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Guy Warren

STUDIO 15 April 2021

"I do something every day, even if it's only a scribble. But of course I still have doubts. There is no certainty in this game. There are no rules."

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Photographs by Hamish Ta-Mé for Art Guide Australia.

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along with the Shoalhaven River, one of his perennial subjects. After the war Warren trained at what is now the National Art School and he went on to forge a career filled with accolades, including being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). At his home studio in Greenwich, one of Sydney's leafy northern suburbs, Tracey Clement spoke to Guy Warren about his primal urge to make art every day.



Photographs by Hamish Ta-Mé for Art Guide Australia.

PLACE

GUY WARREN: I've been in this property for 60 years. Would you believe? We bought it when we had just come back from the UK, after being away for eight years. Back in those days it was covered in trees. Almost still is. Sydney has sandstone and little ridges and gullies, and in between all those gullies around this part of the world, rainforest.

And I happen to like rainforest. In some ways it is like a painting. At another level you feel as though you're part of it. And I like that idea. Because once you're in the rainforest, there is seldom a long view. You get compounded, compressed views: you get tree over tree over tree, leaf over leaf over leaf. And then through it all, you get lianas winding their way like a three dimensional drawing; like a line in space.

Of course the area has changed a lot over the years. When we bought the property it was surrounded by bush. In fact, from my front door, I could actually get a glimpse of the harbour. But now all that's gone. The house was just a tiny four room cottage, which we extended, and this studio was a double garage. And like a lot of double garages it has ended up as a workshop. Skylights bring in natural light. It's not too bad. And it's handy.

The studio here is on River Road, and in my work I've painted, again and again, a trip I took down the Shoalhaven River with my brother. I've often thought of that. But it was totally accidental! And I'm still painting the river; that little boat. But then these are images which many cultures have been using for years; the boat appears in most cultures all over the world. It's one of those things. It's about journeying, it's the life journey, and it's reaching the end, or starting off on the journey.



Photographs by Hamish Ta-Mé for Art Guide Australia.

PROCESS

Every day I wake up at six o'clock and I think, 'I should do something today.' That's what I think, then I get up probably about eight o'clock and I come out here to the studio. And the morning sun comes in through the glass doors there. And I sit here and have a cup of coffee and think about the things I'm going to do. And then if I'm lucky, I'll get around to doing them! But I work every day.

I don't like the word inspiration. It's one of those pompous bloody words which doesn't really mean anything. I've got lots of ideas in my head that I want to use. And literally hundreds of sketchbooks which I've filled over the years. And they're not sketchbooks like other people use sketchbooks; they're not intended for me to sit down and draw what is in front of me. They are idea books; random ideas which float in and out of my mad mind and one makes a note of them.

I do something every day, even if it's only a scribble. But of course I still have doubts. There is no certainty in this game. There are no rules. You always have doubts. In the kitchen, I have two comments pinned to the wall, which I look at every day One is from Philip Guston, an American painter for whom I hold a lot of respect. He said, "Doubt is the acute awareness of the existence of alternatives." And it is exactly that. And there's another one by Robert Hughes. Bob isn't quite as subtle, as you know. And it says, "The greater the artist, the greater the doubt. Perfect confidence is given to the lesser artists as a consolation prize."



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PROJECTS

I've got shows planned next year at King Street Gallery on William, and the National Art School (NAS) in Sydney; Nicholas Thompson Gallery in Melbourne; and Gallery Lane Cove, the local gallery here [Greenwich, Sydney]. And I am making some new work. Luckily there are few interruptions these days. The Gallery Lane Cove exhibition will be a survey show. And the NAS show will focus on my drawings.

They've already chosen a whole stack of drawings and they want some of the sketchbooks as well, going all the way back to my time in New Guinea during WWII. But I'm keeping some of those back because I want them to go to the war museum.

Not that I'm really planning my legacy. I have been talking to my son about it, and my daughter, but I don't have any real plans apart from I think that I'd like some of them to go to museums. And literally five minutes before you came in, I found out that the New South Wales State Library bought two of my drawing notebooks, which I did during lockdown.

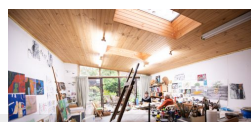
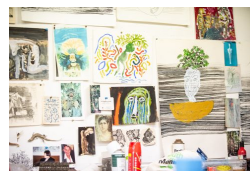
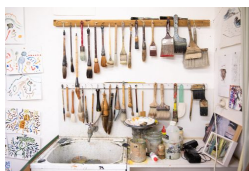
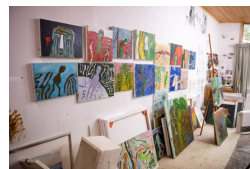
There is something primal about mark making. It's a primal urge, ever since the first person picked up a burnt stick and made a mark; a drawing. It's a primal urge and I'm still doing it.

From the Mountain to the Sky: Guy Warren Drawings

National Art School Gallery

17 April – 22 May 2021

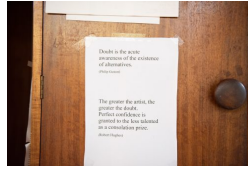
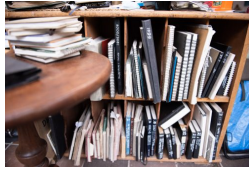
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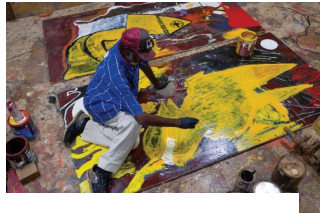


STUDIO

Into Deborah Kelly's remote studio

"What I think of as my real work happens outside the studio and in exchange with other humans."

Tracey Clement



STUDIO

Tennant Creek Brio

"Our country and culture has been there all the time, it is our strength, our dream, and our stories. No one can take that away from us. So, we've got to tell that story and share it." – Jimmy Frank, Tennant Creek Brio

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