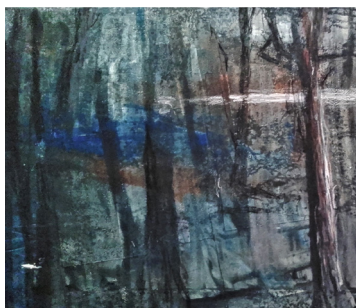


The Hawkesbury

4 April to 9 May 2019



Lyndall Beck | David Collins | Viola Dominello

Curated by Elisabeth Cummings

Opened on Saturday 6 April by Katrina Cashman, Assistant Director/Senior Curator at Mosman Art Gallery

The Grace Cossington Smith Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of works inspired by the Hawkesbury River. The artists, Lyndall Beck, David Collins and Viola Dominello show a reverence for the natural environment with its human interventions. The tides, mangroves and mudflats, weathered jetties, bridges and oyster leases are reference points that frame and link the artists to an unruly and spectacular coastal river landscape.

The Hawkesbury is a visually elusive place, holding its secret life close to its edge and the artists have a long association with the area. Inspired by river and shore, river and sky, river and depths, this all-encompassing primordial beauty, the history laden liveliness provides the visual language that informs their artmaking. The artists offer glimpses of the unfolding world of the river and embrace the view *en plein air*, from the seat of a kayak, amongst the mud in the mangroves or on the solidity of the sandstone shore.

These views of the untamed, natural landscape are executed through a variety of approaches: suggestive sketches in charcoal and pastel, thin liquid washes, crusty oil, layered prints and evocative video to reveal the light and shape of the river. The exhibition is a journey through this hidden place that is The Hawkesbury.



The Hawkesbury

Fed by the crystalline waters of the Colo and its bigger sisters the Nepean and Grosse, bringing their waters and whispers, the Hawkesbury River glides to commune with the Tasman Sea through the sentinel headlands of Broken Bay. River of many names, many people, many stories. Historians working with First Nation people study landscapes to decipher places where we name the untameable river¹. The ancient river who with tolerance abides our towns and activity, flushing floods, sucking out life as our rising actions disturb its path.

Many of us choose to live on and by the Hawkesbury River for its sublime beauty – its majestic rugged escarpments, veiled hills, primal mangrove forests and of course the waterway. Sucked deceptively dry by tidal pull baring rich plains of dark mud, the river returns on the tide to subsume its secrets invigorated by its dance with the sea. Not just for those who live here, but those who seek or stumble on the Hawkesbury, it provides reach, connection to communities, to people, places, nature and ourselves. And this is why we are here in this exhibition to find, explore, open unidentified paths of conversation with our environment, in discourse with the artistic interpretations of Lyndall, Viola and David.

On writing this, I am drawn to something David made me aware of, something I'd seen here on the Hawkesbury almost every day; the sky is the water, the water is the sky, where does the land stop and river or sky own their part of the visual plane? It's true, look into the river; the image so clear – how can it be reflection? Look up; salt mists and cloud glaze – how can this be the true vista? Atmospheric ambiguity akin to the spill of gold skies in tension on the river's surface, allowed to escape by a dipping oar or curious fingertips sliding into liquid.

A video installation created for this exhibition immerses us in the mangrove cathedrals of the lower Hawkesbury, near Marra Marra Creek. Slender extenuated silver limbs, stained dark as the tide passes, resemble painted totems to secret spaces. Standing together, creating an airy cavern of dappled light – shelter, harbour, chapel somehow primordial and ageless. Standing, toes hidden by the bronzed, mercurial mirror of the river (again the jumble of sky, land, water). Life potential seethes below in the estuarial birthing canals of the mangroves, above like a choir life calls in the constant thrum of cicadas and magpie warble. Breathe and you taste the briny water, decaying eucalypt and earthy tannin of mud. Mud thick and shiny as printer's ink.

Lyndall continues this journey through other works, revealing moments, private observations of the living river. Singling out unpredictable glimpses, imprints that open deft truths our eyes may observe but our mind may not otherwise see.

