

Guy Warren

Forward...
& back

Guy Warren '18

GUY WARREN

Forward...
& back

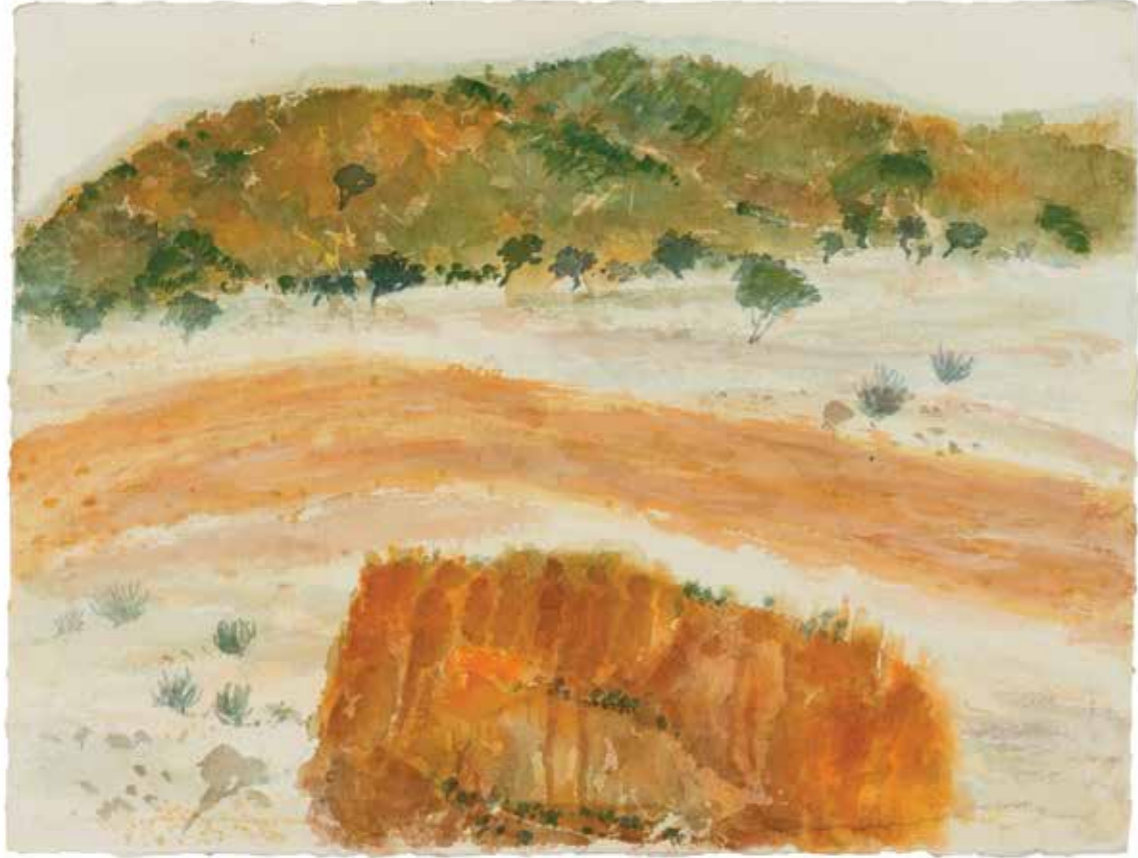
19 February – 16 March 2019

King Street Gallery **KS**
on William **Gw**

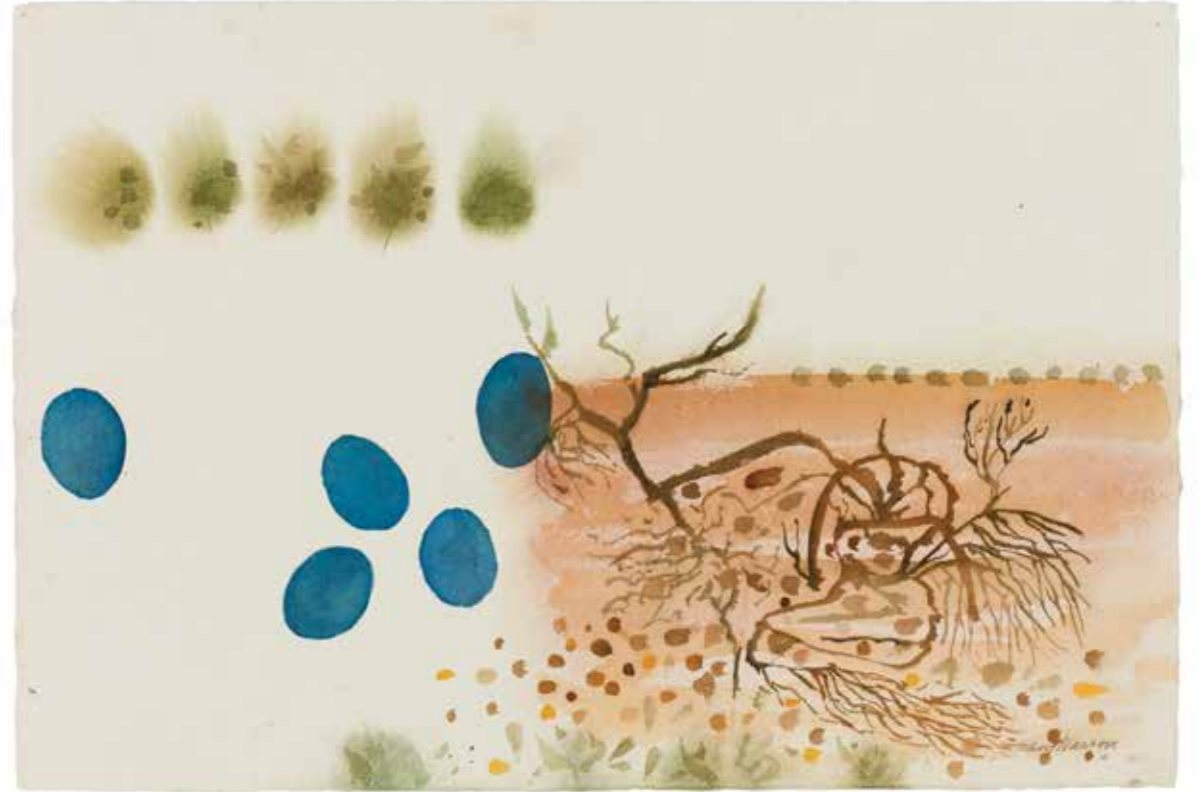
10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
T: 61 2 9360 9727 E: art@kingstreetgallery.com
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

