

Susan McMinn - Bursary Recipient 2007

Susan McMinn is currently studying for a Masters of Visual Arts by research entitled 'Hooves and Steel: The warhorse in conflict.' My research is an investigation into the myth and legend surrounding the Australian Light Horse, and in particular the 'Waler'. Focusing on the Australian War Horse during the Palestine Campaigns, 1915-1918, historical record, war diaries, letters, poems and oral histories are influential in the development of resultant imagery. Recent travel to the battlefields and the Anzac Trails in Israel have been pivotal in gaining a deeper understanding of the land and conditions of the Negev desert. Painting, drawing and animation seek to reflect a sense of place together with historical narrative, in a contemporary arena.

Susan writes:

The La Trobe animation bursary has allowed for further development of my interest in movement in art. Earlier research involved the exploration of motion in painting and drawing and how to capture that motion in a still image. To have the opportunity to investigate actual animation of my drawing and painting has been an exciting progression in my work.

The Last Warhorse

During the First World War (WW1), the Australian Light horsemen took their horses from their homeland to a foreign country, and not unlike the soldiers themselves, were required to perform near impossible tasks. A fusion of myth,



legend and history, *'The Last War Horse'* highlights the vital role played by Australian Waler during the Palestine Campaigns. Freedom in the reckless Australian landscape pales into harshness of wartime Palestine. Rounded up under the crack of the stockman's whip, the Waler is then shipped across the oceans and landed in the Middle East. Long night marches follow endless waiting around in the

ever-present sands of the Sinai. Beersheva or Semech, the charge begins. Remains of Calvary warfare litter the battlefield; ghost horses become a stark reminder of the Warhorse who never returned. Companion, warrior, shield, transport, hero and ultimately animal soldier, the Australian Waler is *'The Last War Horse'*.