

EMILY FERRETTI

## SUE LOVEGROVE

**Your works examine the intimate experience of remote and isolated landscapes relatively free of human presence. What is it about the relationship with untouched environments that intrigues you?**

Remote places are hard to get to, often rugged [with] inhospitable terrain and extreme weather conditions. It is this wildness that I love and respond to, the experience of being there is intensified and my sensory perceptions heightened. Humans don't really belong in these wild places and can't inhabit them easily. We feel vulnerable there and need to respect the place in order to survive.

**Your 2015 series explored the fragility of lakes and lagoons along the coast of Tasmania where you live. How does this familiarity with your environment affect the way you explore it in your works, compared to landscapes you've merely visited, like Antarctica?**

Places nearby are easier to visit so there is the possibility of returning to them... to develop strong relationships with them... there comes a much deeper understanding and hopefully a stronger resonance in the way I represent them in images. With time spent in a place, one experiences and perceives more subtle and complex nuances that would otherwise be lost.

**The power struggle between humankind and nature is often discussed in regards to a disruption of balance and order. Your works often reflect a theme of hopefulness rather than dystopia. How does your current body of work continue with this hopefulness?**

My current body of work *The Book of Trees* has departed from the transient and metaphysical aspects of the landscape. I've shifted my focus to more tangible and physical aspects of the natural environment... I've always been interested in vegetation as an indicator of the ecological health of the landscape. This series looks at the ordinariness of trees that we might take for granted. I have painted them into the context of Persian miniatures and illuminated manuscripts to heighten the sense of their preciousness. I think of them as devotional images.

**You've investigated the varying degrees of which the strength and fragility of nature is at the mercy of humans in a variety of mediums. What determines the materials you utilise?**

The developmental process shifts between drawing, watercolour, gouache and print media, depending on what I feel like at the time and what I can carry with me. In the past my large paintings have been worked with layers of acrylic washes and fine lines to create a sense of shimmering light, space and depth.

**Your recent 2016 Bett Gallery exhibition comprised of miniature works on paper featuring Tasmanian birds adapted from 16th and 17th Century Indo-Persian manuscript paintings, their realism reflecting a celebration of their beauty, starkly contrasting the vulnerability and abstraction of earlier works. What provoked this departure?**

I have put aside my 21st Century understanding of contemporary abstraction and stepped back a few centuries to explore another aesthetic world from an entirely different culture to my own. Although the work appears

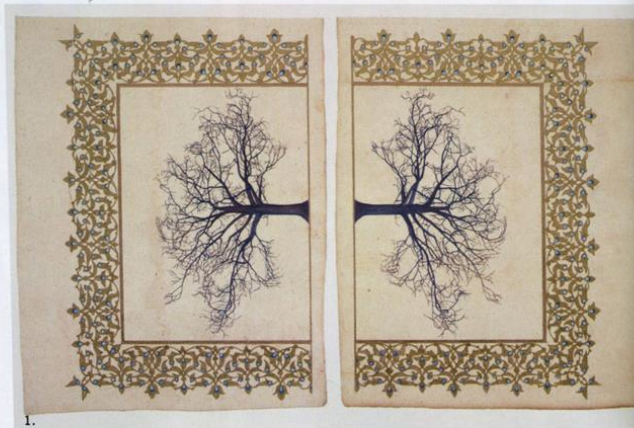
so clearly different to what I have done in the recent past, many of the concerns relate to how we perceive the landscape and our need to care for it.

**Your consistent use of muted colour reflects a subdued yet ephemeral characterisation of the natural world that is almost meditative.**

The muted colour of earlier works reflected my interest in light, air and weather. The softness of touch of air on the skin, gently flickering light or the way you can feel a landscape in your body. It takes time being in a place to perceive these subtle qualities and it seemed necessary to paint in a subtle way – to seduce the viewer into a slow quiet space.

Emily Cones-Brown

**› SUE LOVEGROVE'S *THE BOOK OF TREES* CAN BE SEEN AT BEAVER GALLERIES, CANBERRA FROM 20 OCTOBER - 6 NOVEMBER 2016. THE ARTIST ALSO FEATURES IN THE GROUP EXHIBITION *POETS AND PAINTERS* AT BETT GALLERY, HOBART IN AUGUST 2017 AND AT GALLERYSMITH, MELBOURNE IN LATE 2017.**



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1. // Sue Lovegrove, *Tree unknown, Hobart, Tasmania*, watercolour, gouache, ink, pigment and gold leaf on manuscript paper, 26 x 41cm.

2. // Sue Lovegrove, *River Red Gum, (Eucalyptus Camaldulensis) Old Wilpena Station, SA*, Watercolour, gouache, ink, pigment and gold leaf on manuscript paper, 23 x 16cm.

3. // Sue Lovegrove, *White Peppermint Gum (Eucalyptus Pulchella) Pelverata, Tasmania*, Watercolour, gouache, ink, pigment and gold leaf on manuscript paper, 23 x 16cm.

4. // Sue Lovegrove, *White Peppermint Gum (Eucalyptus Pulchella) Pelverata, Tasmania*, Watercolour, gouache, ink, pigment and gold leaf on manuscript paper, 23 x 16cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND BEAVER GALLERIES, CANBERRA.