

OUTSIDE INSIDE

A solo exhibition by Hannah Fox

Collingwood Gallery
09 May — 21 May 2015

Outside Inside is Hannah's second solo exhibition and a measured departure from earlier work. Now with three young sons, a new sense of purpose and urgency informs her output. The paintings have come about not through hours of uninterrupted introspection, but through pre-planned and finite snatches of time in her light-filled suburban studio where, with a great deal of discipline, she sets out to find her unique painterly path. Hours in the studio are hard-won; three boys are demanding and relentless. Perhaps that is why there is a new urgency to her paintings, and a new confidence too.

The new paintings demonstrate an exploration in three distinct directions. *Winter Landscape # 2* picks up from previous work, also featuring landscapes, but more obviously so. Horizon lines, while scratched and clawed in, separate land and sky. Light and dark hint at sky and land. It makes sense to depict that journey.

From there, she has allowed herself to travel to an Audette-inspired mark-making approach that seems to avoid the sky altogether, focussing instead on the sticks and twigs of Merri Creek. Pale backgrounds are disturbed by forceful mark-making in the foreground. This was probably a necessary step to what is perhaps the biggest departure from Hannah's distinctive style. Like a musician, an artist needs to continually evolve her work, even if what she is leaving behind is popular with her fans. It can be a difficult thing, particularly when in Hannah's case those works are beautiful and joyful. Nonetheless, she has forged ahead, revelling in the handling of paint, knowing that the process of changing what people love can be a painful transition.

Landscape is undeniably still a feature of Hannah's work. But it has lost some of the self-consciousness of earlier work, where the burden of being an early career artist and all of its sensitivities was surely influential. There is certainly still the pursuit of beauty here, but there is also recognition that not everything in nature is beautiful. The outside is in balance with the inside. The occasional dirtiness and grittiness of some paintings has morphed into a more dappled light interspersed with dark and mysterious bush understorey, adding a new complexity and darker sensibility to her work. The darkness that has eased its way in to the painting is difficult to define — is that a horizon line or is it a close up of bark? Are those white blobs the rear lights of a car? Or are they something else entirely, perhaps even various moulds growing on a petri dish, creating beautiful random patterns. You can even make out crowds of people if you so choose. What the artist remembers from her bushwalks may appear ambiguous to others.

This new sense of balance signifies an important step in Hannah's career, and it will be interesting to see where she goes next. As a long time friend and a lover of painting, I feel honoured to have contributed to this catalogue.

*Suzanne Waddell is a communications consultant
and was a fellow graduate of the Monash University
Fine Art degree with Hannah in 2001.*