Front cover: *Rocks at Ross River 1* 2018 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm
Opposite: *Sentinel, Alice Springs* 2013 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm





Dusty road 2012 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm



Emu nest Tibooburra 1992 watercolour on paper 38 x 56.5 cm



Not many artists would have gotten away with such a random selection. But then very few may, like Guy Warren, have the luxury of sifting amongst a cornucopia of paintings, watercolours and drawings housed in their studios, and allow a gallery to choose at will, with his blessing, a loose exhibition of works, old and new, that speak of persistence across almost eight decades.

Each work selected here, if sometimes only for the opportunity of giving it air and light away from the rooms and racks of storage, connects effortlessly with its siblings like equal steps of an incredible story.

But the most impressive thing about Guy Warren revealed in this exhibition is that, as he now approaches his ninety-eighth birthday, he is producing work as fresh as the day he first picked up a paint brush.

Indeed the most recent group of works on paper, evocative of journeys to distant parts of Australia, all painted or drawn within the last ten years, are the vision of a man who has held on to his youth and continues to refine the command of his language without any sign of flagging.

In central Australia his roads, rivers and rocks are chicanes on the picture plane preventing the eye from escaping too quickly into deep space. Tibooburra in the far north-west of New South Wales yields surreal patterns emphasising the modern ground of flatness. And when Warren does concede to deep space, across the Nullarbor he effortlessly evokes a bare horizontal trope without becoming rhetorical.

How may we explain the mystery of his longevity? Teacher, writer, editor, designer, arts administrator, incorrigible traveller throughout two hemispheres: how has he found the time to be so prolific?

It may be something to do with allowing English and European sensibility indelibly into his soul whilst living in London for eight years during the 1950s. That deeply imbedded sense of lyricism became an eternal battery of sustenance, even against the irresistible confidence of the Americans. Evidence of it is here in the 1963 oil painting *Children playing: the garden party*, echoing a popular Italian figurative artist Massimo Campigli. And in *Prisoner* of 1962, his first painting following return to Sydney, a state of melancholy pervades the air from an artist who has left behind a field in London far more fertile than awaiting him in the antipodes.

American abstractionists were of course banging loudly at the door during the 1960s, and even though by then he had become inoculated by the delicate poetry of his Mungo Brush watercolours, Warren was not entirely immune to being seduced by an exaggerated formalism and exhilarating language of scale. He missed the loan exhibition *Two decades of American painting* which shook contemporary Australian artists in Melbourne and Sydney in 1967.

In that show Warren may have been intrigued by the images of circles by Adolph Gottlieb and others had he not been abroad visiting the eastern seaboard of the United States where he would have seen plenty of the

recent wave of abstraction anyway, especially in New York. This is possibly a context for the three peculiar images of lens-like circles in this exhibition. They were made just after man had finally landed on the moon in 1969, when the collective imagining through telescopes of celestial bodies was entering a new dimension. Whatever, though Warren himself cannot remember exactly his motivation, it was part of contemporary visual language being shared around, breaking free from a leaden gravity of pictorial orthodoxy.

His next stay in New York was 1982, courtesy of the Australia Council and his dealer Ann Lewis. A result of nine months stay was *New York Triptych*, an ambitious *cadenza* of a painting perhaps indebted to a lingering memory of Matisse's huge canvas *Bathers by a river* that Warren saw at the Chicago Art Institute fourteen years earlier.

