

RMOA Collection Study Room Artist-in-Residence

Written Reflection

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In March and April 2022, I was fortunate to take up the Rockhampton Museum of Art's first of three offered Artist in Residence positions. The Rockhampton Regional Council's new art museum is located on Darumbal Country beside Tunuba (Fitzroy River) and houses a significant permanent collection of artworks: approximately 3,000 pieces collected since the mid -1970's. The residency was offered on the understanding that I would address three criteria: impact on my professional career, using my links to Central Queensland to create further connections for the art museum, and my ability to work creatively and communicate well. This reflection addresses my experiences during the residency and demonstrates how successful I was at fulfilling the criteria.

I showcased my artistic interests through the artworks I selected to hang in the Collection Room. I chose works that I had a visceral response to rather than choosing by artist names. All the artists whose work kept me company deal with the landscape in some way, albeit very differently. Mark-making, line and rhythm, as well as layering, play an important part of their works. It was pointed out after I had made my selection that the horizon line is not indicated in most of these works. I find this interesting, as much of my work too focuses on elements found *within* the landscape rather than looking *at* the landscape.

The non-figurative works of John Peart, whose art helped to inspire me during the residency, are influenced by the landscape through concepts of minimalisation with a drive to retain only that which is essential in his images. My work is about trying to capture some of the essence of place. In future I will reflect on and be informed by the study of Peart's work and how it manages to capture that quality. Both Tommy May and David Rankin convey rhythm within the landscape – a sense that I am finding in my own work. The process becomes almost about mapping the rhythmic elements of the landscape, Rankin in a figurative way as well as a more linear style like May. Sandra Stubb's serigraph with collage, Kelly Fielding's linocut, and Judith Warrie's painting show elements of rhythm. Warrie, Stubb, Clifton Pugh and Margery Edwards all show a sense of layering in their works although Edwards does this much more overtly though her use of large transparent collage elements.

In Williams Boissevain's work I'm drawn to line; in particular, how he manages to pick out line from the picture plane to create a lost-and-found foreground. The fact that I am even able to articulate what appeals to me in an art work in this way is rewarding and something that I have found to be a benefit from spending significant time surrounded by these pieces. I found Jon Coburn's ability to represent landscape by simplifying subjects fascinating. I haven't really done any lino printing in the past so I trialled this process during my residency to see how it fits into my work practice. Viewing works in the wider exhibition also influenced some of my experiments during the residency. For example, I was informed by Sally Gabori's use of colour and the freedom she expresses with her brush strokes.

While looking through the collection database, I noticed numerous art works by Elizabeth and John Gould who documented many Australian birds and animals during the 1800's. On my first day at the museum, I noted the many feathers littering the ground as I walked from the carpark to the building, so I decided to collect and catalogue a feather a day and present them, almost scientifically, to fit into the idea that I was working in a 'museum' space: a place where items are gathered, examined and recorded for future generations.

I explored the concepts of place and identity throughout the residency by investigating the area surrounding the Museum of Art. This included experimenting with imagery of seed pods found lying on the ground through a variety of media. I used pencil, charcoal and ink to draw their forms and then reimagine those through paint, and used wire as another medium to investigate form. I also began to use various eco dyeing processes using found leaves on paper and fabric and then juxtaposing and layering this with other found elements to create a narrative that speaks of place and my connection to where the museum is located over the duration of my residency.

One thing that I was a little unsure about when I began the residency was how I would interact with the range of people passing through. Surprisingly, I enjoyed this immensely, particularly talking to school children and being able to convey the sense of enjoyment and curiosity I find in my work. Apart from this, people from Jerico visited specifically because I was there, and visitors from Quilpie, Rolleston, Comet, Emerald, Springsure, Bundaberg and possibly other places were able to share their stories and viewpoints with me. I think it was exciting for them to see someone from a regional area being creative in a gallery: a space that can seem rarified, slightly foreign, to people raised to be practical. It was encouraging for visiting regional artists to know that this residency is planned to be offered in the future and that they could apply.

Overall, I believe that I have gained valuable insight from the collection to further develop my skills, demonstrated and shared the processes I use in creating my artwork, and managed to show I can work creatively within the space provided. For me, personally, being an Artist in Residence has been highly beneficial. It has given me time and space to be creative away from my everyday life; to stand back and reflect on how to move forward and find what is important to me. The time I have had in the Collection Room to study my chosen works and learn to articulate why I chose these works has been an important process in finding a focus for my work going forward.