

WEEKEND DILETTANTE | DARWIN FESTIVAL

What: Darwin Festival. The winter arts event returns with a mix of online and live activities.

The program includes music, theatre, dance, films, comedy, cabaret, storytelling and visual arts.

The National Indigenous Music Awards and the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair are both online this year.

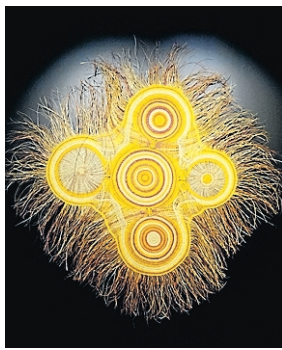
Access to Festival Park and any shows is limited by social distancing requirements and you will need to purchase a ticket to guarantee you get in.

As well as local music acts including Caiti Baker, Serina Pech, Stevie Jean and Lil Kootsie, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra will perform two concerts.

Love Me (Bar) Tender at Brown's Mart Courtyard is an intimate one-on-one performance where a bartender will create a



Love Me (Bar) Tender, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards.



unique cocktail for you based on the secret conversation you have with them.

Comedian KC Martin-Stone will answer your questions about death with her signature brand of gallows humour.

Miss Ellaneous (aka Ben Graetz) leads a line-up of drag starts in *Drag Divas: Essential Werk*. Dress up as your favourite essential worker to be

in the running for a fabulous prize.

The finalists for the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards will be on display at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory with a Salon des Refuses at the Charles Darwin University Art Gallery.

Where: Venues around Darwin. **When:** August 6-16

WHY AN 1866 PAINTING IS STILL A SHOCKER

Art A trip to France turned into a 10-year mission to tell the story of a notorious work, writes Theo Chapman.

When Australian artist Lilianne Milgrom went to Paris for a six-week artist residency a decade ago, she had no idea she would

spend much of her time staring at a painting of another woman's genitals or that the experience would lead to years of research culminating in a novel about that painting.

Milgrom was looking for inspiration when she visited the Musee d'Orsay and as she wandered around she found the gallery dedicated to the work of Gustave Courbet.

"It stopped me dead in my tracks. Prominently displayed on its own dedicated wall and hanging at eye level was a realistically rendered, X-rated, peep-show perspective of a woman's exposed genitals. Not a fig leaf in sight," she writes about her first sight of the painting.

"For its modest size, it packed a monumental punch," she writes.

Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde*, or *The Origin of the World*, painted in 1866, was never intended for public consumption. The model was Constance Queniaux, who agreed to pose for the Turkic portrait destined for her lover, Turkish diplomat Khalil Bey.

The painting had a series of owners but wasn't shown publicly until 1988, when it was included in an exhibition at New York's Brooklyn Museum. In 1995, it went on permanent display at the Musee d'Orsay.

Milgrom, who was born in France, raised in Melbourne and now lives in the US, made a spur-of-the-moment decision that day to become the painting's first copyist.

Copying works of art is an established way for artists to hone their skills. But *L'Origine* was a particularly bold choice.

"It's seen as the quintessential painting for the male gaze," Milgrom says. "I wanted to see it through a female gaze."

Her first day as a copyist was nerve-racking. "I started off being totally embarrassed," she says. "My palms were sweaty and everyone was looking at me. I don't like to paint in front of people; I don't even like people being in my studio."

Once she started working on her version of the painting, she was soon swept up in the way Courbet used paint and came to recognise how well he had rendered the anatomy.

"We don't normally see ourselves from that angle naked," she says. "When I had to go to such detail and was zeroing in like a microscope, I realised he'd put in the clitoris and we know it was never painted before like that."

While she worked on her copy, Milgrom watched the responses of gallery visitors to the original. Young women were horrified by the model's abundant pubic hair, she says.

Some men flirted with her, but with a husband and children at home she didn't follow up. She acknowledges part of her motiva-

tion for the Paris trip was to rediscover her sexual power.

"I was in my 50s and I still felt like a sexual woman and I didn't want to let go of that. Just being in France helped me feel that as a mature woman I didn't have to give that up."

Copying *L'Origine* helped her acknowledge that sexual energy isn't something you have to put aside.

"It was a sort of awakening, like I felt liberated, empowered by this painting and its beauty and the power that it shows that women have," she says.

Other encounters while painting at the museum revealed other versions of the image. One woman invited her to visit and showed her a mural-sized rendition painted on the wall of her teenage son's room. Then, just before Milgrom was about to leave Paris, a friend took her to see a vast version created from bread, cheese and chocolate on the side of a building: "How much more French can you get!"

Since then, she has come across many other interpretations of the picture.

"Everywhere I went after this experience, I'd find this painting. I found it in an Australian gallery as a full-size pencil drawing. I saw one by German artist Rosemarie Trockel at the New Museum in New York: she had a print of Courbet's painting and on top of it she'd painted a black spider where the pubis is and it really makes you want to shiver."

When she returned to her family in Washington, she decided not to display her copy of *L'Origine* at home.

"At the time my mother was alive and she was so anxious: 'Are you going to put it up? I don't think you should,'" Milgrom says.

Instead, Milgrom created an installation that incorporates the painting. "I used images of parts of my own body to fill out the body and I called it *L'Origine c'est moi*," says the 66-year-old. "I showed it once in New York. It's not on my living room wall."

Even though her copy was complete, the original painting had taken hold of Milgrom's imagination and she decided to research its history and write a book about it. "The reason the book took me 10 years to write," she says, "is because I stuck so closely to my historical research."

