

Digital prints show nature

Sophia Szilagyi: *Drifting past: prints*. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until March 1.

Reviewer: Sasha Grishin

Ever since her first appearance in a group show at the Beaver Galleries in 2008, Sophia Szilagyi has been a compelling presence in the local art scene.

Her highly accomplished digital prints, some creeping up to almost two metres in size, are immediately recognisable as her work with their strongly feminine and romantic sensibility.

Her technical strategy is relatively straightforward in that she photographs scenes and art works that produce a certain emotional resonance within her and these images she overlays and seamlessly splices together on her computer screen until she arrives at a pleasing resolution.

This she then prints out as a digital pigment print on high-quality art rag paper in editions of 15 or fewer copies.

A precious quality in her art is that she does not simply record nature, but reassembles and recreates it. In



Sophia Szilagyi, *Yellow Noise*; below: Sophia Szilagyi, *Held*.

this manner Szilagyi creates a new reality imbued with a personal mood and spirit. The created scenes may be ones that do not exist in this precise form anywhere on earth, but they appears to us as tangible and potentially real.

The romantic sensibility is in some ways the triumph of the individual imagination, with its subjective, intuitive, emotional and irrational impulses, over an order ruled by scientific laws and reason. In the early 19th century, during the first triumph of European romanticism, for the artists who embraced it, there was an element

of escape from the horrors of the Industrial Revolution with its greyness, smog and poverty.

According to the French poet Baudelaire, it was "a way of feeling" and implied a rejection of the banality of the surrounding world. Many artists, including Caspar David Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner, were to take romanticism into nature to create profoundly moving personal landscape and seascape visions in paint.

In our own day, there has been an international revival of romanticism, possibly responding to a similar catalyst, a disillusionment with reality and its murky economic laws, environmental destruction and the humbug of daily politics. Szilagyi is part of this revival and employs contemporary technologies to create personal visions of nature.

There seems to be an increasing interest not only in the moods of nature and the spiritual resonances that these produce, but also in the shape of time and the "sound of nature".

Her spectacular print, *Almost loneliness (moonlight)*, measuring 172.5cm x 118cm, is a sweeping view into the vastness of the ocean set below a stunning sky.

The sea, sky and the feeling for infinity are united in a perception of oneness with nature. Her prints *Held*, *Yellow Noise*, *Exposure II*, *Within Time* and *Calling* play with this sense of transfigured time and the highly personal expression of deeply felt emotions.

The darkness of some of her earlier pieces has somewhat lifted in the newer work.

The new sense of unease is expressed with a sombre palette, but now filtered with a glowing and radiating light.

