

Slices of time and movement

Sally Stokes unveils bold new exhibition at Rochfort

✦ Andrea McCullagh

Marramarra Creek cuts its way through lush forest and flows into the Hawkesbury River just north of Sydney. Sometimes there is a dim hum from traffic on the M1 a few kilometres away but mostly the creek is a quiet spot where the trees hang over the water and wildlife swim undisturbed.

It's here that artist Sally Stokes has found the perfect place to work. Her small studio is only accessible by boat and allows her to become completely immersed in the

world of her paintings.

Stokes' latest show opens next week and a highlight of the exhibition, *Beginning to breathe slowly*, was inspired by this remote hideaway.

"As I sit in my boat shed studio on Marramarra Creek, with the tide lapping the jetty posts and the rain falling, I remember the genesis of this painting – many canoe trips to Kulkah Bay, one of the few places where in mid tides you can canoe among the mangroves," Stokes said. "I sit in the canoe drawing – gouaches, graphite and charcoal, bal-

ancing books, paints and brushes as the water ebbs and flows.

"Over time I probably did around 50 drawings – emphasising different qualities of line and space."

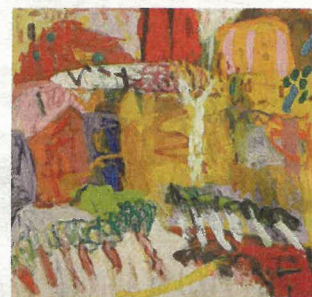
Stokes keeps a second studio in Dural and she pinned up the drawings from the creek to use as inspiration for the final oil painting and other works from the show.

She takes an abstract approach to landscape as she wants to convey much more than what she can see at one time. Her paintings capture different slices of time and the movement of the natural world.

"Working with abstract qualities allows time, doubt, impermanence, life force, emotions to enter the work and the viewer," she says.

"I sit with the landscape: leaves move, the light changes, a bird flies across, a branch falls. I want to convey both the moment and extended time. The spaces that come back and forth depending on what you concentrate upon. A sense of place and my connection to it. The silence of soul."

Stokes won the 2021 Muswellbrook Art Prize and the 2020 Paddington Art Prize



Paintings: (top) *Did you see it?* and *Still holding the moment*, by artist Sally Stokes at Rochfort Gallery.

People's Choice Award. Her work was selected for the 2020 Archibald's Salon des Refuses and has been acquired by collectors in Australia and internationally.

Sally Stokes' solo exhibition *The Black Honey of Summer* is showing from June 23 to August 15 at the Rochfort Gallery, North Sydney. More details at rochfortgallery.com.



Sally Stokes with her work *Beginning to breathe slowly*. Pictures: John Appleyard

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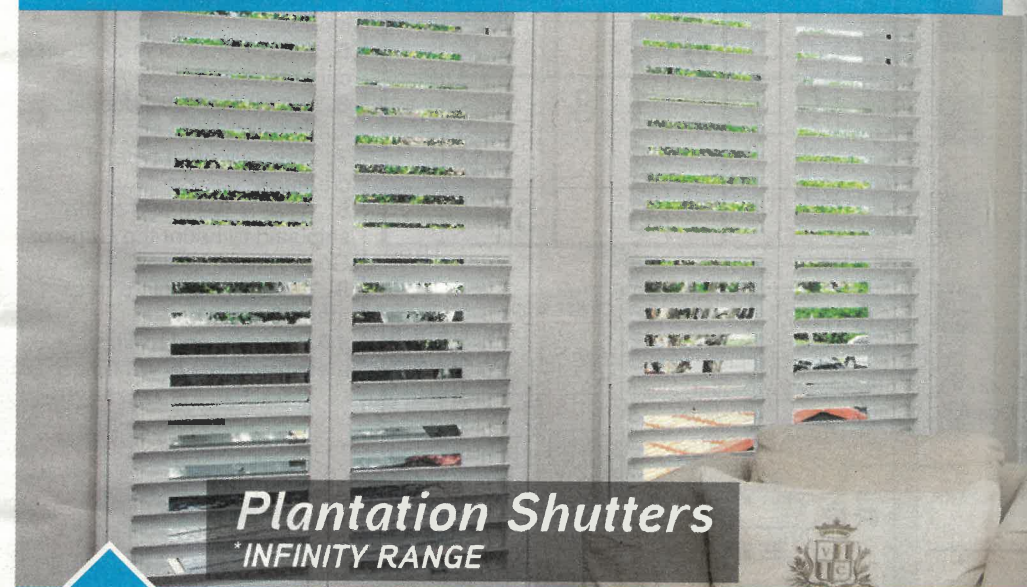
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