

RELEASE

EXHIBITION

lakebed



sam newstead
barbara nicholls
natalie o'connor
sharron ohlsen
liz o'reilly

OPENING NIGHT

THURSDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2018 AT 6PM

EXHIBITION CONTINUES

26TH OCTOBER – 10TH NOVEMBER, 2018

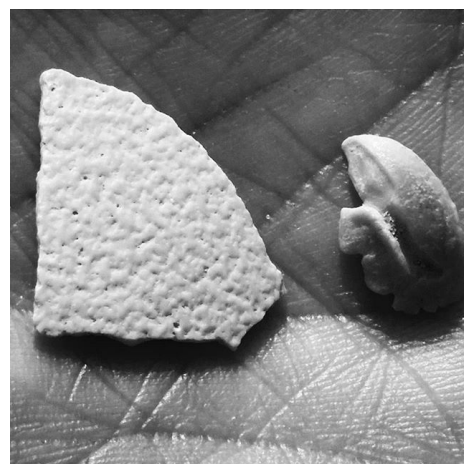
CONCORDIA GALLERY, NEWINGTON COLLEGE

200 STANMORE RD, STANMORE.

OVERVIEW

lakebed is a body of work arising from multiple art residencies of exploration and experimentation at Lake Mungo National Park in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. During 2016, 2017 and 2018, artists Sam Newstead, Barbara Nicholls, Natalie O'Connor, Sharron Ohlsen and Liz O'Reilly travelled thousands of kilometres from their homes to come together in the far south-west of New South Wales, embedding themselves in the ancient landscape of Mungo.

Exhibited together at Concordia Gallery, the resulting paintings, monoprints and installations sit side by side in a series of conversations, responses in situ and works considered over time in the studio, a diversity of expression exists, unified by the artists' quest to honour narratives of life revealed by the unfurling layers of time at Mungo.



Mungo lunettes: colours of the landscape and ancient fragments



Tanya (Mutthi Mutthi woman, NSW National Parks guide) shares stories of the land (above) and then (below) she gathers a stone from the ground amongst many more stones....but this one is different... it is a tool quite possibly once held in the hands of her people from a long long time ago



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

SAM NEWSTEAD

I approach residencies like a collector. By spending time, by being still, looking and listening I learn about a new place. I believe it to be a transaction of respect, between guest and host, between humans and nature.

The land stretched to infinity in all directions, sand dunes bordering long extinct lakes documented animal meanderings.

It was the domain of emus, kangaroos and others.

No person had walked this way in some time.



As the days passed, I found myself understanding the animal tracks, seeing and comprehending the hesitation or speed in their changed footprint shapes. I could trace where I walked the day before, literally retreading my steps, re-echoing my gait. I found myself able to identify each of the different patterns left in the sand by the tread of our shoes. I think we all experienced this, like trackers, we became experts at finding each other.

