

# sophie gralton

## *Snapshots*

May 6 – May 20 2023

As do photographs, Sophie Gralton's recent paintings capture significant moments. However, 'snap shot' static representations they are not, photographic realism is totally eschewed. Sydney-based Gralton's focus lies in the interaction between image and medium. She wants us to respond not solely to the subject matter but also to the aesthetic and metaphoric signals a painting communicates. Past memories, present observations and future possibilities are given tangible form upon canvases alive with tactile surfaces.



The *2<sup>nd</sup> Day of Autumn* work resonates the innate, undeterred vitality of youthful times. We enter into the picture along with the child who is eagerly advancing towards the ocean, tangled curls bouncing in the cool breeze and striped towel clutched about. Equally enthusiastic, the companion pooch is caught mid leap, its form reflected in the gleaming wet sand. The warm hue of the primer undercoat is left apparent in certain areas to amplify the verve.

A similar mood of utter elation pervades *Somebody's Boy III* as it captures the subject running with gusto towards the beckoning waves. In the painting, *The Boys*, an expanse of seawater without horizon fills the canvas. The youngsters here seem just a tad more reticent in their approach. An altogether different nuance imbues *The Thinkers* work. Sitting at the ocean's edge, a girl looks out into the distance, perhaps pondering what the future may hold rather than wanting to plunge into the seascape stretching before her. Dalmatian comrade, its game of chasing the ball apparently abandoned, dutifully surrenders to her meditative demeanour. The flag's oblique angle ensures our attention is directed down to the contemplative duo.

Other works also relay children's encounters with nature but are set amidst rural environments. *Before Thunder* manifests Gralton's painterly process of employing loaded brush and palette knife to transmit the natural world's vibratory essence. Curiously, the girl seated upon the horse is depicted otherwise. Her black helmet and boots are sleek, the dotted pink dress and petticoats intricately detailed. Ambiguity reigns. Faithful dog is seemingly querulous as it glances out to the viewer. Horse and rider are focused on what lies ahead. Are they considering the wisdom of departing before a possible storm or is the imagery evoking the silence before hooves thunder across the landscape? Gralton is ever reticent to divulge her intent, preferring that we invest the scenario with our own imaginings.

The pose of the boy in *Home For the Weekend* expresses a delight in once again being able to connect with the land. It is as if with deep breath he absorbs its sights and aromas. A sense of quietude and interconnectedness pervades. The distant hills suggest limitless possibilities within this suspension of time. We cannot help but share the child's immersive experience of place.

Transcending any sense of specific location, personage or period, the *Snapshots* exhibition offers the viewer the possibility of finding one's own presence within the 'eternal moments' depicted upon surfaces pulsating with colour and gestural markings.

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