

Q1. Can you give us an insight into your artistic process? Is your work pre-planned or created intuitively? How long does each work take to complete?

Across the works included in this exhibition there is a mix of different things going on. Some works have been created to store or put into practice knowledge, techniques, and traditions we have been shown. Others are more introspective or intuitive, evolving out of a process of repetition and iteration, be this through the act of gathering, moving through a territory, mark making, various gestures of weaving or the slow making involved in spinning by hand and cold dyeing many of the threads we use.

This is especially the case in the works on paper, where I have been reworking my existing abstract and expressionist investigations to incorporate the use of naturally gathered materials. Here some of the works happen as a result of responding immediately and directly to what's going on around us, so waiting for exactly the right moment to collect certain plants that can be used to produce colours and working with these during a small window of time whilst they bloom and change. This might mean that I have to wait for a year to work with colours that are there for a few weeks, with each day changing what I can and can't do as things dry out, rot or transform. It also means I am always watching the landscape not only for anticipating when things will emerge to use, but to try and get a sense of how to catch what is going on at key points of time. In this sense there is not so much pre-planning as a slow build-up of anticipation and preparation to then work in a very open and unexpected way.

This is also something that is locked into the weavings, as there is the same process of time and seasons giving a shape and structure to what you have at hand, what you might decide to weave and how you might bring different colour and combinations together, such as when a thread you prepared 3 years ago runs out in the middle of a design and you need to find a way to bring something else you have into the mix.

Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that as a collaborative duo, our artistic practice operates on different levels as something both shared and individual. So even though many of works in this exhibition have been made primarily by one or the other, there are various elements involved that happen as a result of works passing between us too, and is something that is also very open, improvised and inter-intuitive.

Q2. How long does each artwork take to complete?

Given the processes involved, most of the works here present many years of accumulated production. Certainly, in the woven works, it's a slow nature of not only spinning and dyeing the threads ourselves but also using a non-mechanical system of weaving. This requires you to physically pass a spool over and under each warp stitch by stitch as well as interweaving the designs into the warp line by line. It means that these tapestries can take anywhere from several years to make, though some smaller works happen over a single, long night.

The paintings also infold in this way, with many years of testing how each colour might respond to a different paper, age, or change when they interact. In quite a few works I have had to build up the paintings over several years as I wait for the next season to come around again to keep going with what was started the year before. As the method we use to produce dyes is also very sensitive to weather conditions some paintings feature colours that have only produced the once and this can shape what comes out over time, meaning that some works happen very quickly, using what has emerged and then trying not to touch it any more after that.

Q3. Can you explain your technique; how you manipulate the medium?

With the works on paper, I really like to make use of the things that give me colours to direct how I make lines and shapes. So, when I use certain inflorescences the act of applying to the paper can also disintegrate them, meaning that you have a certain kind of line as it dissolves, and you have to use another to make the next 'stroke'. Others can be used in a more flowing gesture if you know when to use them as they become liquid, but again the act of using them also determines what you can 'paint' at a given time. Using the knowledge gained from our Maestro regarding the Palaeolithic cold dyes of our threads, I have also begun applying these natural alchemic techniques to these botanic and natural colours using different elements and reactions to produce colour changes and effects, especially with different waters as it changes a lot. I also find that although I use a lot of Chinese and Japanese hair brushes in my work generally, I like making natural brushes using various parts of plants or the instruments we use when weaving to paint or gathering charcoal or ochres that are not uniform like a pencil. This often serves as the foundation for the application of more a 'traditional' media such as ink, watercolours, pastels, or metal foils that produce further interactions between the different layers.

Q4. Do you keep some kind of ongoing drawing book or diary? Or a collection of images or photographs for inspiration?

I am mostly trying to catch an abstract and elusive experience of a given landscape, with most of the impressions I gather committed to memory rather than working on sketches or photos than taken back to the studio. Even though I am also using the camera a lot to help catch parts of the landscapes that we are always revisiting, I find that in those works that even when we catch a specific moment, these are almost always times when I don't have a camera or other recording device with me other than the mind and eyes. In other works, there are scenes that mix the real with the imagined or take a motif like the next or the eel and use this to create an internal story. These are driven by a whole bunch of different research materials from books and stories to scientific drawings, conversations with each other and shapes and patterns we see within and around us.

I've never been the best with consistently documenting or drawing in books or diaries. When I am in phases of sketching or jotting down ideas a tend to use whatever is handy and have a few boxes full of loose notes on anything from the backs of food packaging to A4 printer paper. But I also have a couple of different books that I use to try and bring some discipline into my mark making, whilst using these more to test out colours and dyes and try to then recalibrate these with the artist quality paper used in final works. This means that I also go through a lot of watercolour pads, using these to both produce a large volume of smaller finished works that are then used to produce larger pieces.

Q5. Who are your favourite artists? Who do you draw inspiration from?

My background is in design and design theory, so when I began to start making installation and live-art works, to understand what I was doing I looked to a lot of different multidisciplinary Australian artists such a Fiona Hall, John Wolseley, and Richard Goodwin, each of whom I have had the fortune to engage with directly at some point along the way. Whilst these approaches have shaped the way I still think about work now, learning to and even starting to paint has been a self-taught process that owes a great deal to the work of the late and great John Olsen after getting a copy of his published diary excerpts. These various notes and advice to himself as a painter inspired my first forays into painting beyond a few drawing classes at university and high school, and I am still always looking at his work to understand and learn new things. Though Olsen is a big (and perhaps very obvious) influence,

other artists in the abstract Australian landscape tradition I find inspirational include Fred Williams, Guy Maestri, Joshua Yeldham and Arthur Boyd alongside the strong lessons and inspiration to be found in the work and lives of many Indigenous artists such as Clifford Possum Japaltjarri, Yaritji Young, Nyunmiyi Burton and Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton amongst many, many others.

This strong Australian connection has all been significantly transformed through moving to Sardinia and learning to weave with the Maestro Chaira Vigo. Without any prior understanding or even a huge interest in textile art, after meeting the Maestro and deciding to learn from her all that I now know (and hope to continue to learning), not only is the singular influence on this side of the practice, but also unlocks my current artistic, material and wider understandings of landscape, country and planet through the various aspects that are part of the ancient tradition Vigo maintains. So, together these different things combine as a way of looking at new ways at art and nature through coming back to Australia and Sydney and making together the show Net calls Net, Weave calls Wave.



