

I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we are meeting, the first peoples of the Millewa-Mallee, and pay my respects to Indigenous Elders both past, present and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

## IMAGES OF NATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND HOW THEY RELATE TO, DISTANCE, DRYNESS, FIRST AUSTRALIANS, ISOLATION, ENVIRONMENT, GENDER, AND CULTURE.

These are all statements confronted head on by Susan Wald in the Mungo monotypes, and paintings.

Wald's work previous to this series is of, drawn, printed, and painted, figures: Pontificating pulpiteers, on stage, dramatically lit, with a grand debt to the gaping maw of Goya's insane monks, and that masters poor, trapped, and tortured, Spanish populous. Five years ago when I first made contact with Susan, and looked through some of her Elektra and Exile monotypes I told her the works look like a cross between Nathan Olivieras La Tauromaquia, or Bull fighting monotype backgrounds and Goya's oil on ivory portraits. She states that with all her work she is trying to; "make sense of our time", to find truth, both spiritual and psychological. She lists the horrors, in the shadow of ww2, threats of: "Global destruction, women's liberation, consumer capitalism, and shifts in social identity." Christopher Heathcote in 2007 adds that: "There is no way to discuss them [her paintings and drawings] without confronting a genuine psychological weight. Some inner truth is externalized.

In March 2016 I wrote about the "beseeching nature" and, "longing on the faces" of the two figure monotypes I purchased for the CSU Art Collection, and that the approximated stage lighting, brings a deep interest to the dead spaces within the monotypes. I comment on the large scale of her monotypes, as confident and, monumental stating they are gallery pieces, artworks of gravitas or acting as a perfunctory sketch. Ending the statement that "Wald is building an important body of both figurative and landscape monotypes."

Wald learned the delicacy, and mastery of drawing through Patrick Moss, and was introduced to Degas monotypes by the artist. Making her own first monotypes in 1989. She studied at Victoria College, Prahran campus, in Melbourne, winning the Deans Acquisitive Award.

These landscape works are different from her studio and stage figurative drawings, monotypes and paintings, they are, unique in the artists oeuvre, these are landscapes which have a connection in method, and drawn technique to her figure drawings and figure paintings, but tap into a long history of Australian landscape painting.

Wald's art is that of a disruptor:

Wald has a Jewish migrant heritage, her parents fled Poland after the war, her painting is connected to her culture, and history.

Wald is a diminutive figure, she is not the John Peter Russell who's life, and figure is dominant in the landscape, she did not strap herself to rocks in a storm, in elegy to 'Ulyseys and the sirens' to see the scope of, and marvel of nature and have the gall to replicate it. To paint the oncoming storm. But paints the ever advancing destruction of climate change, and infuses it with the history, and ever ancient spirit of the barrenness of the Australian desert.

Wald's process is of refining her work firstly by drawing, then through monotype -a painterly drawing- and eventually to the large-scale studio painting. This does not diminish the drawing in my mind. Her process, importantly, involves time. Years of refining, and active drawing. One must mention the debt she owes to the Art Vault in Mildura where she was resident in 2014, 2016, and 2018, and where many of these monotypes were printed, where numerous painterly problems were worked out before ever touching canvas.

Wald makes monotypes in monochrome, much later in her process she infuses her paintings with some colour. The darkness of the monotypes, the stark, shifting, line that moves from black through grey to papers, bold, white define these structures, define the picture plane. The monochrome lines like that of a wood engraving of a face delineate specificity, a particular indent or rise. The images after being obsessively drawn, then printed are indelibly stamped on the artists psyche for use in later work.

Helen Frankenthaler the American abstract expressionist painter some would say colourist, and sometime printmaker, when describing a small print of hers 'Message from Degas', a mainly black toned print, she states that she sees a world of colour in shades or tones of black. I can understand that feeling looking at these monotypes.

These are pictures for our time. Pictures that are refined by time, they are thoughtful, and speak of death and birth in one. They speak of the end point of the Australian landscape, the dry, desolate, final images of one of the worlds driest continents. If we go on neglecting the signs our planet has given us, our country will be unliveable. And in one the work also shows us the long and enduring history of that landscape. Mungo is known worldwide as a place of discovery; of Mungo man, and Mungo woman, a marker that starts a chronology for our first peoples. The feeling the artist is trying to express that spans so many generations must be overwhelming.

*Lets delve into some images of these lunettes, these pinnacles:*

How do these compare to Monet, or John Peter Russell's depictions of the rocky forms of Belle LLe, of the coast of Brittany, in France, in the 1880's and 90's; and the much more recent revisiting of these structures by Luke Sciberras, and Euan Macleod. Favorably I feel.

Macleod's penchant for including the rocky figure in a rugged landscape the structure of said figure reminiscent of a Giacometti sculpture, stretched out

and continuing the needle, or finger-like rocky forms in his landscapes, have an affinity with not the application, but the portrait like approach of Wald's painting, the structures within the monotypes and painting, both movements of the wrist and forearm, are found within her drawing of facial structures. Her lunettes are embodied, rooted, structurally firm, and dominant in the landscape, they are enduring, imposing, and strive to show the permanence of the figures embedded in the mythology of Mungo.

The red creeping glow within the horizon line of the lunettes in Wald's painting 'Dusk at Red Top'; oil on linen 2019, is reminiscent of the impressionists depictions of landscape and its features at differing time periods; in different light, at sunset, and as the shadows form.

The work brings to mind a line in a recent Amanda Palmer song, also influenced by this Australian summer: "Beautiful Sunsets Ironically Coloured". It's been a cruel summer, and these stark, subtly lit paintings remind me of historical damage done, and work that is needed to be done in the future to counter climate change.

In the invitation statement I talk of 'restraint', and 'fecundity'... the latter a predominantly feminine version of growth, a remembrance of birth and feelings of life, and essentially female power. This landscape 'gave up' our oldest inhabitants, Mungo Man and Mungo Lady, it birthed, those important humans. Restraint in the works is formed in the colour restriction within the paintings, but especially in the monochrome monotypes. Fecundity is imaged within the colour on the hills, the birth assumed by the red, orange hue born of a sunrise or sunset, the addition of colour by the form of the sun on the red hills.

The sparse but ever present, struggling, spindly, but rugged form of the Australian eucalypt in the landscape, is imaged through the crooked hand of its boughs. The strength and resilience of the tree and the landscape is pictured. The roots depicted assure its continuity, its survival. Survival for a future time of abundance, a 'generation flood', that may now, with the extremes of climate change be a myth.

This is not a time to listen to bold and brash men, who 'discover', continents, that were already populated, cultivated, and imbued with deep, and ongoing stories by indigenous inhabitants; not a time to listen to people like Sidney Nolan who dispose of their spouse, suck them dry and discount their existence, for their masterful art practice, or supposed genius. Or in the 50's went inland with grants from Newspapers to stage desert-dried, and petrified animals as a definitive statement on drought.

Let's listen to women's voices, let us try to glean the meaning imbued in womens landscape painting, and the feminized experience. In this age post Mee Too, its time for men to shut up.

The exhibition we are within *Paintings, monotypes, and poems of The Lake*

*Mungo Area* will be here at the Mildura Arts Centre: 5 March - 3 May 2020.  
And on Saturday Both the artist, and I will have a chat about the work,  
monotype, and other things with the public involved. Please come along.