



Catalogue essay by Owen Craven, curator with UAP and former editor of Artist Profile.

Jo Davenport's abstract paintings are an exploration of the Australian landscape that surrounds her daily life, stripped back to its bare essentials. Her latest exhibition – *Surrounded by Sky* – is a continuation of her luminous body of work, inspired by the relationship she has with the landscape she calls home.

Living and working in an area called Splitters Creek, on the Murray River, Davenport is surrounded by the Wonga Wetlands – the floodplains of the Murray River. An ecosystem of lagoons and billabongs that covers an area of around 80 hectares, the wetlands are a haven for native wildlife and an endless source of creative stimulation and inspiration for her paintings.

The richness and vitality of this landscape feeds into Davenport's paintings to create sophisticated fields of tension with the simplest elements of composition and form. Each and every painting is imbued with an energy that is a unique response to her relationship with that landscape – one that is rich and full of life.

Davenport uses painting as a vehicle to explore her deep connection with the landscape and to offer insight into the intangible and irresistible qualities of the land she holds dear to her. "I like to generate energy in the work by keeping the paintings open and airy" she explains. The paintings act as portals so "the viewer can enter the work, move through it and therefore experience or have an understanding of the landscape as I have done".

Her canvases are densely layered compositions that are a reflection of time spent in the landscape. With each gestural layer, "an element of time is created...an accumulation or a collection of experiences of being and living each day" Davenport explains. Vibrant colours and textures grow on a canvas. The compositions are not static depictions of a landscape topography but, rather, are dynamic reflections on the emotions and memory of place.

There is movement and texture on the surface of each canvas that transports the viewer to a place that is at once complex and challenging but full of life and energy. Davenport says, "it's not always about the sublime greatness of the landscape; it can also be the fragility and intimacy – a feminine nurturing landscape. But in a moment it could all change and that sense of wellbeing could all be eroded away".

Davenport embraces the density of the landscape by layering her ideas, thoughts and emotions onto the canvas. "Abstraction allows for a layering of meaning that can be experienced in unison – the painting therefore is never static or fixed – it can keep changing, be full of possibilities and have a life of its own" she explains.

Surrounded by Sky presents a body of work that highlights the insatiable qualities of being immersed in the natural landscape of Davenport's surrounds. Each painting transports the viewer to a space, place and time but is composed with such vitality that with each viewing the works evolve and change – just like that of the natural landscapes – offering a new experience each and every day.



Picnic on the Ridge 2016
oil & beeswax on Belgian linen
153cm x 263cm



The Bush Block 2016
oil & beeswax on Belgian linen
168cm x 183cm



Winter Wetlands 2016
oil on Belgian linen
168cm x 183cm



Horseshoe Lagoon Jetty 2016
oil on Belgian linen
183cm x 168cm



View From the Pines 2016
oil on Belgian linen
153cm x 153cm



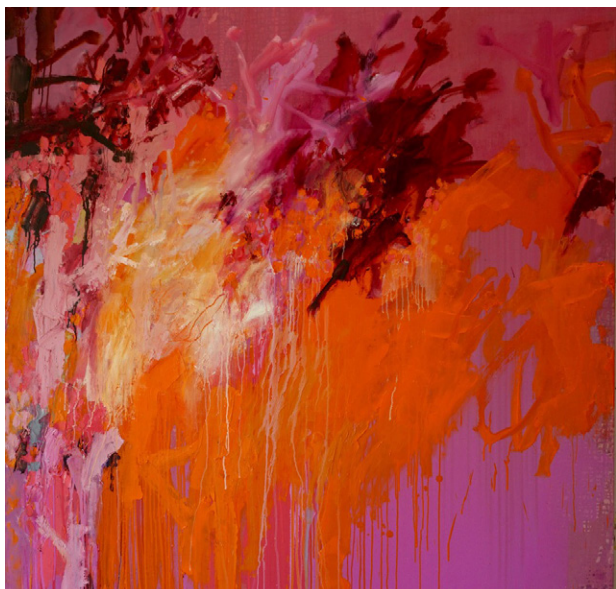
Red Sky to Night 2016
oil on Belgian linen
168cm x 183cm



Still Water 2016
oil on Belgian linen
153cm x 153cm

Jo Davenport undertook a residency at the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in Hill End in October 2015, and in 2016 presented a major solo exhibition at the MAMA Regional Gallery in Albury. Recently, her work 'Sunshine and Rain' was acquired by Artbank.

For 35 years Davenport technically trained within the field of painting, yet turned her focus to exhibiting in both solo and group exhibitions only in the last ten years. In 2013 Jo Davenport was included in a major new exhibition at the Wangaratta Art Gallery, alongside Sally Gabori, Todd Hunter, Ildiko Kovacs, and Aida Tomescu, as well as being a finalist in the Tattersall's Club Prize for Landscape. In 2012 Davenport was selected as one of only 30 finalists in the \$25,000 R M McGivern Prize 2012, with a theme of Uncertainty. Whilst completing her Masters at the VCA, Jo was also the recipient of The Langridge Painting Award, The Shelmedine Acquisitive Art Award, The Alliance Francaise Award and The Pigment Gallery Award. In 2012 she held her first highly successful solo exhibition, 'Remembered Landscapes' at Flinders Lane Gallery.



Eventide 2016
oil on Belgian linen
153cm x 153cm



Morning Has Broken II 2016
oil on Belgian linen
92cm x 92cm



After Winter, Spring 2016
oil on Belgian linen
92cm x 92cm



Glory Glory 2016
oil on Belgian linen
92cm x 92cm

Davenport's work is held in the Artbank Collection, Hong Kong's Norman Foster Club House Tai Po; the Permanent Collection of Wangaratta Regional Art Gallery; the University of Melbourne; Mercy Hospital, Albury and ArtStream Investment Group, as well as private collections in Australia, UK, USA, Hong Kong, France, Canada and Japan. She is a constant traveler, drawing upon her surrounds to inspire her bodies of work and she has undertaken residencies and research trips globally for the last ten years.