In the end, fictionalising the painting's history allowed Milgrom to breathe life into the facts of the artwork's story.

The effect of copying *L'Origine* has been profound, Milgrom says.

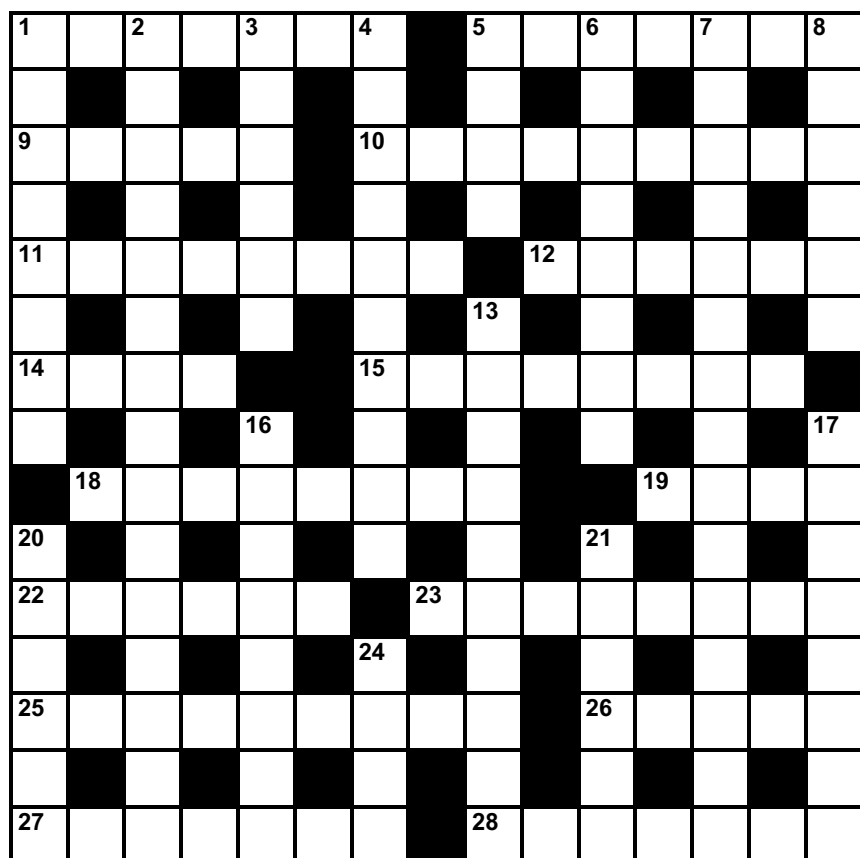
"It gave me courage that I could do anything and it opened me up to all sorts of work. I really did take a chance with my art after that and I'm not afraid of it any more. I just want to do what I want to do." **W**

L'Origine - A Novel by Lilianne Milgrom (Little French Girl Press).



Lilianne Milgrom working as a copyist painted by friend Richard Edelstein.

AFR cryptic crossword



Across

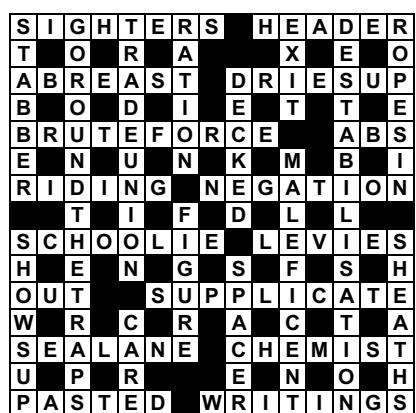
- 1 Doctor's prescription, perhaps, best opened by doctor heading to emergency (3-4)
- 5 Male tenor missing out on backing part (7)
- 9 Vehicle got less time loading (5)
- 10 Elected Green implicated in confidential information's impropriety (9)
- 11 Hidden text ultimately discovered in restored fragments of decrees (8)
- 12 Resistance identified in dryer with tool (6)
- 14 Drain's primary rupture is a plumber's problem (4)
- 15 Silence excursion making a lot of noise (8)
- 18 Cocoon belonging to university fossilised in rock (8)
- 19 What interfered with a reduction in hostility? (4)
- 22 Big character from Wales, troubled, cried out (6)
- 23 Referee's ring count involving a fix again? (8)
- 25 Influence can start to generate planning for the future (9)
- 26 Succeed mostly in fastening pin (5)
- 27 Something sweet and sour left not frozen initially (7)
- 28 Plenty in side, oddly, may be experienced (7)

Down

- 1 One resting in sick-bed ordered rump (8)
- 2 Confident rider shifted around one aid to navigation (9,6)
- 3 East European picked up diamonds and

ran off (6)

- 4 It's used to clean greasy substance inside discoloured teapots (6,4)
- 5 Company recalled commercial's last piece of music (4)
- 6 Faithful act not completed by member of the church (8)
- 7 One accommodated by Wentworth Hotel organised surrender (5,2,3,5)
- 8 Mobs, regularly breaking law, fight (6)
- 13 Warnings about finished drug kings, perhaps (10)
- 16 Dark material behind entertainment capital of Europe (8)
- 17 Did turn in snow vehicle (8)
- 20 Fool admitting outside broadcast is worth next to nothing (3-3)
- 21 Casual supervised get-together before mass (6)
- 24 Screen is moved up twelve inches (4)



Need help?

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COMPILED BY DAVID STICKLEY
SOLUTION NEXT WEEK

Solution to last week's crossword