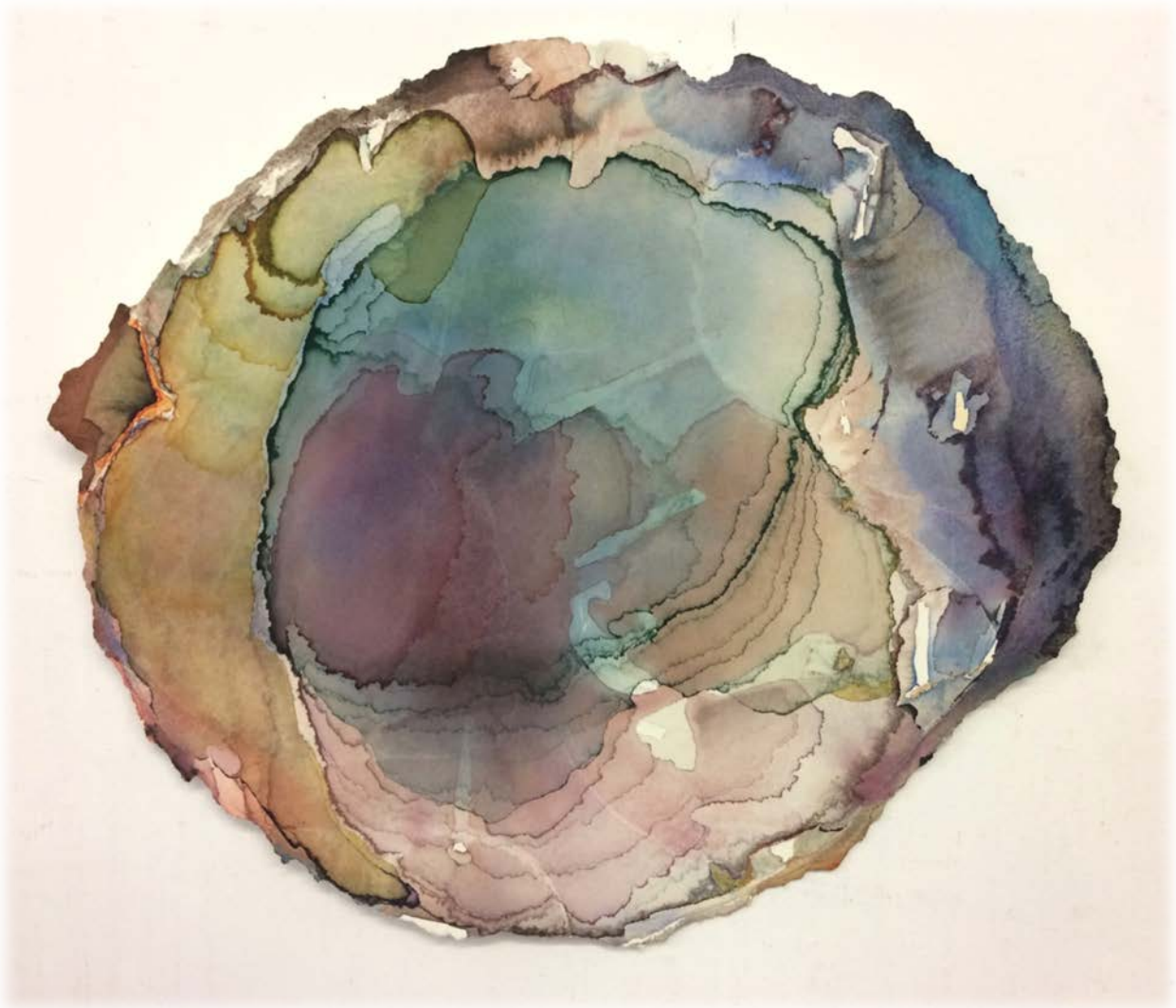


Shadowdune, (detail) 2016 Watercolour on paper 75 x 14 cm

BARBARA NICHOLLS

In London researching prior to my Lake Mungo residency, I was stimulated by the descriptions of the geological timeline and images of the sedimentary colours. I found that they strongly related to my work which is informed by geology, archaeology, topography and cartography.

Lake Mungo is a dried Lake and comparatively my watercolours are micro dried lakes. I have been making very large watercolours on my studio floor where areas of watercolour wash are applied and settle onto smooth heavyweight paper. Through the long process of evaporation, layers of pigment form like the sediment in a lake. I use the breeze of electric fans and heaters to create micro-climates which cause the paint to dry. Eventually the work holds arid terrains, artistic dried lakes and droughts.



After Mungo 1, 2017 Watercolour on paper 45cm Diameter

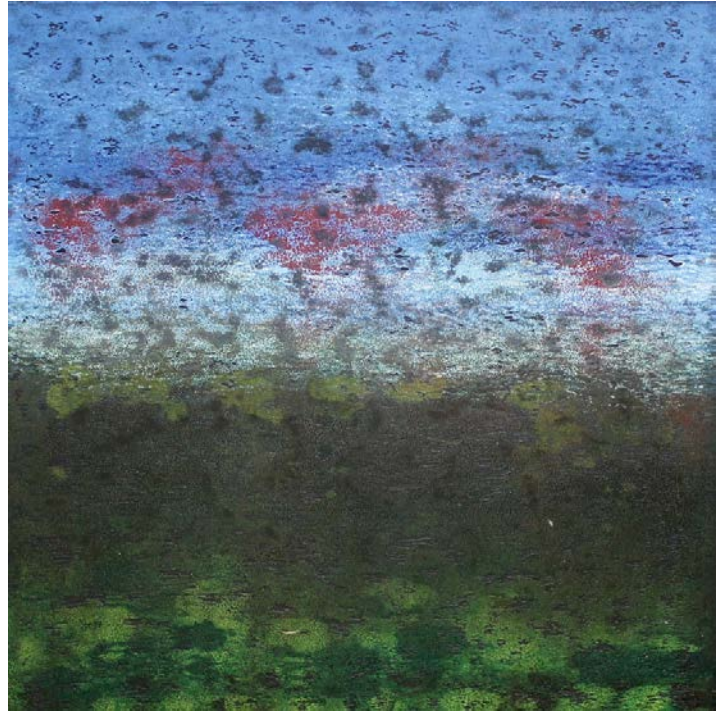
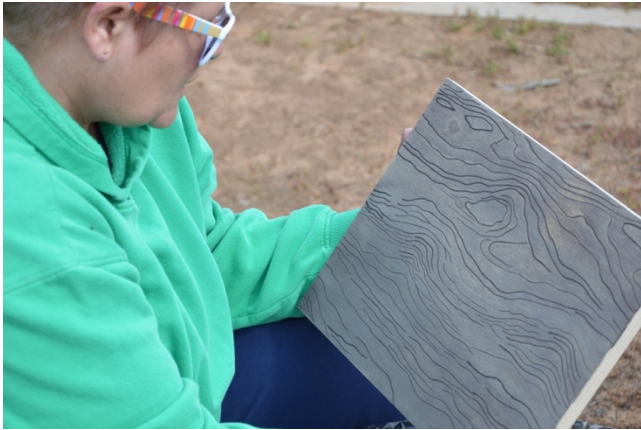


