

Frances Sullivan-Rhodes

'At the Edge of Things'

Frances Sullivan-Rhodes is an artist of the Peel region, originally from the UK. Having studied and exhibited in England, Eire and Australia, her practice spans painting, photography, sculpture, installation and curation. Her practice is driven by a fascination with the natural world and with a particular focus on the landscape that she and her children inhabit.

Her recent works are a portrait of motherhood and childhood, springing from the joys and horrors of observing her children's playful and inquisitive engagement with their environments. The magic of discovering the natural world and of inventive play for the children, and the anxious awareness of dangers and challenges in the mind of their mother.

In the first year of the Pandemic, witnessing sadnesses, losses and anxieties of those touched by disasters of bushfires, closed borders and changes in human interaction, her observations of her children's play was thrown into sharp relief. Against a maelstrom of local and global fears, threats and disasters she witnessed her children, their cousins and friends, playing, unconcerned. This innocent play appeared immeasurably precious and deserving of celebration and led to a renewed vigour in her painting.

The paintings collected in this exhibition are extensively layered, acrylic and mixed media on ply. Some reference is made to the landscape of the Peel region, but imagined as a composite, almost surreal space in which lace, abstracted plants and children's play equipment are situated. These references enhance the sense of the fragility of the innocent play and an urgency to protect and enable it.

Frances' background in teaching Aesthetics fed an interest in the notions of the Uncanny and the Monstrous shapes her approach to painting, with figures and fragments of landscape appearing as if in flux: disrupted, unfixed, emerging or receding from or into the painted surface.

Frances works in Curtin University's School of Education and lives near the edge of the land and water, in Djilba Darbal-Gabbi, with her husband and children and plants.

Selected Exhibitions

- 2024 Children at the Edge of Things, Curtin University, School of Education
- 2024 Practice in Place, The Moore's Building, Fremantle
- 2023 Lovely Creatures, The Painted Tree Gallery, Northcliffe
- 2021 Solastalgia, Lost Eden, Dwellingup
- 2020 Reflections | COVID19, CASM, Mandurah, WA
- 2020 *South West Times Art 2020*, Bunbury Regional Art Gallery, Bunbury, WA
- 2019 *SCARP: Alternative Archive*, Lost Eden, WA
- 2019 *Altered Nature*, Lost Eden, Dwellingup, WA
- 2018 *Dark Swan*, P.S.A.S, Fremantle (September 7- October 5, 2018)
- 2015 *Neither Here, Nor There*, Kidogo, Fremantle
- 2015 *Homing: Luxury and Necessity*, Hangzhou, China
- 2015 *GMT+8*, Hangzhou, China
- 2015 *Necessary Fictions*, Kidogo, Fremantle
- 2014 *Staffroom*, PSAS, Fremantle

- 2014 *Solstice Exhibition*, Habitué, Fremantle
- 2014 *Blending Past and Present*, Moore's Building Fremantle
- 2013 *Staffroom Exhibition*, Myre Building, Fremantle, December.
- 2012 *The Floating Garden*, Free Range Gallery, Perth, Western Australia
- 2012 *Alight*, The Oats Factory, Perth Western Australia
- 2011 *Second Nature*, The Studio Gallery, Yallingup, Western Australia
- 2007 *Place and Memory*, Solo Exhibition, Kidogo Gallery, Perth, Western Australia
- 2006 *In Memory of Landscapes*, MarinovicRhodes Gallery, Fremantle
- 2003 *House Project*, Artist Led Project, Falmouth, Cornwall, UK
- 2002 *Playing With Each Other*, Kerris Veane, Falmouth College of Arts, Cornwall
- 2002 *Field of Vision*, Artist Led Project, Trenmenere, Cornwall, UK

Artworks:

If you are interested in owning one of these works, please contact Fran on 0420876702, direct message on @franrhodes77 on Instagram, or fransullivanrhodes@gmail.com. Payment plans and commissions are available.



