

Melitta Perry

Traces In The Landscape

May 30 – June 13 2026

Melitta Perry's fifth exhibition with Anthea Polson Art is imbued with a sense of contemplative quietude. A distillation of observed phenomena and metaphysical musings her paintings invite the viewer to enter non-figurative aesthetic domains that transcend literal locations. "In a nutshell, this body of work explores the traces of legacy left in landscapes that inspired a group of my favourite Australian artists including Brett Whiteley, Margaret Olley, Sidney Nolan and Norman Lindsay," Perry informs. "My imagery draws on their experience of certain landscapes I have also visited. Many of the objects placed in the scenarios are similar to those used by Olley and Whiteley, for example cane chairs, blue and white china, antique furniture. The works are not homages. They are an acknowledgement of a painterly language spoken across time by a common Muse."



The *Secret Garden* painting depicts Perry's observations when visiting the Lavender Bay gardens that were created by Wendy Whiteley below her and Brett's turreted Sydney residence. "It's not hard to see why Brett was so inspired by the view of the harbour. The sprawling terrain is such a soulful space. Random paths and steps, luscious foliage, ornamental statues and the giant Port Jackson Fig generate something of a liminal realm," Perry recalls. "The string of pearls being investigated by a ubiquitous Brush Turkey represents the other-worldly. The plinth and the receptacle atop with bird nest and egg is a motif I continue to use in various ways. I was quite wide-eyed to discover that Whiteley had employed similar iconography in a few of his paintings and especially his *Totem* sculptures."

The stimulus for Perry's *Poem For Nolan* artwork was a poem by one of her favourite Australian poets, Randolph Stow. Titled *The Land's Meaning* it references Sidney Nolan's portrayals of the ill-fated Bourke and Wills expedition from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Perry elucidates her imagery, "The object on the antique drum table is actually a glass-domed miniature of the famous Burke and Wills statue that is on display in Melbourne. The crows and cockatoos feature in Stow's poem while the binoculars and compass symbolise journeying equipment. The landscape dotted with anthills is imaginative Gulf savannah terrain and the wicker-back chair is a nod to a comfortable seat in which the poet could cogitate and write. I particularly like the crow on it looking directly at the viewer, flipping the gaze."

The *Springwood Lawn* painting is again based on an exploration of historical art traces in the landscape. This time Perry visited the Blue Mountains and the old Norman Lindsay residence near Faulconbridge. The property was named Springwood when purchased around 1912 and became home to him, wife Rose and their daughters. Perry elaborates, "Although famed for the voluptuous nudes that populated his folkloric renderings Lindsay was not limited to paintings and etchings. The grounds of Springwood are an allegorical wonderland. Concrete gods and nymphs are set into a backdrop of mountain bushland much like an Austral Olympus. It is this juxtaposition of ancient myth and primeval escarpments that fascinated me." In Perry's picture the classical colonnade of the sandstone cottage, the luxurious couch and lyrebird perched upon it, as well as the gaze of the statue all face the mountain vista. Discarded shoes and costume headpiece lie on the manicured lawn. "These all come together to describe how Lindsay created a theatrical world, simultaneously integrated and separate, which is a theme I have frequently explored," Perry concludes.

JACQUELINE HOUGHTON

Melitta Perry's sensitive renditions of time and place have earned her entry into multiple prestigious awards. She was a Finalist in the Glover Prize, Tasmania 2024; the Ravenswood Women's Art Prize (professional artist section) NSW 2021 and the Calleen Art Prize, NSW 2020; an Invited Finalist in the Tattersall's Club Landscape Prize, Brisbane 2019, 2018. Perry was Winner of the Council Acquisitive Prize, Byron Arts Classic 2015; received the William Fletcher Tertiary Grant 2013 and won the Coraki Painting Prize 2013. She has been a Finalist in the Wilson Art Award 2012; Country Energy Award for Landscape 2009, 2007; Portia Geach Memorial Award 2005; Metro 5 Art Award 2005.

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