

Powerful imagery has a strong impact

Art review

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ANNIKA Romeyn: *Endurance*. Megalo Print Gallery, 21 Wentworth Avenue, Kingston. Until September 21.

Annika Romeyn is a Canberra-born, Canberra-based printmaker whose work is primarily preoccupied with the landscape. For her, the landscape is not something neutral or objectified, but it is animate - the carrier of the spirit of the place. It is something with which the artist has a very personal relationship.

Romeyn spends much of her time walking and travelling on water by raft or kayak through the landscape, while at the same time absorbing all that surrounds her.

The great Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once wrote, "Above all, do not give up your desire to walk: every day I walk myself into a state of well-being, and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it ... but by sitting still, and the more one sits still, the closer one comes to feeling ill ... thus if one just keeps on walking, everything will be all right."

Endurance is an exhibition that takes as its point of departure the geographical location of Guerilla Bay on the far south coast, bordered to the south by Burrewarra Point. It has spectacular rock formations that have been squeezed, bent and broken as part of a very ancient compressive movement and are thought to date back over 500 million years. Its tranquil beach can witness stormy seas.

For Romeyn, the site also has a personal association, as it was the place where she spent the last summer with her mother in 2016-17. It was about the same time that she encountered in the writings of the popular American author Rebecca Solnit ideas concerning "the blue of distance", where the blue on the horizon is forever unattainable. All of these factors the artist shares with her audience in her exhibition catalogue note as we approach her large impressive installed



Annika Romeyn's Guerilla Bay 1, 2019, in *Endurance* at Megalo Print Studio + Gallery. Picture: Supplied

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works on paper.

The first thing that strikes one is the sense of scale of these works. Although they are made up of individual smaller sheets of paper, one of the key works in the show, *Guerilla Bay 1* (2019), has an overall composite measurement of 160 centimetres

by 228 centimetres.

The other thing is the colour - it is made up of shades of blue from the darker textured rocks with their tooth-like formation full of microscopic fossils of long extinct little creatures, to the swirling lighter blue masses of water, through to the weeping blue sky with dribbles descending to the sea on the horizon.

The technique is also curious. The artist has employed a monotype as a base - in other words, an image is painted on a plate and then this is run through the press onto a sheet of paper - that she has heavily reworked or touched up with watercolour.

It is very effective as it has the slightly

ethereal quality of a vision: strong, dominant and almost tangible through its sense of scale, but at the same time removed from a knowable reality.

The ancient qualities of the rocks have permanence, but the sea and sky have an ephemeral dimension that could fade like sea mist.

Other strong pieces in the show include *Endurance 1* and *Endurance 2*, both of 2019 and of the same scale and technique.

This is the most coherent and ambitious exhibition by Romeyn to date, where powerful imagery is imbued with a strong emotional impact - an image of grandeur and beauty that is never fully attainable.