At the same time its hoarding-like quality exudes the flavour of a great metropolis recently conquered by the hyped graffiti artist Keith Haring, whose energy was exploding on to the walls of subway stations, unloved expanses of wall and alleyways. Warren's image of a woman with tousled hair, based on his wife Joy, might be an unconscious partner to Haring's dancing man, but it is almost impossible to ignore a synergy between certain white lines of the New Yorker and Warren's *Icarus* or *Wingman* figure drawn through a vapour trail across the sky of Sydney in 1994, a different, infinitively briefer kind of urban conquest.

However to return to the question of Warren's longevity. *New York Triptych*, for all its architectonic compression, contains for the artist certain subtle references to another world that constituted the most profoundly singular experiences of his life as an artist. Firstly, a canoe journey down the Shoalhaven River in 1939 with five companions, including his older brother, during which the gap between life and death closed perilously. It appears as a tiny reference in one of the watercolours, *Rock pool and river*. Secondly, in the rainforest of Queensland and the jungles of Papua New Guinea during World War II when Warren realised that the fates of human beings and nature were interconnected; the survival of one without the other untenable.

Clearly such truths would best become resolved by him enveloped within an abstract language, and so from early in his maturity as a painter Warren's mission became clear. As we contemplate especially the beautiful translucence of the late watercolour landscapes, Wingman takes flight once more and shows us what he sees and feels, both intimate and far away, from his past, present and future.

Barry Pearce

Emeritus Curator of Australian Art
Art Gallery of New South Wales
December 2018



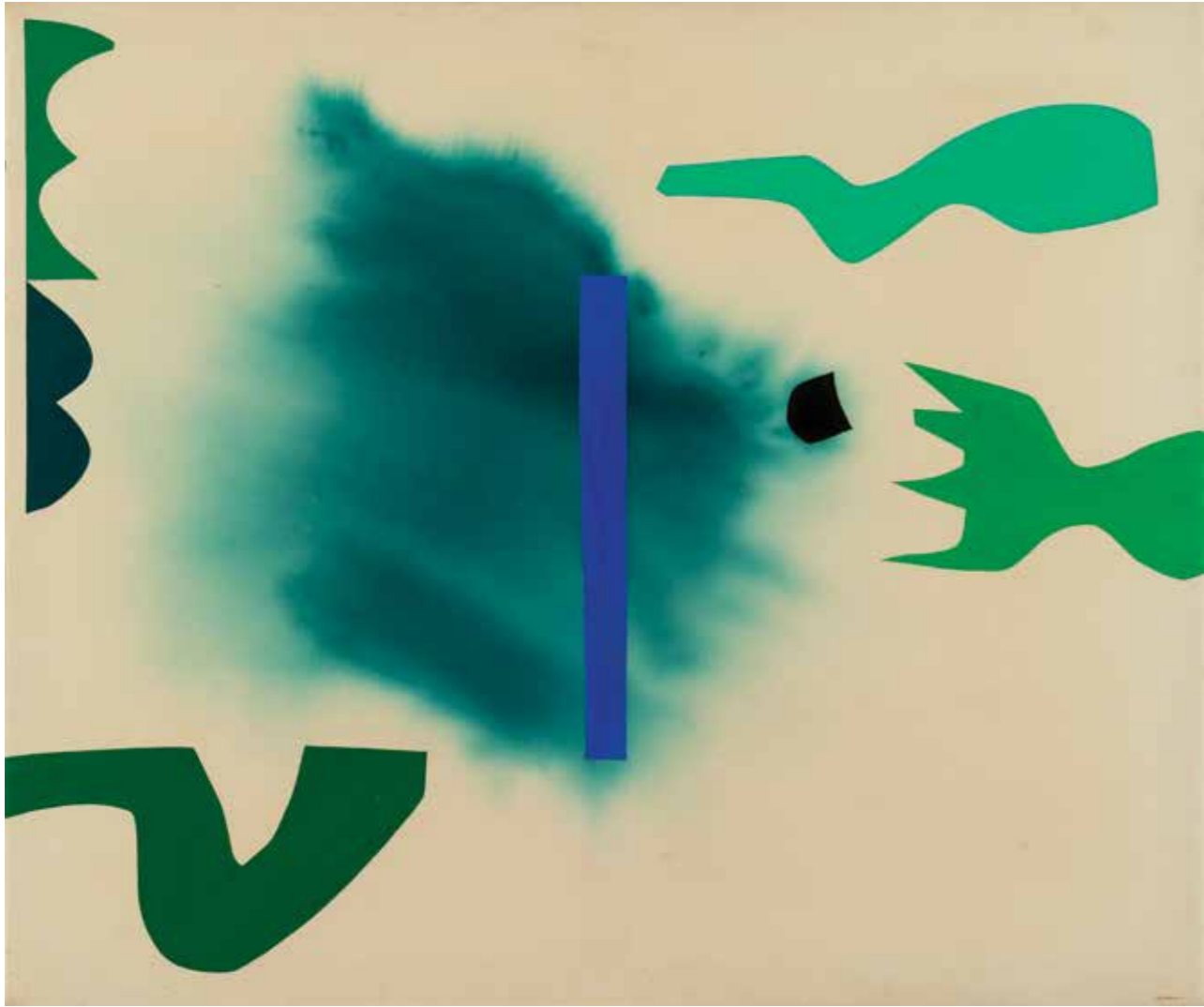
Across the saltbush and scrub 2018 watercolour on paper 38 x 51 cm



