

Jenny Dolezel was born in Henderson, Auckland, in 1964. Her father came from Czechoslovakia but her mother is a New Zealander with a keen interest in art. While growing up, Dolezel was encouraged to draw, to invent things and to use her imagination. She attended Epsom Girls' Grammar School from 1978 to 1982 and was taught art there by the sculptor Marte Szirmay. Between 1983 and 1986 she studied at the Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in printmaking. Among influences on her formative phase were the early works of Dick Frizzell and Denys Watkins. She moved freely between a variety of media, including photography, painting and etching. Masquerade attracted her early on and she adopted make-up to project a different persona in self-portrait photographs and images in her graphic art.

The world of theatre also appeals to Dolezel, as can be seen in the stage-like projections of her figures. She has friends in the theatrical world but confines her own performances to the fanciful creations in her artwork. A distinctive feature of her work, whether in printmaking or painting, is the invention of figures that can appear puppet-like or reminiscent of Victorian toys or illustrations as found, for example, in Tenniel's designs for *Alice in Wonderland*. Dolezel's creations are quite unlike those of any other contemporary New Zealand painter, with the exception of some of the late Tony Fomison's sinister inventions.

Typically, Dolezel's paintings have an unrealistic colouration, where bright yellows and pinks suggest toyland or a confectionary shop rather than our everyday surroundings. These colours attract the viewer to the work, in which layers of meaning can be found. There are more than faint recollections of the imaginative scenes of Hieronymous Bosch or Pieter Brueghel in the imagery, though it is the

troubling psychological problems of twentieth century existence which haunt her works in a way that is contemporary in focus. Questions of identity, of gender, and of the ultimate purpose of life surface in the staring eyes of her figures with their androgynous characteristics and their sense of agitation and unease. Most of these characteristics can be seen magnified in Dolezel's most ambitious painting, *The Circus of Life*, 1990, for the Aotea Cultural Centre in Auckland.

In all Dolezel's art there is a strong graphic quality, with line and edge contributing firmly to the definition of her ideas. The use of oil stick enables her to generate colour and line freely in her painting. Oil paint, with its slow-drying time, allows the layering of paint surfaces she prefers and reinforces the levels of meaning and intention she seeks in her art.

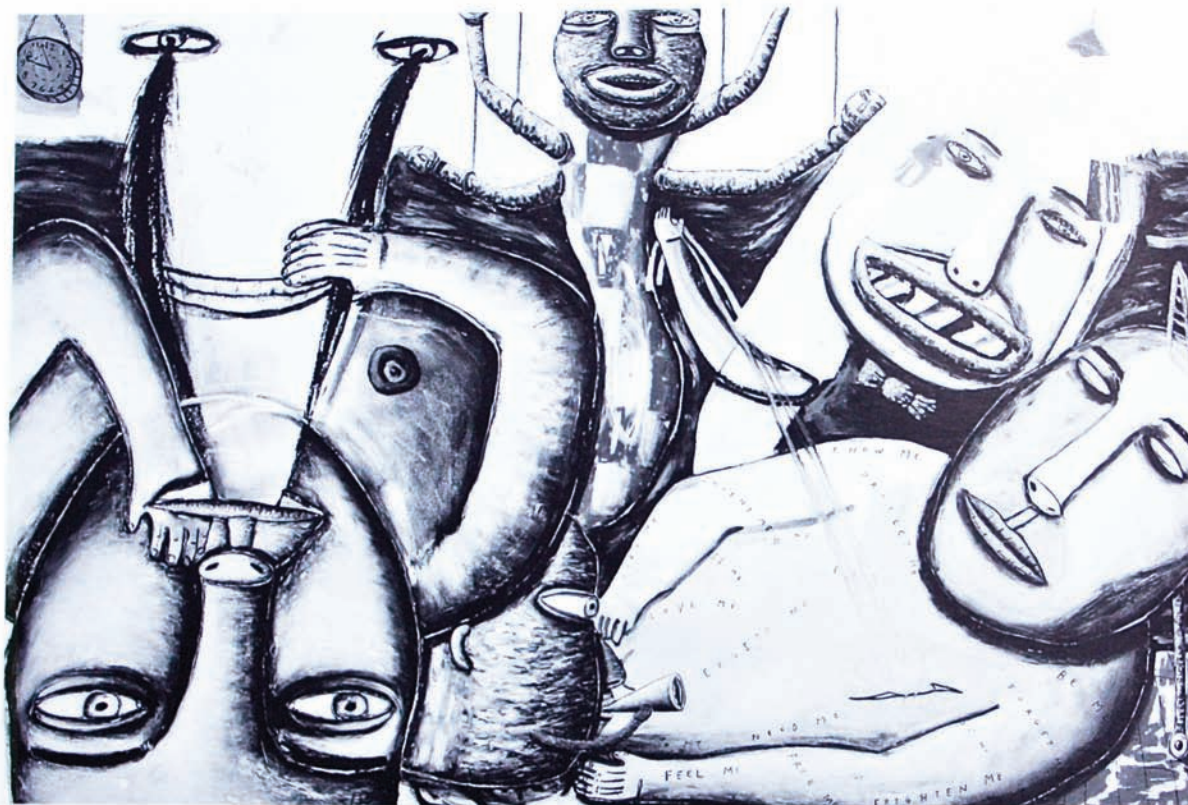
Jenny Dolezel has exhibited extensively in New Zealand and also in the United States and Europe. She is represented in major public collections in New Zealand as well as in numerous private collections. She lives and works in Auckland.



