

Jason William Francis Monet was born at Sutton Dwellings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1938 in Chelsea, London to Edwin Daw and Madeline Louise Monet. He was the ninth and final son of a one legged man; the only word his father could say was 'Jesus'. Jason's parents had moved from Jersey in the Channel Islands to London after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War for hospital treatment because his father was left disabled.

While Jason's mother was pregnant with him, she was reading a book about a little boy Jason who grew up to become an artist, so she decided to call her own new baby boy Jason. William was his father's best friend in the Army and Francis his confirmation name. Francis, being the Italian saint of Assisi, the animal lover.

Jason always had a love for animals. He lived in a small flat in London and the only animals he could keep were frogs. Luckily enough, the Natural History Museum was very near to where he lived. From the age of seven he used to go there and draw the animals. He drew everything from the stuffed animals to the skeletons because he was fascinated by animals.

Jason attended the Oratory elementary school in Chelsea. As he was the youngest of a family of boys who all were good boxers, older children that lost fights against his older brothers came to him for a free punch (pay back for losing the fight against his brothers).

During his elementary years Jason was a proud member of the Oratory Cadets where he marched and stood guard while playing the bugle.

Jason was one when WW2 broke out. His brothers were all evacuated first, then Jason and his mother were evacuated to Cambridge to live with doctors. After some time they moved back to London but the abundance of air raids forced them to move to an Aunts home in Liverpool where they stayed for around 2 years, separated from the family.

He was a late developer; he wasn't interested in anything except drawing. Even at a young age, he could capture the character of a person, what they really looked like, as opposed to doing 'a pretty picture'.

In 1951 at the age of 13, Jason trained at the Christopher Wren Technical School of Printing & Graphic Art. He quickly shifted from commercial to fine art, rapidly establishing himself as an internationally known expressionist painter and sculptor. He graduated with a National Diploma for design from the London School of Printing & Graphic Art in 1958.

In 1963, not for the first or last time, Jason was absolutely broke, so he took a job, as manager of a comedy club called the Establishment Club, run by Peter Cooke and Dudley Moore. (Sheer luck as he would say.)

He loved this job, it was full of actors and painters. He had Jack Lemmon, Peter O'Toole, Eartha Kitt, Francis Bacon and Michael Caine as customers. He became friendly with many of the them, which he enjoyed.

Jason also had drawings on show at the 'Establishment' and for the first time in his life had a regular income from his artwork.

Tony Hill who was a good friend at this time, wrote *'He was immensely popular, generous and sociable and the bar he worked in was always known as 'Jason's Bar'. If I recall correctly, his paintings had echoes of John Bratby about them, strong, colorful and full of social interest. He was always proud of his Monet connection, but never traded on it.'*

It was at this young age he became well known in London and famous sitters included Noel Coward, Barbra Streisand, Michael Caine, Jack Palance, Rolf Harris, John Dankworth, Cleo Laine and Pink Floyd.

Barbra Streisand wrote upon hearing of his passing: I'm glad I saw him again when I was in Bali in 2000. I still have the painting of my son Jason by your father.. as a young couple your fathers work was the first artist Elliot and I collected.. and now his philosophical thoughts about life seem to be all true . his spirit will be missed... Barbra Streisand

Jason started seriously painting when he was in the British Army, painting murals.

His army friend Michael Ainsworth wrote 'In 1960 I was a lance corporal in the intelligence section of the East Surrey Regiment stationed in Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk. A sergeant came into my room and said "I have got a new man for you-watch him, he is trouble!" He then pushed a rather untidy "soldier" towards me. It was Jason.

Jason was always in trouble, as the Regimental Sergeant Major hated him and therefore all other ranks above lance corporal were encouraged to hate him as well. Jason's problem was that he was too kind to people and only did things when he felt they should be done. (not the army's way of doing it!) However, Jason had something that the army wanted. He could play a bugle! So poor Jason had to play Reveille at 6.30am and Lights Out at 10.30pm six days a week. This then became a problem for the British Army. The bugler always had to be immaculately turned out and as a result this did not fit into Jason's criteria. So everyday Jason was on a charge and sent to the guardhouse. But when the army wanted the bugler they couldn't have one because Jason was in prison. Jason beat the British Army in the end because "blind eyes" were cast.

In 1963 Jason met his first wife Andrea on the West End in London. After only 10 days they were married at the Chelsea registry office. In 1965 came the birth of their first son Aaron. Jason and his family sailed across to the West Indies on board the Queen Mary where they stayed for 7 months. Jason fell in love with the West Indies; oil painting was quite new to him then. After returning to London they had their second son Pablo and shortly after that their marriage ended.

A heart breaking time for Jason as Andrea and their 2 sons moved to New York. The following years were very difficult.