The landscape at Mungo extends as far as your eyes can see but instead of the expanse, I was interested in what lay beneath the surface- the living floor of the lakebed. My art practice and research is concentrated on colour and investigation of pigments, and my specific fascination is red coloured pigments and their behavior. As a result, when told about the presence of red ochre powder found scattered over the body of Mungo Man at the time of his burial, it sparked a line of inquiry which inevitably led me to the Gol Gol layer. Revealed in the lunettes, this red layer below the surface is believed to contain no human made artefacts and is a clear demarcation of a time before homo sapiens are present in the Willandra Lakes Region. The past life of this landscape, its people, colours and stories are deep in the layers of Mungo, and I am now a part of this landscape and my art is a part of its story.



SHARRON OHLSEN

I am a part of this country and its stories. I travelled to Mungo for the first time as an artist to share my stories with other women and artists. This place is different for us all but I know it made me feel special to be a part of its stories.



Mungo 2, 2016. Monoprint.
Artisan watermixable oils on paper 30 x 30 cm

LIZ O'REILLY

Embedding the contours of geography, sensations of weather and impressions belonging to place into long rolls of watercolour paper has been part of my landscape painting practice since first visiting Lake Mungo in 2006. Returning eleven years later, I work on a roll of watercolour paper outside in fierce autumn winds. I grapple with the roll and then the paint as they are both thrown in the air. The paper tears and the paint is flung across the paper in gestures that belong to the wind.



Words come to me. Like the fragments of stone, bone and charcoal that are uncovered by the eroding sands, single words and phrases are revealed by shifts in my sensory perceptions of this place. In the studio, I make long vertical scrolls of words then turn them sideways to become part of the landscape. The scrolls begin to take sculptural form, sewn together with wool – the thread of white settlement.

My memory of looking down at the subtle shifts of colour and iridescence in the sand, prompts a series of small works on boards that collectively create landscapes of bigger expanses. On each small board and larger works on paper, hidden landscapes of the interior mingle with moments deep-rooted in the exterior. In the layers of light and luminescence, a story of life, death and survival can be sensed and preserved, there to be uncovered by the viewer.



Travelling 2017. Acrylic, ink and Conte on clayboard 20 x 30cm

LAKEBED

Discoveries at Lake Mungo have revealed an alternative sequential and ecological circumstance in which to contemplate the movement of human life through the Australian landscape. Scientists speculate about the demise of the megafauna and the drying up of bountiful lakes when the climate was in a continuous and momentous state of flux, over thousands of years. And the evidence of human life suggests interaction in these great changes.

If major climactic changes can be seen not just as ice ages coming and going, but shifts in philosophical temperatures and atmospheric changes to history, the implications are that we will see ourselves belonging in the Australian landscape differently. The south-westerly blowing winds that continue to shape the lunettes and dunes at Mungo might well uncover new discoveries, about ourselves, and reveal a change in mood as we contemplate connecting to the living world in a contemporary way.