Space lens 1969 acrylic on canvas 50.5 x 61 cm



Prisoner 1962 oil on board 100.5 x 121.5 cm



Greens floating maturity 1969 acrylic on canvas 153 x 185 cm



Red expanding genesis 1960 acrylic on canvas 153 x 185 cm



Children playing: the garden party 1963 oil on board 90 x 122 cm



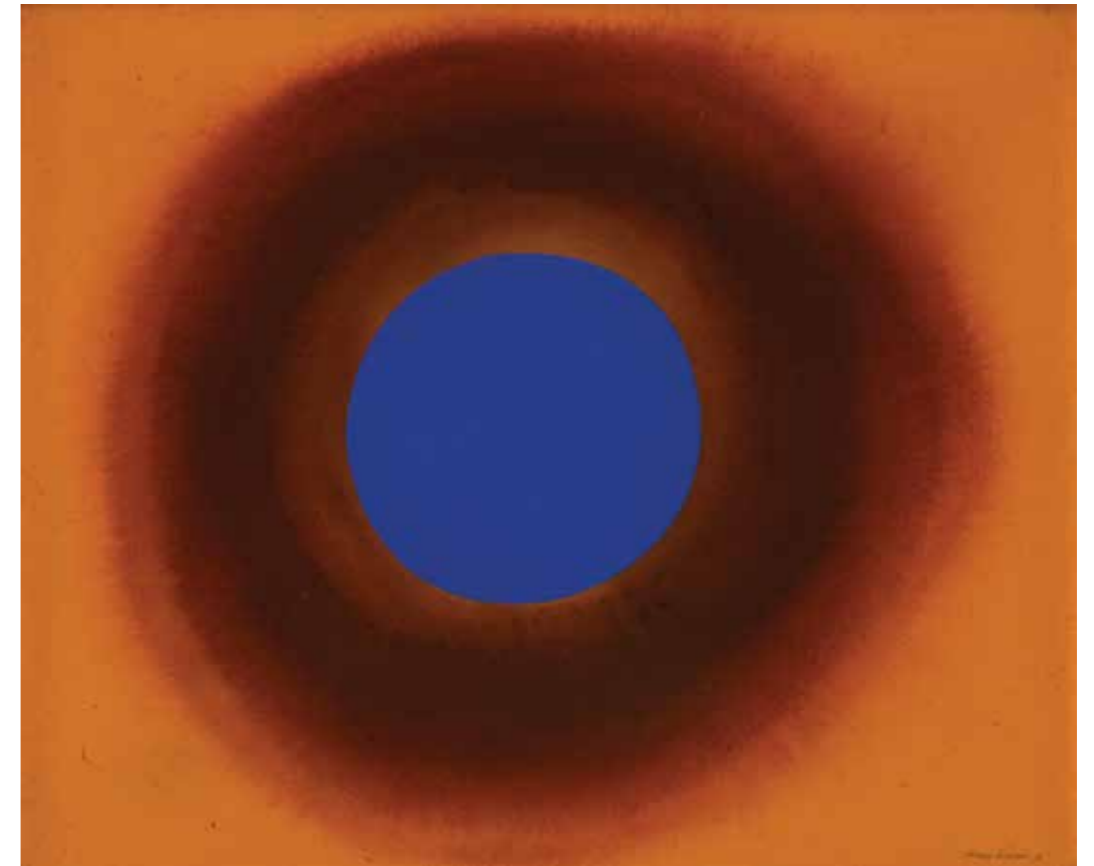
Tibooburra drawing 2018 crayon on paper 58 x 77 cm



