

FEELING INTO FORM: KATHRYN DOLBY

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OTOMYS



“As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.” – Carl Jung

Art critic Jennifer Higgin writes in *The Other Side: A Journey into Women, Art and the Spiritual World*, “To trust in art is to trust in mystery.” It’s not a wild thought to translate art and its mystical process into some form of alchemy. As Higgin muses, art in its pure form is “the transformation of one thing (an idea, a material) into another.” Art allows for a tapping, nudging, sneaking, peeping into the metaphysical.

Leaning into her intuition, *Feeling Into Form* is Kathryn Dolby's artistic energy captured on birch board in quickly applied brushwork. The paintings invite the viewer to discover more than what can be seen. Beyond the physicality, they serve as reminders of a feeling. A moment; the artwork becomes a portal to transcend the world as we understand it. We are asked to step into Dolby's realm — connections between the subconscious and the intuitive, the everyday and the sublime. The paintings reveal that there are transcendent experiences everywhere in life. For the artist, they exist in motherhood, nature and her environment in the Northern Rivers, and her artwork process.

In her artworks, gesture and line needs life to vibrate — something she describes as an electrical current, 'humming'. Somewhat of an evasive process, the artist works across multiple paintings, which she moves around the studio, from board to board, layering, building, painting over. This charge echoes the one she finds when looking at the sky, at water, at the changing colours of trees as they shift through the seasons, or when the light touches the horizon at dusk.

What unfolds is a bodily response where the hand holding the brush connects with the subconscious. The aim is to be effortless with this process, quick marks hit the surface. An unravelling and release. As natural as the marks found in nature, some are minimal, others bring more form — either geometry (a vessel to pour into, a container), abstract forms, or familiar landscape motifs borrowed from the horizon. The result creates dream-like, otherworldly depictions layered with paint, overlapping and borrowing from the layers below. Delicately slicing into other realms for movement and life captured in the artworks. Like the currents in water or shadows of the trees. Questioning what you see, what is real, or a reflection.

The artworks speak to each other to create a dialogue of energy that vibrates throughout the collection. Continuing their conversation that hums around the room. The paintings are worked on from feel and memory, with slight references from her time out in nature. A particular line, colour or composition may reference a piece, yet only in emotion rather than an accurate depiction. Dolby says, "If my intuition is telling me that the painting needs something drastic, I have to listen to it."

In *Little Anchors*, the canvas is split in two. A reflection or mirror. Though neither side reflects the other in perfect imagery. The title balances the painting for a grounding element, the block-like forms borrowed from the playroom. The painting speaks to Dolby's consideration on mirroring. How children mirror their parents and build upon our stories. There is this double side. But also, one seen in nature for reflected landscapes in water — from permanent bodies of water like the ocean or rivers to a seasonal creek or transient puddle. Capturing a reflection perhaps only just once. Ever changing, evocative of how we all perceive reality slightly differently.

Stories Built on Stories features a cluster of trees on the right-hand side, a slight ochre red figure emerging and a glowing sunset/sunrise at the top. The title of the work stems from *Motherhood* by Sheila Heti. She speaks about how our children build upon our stories and become their own. Dolby describes this painting as also a painting over a painting, completed at separate times (an older work from a previous exhibition, layered over with fresh paint to become new again). Here, she considers the hidden stories, embedded in the history of the landscape. They contain their own energy, a spirit. She asks, do you ever notice that certain places have a distinct feel or energy to them?

The resulting artworks tap into a hidden meaning, a raw feeling — a search for the middle ground between the physical and intangible. The physical being the landscape, the structure of the board and materials. The intangible is everything from emotion, feeling, the psyche, memory and the spirit.

Philip Guston's book *I Paint What I Want to See* compiles his reflections and thoughts on painting. In one musing, he talks about the picture plane not in terms of composition but of 'the metaphysical plane'. An enigmatic other space accessed by releasing control: as soon as you try to force it, it disappears. Beyond these references to

that something else, a fleetingness, another realm. There is also a return to innocence and play. Something lighter. The air surrounding a child doing a cartwheel on the beach evokes a shift in perception. A pure, childlike sense of freedom, akin to a quick little splash of a painting from a toddler. A fresh burst of energy. It's here Dolby's daughters inspire her to inject that energy into the work; tapping into that space while releasing her own limitations. For awe and wonder.