Jason had developed a great friendship with Rolf Harris who owned a night club in Malta. To help Jason through the depression of losing his wife and children he commissioned Jason to create 2 huge lime stone statues of human figures to sit inside the club. This is where Jason met his second wife Doris and instantly fell in love. A story Jason loved telling was of his first meal at Doris's house with Rolf and how she opened up a can of sausages and fed it to them. From then on, every time Doris cooked a good meal, Jason would proceed to sing 'I taught her everything she knows'.

Jason resided on the beautiful Mediterranean Island of Malta from 1970-75. Malta offered the perfect lifestyle. Sun, enticing beaches, beautiful girls, sandstone, an abundance of stunning scenery, 2 penny settlers; oh and of course the constant flow of duty free alcohol brought in by the British army and consumed at the amazing Fort St Angelo. Malta was a tax free island and a haven for celebrities to invest in. This provided Jason not only with a financial outlet but more importantly a place he was able to become friends with the likes of Cleo Laine, Johnny Dankworth, Frankie Howard and John Lamazore.

In 1975, after Doris bought her own engagement and wedding ring, they married in Kensington registry office in London. Unfortunately, the British mandate in Malta had expired and London was far too cold and expensive so they moved to his 'outlaws', Joe and Connie Briffa's house on Phillip Island.

The block of land that we now stand on was bought and work started on our amazing 'Wooden Palace' as Jan Bodaan calls it.

Rolf Harris kindly bought the block of land next door so that Jason could then create his own 'Monet Gardens'.

These years, rather difficult at times for the starving artist and his wife, was a period the family wanted for little.

Surrounded by good friends and plenty of love, there was always fresh abalones, vegetables from the much-loved garden and dairy products from Madeline Louise the adored cow named after his mother.

The home was always full of beloved animals, Including Annabella the sheep and a gaggle of chickens which Jason took great pride in naming after his sisters in law.

Then came the other animals.

Camille also known as fingers, was born in 1976; 16 months later in 77 Marcelle also known as Maggott was born, having spiky jet-black hair, Jason called her a golliwog.

For a short time the family tried to move back to their house in St Paul's Bay in Malta.

Pregnancy intervened however. Doris was pregnant for the third time so they came back to Australia where Louise also known as misfit was born in 1979 and Simone also known as midget in 1981.

Jason had such a warm generous personality that every time someone entered the property they would find themselves with a tool and a drink in their hands and soon began helping in whatever way they could.

One person whose help was truly amazing was Eric Van Grondelle.

After being invited in for a cup of tea, Eric (obviously fond of the tea and company) found himself staying for a year to help build the Wooden Palace.

While Jason and Eric chiseled, Doris was kept busy with four small children and providing food for the revolving door of friends that Jason would constantly invite to stay.

Thanks to a recommendation from great friends, Billy and Sandy Guy, the Monet family visited Bali several times for painting trips. The first time Jason went to Bali he was there for 2 months and painted 40 paintings.

He fell in love instantly with the place, the customs, the village, the attitude to life and he was constantly surprised and inspired by the island's beauty.

He once told an interviewer *'I wake up and, corny as it sounds, I feast on what I see. I get excited just by being there. The plants are enough to excite me. The light coming through that window every day is enough to make me excited, get out of bed and want to be there- that in itself is enough'*.

Jason, for all his gifted talents, marriages never seemed to work for him.

At the end of the 80's his second marriage ended and Jason moved to Bali full time. Jason was always optimistic, Not one to dwell on things, he told people 'I am lucky, my 2 wives left me so I moved to Bali'.

He said about Bali and the magnificent art work he created there:

*"I hope anyone who buys my paintings receives some of the warmth, excitement and love I have of Bali. That is enough. I'll be happy. To be able to give back what's been given to me, that would be the biggest thrill in the world: then all my efforts will have been worthwhile"*

Jason loved everything about Bali. After moving several times through the rice paddies from Campuan to Penastanan, he eventually bought his beautiful acres in Singa kerta.

It was here in 1998 that he started building his dream house “Rumah Bamboo’ (bamboo house).

After a long year of designing and building, with the help of 7 Balinese boys, Sachiko, his girlfriend at the time and his beloved dog named DOG, the house was almost finished.

Sadly for Jason he forgot that he was an artist not a builder – he might have been good at mixing paints but alas not when it came to the correct mix for concrete.

Subsequently the building was rendered unsafe and tragically had to be pulled down.

Not to let a minor matter like a collapsing house bother him for long, in the true Anzac spirit, several years later, in 2006, he found the energy and courage again to rebuild his paradise.

This time, wiser for the experience, he teamed up with a professional bamboo builder from Java, Gundong.

