

INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that the Glasshouse Regional Gallery presents *Within and Between - Walking in the Space of Landscape* by Wendy Stokes.

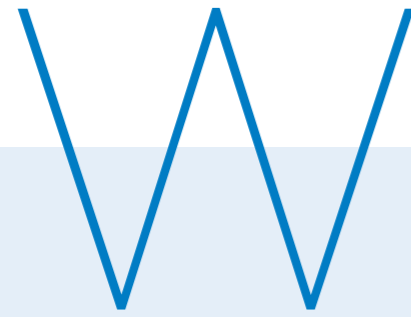
The exhibition continues the Glasshouse Regional Gallery's commitment to supporting contemporary Australian artists and presenting quality artistic experiences for our community and visitors to our region.

There is something about the clarity that comes when we immerse ourselves into our environment, whether this be by walking, sitting, simply observing and acknowledging nature's beauty that surrounds us. To feel the sun on your face or to feel the sand between your toes, the rough and smooth textures of the land, or to glance up and witness a double rainbow, these are all moments that we share and have in common living within this beautiful area of Port Macquarie and the Mid North Coast. Within this space, a sense of calm and peace can be found, revelations and ideas have a place to grow, it is in these moments that we can create space for the new or to simply ground ourselves to be open to what might come.

Within and Between is a beautiful metaphor for life which Wendy so eloquently captures in her work, that ability to create space is a unique gift. Thank you Wendy for sharing it with us.

It has been a great pleasure to work with Wendy to develop this exhibition.

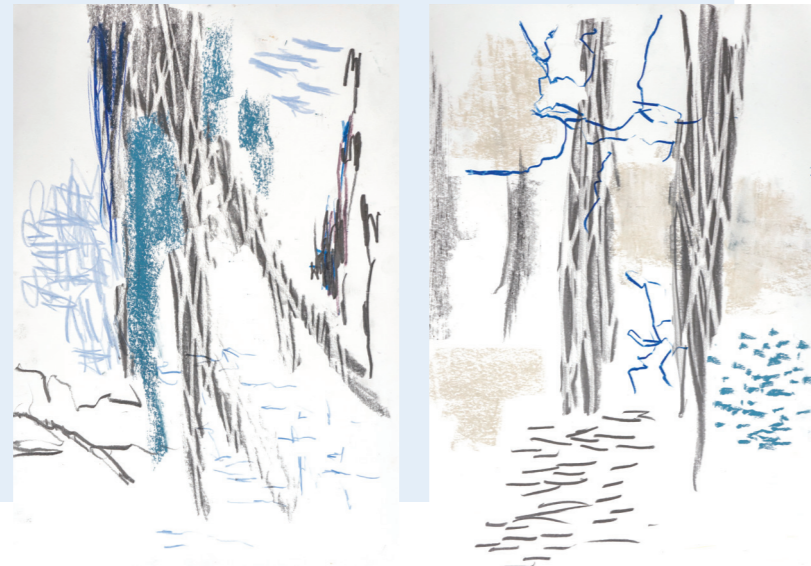
Bridget Purtill
Gallery Curator
Glasshouse Regional Gallery



Walking involves moving through a space and upon a surface, as much as moving between place; it becomes a way of seeing, feeling or 'knowing' a landscape; it becomes a rhythmic process and the body becomes a vessel 'collecting notations' of visual, sensory information and fragments of memory'

Wendy Stokes.

Whilst attending an International Cite des Arts residency in Paris in 2014, Stokes spent time exploring Claude Monet sites of the coast and the Giverny garden. Exploring parallels between these sites and Stokes own locations the exhibition explores drawing as a vehicle to interweave a connection between place and memory.



Re- membering Site I and II. graphite frottage and progressio pencil on paper, 30cmx29cm

The exhibition titled *Within and Between - Walking in the space of Landscape*, reflects a continuum in your preoccupation with the theme of place - a sense of place, can you discuss why this is an important element to your practice?

My practice is informed by what I know and by experiences which are deeply felt, hopefully instilling integrity, and an honesty of experience within the work. A sense of place for me hinges on understanding a connection to one's place in the world; physically, psychologically and geographically and, where for reasons sometimes unknown you know you belong, bringing feelings of familiarity. Geographically, I see it as a blend of locations yet it can also occur in the presence of great paintings. Although my direct daily experiences of the coastal landscape with its atmospheric space blended with memories of rural childhood inform my practice, I aim for universality, an essence; to create visual spaces which possess a sense of calm allowing the viewer to inhabit their own sense of place.

Within this exhibition there are sketches and explorations from your time in Monet's garden, whilst attending a residency at the Cite International des Arts in Paris. What was it about Monet's Garden that captivated your attention?

Placing the Giverny garden in context, my residency in Paris was centred on the Claude Monet *Nymphéas* suite in the Musée de l' Orangerie. The depth of experience felt within a 'sense of place' is what pulled me to France to unravel the complex relationships between the *Nymphéas* paintings as a contemplative installation; the correlation between the Monet sketchbooks and studies while also immersing myself in the landscape of the Giverny garden and coastal Étretat, where Monet spent his youth and continued to visit his entire life. I was interested in how this lived bodily engagement with 'place' informs how one engages in the acts of drawing and painting. I was also very interested in how time and memory imparted psychologies of place. At no time were water lilies a motif but rather what drives the maker into gesture and mark through ones lived experience of place.

