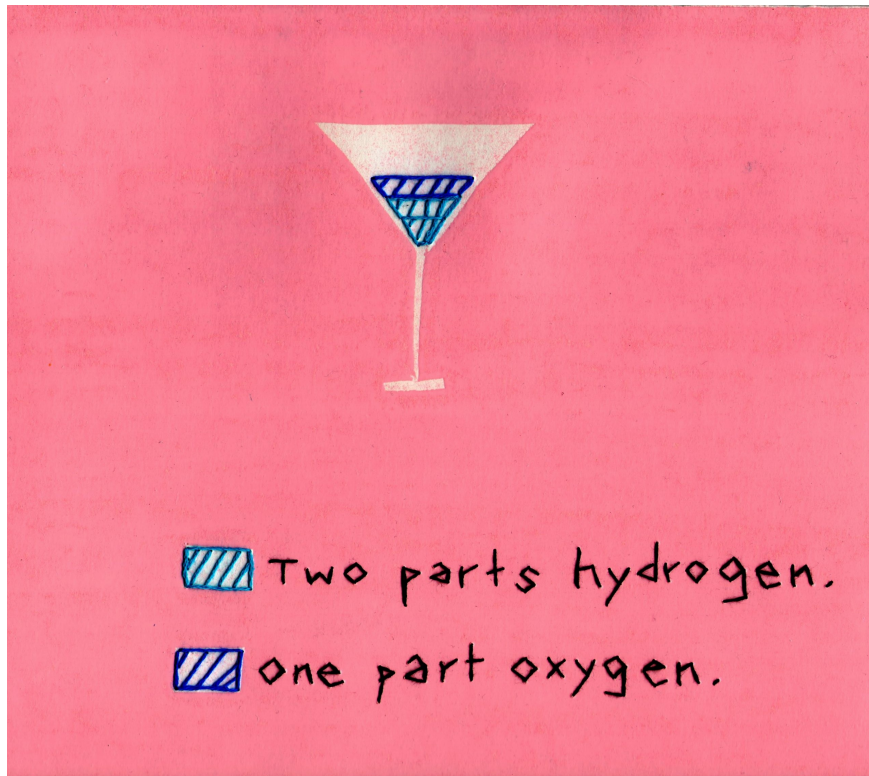


# Speaking with Zoe Barry

Interview with Claire Bushby / All images courtesy of Zoe Barry



*Shit Faced*, Zoe Barry, 2010. Mono-print & cotton stitching.

Did you grow up in Perth? Study here?

I went to primary school in Roleystone, and high school in Narrogin. After year 12, I moved straight up to Perth and got my BA Art at Curtin, majoring in printmaking. I am now doing an Arts Management course through WAAPA part-time, and working 30hrs a week at Artsource.

Can you tell us a little about the kind of work you make?

I've always made art from a cathartic place. So whatever I'm making is from an honest place and it often reflects where I am at. I generally revolve around printmaking and installations. At the moment I'm enjoying exploring stitching-like methods and materials. My work often reflects my observations and reactions to the everyday.

I really enjoy works like *In the Beginning* and *I do*, the way that you have subverted traditional stitch-work that calls to mind the good wife decorating her home with virtuous texts. You seem to tackle emotional subjects with quite a bit of playfulness and humour. Can you talk a little about this?



*I do, Zoe Barry, 2009. Cross-stitch.*

I was looking at combining text and image, and was particularly into Shrigley and Leunig. I wanted to say something that expressed my current cynicism, as well as make people laugh and think. I had also just discovered radical cross stitch, and loved work by Ghada Amer, Leah Emery and Silke Raetze's 'My Buddy'. I had drawn a large number of stick figure drawings expressing random thoughts and chose my favourites to develop further.

I like the idea of putting in so much time and detail into what was essentially a stick drawing and challenging the craft vs. art and high art vs. low art conceptions. I love the contradiction between the time consuming, feminine, and traditionally decorative cross stitch and the subversive, totally honest, and cynical message.

Yeah, I guess it's a reflection of my somewhat dark humour and the very sophisticated tool of sarcasm.

**Are those stitching and craft techniques something you learned as a child, from family perhaps or is it something you sought to learn later as an adult?**

Yeah, Mum taught me to do cross stitch and I quite enjoyed it as a child. I also got into French knitting and weaving for a while, but never really succeeded at knitting.

**What is your workspace like? Are you someone who works from a studio or in your living space?**

At the moment I generally work from wherever there is space in my apartment. Sometimes it's the kitchen table or desk, but it often ends up being my bed! So, there's a couple of paint and ink stains on there.

**What is your earliest creative memory? and did you always want to be an artist, or did that come later?**



I think I was about 8 and I sat and drew every last tiny detail of my bicycle and I remember Dad getting quite enthusiastic about how well I had done!

I was planning on being an art teacher for a fair while, but when it came to enrolling I realised I don't want to teach but just sit and use the schools supplies and have lots of holidays. Haha!



*Pink Present, Zoe Barry, 2010.*

Location: South Entrance of Curtin University, Manning Road, Bentley, WA.

The images of your gift wrapped urban objects make me so happy! You've also done some yarn bombing? Can you talk a little about the work you have installed in public spaces?

I was looking at alternative mediums of graffiti and street art. There's some extremely creative and original styles of Graffiti around. I was totally intrigued by yarn bombing when I discovered it, and it expanded on the stitching I was already doing. I found it quite difficult to think of something more original than just a contribution-like piece to the yarn bombing movement. Having said that, I really enjoyed doing the piece 'river views', and am amazed it is still there, bright as ever, 12 months later! It makes me smile every time I drive past it, and even more when I see someone else notice and react to it.

So, I wanted to do some street art in a medium that no-one else had done before, but realised I didn't have the balls to do anything particularly illegal! The idea of gift graffiti just came to me and was a lot of fun. It was interesting seeing how long it would stay installed for, and watching people's reactions when they passed by a gift wrapped electrical box! Despite my stakeout sessions, I haven't managed to catch one of these installations being removed yet.



*River Views*, Zoe Barry, 2010.  
Location: Pattie Street, Cannington, WA.

**Do you have any exhibitions coming up?**

I'm Co-Curating a show that will be up at Free Range in August called *Kick the Habit*, exhibiting new work by 4 emerging Perth artists of varying mediums. So, I'm pretty excited about that. I have started working on some new stuff, combining found metal and wool, but it isn't developed to be exhibition ready as of yet.



**Where can people find out more about your work?**

For news about what I'm up to and to look at more of my work, you can have a look at my website: [www.zoebarry.com](http://www.zoebarry.com)(.) I welcome feedback, comments and questions :)

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