

Sue Smalkowski

***Rhythmic Encounters* - Hazelhurst Gallery 19 March 2016**

In 2006 I walked into this Gallery and was struck by the art being exhibited by an artist called Sue Smalkowski in this same space and immediately purchased a triptych called *What Remains?* for the Dingle Hughes Collection, a collection that focuses on Australian Women artists and that has been bequested to the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Collection.

On a personal note, over time I also got to know Sue, and her husband Henry, apart from being a great artist Sue is a really wonderful person, full of humour, intelligent conversation and a great cook. Sue's artistic qualities include a deep understanding of the use of colour, texture and tone, and the ability to really see the landscape.

In 2009 "What Remains?" was included in a major exhibition of Australian Women artists and the description I wrote in the catalogue included this comment :

The landscape has invaded the canvas, sand, lichen and moss, rocks and dripping water, the earth viewed from a great height, all come to mind. The worked surface and placement of colours and tones work together to provide a slice of the earth in all its abstract glory.

Since then, when Sue's work explored the natural and intricate patterns within our environment especially the Illawarra escarpment, she has, as all great artists do, grown and changed focus, has spent long periods of time in the outdoors in places such as Hill End as well as in the studio and immersed herself in the Australian landscape traditions and studied our wild and wonderful, not so neat and tidy, bush and rock formations.

Australia's artists have a great tradition of landscape painting and have developed an affinity for and a sense of place that has been developed through the work of artists ranging from John Glover through Margaret Preston, Russell Drysdale, Elisabeth Cummings to name a few. Sue fits within this tradition.

Though at first glance these works are seemingly abstract , this is not really the case, if the viewer settles down and contemplates each work, allow themselves time to see, time to let the layers of clashing and contrasting colours and the mark making, resolve into a tree or a track meandering through the bush, a gap in the canopy or a rocky cliff.

Paintings such as "Grey Canopy" and "Golden Gully" exemplify the understanding that Sue has of the bush and the unique way her insight into the colours and moods are expressed on canvas.

I wish Sue well with this exhibition and if you do purchase a work, there will never be any regret. This art always surprises.

Each time I come to the works I have on my walls, they speak to me with new vitality and freshness.

Max Dingle

19 March 2016

