



GENDER ISSUES

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Award-winning artist Deborah Prior is concerned about society's portrayal of women, especially in the media but it's not cheesy bikini shots that are the issue.

She's actually preoccupied with an earlier era, the 1800s, in particular medical drawings showing women resplendent in pearls and gleaming hair-dos - with a mass of intestines and organs displayed from the waist down. The young artist is musing about what have been society's expectations of women.

Deborah, a graduate of the Adelaide Central School of Art and the winner of this year's Adelaide Bank Award for SA's top arts graduate as well as a Ruth Tuck scholarship, has just returned from London.

She says the trip, funded by her prize winnings, has helped "kickstart" her career and enabled her to visit places of interest, rather than just reading about them.

In addition to well-known galleries in London, she spent time at smaller museums.

"I spent a lot of time in the Hunterian Museum which is part of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, and it was set up in the 18th century by a chap called John Hunter who was a surgeon and an anatomist...there's a huge collection of human and animal specimens...it's a fascinating museum," she says.

"I also spent quite a while at the Wellcome Trust, a huge medical trust, again started by a rich family with a pharmaceutical business and a collector of things, of medical paraphernalia."

Deborah employs a variety of methods in her artwork, and says about the only thing she doesn't do is paint.

The notion of women in society and how her experience differs from other generations has been a common theme she has explored in vastly different ways - before her trip she had been sculpting soap.

"I was looking at ideas of cleanliness and purity and the female body," she says.

"I was looking at the physical manifestations of being good and well behaved."

In her final few months of study, she started to look at anatomical drawings and the depiction of the body, which had fuelled her interest in visiting the museums overseas.

"It's now more of an internal physical thing, looking at bodies, anatomical Venuses," she says.

"Generally they're men, unless they want to show something men can't show, so women only appear when they're pregnant."

Deborah Prior is showing her latest work in the exhibition - *Maladies and Remedies* - with Julia Robinson, at the Contemporary Art Centre, Parkside, October 26 to December 9.