

# from ocean to harbour

Recent works by members of the Warringah Printmakers Studio 14 June – 20 July

## Introduction

Warringah Printmakers Studio operates at the forefront of printmaking practice in terms of innovation, education, promotion and safety. Established in the late 1990's, its history extends further back to the time when Paul Smith, a professional artist, teacher and printmaker, started printmaking classes in the old Scout Hall behind Manly Vale Community Centre in 1983. A year later, the Warringah Print Workshop was officially launched. With the hard work of a number of volunteer artists, especially Joan Hartman and Anthea Boesenberg, it continued to develop and grow.

Over the next thirteen years the Workshop expanded its programs and activities and then in 1997 the members agreed to form an independent, self-funded, not-for-profit association, which was renamed the Warringah Printmakers Studio. Since then the Studio has been responsible for organising numerous exhibitions, demonstrations and exchange projects, as well as providing professional advice and assistance to Warringah Council and other organizations. Members of the Association have also participated in a range of Art Shows or Expos, including the Sydney Art on Paper Fair, on a regular basis, giving demonstrations and talks, and promoting the practice of printmaking. Now in 2008, the Studio has 150 members with many residing in Mosman and Manly as well as Warringah Shire.

One of the main strengths of the Warringah Printmakers Studio is the commitment to developing safe work methods where artists can enjoy a workshop relatively free of toxic fumes and dangerous chemicals. This commitment, combined with a focus on new media and technologies, has enabled the Studio to acquire an enviable reputation in the field that goes far beyond the Warringah Shire. In recent years the

Studio has established networks with printmakers and printmaking groups from all around the world, providing more opportunities for the exchange of ideas and development of creative practices.

While the Warringah Printmakers Studio has been involved in numerous exhibitions over the years, it has seldom confined members to a single exhibition theme or topic. With respect to this exhibition, members have been invited to explore two of the most vital links between the municipalities of Mosman, Manly and Warringah; the 'ocean' and 'Sydney Harbour'. Of particular interest to these artists, are the influences the ocean and harbour have on the character and pulse of life in this distinct region of Sydney and the associated natural and built environments.

Rosanna Jurisevic  
*Through the Heads*  
47 x 60cm  
Woodblock



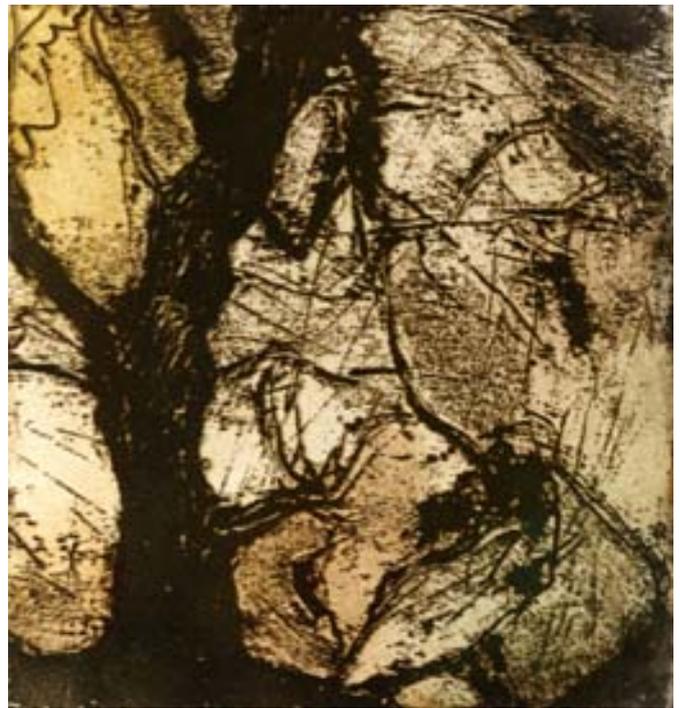
Everything from swimming and sailing to fossils and foliage seems to have captured the imaginations of members, as they apply their printmaking knowledge and skills to the task of creating compelling images of their experiences and understandings of the ocean and harbour.

