

kirsten chambers

Mudlarking December 6 to December 20, 2025

The paintings in Kirsten Chambers' third exhibition with Anthea Polson Art express her inspirations for art making. She explains that its title *Mudlarking*, originated in London's 18th century Thames region, "Mudlarking is the activity of searching muddy banks of tidal rivers for interesting and perhaps valuable objects. I think it is a perfect metaphor for what narrative artists do, trawl through their memories and explore the mind for treasures that might be interesting to rescue and depict." Originally from Adelaide, the now Federal-based artist describes her landscapes as mud maps because although they reference areas she has a particular connection with, they are not fixed scenes. "This year I started sketching and just doodling without a clear plan or too much control. These drawings then developed into paintings."

Chambers' ensuing works transcend any sense of literal location and embody aesthetic qualities beyond the classical landscape tradition.

Her training and subsequent practice 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.

In describing the works' aerial perspectives, Chambers imparts, "The picture plane usually is flattened somewhat. It is a stylistic device influenced by the ancient illustrated maps, Persian paintings and illuminated manuscripts that I was interested in when at art school. This presentation allows one to show things otherwise hidden by frontal objects and thus more of a scene is able to be rendered."

Chambers' design aptitude is evidenced in what she calls her townscapes. The large *Blow In* artwork on canvas is a prime example. It depicts a view down to a town dissected by streets upon which very few cars are travelling. Geometric areas of bright green grass accentuate the buildings' shapes and colours. "This piece shows Bangalow when I 'blew in' from elsewhere during the late 90's," she informs. "Whenever I walk through Bangalow every landmark prompts a recollection so I have depicted a few little memory anecdotes of that time. They include me having a break on the steps of the iconic Agriculture & Industrial Hall opposite the design shop where I used to work and me, back in the day, talking to a friend at the Bakery, with doggo of course! There's a portrayal of two gossiping women in front of the Post Office and a friend getting yelled at outside the pub on Main Street." Although there is no sky above in this work, Chambers has painted puffy clouds approaching from the sides that symbolically denote her 'blowing in'.

The exhibition showcases a number of small oil on panel paintings and these Chambers tells are imaginary vistas mudlarked from memory. "The pink skies signify dawn breaking or sun going down, magical times of day," she reflects. Scenes that include various activities such as walking dogs, bike riding, waxing a surfboard, may not be happening at those particular times of day but the rosy-hued skies epitomise the carefree joy of being out and about in a beautiful environment away from worldly concerns. Chambers' artworks invite the viewer to share such realms and encourage a mudlarking of one's own forgotten experiences.

JACQUELINE HOUGHTON

Kirsten Chambers has an Advanced Diploma in Arts, North Adelaide School of Art 1994 and a Bachelor of Design, University of South Australia 1999. In between graduation and painting full time she had a hiatus into the world of advertising that included being Art Director BMF Advertising, Pyrmont NSW 2004 – 2008; Art Director M&C Saatchi, Sydney NSW 2008 – 2011; Art Director The Shop Graphic Design, Federal NSW 2018 – 2022. Chambers was a Finalist Wollumbin Art Award 2024; Semi-Finalist BAM Art Prize 2023; Finalist Art Lovers Australia Prize 2022; Finalist BAM Art Prize 2022.

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