The impasto bark of Viola's tree trunks sits off the revealed body, pale against the warm reclusive brush. Face to face with this form, the trickle of ruddy viscous sap stark on silver – wound, mouth-like, you are committed to dialogue. Does it bleed, does it heal? Sightless and still what is it telling you or hiding from you?

Look into David's work and sense the Hawkesbury. Line anchoring plane, the quiver of colour, breath of bare canvas. Saturated in summer, orange escarpments glow off the surface. Are we under the water looking up or do we sink into a reflection? Chameleon-like, the river and light play together on the tip of David's brush.

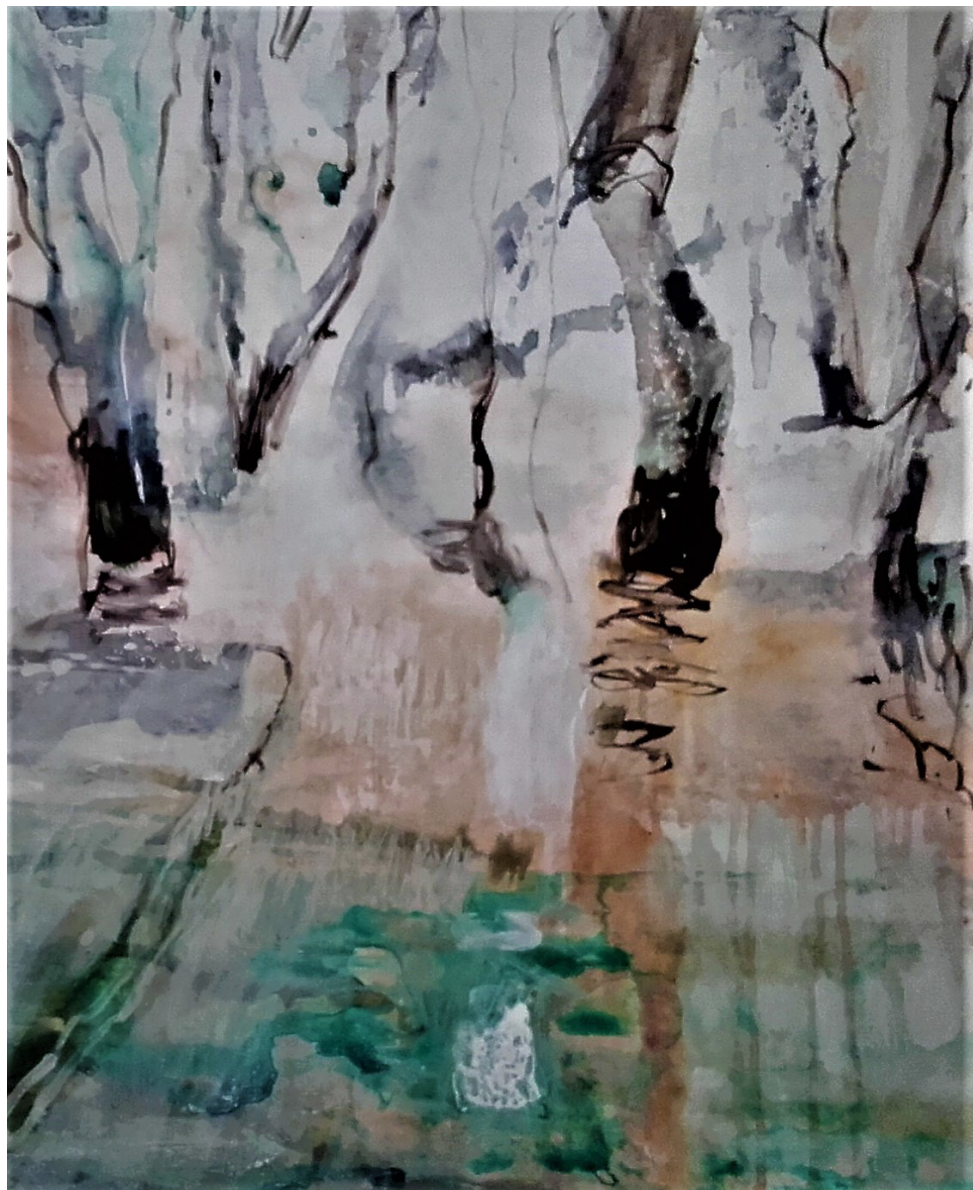
Happening here in the art of David, Viola and Lyndall is not replication of a reality, but distillation of essence, its own reality. Making sense of our surroundings in this post-fact world where truths are multifaceted, perceived or constructed, do we yearn for a simpler experience? One that reveals not a narrative but an inner conversation?