The pre-dominant theme of the exhibition 'Ocean to Harbour' is the natural beauty of the landscape in this region. In particular, those characteristics that are inextricably linked to the area's identity – the various qualities of light, and water in its myriad moods and states – that inform our experience of this special part of Sydney. These characteristics contribute to the strong sense of place reflected in the exhibition.

Sydney Heads and Manly Dam, for example, enable Rosanna Jurisevic and Trudy Goodwin to exploit the shapes and spaces in between landforms, bodies of water and trees to arrive at abstracted compositions which mimic the subtlety and complexity of the landscape. Jurisevic's images *Through the Heads* and *Little Manly Point* are woodblocks rendered with strong, minimalist forms in a high key palette, which elicit the intense heat, light and optimism of a summer's day. The artist has drawn inspiration from her experiences of sailing both the open sea and harbour, with the flux of the tides represented beautifully by the texture and natural grain of the woodblocks. These elegant and refined images possess a strong aesthetic of restrained simplicity.

In contrast, Trudy Goodwin's evocative images *North Head vista*, and *Moods of Manly Dam*, are fragments or snapshots of nature, capturing fleeting moments of time in exquisite detail. The artist examines the affects of light and shadows, as well as the change of season, the change of time and temperature. These are peaceful and reflective works which recall the stillness, calm and spirituality of the bush, and the deep sense of agelessness one feels when immersed in nature, while Sydney suburbia sits just a few streets away.

A central and unifying concern of the exhibition is



Trudy Goodwin  
*Moods of Manly Dam*  
63 x 63cm  
Photopolymer

the state of the environment, and the political currency surrounding conservation and their related issues. The fragility of the natural environment and its flora and fauna, is the focus of investigation in many artworks. Peri Tobias explores this subject in a compelling group of etchings. Her impressive and engaging large scale images bring into sharp focus microcosms of nature, in particular the sea grasses and salt marshes found in inter-tidal estuaries of Sydney Harbour. These fragile eco-systems provide habitats for many species of birds, fish and crustaceans which, as a direct result of mankind's exploitation of the natural environment, are now in decline. Tobias' rich images are stark reminders of the beauty and vulnerability of this environment and the urgent need for positive action to ensure its future survival.

The concept of the 'journey' and mankind's physical and emotional relationships with the waterways represented by both ocean and harbour are explored with multifarious approaches in the exhibition. Particularly prevalent is the notion of the harbour as a source of refuge, safe-haven, shelter, sanctuary and intimacy, in contrast



Peri Tobias  
*Seagrass Strands*  
 120 x 60cm  
 Aluminium sugar lift etching and drypoint

to the sense of limitless space, wild temperament and potentially perilous nature often associated with the open sea. Artists Sandra Williams and Pearl Orwin explore these two very different bodies of water by placing figures in the water and on the beach, evoking a sense of mystery and magic about the ocean, as if it has a life of its own. Orwin's enigmatic images relate to the artist's personal experiences and life journey as a migrant to Australia. In her poignant work, *Seeking a peaceful place to rest my soul*, a child floating within the open sea represents the dreams, hopes

and vulnerabilities of refugees seeking shelter on our shores.

Similarly, Sandra Williams' powerful image, *The outsiders* examines the highly emotive issue of boat people, political refugees and the 'child overboard' Tampa incident of 2001. The image is about inclusion and exclusion and highlights the desperate situation these people face to embark on such a treacherous journey, in the light of so many uncertainties, not least of all, the question of a welcome at their destination.