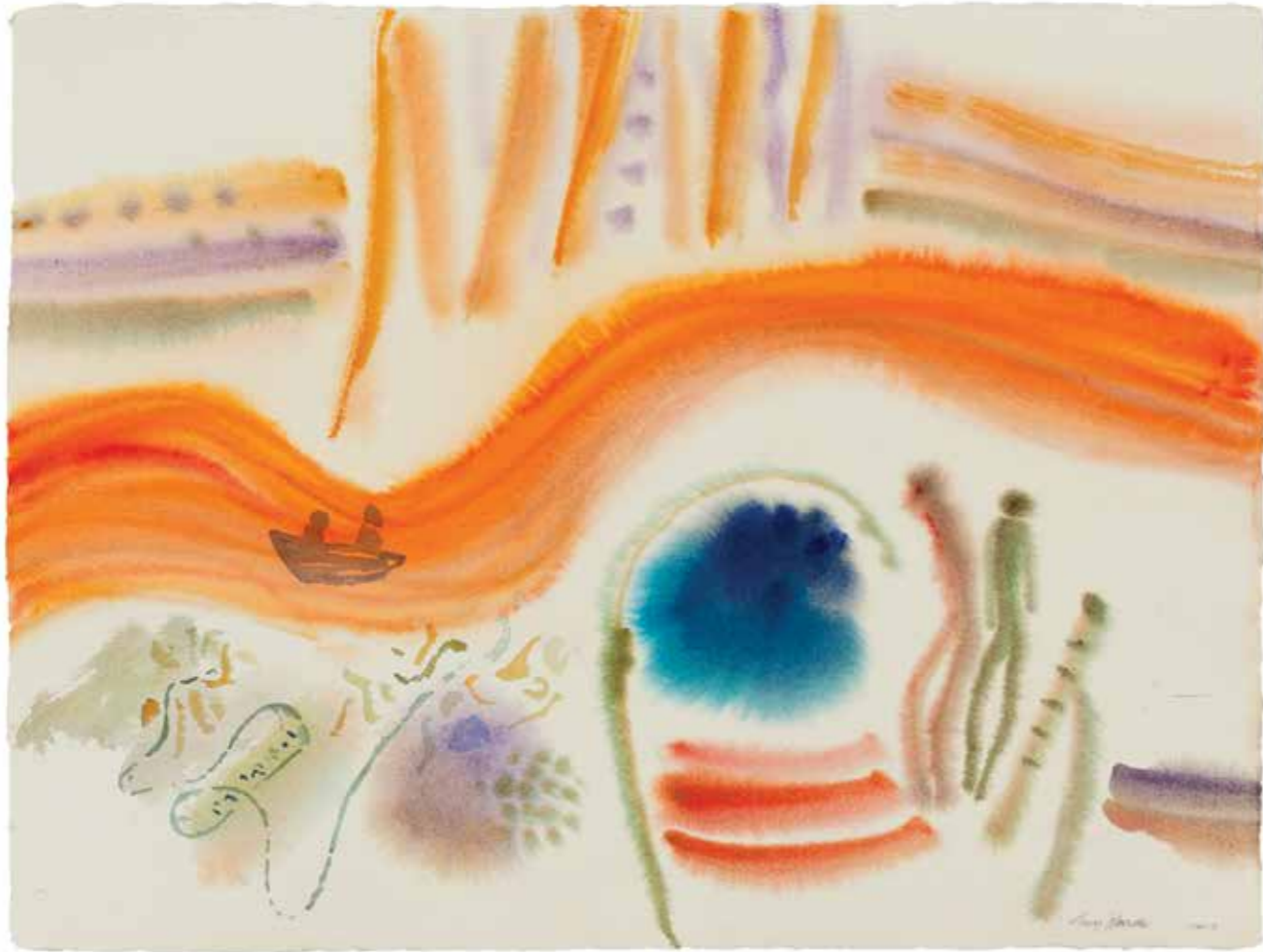
New York [triptych] 1982
acrylic on paper on canvas 239 x 428 cm



Rock pool bush 2018 watercolour on paper 28 x 38 cm



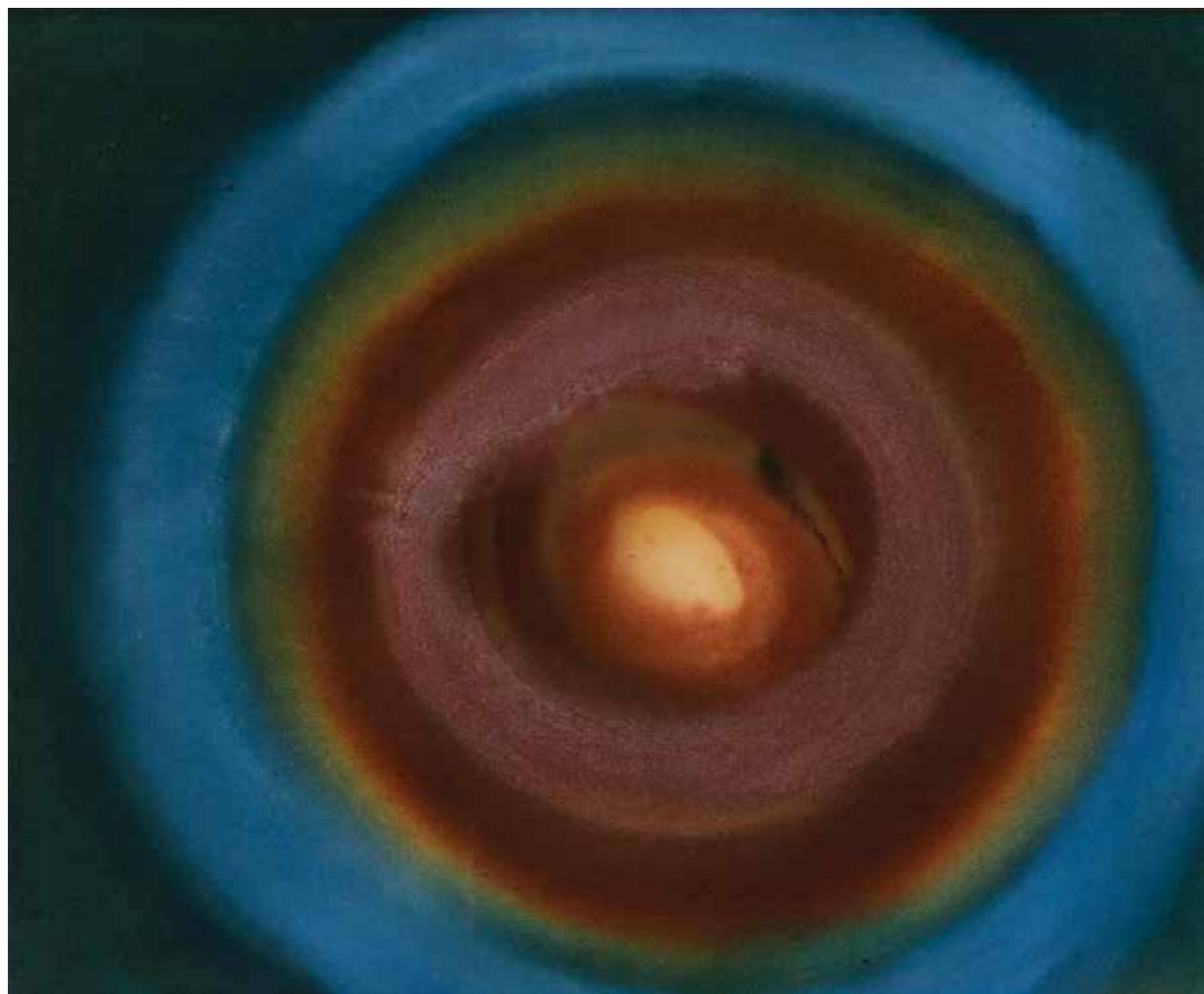
Space lens 1970 acrylic on canvas 50.5 x 61 cm