Many of the works here take a low vantage point, immersing you visually, evocative of travelling the river as people have done for thousands of years evident in the human marks on the landscape. Now in the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery, which like the river has nooks and bays to visit, we receive the marks of the river on us.

Myffanwy Sharp

March 2019

LYNDALL BECK



Mangrove Journey 1, 2019, Mixed Media – Ink/Acrylic/Oil, 65 x 56 cm



Riverscape 1, 2019, mixed media, 65 x 82 cm

DAVID COLLINS



To the Island, 2019, oil on canvas, 109 x 124 cm

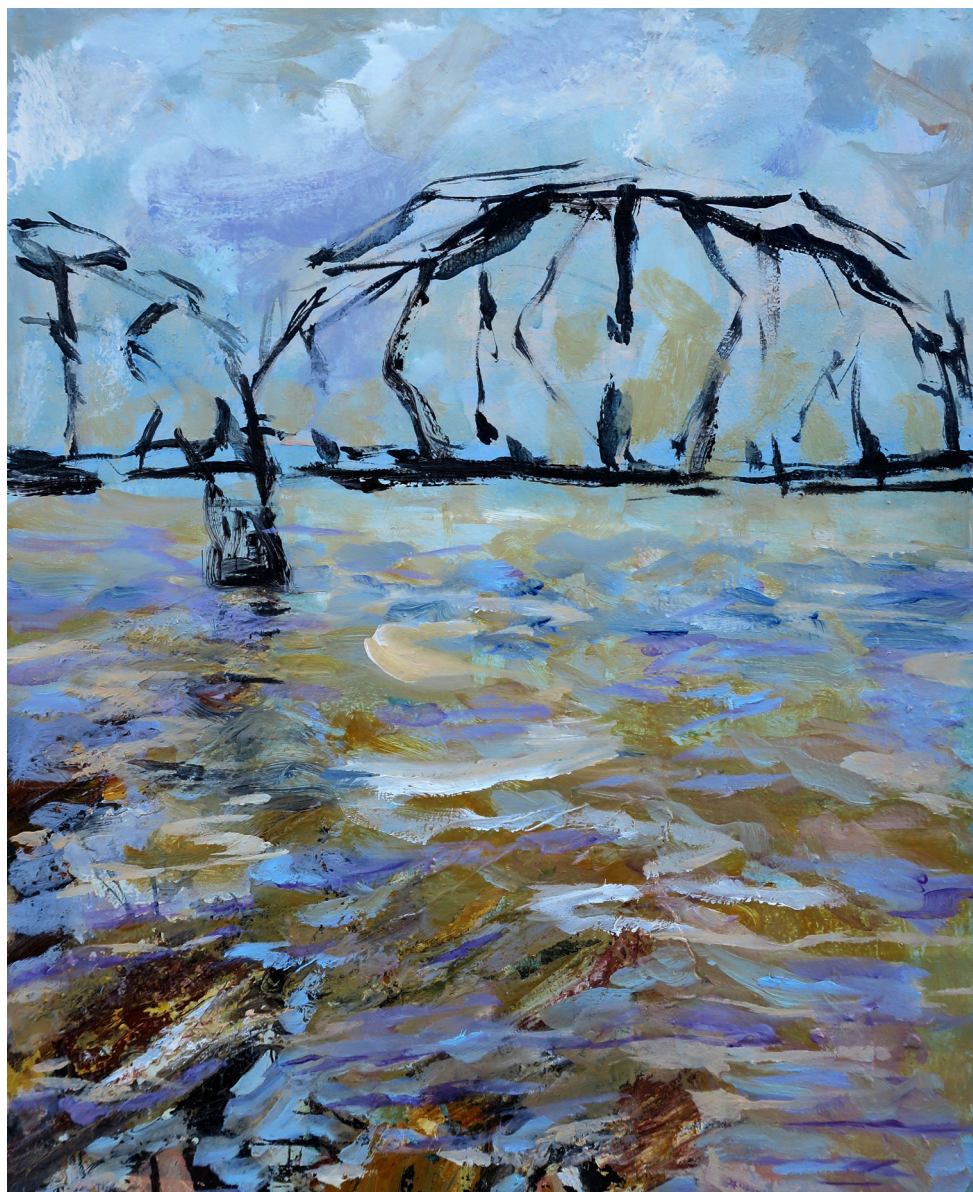


Swamp, 2019, oil on canvas, 97 x 82 cm

VIOLA DOMINELLO



Trunk line 2 and Trunk line 10 (detail), oil on board, 183 x 28.5 cm



Brooklyn afternoon, oil on board, 30 x 23 cm

THE ARTISTS

Lyndall Beck works in diverse genres: painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media and drawing. She studied from 1976 to 1986 at Hornsby College of TAFE, with a Fine Arts Advanced Diploma, majoring in printmaking. Beck has taught multi-disciplined art practices with various institutions over 25 years. She has exhibited work in numerous solo and group shows such as Port Jackson Press and in private and public galleries including the Art Gallery of Ballarat, Wagner Gallery, Grace Cossington Smith Gallery and Art Atrium. In 2006 Beck was awarded the Sydney Gallery School Paris Residency and worked at International Atelier Bo Halbirk. Recently she was the recipient of both the 2017 Hornsby Art Prize Award and the Most Outstanding Local Artist, which resulted in a solo exhibition at the Wallarobba Art Centre in 2018.

David Collins is a landscape painter who lives and works on the Hawkesbury. He studied fine arts at the Hornsby Technical College and the Canberra School of Art. In 2013 Collins received a high commendation in the Wynne Prize for landscape painting and in 2011 he was awarded the painting prize in the Hornsby Art Prize. Since 1990 he has