Words by Emma-Kate Wilson



Kathryn Dolby

Little Anchors

Acrylic on Board

Natural Oak Shadow Box Frame

80 x 122cm

\$ 4,500.00

SOLD



Kathryn Dolby

Stories Built on Stories (Ghost Gums)

Acrylic on Board

80 x 120cm

\$ 3,750.00



Kathryn Dolby

The Mountains We Hold, Evans River Green

Acrylic on Birch Board

80 x 120cm

\$ 3,750.00

SOLD



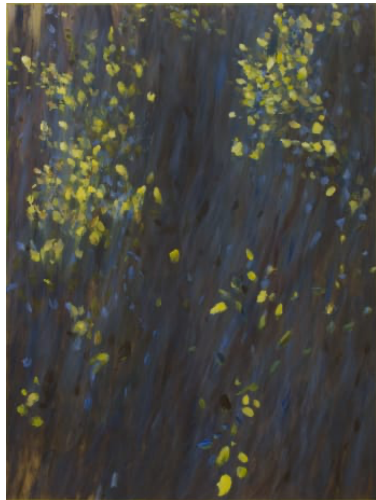
Kathryn Dolby

Unravel, Release

Acrylic on Birch Board

80 x 120cm

\$ 3,750.00



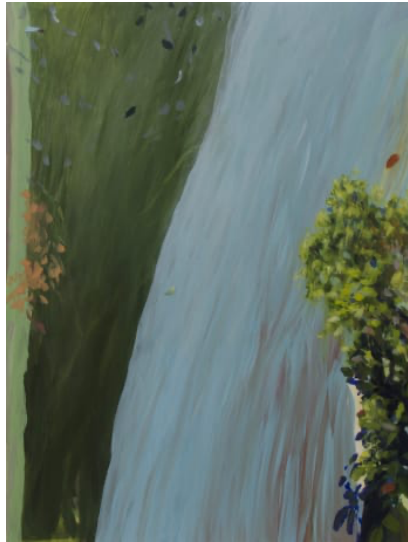
Kathryn Dolby

Wattle Over Gumnut

Acrylic on Birch Board

75 x 100cm

\$ 3,200.00



Kathryn Dolby

Slipping Colour

Acrylic on Birch Board

75 x 100cm

\$ 3,200.00



Kathryn Dolby

Ghost Gum, Tree Veil

Acrylic on Birch Board

60 x 80cm

\$ 2,750.00



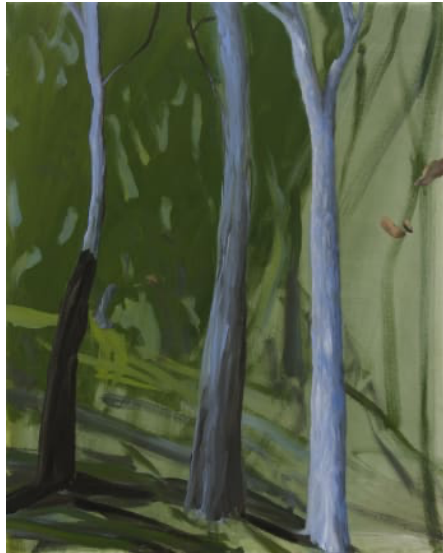
Kathryn Dolby

Mirror, Blue

Acrylic on Birch Board

60 x 80cm

\$ 2,750.00



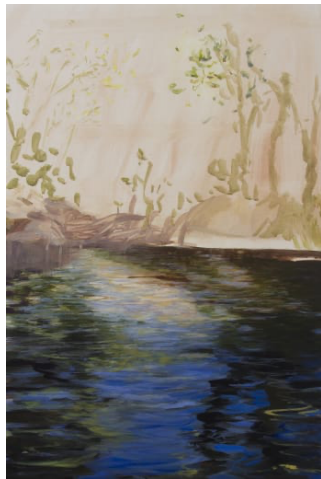
Kathryn Dolby

Leaning in, Ghost Gums, Nightcap

Acrylic on Polycotton

61 x 76cm

\$ 2,750.00



Kathryn Dolby

New Leaves, In Water

Acrylic on Birch Board

40 x 60cm

\$ 1,750.00



Kathryn Dolby

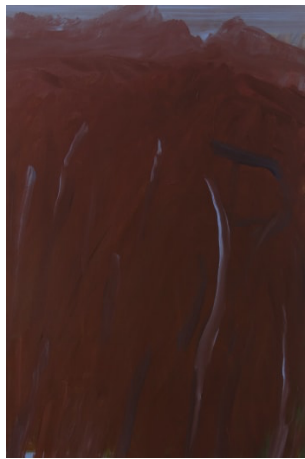
Rebirth Of Spring

Acrylic on Birch Board

40 x 60cm

\$ 1,750.00

SOLD



Kathryn Dolby

Light Lines

Acrylic on Birch Board

40 x 60cm

\$ 1,750.00



Kathryn Dolby

Study for Mirror, Blue

Acrylic on Saunders Waterford Paper

Olive Archival Backing Board

Charcoal Frame

37 x 45cm

\$ 1,100.00



Kathryn Dolby

Of Water (Entry)

Acrylic on Saunders Waterford Paper

Olive Archival Backing Board

Charcoal Frame

48 x 37.5cm

\$ 1,250.00