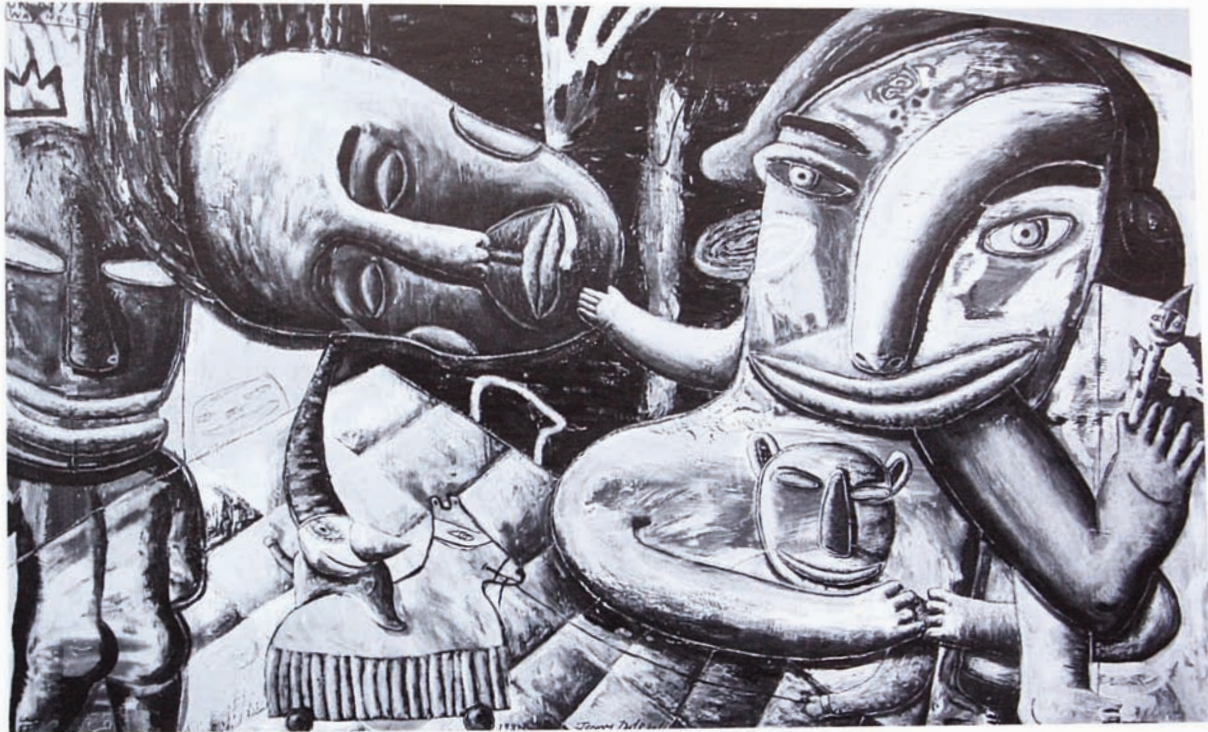
**On the Day of the Ceremony, 1993**  
Oil on canvas, 1100 x 1500 mm  
Gosling Chapman Collection, Auckland



Jenny Dolezel



**Then and Now, 1993**  
Oil and oil stick on paper, 750 x 1100 mm  
Private collection, Auckland



**On My Way Home, 1993**  
Oil and oil stick on paper, 740 x 1100 mm  
Private collection, Auckland