Rock pool and river 2017 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm



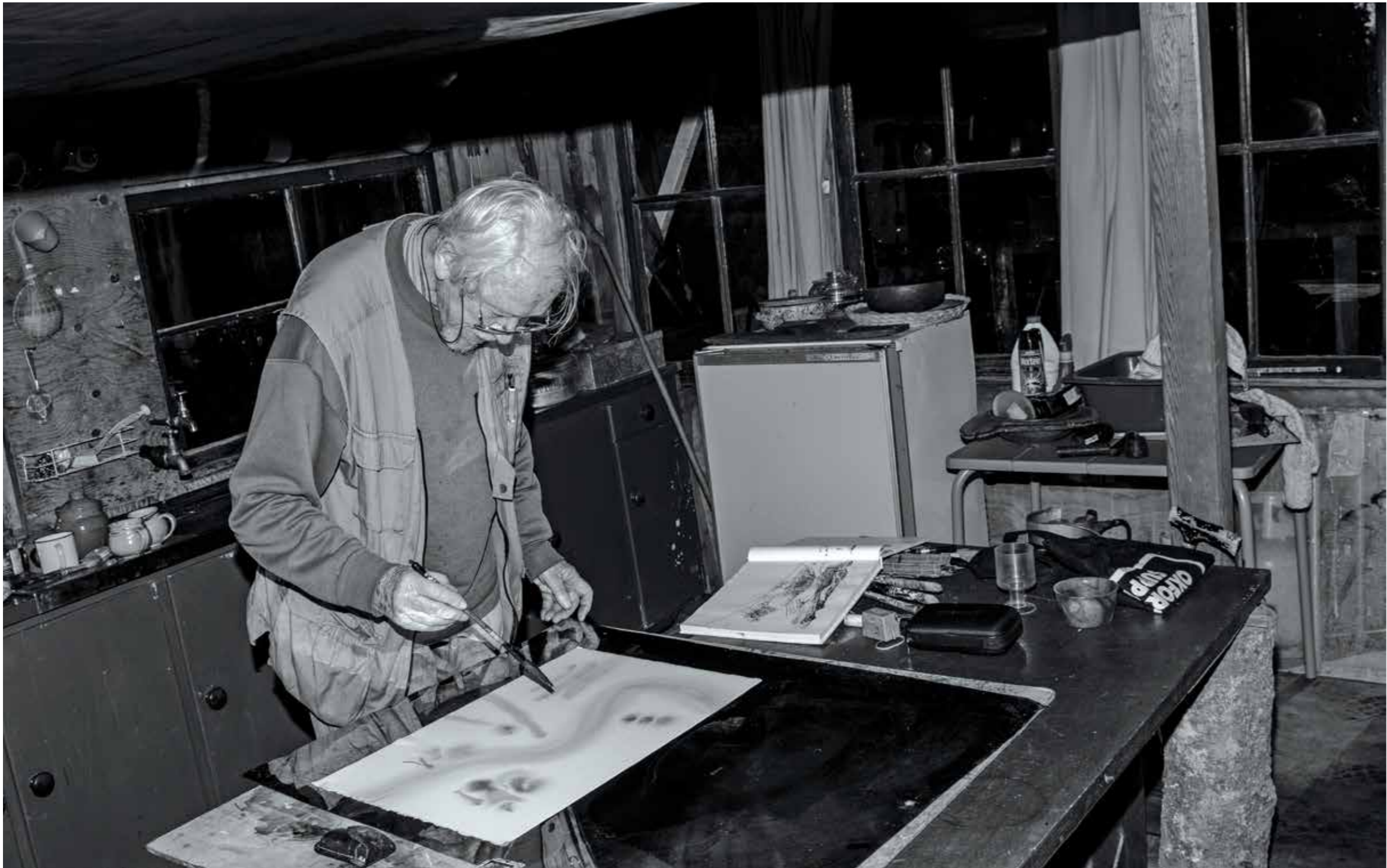
Visiting Alice 2012 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm



Blue pulse 1969 acrylic on canvas 50.5 x 61 cm



Golden days 2007 watercolour on paper 56 x 76 cm

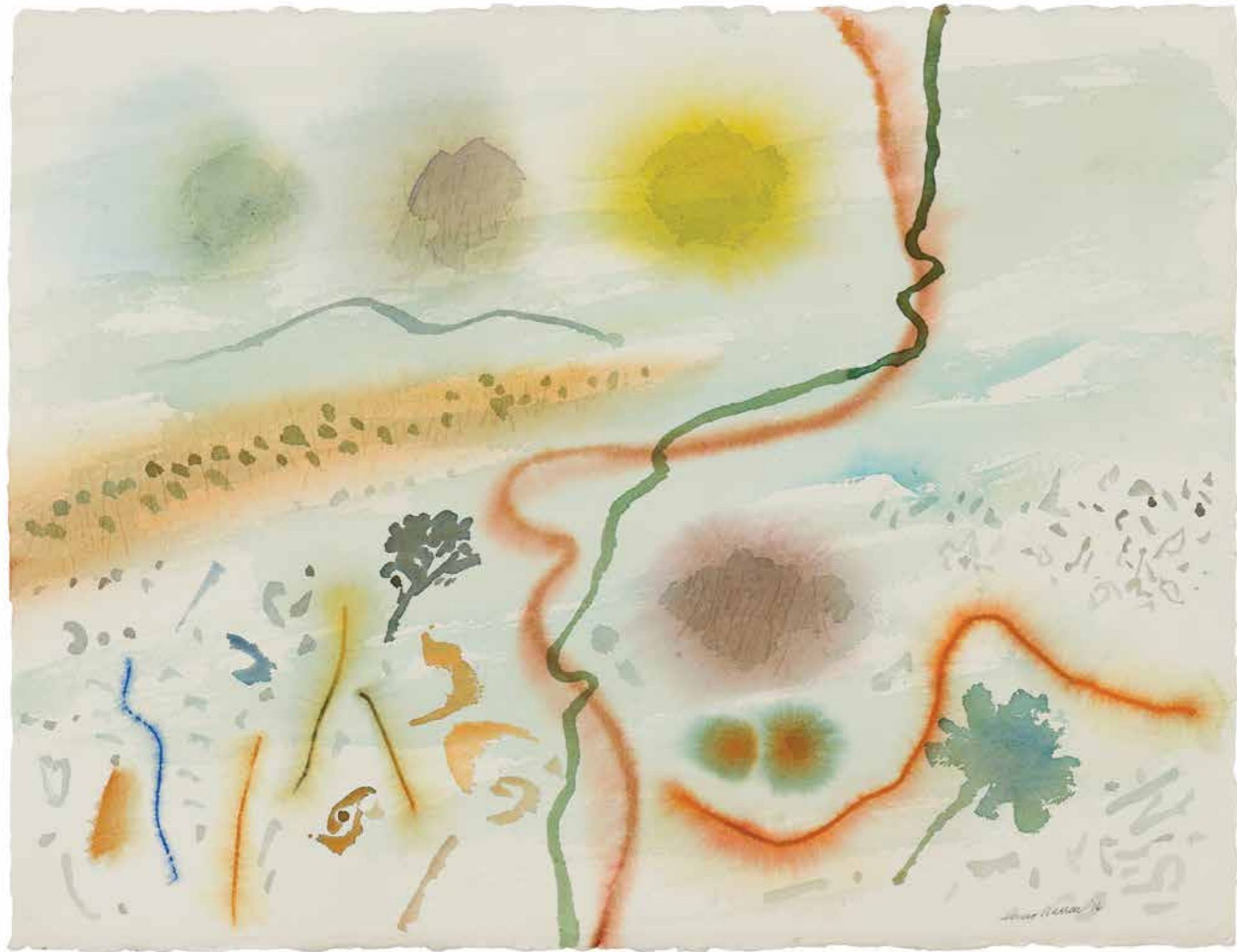




Evening Nullarbor 2009 watercolour on paper 38 x 51 cm



Hillside 2008 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm



Track through the scrub 2016 watercolour on paper 58 x 77 cm

Guy Warren

Born

1921 Goulburn, NSW, Australia

Studies & work

1947-49 National Art School, Sydney, under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme
1950's Part-time study Chelsea School of Art, London School of Art and Central School of Arts and Crafts, London