held 16 solo exhibitions of paintings and drawings and participated in many group exhibitions. In 2004 he was artist in residence and tutor in the College of Fine Arts, North-West University for Minorities Lan Zhou, China. Collins has been a finalist in numerous art prizes and awards, including The Wynne Prize, Salon Des Refuses, Fleurieu Landscape Prize, Cossack Art Award, Muswellbrook Art Prize, Grace Cossington Smith Art Award and the Calleen Art Prize. He is represented by Stanley Street Gallery. <http://david-collins.com.au/>

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Viola Dominello received an MFA from the University of New South Wales. Prior to this she studied at the University of Foreigners Siena (Italy), Scuola Internazionale di Grafica Venezia (Italy), Julian Ashton School of Art, Hornsby Technical College and the City Art Institute. Dominello was awarded a Borsa di Studio Scholarship from the Italian government on two occasions (1999 and 2003) and she also received an Assistant Fellowship from Scuola Internazionale di Grafica Venezia, Italy (2000). Dominello was awarded the Wynne Trustees Watercolour Prize in 2010 and John and Elizabeth Newman Pring Memorial Prize Art Gallery of NSW 2015. She has been a finalist in numerous art prizes including the Adelaide Perry, Kedumba and Dobell Drawing Prizes, NSW Parliament En Plein Air Prize and Tatterstall's Club Landscape Art Prize. Her works are held in private and international collections and have been acquired by Artbank, Mosman Art Gallery and Peabody Energy. She has recently exhibited in the Bush to Bay exhibition at Mosman Art Gallery and she is represented by Stella Downer Fine Art.

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Cover

David Collins *Downstream*, 2019, oil on canvas, 102 X 119 cm

Lyndall Beck *Estuary* (detail) etching and mixed media

Viola Dominello *Reflections Hawkesbury*, (detail) 2019, oil on canvas, 90 x 45cm

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