

Annika Romeyn's immersive prints in *Across the Distance* convey power and sadness

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Music, Theatre & Arts

**Annika Romeyn: *Across the Distance*.
At Cox Gallery, 1/19 Eastlake Parade, Kingston. Until July 16, 2021.**

The young Canberra-based printmaker Annika Romeyn has in recent years been making quite an impact in the Australian printmaking scene.

In 2020 she won the \$25,000 Open Award at the Fisher's Ghost Art Award at the Campbelltown Arts Centre to be followed by the \$15,000 National Works on Paper Prize at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery. Earlier this year, she took out the \$15,000 Burnie Print Prize at the Burnie Regional Art Gallery in Tasmania.

She works on a large scale by assembling multiple panels of paper to create huge immersive prints that function more like installations than single images.



Annika Romeyn, *Endurance 7*.

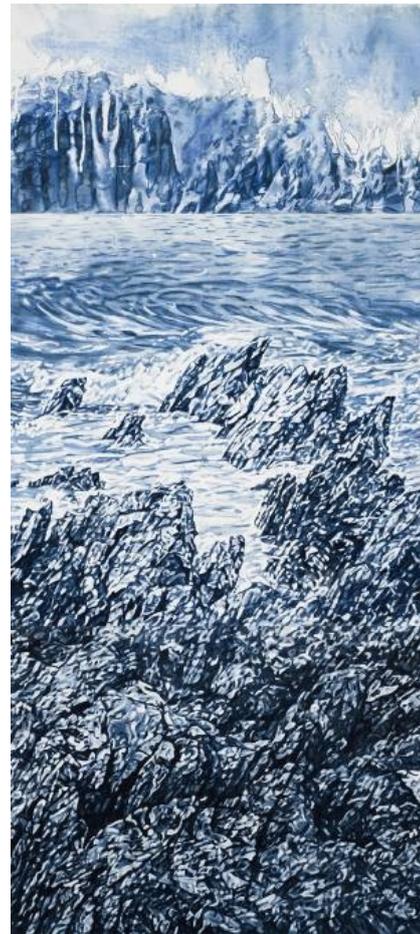
Her exhibition in Canberra consists of four of these large prints. Apart from scale, her technique is also somewhat unconventional and in many ways low-tech compared with that devised by many printmakers. Her matrix is a plastic sheet that she paints up in watercolours. She then covers it with wet paper and passes it through an etching press to create a unique impression. This is called a watercolour monotype.

Romeyn is a landscape artist who enjoys being in the landscape and travelling through it on foot, by kayak and raft. The large scale - the prints *Endurance 7* and *Endurance 8* measure 228 centimetres by 168 centimetres each - allows her to make art to the scale of her own body, in other words, there is a direct physicality where she is not called upon to reduce the dimensions but in the mark making on the plastic there is a one-to-one correspondence in the human touch.

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The other distinguishing quality of the four prints at this exhibition is their colour and subject matter. Having for personal reasons selected Guerilla Bay on the South Coast with its spectacular rock formations as the focus for her work, Romeyn has translated the colour palette into a rich monochrome blue.

The choppy seas, the sea spray, the drifting mist and the vaporous clouds combine into a mighty, atmospheric vision stressing the power and dynamism of elemental forces. There is the feeling for the sublime in nature where its awe-inspiring force by contrast makes the human presence appear fragile and insignificant. Traditionally, blue is a spiritual colour. In its darker hues it denotes the supernatural, while when it is lighter it becomes calmer and when it reaches white it can come to represent a complete calm. It is also a slightly melancholy colour, like the popular connotations of the word blue from blue horizons to a form of music.



Annika Romeyn, Guerilla Bay 2

When witnessing a major print, such as *Endurance 8* (2021) or my favourite at the exhibition, *Guerilla Bay 2* (2019), for all of the conveyed power and fury in wild waves and stormy skies, the prevailing atmosphere is one of subdued sadness. The images appear like a metaphor for the passing of life and, within a universal scheme, the insignificance of human existence when compared with the permanence of the forms and forces of nature.

Although one has to admit that the Cox Gallery is a fairly inadequate space for the display of art - basically an entrance foyer into an office complex - Romeyn's prints hold their own ground and majestically dominate the space.

Through this body of work she has already established a profile in the art world and a degree of acclaim and it is with enthusiasm that I look forward to future developments in her art. I think that it was Edgar Degas who said, "Everybody has talent at 25. The difficult thing is to have it at 50."