Solo exhibitions [selected]

2019 *Forward... & back* King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
River, Rainforest, Rock Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Nowra, NSW
2018 *Works on paper from the artist's studio* King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2016 *Genesis of a painter: Guy Warren at 95* National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2015 *Dust of Memory* Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney
2012 *Work from the Dry Country* Rex Irwin Galleries, Sydney
2009 Rex Irwin Galleries, Sydney
2008 BMG Galleries, Adelaide. United Galleries, Perth
2007 Annandale Galleries, Sydney. BMG Galleries, Adelaide
2003 Annandale Galleries, Sydney. Axia Modern Art, Melbourne
2003-2004 Presence and Landscape – Guy Warren in Retrospect: retrospective exhibition of works covering 60 years of art practice (a Mosman Art Gallery exhibition touring to six NSW regional art galleries).
2002 University of Wollongong – retrospective exhibition of watercolours

Group exhibitions [selected]

2018 *Jamberoo Mountain Road* Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Nowra, NSW
The Art of Friendship Gallery Lane Cove and Creative Studios, Sydney
2016 *Luminous - Australian Watercolours 1900-2000* National Gallery of Victoria
2015 Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
2014 Across the Water: China-Australia Modern Masters of Watercolour, Quanhua, China; Shenzhen Fine Art Museum, Shenzhen, China; Juniper Hall, Sydney
2013 *Not the Way Home -- 13 Artists Paint the Desert* New England Regional Art Museum and travelling Australian Watercolour Unstitute 90th Annual Exhibition, Gosford Regional Gallery, NSW
2012 Tradition and Transformation: Taiwan-Australia Watercolour Exhibition, Taichung, China; Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
2011 Taiwan International Watercolour Exhibition, Robeson Gallery, Pennsylvania, Carrollton Cultural Art Center, Georgia, and the Chung-shan National Art Gallery, Taipei
2010 Wattle, Rose and Thistle: The Finest Watercolourists of Australia, England and Scotland. Also at the Wollongong Regional Art Gallery, Sydney; Wagner Gallery, Sydney; Bankside Gallery, London
2008 *Lines of Fire: Armed Forces to Art School* National Art School, Sydney
2003 *Beneath the Monsoon* Artspace, Mackay, Queensland, touring to other regional galleries in Queensland.
Guy Warren: New Paintings & Drawings Annandale Galleries, Sydney

Prizes and awards [selected]

2013 Awarded the Australia Medal (AM.)
2007 Awarded Doctorate of Visual Arts (honoris causa) The University of Sydney
1999 Awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)
1998 Awarded Doctorate of Creative Arts (honoris causa) University of Wollongong
1998 Awarded Bronze Medal, 4th International Triennale of Drawing, Poland
1985 Archibald Prize for Portraiture, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

Public and corporate collections

National Gallery of Australia collection, Canberra
Parliament House Collection, Canberra
Contemporary Art Society Collection, London, UK
The British Museum, London
The Deal Collection, Dallas, USA
The Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Art Gallery of Tasmania, Hobart
Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, Victoria
Manly Art Gallery, NSW
The Qantas Collection
Shepparton Art Gallery, Victoria
Burnie Art Gallery, Tasmania
Wollongong City Art Gallery, NSW
The Kedumba Collection of Contemporary Australian Drawing
Grafton City Collection NSW
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Queensland
Cairns Regional Art Gallery, North Queensland
Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, NT
Artbank Collection, Sydney
The University of New England Art Collection, Armidale, NSW
The Darnell Collection, The University of Queensland, Brisbane
The Australian National University Collection, Canberra, ACT
The Macquarie University Collection, NSW
The University of Wollongong Art Collection, Wollongong, NSW
James Cook University Art collection, Townsville, Queensland
The University of Technology Collection, Sydney
The University of Sydney Art Collection, Sydney
The Royal Australian Institute of Architects Collection, Canberra, ACT
Curtin University Collection, Perth. WA
The Stein Collection, University of Western Australia, Perth, WA
Churchlands College of Advanced Education Collection, Perth, WA
College of Advanced Education Collection, Canberra, ACT
BHP Collection, Melbourne, Victoria
The Queensland State Library, Brisbane, Queensland
The National Library, Beijing, Peoples' Republic of China
The United Overseas Bank Art Collection, Singapore
Westpac Collection, New York, USA
Union Club Collection, Sydney
Allens Arthur Robinson Collection, Sydney
McDonalds Australia Collection, Sydney
Sheraton on the Park Collection, Sydney
The Mosman Art Collection, Mosman, NSW



King Street Gallery 
on William 

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
T: 61 2 9360 9727 E: art@kingstreetgallery.com
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

Published by King Street Studios P/L
Photography: Roller Photography
Riste Andrievski
Design: Ella Burrett
ISBN 978-0-9925715-5-9



[@kingstreetgallery](https://www.instagram.com/kingstreetgallery)

