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## LAURINE · DIGGINS · FINE · ART

### A CLOSER LOOK AT... capturing a moment

Our current exhibition *Andrew Sayers: Defining the Artist* displays over 40 gouaches capturing the Australian landscape. Gouache paint, with its properties akin to both watercolour and acrylic, is favoured for its strong colour and quick drying nature, allowing Sayers to paint the landscape on the spot. These works painted *en plein air* show a confidence and skill in handling and technique and are marked by a beautiful sense of place and space and time. As Doug Hall AM noted in his opening speech, they exhibit “poise, quiet monumentalism and clarity.”



Andrew Sayers AM 1957 – 2015 *Corunna Point* 2015 gouache on paper 56 x 76 cm



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On the occasion of his 2015 exhibition at LDFA, Andrew spoke of “the challenge of taking a sheet of paper into nature and capturing something of a place and a mood... Sometimes the gouaches end up not working because a rain cloud will come over and wash it away and that’s happened to me on lots of occasions or on other occasions the light changes so rapidly that it’s impossible to capture a moment but sometimes happier things happen.”  
(Andrew Sayers In Conversation, LDFA video, 2015)



Andrew Sayers AM 1957 – 2015 *Bermagui, Behind Haywards Beach* 2012 gouache on paper 34 x 47 cm

The gouaches are an expression of Sayers’ representation of the essence of a landscape, captured at a particular moment in time. The inspiration for the subject matter reveals a personal insight into the artist, with many drawn from the areas around the south coast of New South Wales where the family enjoyed a holiday home near Bermagui. They also reveal his delight in travel and his passion for geology, where rocky sites were of particular appeal.

These works speak not only of the impulse of the artist to capture a particular moment; of his skill in working quickly in the gouache medium to represent a sense of space and light, but also of Andrew’s interest in time, both in the grand sense of the history of geological time and in contrast with the ephemeral fleeting time of the elements – of ancient volcanic hills against an incoming storm or the seasonal desert flora against the historic red domed rocks of Kata Tjuta.

There is an intensity to painting in front of your chosen motif, outside in the elements, which requires long periods of really looking and concentrating; thinking and calculating all the time about how best to encapsulate all that you can see in front of you and selecting the right colour to assist in the portrayal of place and atmosphere. Added to this is the pressure of having to capture the imagery quickly. Perhaps, this is the challenge and the attraction for an artist.



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“It’s great painting in the desert with gouache, you’ve got to do it before the paint dries on the palette or on the paper and the light changes so rapidly, particularly towards the end of the day – it becomes a real race against time... [There is] a sense of space and that feeling you get when you are in the desert that the sky is not just a continuous background by a massive sort of dome and against that light you have all sorts of plays of shadows and tone...”



Andrew Sayers AM 1957 – 2015 *Kata Tjuta II* 2014 gouache on paper 38 x 57 cm



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Andrew Sayers *Two Volcanoes, Mt Moorookyle and Mt Kooroocheang* 2015 gouache on paper 26 x 36 cm

Andrew's partner Perry recalls a trip to the volcanic hills of Mt Moorookyle and Mt Kooroocheang in west central Victoria.... "we'd park by the side of the road with Ikea folding chairs and he had a big piece of Masonite which he had cut to the right size for the paper and his bulldog clips so he had everything organised and sorted but those particular pictures - they're the most beautiful volcanic hills – quite dramatic. It started to spit so we turned the car around and he sat in the back with the back door open and he sat painting."

(In conversation with Perry Sperling 2018)

There is a sense of the awe of nature, yet these are also intimate scenes. They are personal impressions and whilst not overt, evidence of an artist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of art history, from the links to the Impressionist movement, painting en plein air and the attraction of a chosen motif at different times and conditions, to the abstract squiggle of a tree reminiscent of Fred Williams.



Andrew Sayers AM 1957 – 2015 *Mt Moorookyle I* 2015 gouache on paper 26 x 36 cm

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For Andrew Sayers, the consciousness of capturing a moment can be evident in the title, such as *On the Spot Sketch, Wallaga Lake Bridge*. Here, the artist delights in the swirl of cloud above and the reflections in the water below with gestural brushstrokes - you can feel the push of paint across the paper – whilst other elements are given definition with a few deft strokes, such as the tree branches. The bridge serves as a literal bridging device between these two elements, intentionally separated by the white of the paper itself. The bridge invites the viewer's eye right into the centre of the image, providing a sense of depth and perspective.

The unique bridges of this area feature in much of Andrew's work and is something we will take *A Closer Look At...* next time.



Andrew Sayers 1957 -2015 *On the Spot Sketch, Wallaga Lake Bridge* 2012 gouache on paper 24 x 32 cm

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### **ANDREW SAYERS : DEFINING THE ARTIST** showing until 27 April 2019

To preview the exhibition please see our website [www.diggins.com.au](http://www.diggins.com.au)  
where you can download a colour illustrated catalogue  
and view a [video of the opening](#) by Doug Hall AM

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