The view of the harbour as a place of shelter or refuge, is also particularly evident in Christina Cordero's work, *Women in boats entering the*

Pearl Orwin  
*Seeking a Peaceful Place to Rest My Soul*  
 21 x 27cm  
 Photopolymer

Sandra Williams  
*Outsiders (detail)*  
 51 x 39cm  
 Etching aluminium plate and chine colle

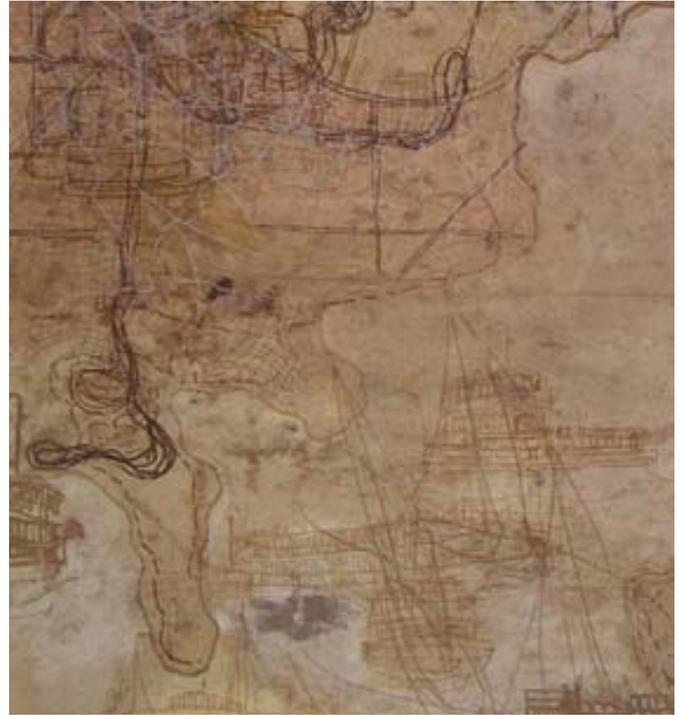


*harbour*, where two women in a small boat appear to float between two worlds. As a migrant from Chile, the ocean separates Cordero from her birth place, yet at the same time, it liberates her. Denise Scholz-Wulfing explores the same theme in her work, *Mapping memories, Mosman to Manly*, creating an antique-styled map layered with symbols and images which tell a story, reflecting what is real, remembered and imagined from the artist's point of view. The open sea is portrayed as a hazardous place, while the harbour is a safe sanctuary for the people and animals that live around it.

The sheer energy and vibrancy of Sydney Harbour's industrial heritage and its continuing role as a working harbour is beautifully depicted in Rebecca Baird's concertina artist's book, *Working harbour*. The artist captures the vitality of the harbour in this mode, with its ferries, tugs, barges, cranes, ships and commercial crafts at work. Baird's charming and intimate series of etchings are based on her father's working life as an apprentice and engineer between the 1950s to 1990s, working on Garden Island, at sea and on Sydney tug boats.

Similarly, Geraldine Berkemeier's work *Tracking* captures the pulse and vitality of Sydney scale monotype. Using an aerial perspective based on maps of Sydney, the artist portrays both the city's landforms and its great body of water in multiple layers of lyrical linear abstractions, creating strong surface tension. The imagery refers to the tracks man has made traversing both land and water through our road ways, buses, trains, trams and ferries. The organic nature of the artist's approach very successfully portrays the complexity and chaos of Sydney's development over time and mans' quest to impose order over nature.

