue to provoke mysterious connections of the internalized figure as a psychic space. Something perhaps invoked because of how the pandemic has us paying more attention to isolation, but I am always aware of the dark you place the figure into, as if submerged into water.. “

“I am always taken, when I receive a catalogue from any of these international graphics Triennials we have history with - when I turn pages and lock onto your imagery. Your frequency, consistency, mastery... stands out. And it is not that you are drawn often to figurative imaging, but the over-riding fingerprint of depiction that has your voice embedded in the work. I’ve always loved aquatint in intaglio, but your mezzotints are so rich in how those black spaces envelop the figure, or whatever part of the figure you reveal... they always (for me) have an element of mystery about them. You voyage into the dark... “

**November 2021**

**Derek Besant RCA Professor of Fine Arts ACAD**

**Alberta College of Art and Design , Canada**

“Encounter” (Cleo Wilkinson) reflect technical prowess but neither let this dominate their own agency and unique aesthetic voice/narrative. These decisions carry visual and semiotic power – as the viewer is drawn into speculative/ alternate spaces and ways of sensing the world. In particular both activated the haptic eye – a unique capacity of the print medium to draw out touch through the optic nerve. All the finalist entries were strong contenders for the award and reflect the diversity of contemporary print practices. I congratulate all the entrants.

**Comments from Carolyn McKenzie Craig regarding the Traditional print prize winners: WWAS Printmaking Prize in 2022, Sydney Australia**

“A masterly work – The velvet finish is rich and difficult to achieve “ – (comment on “Then IV” )  
**Winner of the Hornsby Art Prize – Printmaking Award - 2022 NSW , Australia**

*Silent Revelations* brings together a selection of 26 prints by Australian mezzotint artist Cleo Wilkinson made over the last 18 years. Evocative of the process of making mezzotints, Wilkinson’s subject matter delicately emerges from the darkest depths of tone on the plate revealing through shadow what appear to be isolated frames of an unknown story. Each piece illuminates an intimate moment captured in hushed silence, making the viewer a voyeur. The images and single-word titles taunt us like clues in a mystery, almost daring us to piece together a narrative that never quite reveals itself. These still frames encapsulate the gravity of an entire scene, conveying anticipation, tension, isolation, confrontation, elements that beg for context yet only exist as an asynchronous chronology, like torn pages from an unknown, discarded book. This opportunity to exhibit such a large number of Wilkinson’s prints within the same space provides a unique experience giving her body of work a boundary within which to tell its story, even if it is revealed a page at a time.

“Thank you so much for sharing your work with us and with our community of artists and visitors. The comments about your work were extremely complimentary, I even had someone visit CCP to see both the fall group show and your exhibition, and he said that even though there were so many big names in the fall show, he thought yours was the most impressive with the best work. Your talent is very clear to anyone who sees it. I'm so grateful to have had the ability to bring together so many of your prints at one time. It was such a pleasure having them here”

**Solo Exhibition 2022 Center for Contemporary Printmaking “Silent Revelations” , Norwalk, CT USA <https://contemprints.org/exhibition/silent-revelations/>**

“This is my second purchase of your work - I am truly in awe of your mezzotint abilities - technically - AND the gorgeous images you create. I purchased a perfect egg image from IPCNY a year or two ago”

**2023 Terry Vatr** [theartcaravan.ca](https://theartcaravan.ca) @the\_art\_caravan

## **Summer Small Works 2024: prize-winning artwork "Then VII" 2024**

Judges' comments:

Jade Bitar: "Beautifully constructed."

Nicole Bowler: "A refined stillness, with technical mastery of mezzotint matching the accomplished drawing"

Laura Jovic: "The rich, velvety medium of the mezzotint and modular tones of the skin and hair of the figure add to the meditative quality of this sensitively rendered image. The image is strengthened by its framing of the head within a circle and positioned within the expanse of the rectangle of white paper".

**Caelene Nee Glan Gallery , Victoria , Australia**