I made 13 private visits to the garden making numerous drawings which had a broad range of goals. Drawing as I walked around the water garden became a way into

familiarising, 'knowing' and understanding the site. While drawing in the garden I returned to a place of memory, my own sense of place. The pond itself is a diverted creek bordered by willows not too far removed from an Australian creek, separate to the decorative lilies punctuating the surface. The willows contained their unique rhythms, while their shifting reflections and the sky created active fields upon the water surface. Memories emerged of my childhood garden; enveloped, nurtured and entangled; becoming ideas embedded in the work. For me the site became about association, memory and loss.

Can you draw any comparisons to how you approach the landscape living on the North Coast of NSW?

My coastal walking ritual has been pivotal to my interpretation and approach both in France and Australia which paralleled Monet with his ritual walks of the coastal terrain of Étretat and within his garden.

They are places of fluid geographies, where boundaries of water and sky fuse and are infinitely modified through time and atmosphere. The geography of my coastal terrain offers multiple perspectives as the body moves through it which also aligned to walking the coastal trail at Étretat, on the Normandy coast; all which created a bridge to connect to my Australian experiences.

You speak about how documenting the landscape is no longer a static experience for you? Can you tell us a little more about your process?

Reconnecting to the title *Within and Between - Walking in the space of Landscape*; walking is pivotal to 'collecting notations'. Walking and repetitive drawing are used as a process to 'feel' and 'store' the rhythm of a place as one moves through a landscape site while painting is the residue of act and reconfiguration.

These experiences aren't always singular, set in one moment. In the studio I return to an awareness of spatial relationships,

the sensory imprint of the closing and opening of space as one's body moved through the landscape. When making the work I use the expanded format and practice of walking along the work paying attention to zones of action where a contrast develops between the grand and intimate gesture, and shifts in movement. It is in this way I see the landscape is no longer interpreted as static and becomes about shifting experiences.

When you are working in the landscape and sketching ideas, do you think of how these sketches will transpose over to a canvas, are you conceptualising the end result? Or do you let the marks and connection tell the story?

The sketches are immediate notations, while the paintings are reconfigurations of sensations. They are not planned in the sense they are not crafted from a specific drawing. Drawing for me is a rehearsal process to locate the structure and rhythm of place so the body can contain it when one starts to paint. The painting becomes a physical process of actually walking along



Willow- trace of memory I acrylic wash, pastel, oil pastel and graphite on paper 80cmx60cm

its length re-enacting the walk. It becomes a notational record, traces of experiences, releasing the line and mark into their own identities, rather than direct representation. I do however conceptualise a sense of vacancy and opening of space within the work to invites the viewer to inhabit their own experience of landscape and their participation in it.

Your mark making has a sense of immediacy, a certainty, yet the layering and placement of these marks appear weightless. Is this space between a purposeful created tension?

I want my work to embody openness; an airiness linking to places of contemplation.

By retaining untouched areas of the paper or canvas it opens up readings of space within the work; it becomes part of the surface and the meaning within the work, providing a habitable space while the marks themselves hover between hints of the specific and abstract gesture. I considered the marks in terms of a weight and velocity; how the painted mark sits upon or soaks into the surface of the ground. This approach establishes the mark as possessing a psychological gravity.

In your new work, "Parallel Notations" it has a similar motif a direction of your mark making, is this a symbol of a specific experience or object observed in the landscape? How does this new work relate to your sketches from Paris?

The recent piece follows 10 previous expanded format works. I consider them in terms of drawing as fragmentary suggestions. *"Parallel Notations"* expands upon my working philosophy using a hybrid blend of lived marks as captives of repetitive drawing practice and automatic gesture to reflect the rhythm of place. However in this piece it becomes a compilation of parallel landscapes crossing geographical boundaries past and present; between Australia and France, manipulating a register of experiences, where memories become fragments, glimpses fractured by time, where forms float, remaining undefined, keeping the readings open to the viewer to key in to their own reading of sense of place.



LIST OF WORKS

Parallel Notations, (detail) acrylic oilstick graphite and progressio pencil on canvas, 204cm x530cm

Locating Stillness, blue oilstick, graphite and pastel on paper, 84cmx60cm each

Rehearsing the Willow, coloured progress pencil on paper, 29cmx21cm

Willow - trace of memory, I acrylic wash, pastel, oil pastel and graphite on paper, 80cmx60cm

Re-membering Site I and II, graphite frottage and progressio pencil on paper, 30cmx29cm



“The canvas acts as a filter through which light, space and mark, hover and suspend; reflecting nature’s intensity, pause and fractured moments; punctuated by experiences one takes and recalls within and between places”.

Landscape is interpreted as shifting sensory experiences lived through walking in the landscape rather than capturing the singular framed view”.

Wendy Stokes

BIOGRAPHY

Wendy Stokes has consistently worked across painting, drawing and printmaking disciplines for the last four decades primarily focusing on medium to large scale painting and work on paper.

She has been awarded a Master of Fine Arts through UNSW Art and Design, Sydney and holds a Graduate Diploma Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney, Australia; having her work acquired in National Collections -National Gallery Australia; AGNSW and Tamworth, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie Glasshouse, Gosford, Bathurst and Warrnambool Regional Museum Galleries. She received a research residency through UNSW at Cite International des Arts, Paris in 2014. Her work has been selected in The Glover Prize, The Fleurieu Prize, The Alice Prize, The Dobell Drawing Prize and the Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award (JADA). She is represented by BMGart, Adelaide.



GLASSHOUSE REGIONAL GALLERY

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Wendy Stokes

18 May–21 July 2019

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GLASSHOUSE REGIONAL GALLERY

WENDY STOKES

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Walking in the space of Landscape



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