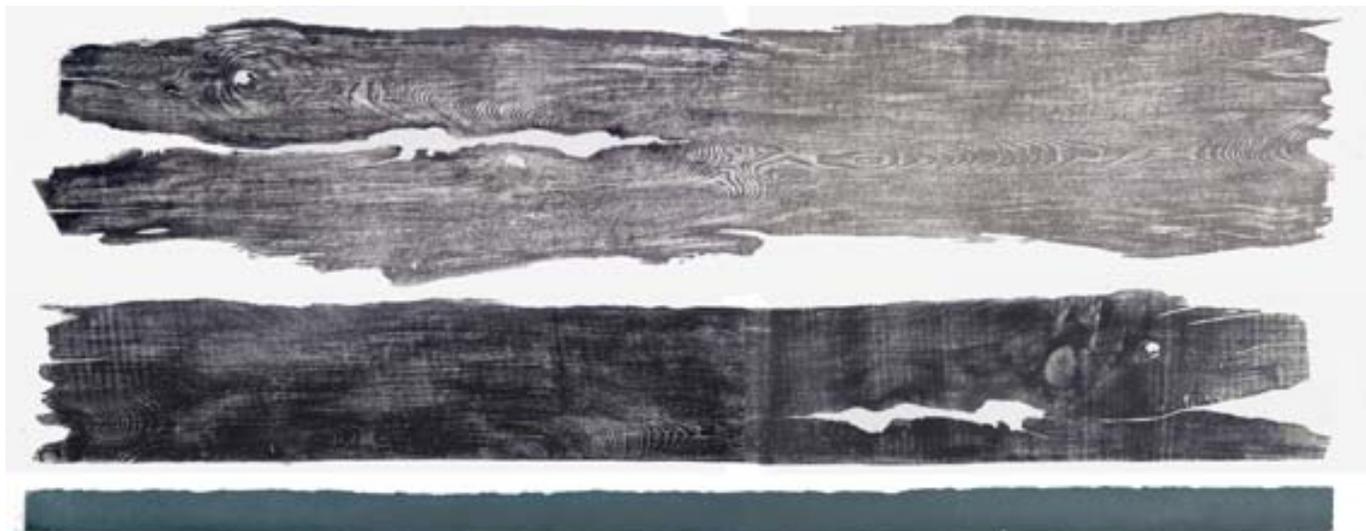
Surfaces and textures excite a number of artists in the exhibition with Anthea Boesenberg creating delicate and intricate patterns, which refer to Aboriginal middens that are common on the fore-shores around Mosman, Manly and Warringah. The contents of these middens – shells and bones



Geraldine Berkemeier  
*Tracking* (detail)  
135 x 120cm  
Monotype

– indicate how the original inhabitants of this region all shared in the bounty of the ocean and harbour, just as we do today. Exploring similar ground is Susan Rushforth's striking image, *Water Spirit II*, a work the artist has wrought from nature, directly from the found object of a tree trunk. The horizontal composition and layered images can be read in many ways: as references to the movement and flux of the tides, or to geological strata, and also to horizons formed by different water levels. The key image of the artwork evokes an ancient mythological aquatic creature while the textural qualities of the wood grain suggest other forms of marine life such as fish and eels, as well as the movement of water through the landscape.

Kate Wilkie, George Soutter and Annie Day also delight in the marine world, finding a rich source of imagery and design potential in fish of all shapes and sizes. Patterns of a very different type dominate the prints of Denise Humphreys and Helen Clare where contour lines of the land and tidal movements of the water form indexes of the forces and energy of nature.



Susan Rushforth  
*Water Spirit II*  
67 x 179 cm  
Woodblock print on handmade Japanese mulberry  
paper using water-based pigments and mixed media

The diversity of responses to these fascinating subjects is reflected in a wide variety of printmaking techniques in the exhibition, along with many innovative approaches and new technologies. Foremost among these techniques are etching, relief and intaglio printing, woodblock printing, monotype, collagraph, drypoint and chine collé, and in terms of new approaches and technologies, the digital manipulation of images plays a vital role in the practice of many artists in this exhibition.

In an age when the environment and conservation is at the forefront of political, economic and social life, this exhibition can be viewed as another important reminder of the value of our natural resources and the critical role they play in shaping our lives. For their efforts in this regard, I would like to congratulate and thank all the members of the Warringah Printmakers Studio. The result is a wonderful testimony to their creative energy and passion, and their dedication to printmaking. I would also like to express my gratitude to the organising committee of the Warringah Printmakers Studio for all their assistance with the project, especially Susan Baran, Annie Day, Helen Clare and Sandra Williams. And finally, I would like to thank Katrina Cashman for curating the

exhibition and Julie Petersen for coordinating the project over the past three months.

Tony Geddes  
Director  
Mosman Art Galley

Katrina Cashman  
Exhibitions Curator  
Mosman Art Gallery