This time the house stood firm.

It was one of the most joyous years of his life. He often cried with happiness at how lucky he was to have his life in Bali.

He employed 5 boys to help with the construction this time around: Gundong, Komang, Made, Wayan, Bimo and the lovely Puspa who kept the house running and the tea with ‘2 sugars love’ flowing.

Building was completed in May 2008 in time for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.

As everyone knows, Jason loved a good party – any party really. And boy this was a beauty! 200 plus people attended. There was a 35 piece Bamboo gamelon band, a funk band, suckling pig, catfish from the moat around his house and plenty of wine and very fine company.

The house represented an example to the whole world that vital habitats need not be destroyed in order to meet our human needs for shelter. Something Jason and his children have always been passionate about.

Many things occupied his final years, none more important than his family but also the cause of the Sumatran Orangutan through the organization SOS (Sumatran orangutan society) founded by Lucy Wisdom. The destruction of the orangutan habitats angered him because of his passion for animals and the fact that it is totally unnecessary.

He spent countless hours making masks, other bamboo items to promote awareness for this cause.

Jason only lived in his new house for a short time but like anywhere Jason has ever lived, his house was open for anyone of his friends to enjoy.

Much could be claimed about Jason Monet. He was no saint and he could be a difficult bastard at times. Other times he could be a self centered 'know all' that showed remnants of the British Raj.

But that was only a very small part of Jason's very complex makeup.

He was also, more importantly than his foibles and flaws, a man of exceptional generosity of spirit and warmth. True, you never died wondering around Jason. He had an opinion on most things and most people. But if you were his friend, you were his friend forever and he reminded you of this fact – constantly.

There was an epic grandeur about his love for life.

Jason Monet was not a small personality, he loomed larger than life in most of his undertakings.

When he painted he painted like he lived – with enormous intensity and zeal.

He had the capacity to reach out and embraced both the good and the difficult with an equal passion. It was as if he had to taste difficulties in his life in order to understand and appreciate the existence of the joy.

Ask anyone who came into his orbit.

A friend Tim Countis who Jason met recently in Bali wrote *'His eyes sparkled, his voice boomed with laughter and he held everyone at the table positively spellbound. Who the hell is this guy, I thought? What a character...straight out of a story by Dickens.*

Or as his close friend Colin Fleming confirmed:

*Having reached my seventies I find myself recalling the few people who made a lasting impression on me and your father was certainly one of them. I don't think I have met anyone who, from a comparatively early age, had such a clear vision of how he would spend his life. He had confidence in his talent and a fierce determination to use it to the full. I always believed that he would do justice to his illustrious surname and was not surprised, when I Googled him, to find that he had lived his dream to the full.*

When Jason was forced to return to Australia recently, one of his greatest concerns was leaving his house and boys behind. Fortunately for everyone concerned a man who considered Jason to be one of his best friends made himself available for housekeeping duties. This same friend named Derek or 'Jock' as Jason would commonly refer to him, wrote this:

*Jason made it all simple.... the way things should be.*

*Free of pretentiousness and falsities and with a rare courage that empowered him to follow his passion, he lived with a capital "L", in a genuine and uninhibited way. A huge personality with a terrific humor, wit and vitality, he was an effervescent diamond in a bucket of pebbles. A real privilege to meet and know. Thanks Jason, for coming across our paths and for shining upon our lives. How loved you are.*

*What was that? Was it a bird, was it a plane? No..... that was Jason Monet ! What an experience!*

When people asked Jason why he was always hanging out with Derek, Jason simply replied *"Because my dog died."*

While Jason was here undergoing treatment he had a newfound respect for Australia that he hadn't realized before. Thanks to the comfort and support from Dr. Paul Flood, Dr. Jim Khong and all his dear friends who came to visit, his last days were made so tranquil.

Jason has left behind a host of families and friends who will miss him in many immeasurable ways.

The last words should come from his children who adored him immensely.

*Daddy was a man for all Seasons, a great artist and to us, a unique presence in our lives. He taught us to love, live, be passionate and express what we think. He taught us to be honest, generous and accepting and to never take out a mortgage.*

*He was certainly no ordinary father. The world is a smaller place now there is no daddy, you don't find people like him very often.*

Marcelle asked her Father shortly before he passed away: *' I asked Dad if he believed in God, he responded "my Gods are the good people I've known". For Dad the joy was in giving, he always said that 'Giving is a priceless gift'. He gave his love, time and acceptance to all.'*

Jason would he be here and he'll no doubt be mightily pissed off that he's not, would be saying by now: *'Enough verbal diarrhea, let's go have a drink'.*

We wouldn't want to upset him, so, please raise your glasses and celebrate the life of Jason Monet.