

[Home](#) » [Arts](#) » *Moving with the light*

Moving with the light

Posted by *Louise North* on September 22, 2013 | [Comments Off](#)

Like  31  1



Shadow Leaves: oil on linen, 183 x137cm. (Kathryn Ryan)

Memories of her childhood living on a dairy farm in Panmure, east of Warrnambool, still permeate **Kathryn Ryan's** foggy, moody oil paintings and charcoal drawings – even though she now calls the extreme desert landscape of the United Arab Emirates home.

Kathryn moved to Dubai in 2011 with her architect husband after studying art in Warrnambool and then spending 20 years in Melbourne establishing herself as a professional artist. And while she returns to Australia and her hometown often to visit family (she has 10 siblings) her artistic connection to the South-West has naturally been altered.

She misses the beaches, the greenness of her old environment – and the light — but with all change comes an opportunity to create anew, and this is what Kathryn has done for her new exhibition in Melbourne from October 8.

The quality of light, mood and atmosphere in the landscape and environment around her remains a central feature of her work, but as she is forced to spend most of her time indoors, her paintings and drawings are less landscape and more object. They take the shape now of more indoor items like the shadows created by an Arabic lantern.



Lantern: charcoal on paper, 72x52cm.

For eight months of the year, it is virtually impossible to venture outside in Dubai's urban environs because the temperature reaches around 47C -50C most days.

"For many years I've painted the South West Victorian landscapes which are so familiar to me, capturing the wintery conditions and quality of light, evoking a calm and contemplative space," she said.

Her new series of work focuses on the play of light and fall of shadows which "accentuate the organic and sensual nature of plants and Arabic lanterns".

Her oil paintings are many meticulous layers of paint and glazes (up to 25-50) built up over three to four months "to achieve a depth and luminosity, harmony and balance", while her charcoals are also layers of mark making and rubbing away to leave the essence of light and shadows.



Kathryn Ryan's work reflects her new home in Dubai – a long way from her South-West Victorian roots.

The transition to Dubai hasn't been easy as an artist. It is difficult to buy the art materials she needs, and sending her canvasses to and from Australia is logistically challenging.

An added difficulty is that this ultra-modern desert metropolis has only a fledgling arts scene and galleries tend to exhibit the work of its countrymen and women.

Kathryn's work, however, still finds accolades in her homeland.

She is well known in Victoria and New South Wales and further afield having exhibited in major commercial galleries and been a finalist in prestigious national art prizes in Australia.