Individually and as a group, the challenge artists Sam Newstead, Barbara Nicholls, Natalie O'Connor, Sharron Ohlsen and Liz O'Reilly took up, was to offer a narrative of this incredible natural world that goes beyond the obvious. Two artists had been to Mungo before, some extensively researched its' archaeological significance before travelling, and yet others arrived in the landscape without prior investigation or preconception. With this project, the artists sought to excavate their own discoveries by immersing themselves in the landscape, their human interconnection occurring over multiple residencies at Lake Mungo.

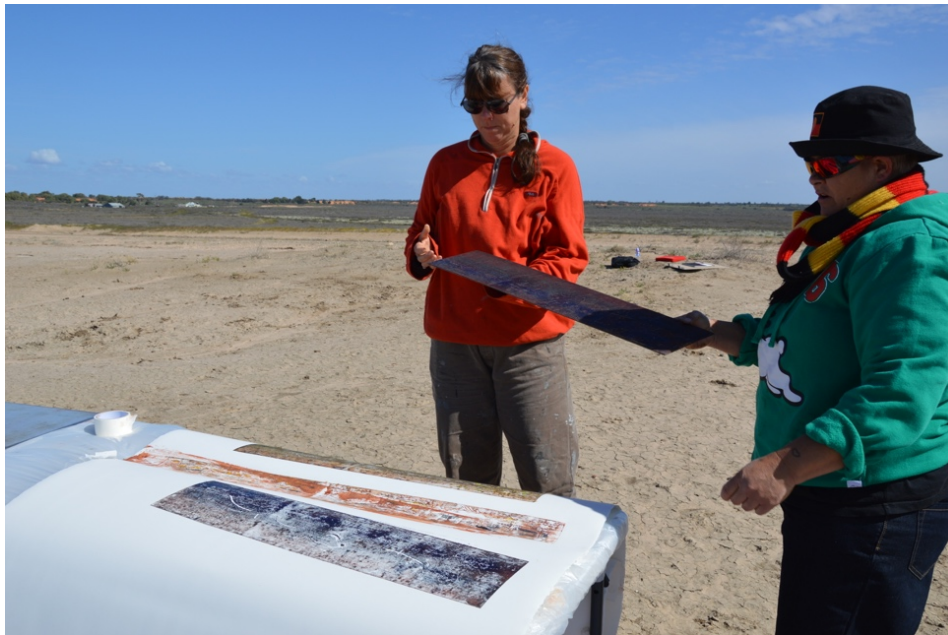
Archaeological findings at Lake Mungo include: 20,000-year-old footprints from the last ice age showing movement in groups, of families and hunting parties; Mungo Lady, the earliest evidence of ritualised cremation in the world and Mungo Man, buried with ochre sourced elsewhere proving the existence of complex trade routes and practices.

Aboriginal Elders from the three traditional tribal groups, the Paakantji, Mutthi Mutthi and Ngyiampaa, have said that Mungo Lady and Mungo Man came to the surface for a reason – so that the rest of Australia and indeed the world, understand what Aboriginal people have always known – that their people have been at Mungo for more than 1600 generations

Warmly accommodated by the generous communities of Mungo and with the sharing of knowledge and stories, the artists were influenced and guided to an understanding of this unique landscape. Changes in working processes occurred as the environment dictated materiality with almost every artist using watercolour in situ. Sharron Ohlsen used the abundant gum leaves as her canvas and has incorporated a new layering process back in her studio. Shifts in the framing of space can be seen in Sam Newstead's panoramic drawings and monotypes, with an almost forensic investigation into layers of colour informing Natalie O'Connor's paintings and installation. Barbara Nicholl's circular watercolours arise from learning about the tradition of sinkholes and filtration systems whilst Liz O'Reilly's work conveys an emotional response to the scale and memory inherent to Mungo.

This exhibition provides the opportunity to view quick response sketches created plein air alongside more deeply considered works produced back in the studio. There is a common thread to the work

– it has made in, not of the landscape. Out at Mungo there’s always a moment of slow realisation – when it dawns on you – exactly where you are. You’re not walking along the shoreline – you are in fact deep inside the lakebed.



Monoprinting overlooking the expanse of Lake Leaghur

The artists would like to thank all the Elders and communities at Mungo.

We are grateful for the support from

**Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area and National Parks and Wildlife Services,
Jo Gorman, Dan Rosendahl, Darryl Pappin, Tanya Charles and Lance, Huey, Ernest, Warren.**

Winsor & Newton, Liquitex, Arches Paper

Concordia Gallery, Newington College- its staff and students

This exhibition is in loving memory of Sue Henderson and Seumas Phelan