

Kirsten Chambers

Hinterland November 25 – December 9, 2023

The paintings in Kirsten Chambers' inaugural exhibition with Anthea Polson Art express her profound delight in the Byron Hinterland's natural environment. Originally from Adelaide, the now Federal-based artist describes her landscapes as mud maps of areas she has a particular connection with. "It is the feeling of place I am trying to capture - how I experience the landscape when driving, walking or cycling through this area".

Presented from an aerial perspective, the works reconfigure vistas seen from hinterland roads winding through the corridors of trees. Occasionally, the iconic Byron lighthouse can be glimpsed in the far distance. Although the paintings take their source of inspiration from such encounters, they transcend any sense of literal location. The depictions embody aesthetic qualities beyond the classical landscape tradition.



Chambers' training and subsequent experience in the design industry is readily apparent in the portrayals. Created through a process of abstracting her perceptions into compositional elements, the shapes, placement and directions integrate with remarkable precision. As is her aspiration, inner and outer experiences coalesce.

The Climb From Mullum oil on panel is a visually intriguing piece. The picture plane is permeated in white curving lines and interspersed with schematic trees. Absence of a horizon abets the abstract, deep green configuration. "There is a mysterious depth to the hinterland," Chambers imparts, "and when travelling through it you wonder what might exist amidst those very dark, wet spaces." Contrasting in hue, a pale green square appears in the left foreground. With astute compositional balance, the same pale green is repeated in the painting's only oval shape. Chambers tells the former represents the Mullumbimby Golf Course located at the beginning of the upward climb, while the rounded form is a farm's grassed area that one can spy when nearing the summit at Montecollum. "When driving, I'm attracted to those unexpected 'pops' of different vegetation that signify the human intervention on an otherwise natural landscape," she informs.

Chambers' design aptitude is also evidenced in what she calls her townscapes, the *Eureka* canvas being a prime example. The viewer's eye is directed up from the shady forest fringe via the branching roads that encompass the Eureka village and its surrounding, soft green expanses. Although the buildings are generally depicted in white, certain structures, signage and one car are rendered with touches of colour, perhaps as an indication of human presence. The painting's outcome is a mixed media amalgamation based upon the various on-site sketches she'd made of the town's houses and scenery. "I used to cycle to Eureka from Federal every morning, (before increasing traffic made that too dangerous), then take the loop back via Goreman's Road," Chambers explains. "Hence, *Eureka* is a much more accurate depiction than many of the other paintings, especially in regards to the buildings, so in a way, this is a 'portrait' of the village."

It is interesting to note that the artist's immersive connection with the Byron Hinterland extends to her proactive environmental concerns. She and husband live on a 100acre gum tree plantation that is a joint venture with the State Forest. To prevent the trees planted more than 20 years ago from being 'harvested', they are currently in the process of buying back the timber so that the forest will remain a safe haven for its thriving wildlife.

JACQUELINE HOUGHTON