Spirit of the trees watching

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30cm

\$380



Nothing that Moves on Land or Sea Seems as Beautiful to Me

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30

\$380



Leap into the Void

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30cm

\$380



Precareity

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30cm

\$380



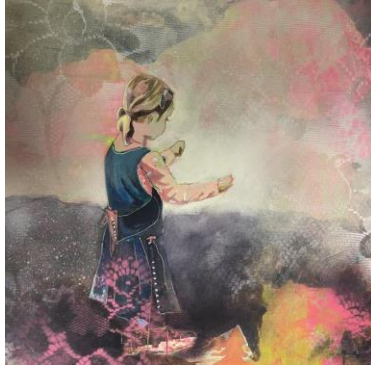
All Come Tumbling Down

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30

\$380



Circe

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30cm

\$380



How Does Your Garden Grow

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

30x30cm

\$380



Golden Summers (A homage) - **SOLD**

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

40x40cm

\$450



At the Edge of Things II

2024

Mixed Media (Acrylic paint, spray acrylic, acrylic ink and graphite on panel)

40x40cm

\$450

Kaya! Thank you, Lisa, for the introduction and the acknowledgment of Country. I want to start by talking about some artworks that aren't here, to help contextualise this small exhibition. So my practice prior to becoming a mom really centered on ideas of place and memory, and identity. On returning to Australia after living and studying in Ireland and England I found that all I wanted to paint were landscapes I had known and walked in in Galway and Cornwall and Indiana and Valencia. My paintings were imperfect as records of those scenes but became a portrait of my experience of place. I really embraced that incompleteness of remembered landscape and layered image with fragments of text that I associated with the experience of those places or that described something particular about being there.

There is a really beautiful short essay by Foucault titled *Des Espaces Autres* (Of Other Spaces) from 1967 in which he discusses places that take their identity from other spaces, places which might be portable like the site of a Persian Carpet, an abstraction of a garden and crucially something that can move and be inhabited in different sites. It gave me a way of thinking about how I navigate my experience of feeling in a way out of place and of homing through creative practice, and this really drove my research for 7 years.

When I became a mom my focus shifted and I found myself watching my children exploring the world around them and entering into their sense of wonder and delight in play and in that exploration. I started to think about how I would help them come to have a sense of their place in the world and their connection to other places, to the landscapes and cultures and peoples and histories of South Africa, Eire, England and here, living as we do on the beautiful traditional lands of the Binjaeb People of the Nyoongar Nation.

The ideas of home and homing became loaded for me, growing out of that research but also as I was a single mom for 5 years and spent a year and a half living with my parents whilst trying to provide a home for my kids. One of these paintings captures a moment of play after we moved into our home, where packing boxes became a fort and a treasure chest and then a tower to try to knock over with balls and this painting catches the moment the tower started to topple. Fragments of domestic decoration, of wallpaper, lace, stitches infiltrate these paintings at once uniting figure and ground and disrupting scenes of play.

The chaotic colour and stains and splashes or smears of paint provide a counterpoint to the deliberate marks that pull a figure out of the surface and for me perfectly evoke the hurly burly of parenting and the chrysalising of moments of attention.

I feel that in the context of all that is horrible in the world, it is worth choosing to place attention on the things we find beautiful and I chose to celebrate these moments of play and exploration and wonder.

I want to finish with a book recommendation. When I was doing my Master's in Falmouth in Cornwall, I had a seminar with a visiting lecturer from the RCA, John Stezaker. He recommended that I read *On Beauty and Being Just* by Elaine Scarry and it has become one of my favourite, most influential texts on my practice. This book sees an intersection of ethics and aesthetics, and she argues that there is a moral consequence for having an aesthetic sensibility. If we can find something beautiful then we will want to protect the conditions that allow us to have that experience. She suggests that this drive explains even the development of our law codes, from Hammurabi to now. My hope is that if we can recognise the beauty in a particular instance of childish play, of frolicking and learning through play, that we can be moved to reflect and to act to protect the conditions that allow that play for all children, not just those to whom we are related or acquainted. Thank you.

