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My art practice has undergone numerous changes and trajectories initially being influenced by a figurative painting tradition; residencies such as the Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris, and experiences such as working with an archaeological drawing team in Tarone, Greece.

For some years now my work has focused on landscape painting, specifically an exploration of “the Inland River in an Enduring Australian Landscape”. I see the river as a source of fertility, a vital and pivotal life force with its cyclical nature of renewal and destruction. In our nations psyche with limited water resources; droughts and floods mark our consciousness. The river is a potent historical and cultural emblem embedded in our literature and our inherited visual language.

I work in both the discipline of painting and hand built ceramics, exhibiting them alongside each other. I enjoy the cross fertilisation and interrelation between the gestural painterly mark and the hand built three-dimensional form; my work is a conversation between paint and clay.

A month’s residency at Art Vault Residency in Mildura, Victoria, 2011, was the initial impetus for my landscape series. Mildura - based on the banks of the Murray River- is historically dependant on the rivers water supply, in stark contrast to the surrounding semi arid mallee scrub.

Increasingly my work has moved away from any specific landscape, to become my own inner recollections, a reduced and abstracted essence of the land. The river, the trees, the rocks and broad spatial vistas become a series of signs or totems.

Embedded in my works are memories and recollections of my youth; swimming in the Wollombi Brook, with its warm shallow amber gum leaf stained edges moving to the cool mysterious deep green umber depths. For me the river is a place of connection, a journey undertaken and a vehicle back to a slower pace and sense of place.

As in the painting, 'Language1', abstracted gestural calligraphic marks float above an expansive space of bleached and stained canvas. Colours transfuse from pinks, to gold to blues, depending on the heat of the day. The marks made on the land are like a text or a series of musical notes, an implied language to be understood or deciphered. The works acknowledge our need to understand the land in order to work with and preserve its fragile ecosystems. "We need a relationship with the land that does not demand submission from either party, that is built more on knowledge than hunger to possess" (p372, The Bush, Don Watson)

I use acrylic paint on linen in my painting process. The flexibility of acrylics allows for spontaneous layering in quick succession. The texture and weave of the linen's surface gives a density, a tenor and depth to the application. The works evolve intuitively, for me painting is a process of finding, losing, rubbing out, reinscribing. In my own humble way I am trying to find my own language.

As in the painting, 'Totems of the land', marks have become series of totemic signs, emblems suggesting shields, trees and a bird. They emerge, hover and dance across the shallow pictorial space; the river in the foreground reflects the stars and suggested hidden depths.

An interest in the historical has always been present and a uniting link in my work, as in painting, 'Language 3'. The river is viewed from within and from above, revealing a language of layered histories echoing told and untold stories, or unearthed mysterious relics.

These paintings and ceramics were first exhibited in 'The Enduring Landscape' at Catherine Asquith Gallery in Melbourne (2011), followed by 'the Enduring landscape and the Inland river' at Arthouse Gallery in Sydney (2012). This was followed in succession by the birth of my two sons, I put on hold my exhibition development for the time being but not my painting inquiry. With an urban home studio, amongst debris of toys, prams, and washing, short sojourns to the studio are possible. There is an increasing need to make simple confident calligraphic marks applied with a meditative approach. These works may be returned to the next day or the next week depending on domestic demands. I have actually found this new restriction has been a refreshing opportunity; fewer marks are made, with less chance of overworking.

The materiality and tactility of ceramics is a direct link to the earth. Using a coiling technique and hand building the form over a period of time mirrors the process, plasticity and sensuality of paint. There is integrity of purpose in making my own direct unrefined forms. Not professing to be a skilled potter but approaching ceramics as a painter allows an opportunity to integrate and play with form and the surface. I apply several layers of shiny shino glaze with underglaze paints, or stains and slips, which all undergo numerous firings. The iron oxide of the stoneware clay bleeds through the layers of glaze on the ceramic surface, creating an alchemy of glaze, gestural marks and clay.

An example is the work 'Land & shadows', and a grouping of larger scale vessels exhibited in 'The Course of Objects; the fine lines of inquiry' at Manly Art Gallery & Museum, in Sydney (2014). These evoke a sense of monumentality, a quality I also hope to encapsulate in my paintings.

The ceramic vessel has always been a presence in my work, initially experimenting with painting on wheel thrown utilitarian objects which I exhibited alongside my paintings, then exploring the functionality of the utilitarian object, and later producing a series of paintings of the vessel focusing on its totemic presence and simplicity of form. These journeys have led to my commitment in pursuing hand built ceramics as a painterly sculptural object with an inner poetic presence.

My current body of work I am developing will be shown at Arthouse Gallery in 2019, exhibiting both ceramics and paintings. I aim to further develop the relationship between the two mediums within an installation context, introducing sound and video, culminating in an exhibition at Manning Regional Art Gallery also in 2019.

Arthouse Gallery:

www.arthousegallery.com

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