

Laura Matthews is reaching the heights of her artistic career; she is highly regarded as one of our most notable landscape artists in the long tradition of landscape painting in this country. Laura trained at the Slade School of Fine Art at University College, London and provided her development in formalism training where Laura has attained masterful techniques in drawing form, composition, and colour. One of Laura's tutors was foremost British artist William Coldstream who was Professor of Fine Art at the University College.

The title *Calculation (Flux)* of this exhibition conjures a sense of opposite forces at play, calculation more mechanical and exacting while Flux is changing shifting at times adrift. We might see those opposing forces at play within the works on exhibition that invite us to contemplate those underpinnings.

The power unleashed by waterfalls is a strong element in this series imbued with mythological characters/narratives that invite us to explore meaning, the signifiers or markers that are in our environment. Water and figures meld and at times are hard to distinguish between nature and figure a commentary on humans' relationship with the environment whether it be close or foreign.

And I ask myself, are these imagined landscapes the artist has conjured or inspired by real landscapes she has encountered or are they produced from a combination that form composite images specific but spectacular for us the viewers here this evening.

I am now quoting from the insightful essay Gregory Uzelac Lecturer/Researcher, University of Sydney:

*Unique to the paintings in this collection is the new inclusion of resin pouring. For Matthews, the resin that coats and encases the thick layers of oil paint serves as a liminal space between intention and action. This new element changes the gruff, impasto texture of her paintings into something more sensational.*

And this is visibly apparent in the highly textured works on display here tonight. The painting *Venus* shines through in its colour vibrancy. The work envelopes us into the composition, the waterfall symbolic to the overwhelming power of nature. The woman's overhanging hair emulates the forms of the bushland and the stream of water in the background. It evokes a slipstream, a dreamlike state, sourcing the spiritual connection that nature offers us. The female form is embodied into the vibrant yellow light of creation like the unstructured passage of time where things stand still for a moment of inner reflection.

We are familiar with the story of *Narcissus* gazing into the pool so self-absorbed by his beauty but here the figure is female. She melds into the plunging momentum of the water rushing through behind her. Laura has transitioned the myth into a contemporary setting where this female figure will never be the same at any one point in time, because she is suspended within this state of flux.

The intensity of the structural composition of the work *Into* throws us deep into the colours of the world an advancing perspective that brings the viewer on the edge by the presence of the two plunging into the water. The work plays with the ambiguity of our perception, so let's imagine if the people were not there, what would we see, the abstraction of form through magnificent colour, the aerial perspective can turn this

picture around and around, the artist is inviting us to use our own visual perception and perhaps the artist is challenging us to look beyond what we can see.

Spirit element in the work *She who may not be there* is cloaked almost hidden beneath a veil of streaming running water blending into the environment. It has an alluring effect drawing us into the spiritual as if dissolving into myth and legend that once was, now a liquid transformation of the environment from which humanity rose.

This is a powerful exhibition of paintings that shine throughout the space, resplendent in vivid colours of the Australian landscape and featured by the water that follows our every movement. The exhibition provokes discussion and leaves us with a sense of ourselves as we try and live within and not against the beauty of our environment.

Rhonda Davis  
Senior Curator of Macquarie University Art Gallery