



Sue Lovegrove, Shimmer no. 9.28, in Shimmer at Beaver Galleries. Picture: Supplied

## Depicting shimmers of light on water

### Art review

Sasha Grishin

**SUE Lovegrove: *Shimmer*.** Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until August 25.

Sue Lovegrove is an unusual artist - a skilled painter, a passionate environmentalist, a linguist and an artist who gravitates to remotelocations throughout the world and takes a fascination with existing on the edge of things.

In her art there is a quality of Zen-like contemplation, one that enhances a more profound examination of things. The great 17th-century Japanese poet Matsuo Bash would write haiku that encouraged contemplation of a profound truth. Bash frequently describes the periphery, but through the contemplation of the edge you attain a revelation concerning the centre.

Lovegrove in this exhibition examines the shimmering effects of light on bodies of water in the remote wetlands on the eastern edge of Tasmania, not far from where she lives. She has developed an exacting technique to create shimmering, gem-like watercolour drawings that seem to shine with an inner luminosity. She works in panels of two or four sequential images, in each case separated, so each individual sheet of paper retains its autonomy. They are very clever paintings in which Lovegrove juxtaposes translucent watercolour with the more opaque gouache paint to create a rather dynamic and kinetic surface.

In the same way as a haiku juxtaposes



Sue Lovegrove, Shimmer no. 9.29 in Shimmer at Beaver Galleries. Picture: Supplied

fleeting thoughts and sense impressions, Lovegrove's miniature paintings provide us with masses of information and yet, to some extent, are intangible and not completely within our grasp. Bash famously wrote, "an ancient pond / a frog jumps in / the splash of water", where there is a profound simplicity and an evocation of something far greater than the individual words suggest.

Lovegrove writes in the catalogue note, "Where there is water there is life. It is a simple concept but, in our climate stressed environment water is becoming increasingly transient, rare and precious. A small shallow seemingly perfect, round freshwater lagoon

on the east coast of Tasmania is filled with water for the first time in many years and life crystallises into action accompanied by a cacophony of sound as birds, frogs and insects all sing with an intensity 'of the moment' as if their life depends upon it. There is a full-bodied luminosity in the light that is polarised by the dark melancholy of all that has been in the landscape as well as what is to come. Within a few weeks the water recedes, and life returns to the shadows and is hidden invisible beneath the ground. It is a poignant and precious moment to witness."

The idea of a microcosm contained within a pool of water relating to a whole philoso-

phy of life and being that gives Lovegrove's paintings their sense of contemplative magic and universalism. The more you look into paintings like *Shimmer no. 9.31* or *Shimmer no. 9.29* or *Shimmer no. 9.28*, three of the most accomplished works in the exhibition, the more you realise that by examining the edge, you open up a path to contemplate the centre and the whole. Lovegrove possesses the rare ability to evoke the wholeness of an environment through the depiction of individual details, which she does with great mimetic skill. Although there is an apparent literalness, there is also lyricism and introspective depth.

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Lovegrove's *Shimmer* is a beautiful and evocative exhibition by an artist working at the peak of her powers.