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A CLOSER LOOK AT.... THE BRIDGES OF ANDREW SAYERS

Included in our current exhibition *Andrew Sayers: Defining the Artist* are a series of gouaches focussing on historic and picturesque wooden bridges on the south coast of New South Wales. Andrew's exposure to these structures came about through holidays spent in the area and his interest led him to source historic photographs from the local museum. This speaks of Sayers' thoroughness and dedication and how his passions and interests shaped his art.



Wallaga Lake Bridge copyright visitnsw.com



Andrew Sayers *Bridge, Wallaga Lake* 2011 gouache on paper 42 x 59 cm

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The bridges appealed to Sayers on a number of levels: beyond any personal connection with place, there is a natural aesthetic charm – the white painted wooden rails atop the wooden construction sunk into the water, contrasted against the coastal scenery of beach and bushland. There is also the attraction of juxtaposing a human element with the natural environment and the questions this poses about observing time. The bridges are historic, from a time when the pace of life was slower, yet by their very existence speak of the growth of industry in the area.



Andrew Sayers *Wallaga Lake Bridge II* 2012 gouache on paper 34 x 47.2 cm



Wallaga Lake Bridge
copyright visitbermagui.com.au



Andrew Sayers *Wallaga Lake Bridge Windy Afternoon* 2012
gouache on paper 34 x 47.5 cm

The Wallaga Lake Bridge, with its raised midsection was built in the 1890s to allow local farmers, including cheese makers, to transport their produce to the Bermagui wharf and then onto Sydney. It marks the boundary between the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla shires and is one of the oldest wooden bridges still in use in NSW.

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Sayers' bridge series has obvious links to the Impressionist movement with their interest in painting in the landscape, en plein air, in front of the same subject in different conditions and times of the day and of the year. Indeed, certain works have an affinity with Monet's waterlilies, especially in terms of their japonisme feel. The formal structure of the bridge allows for a neat compositional device, with a clear division as bridge separates sea and sky.



Andrew Sayers *Wallaga Lake Bridge III* 2011
gouache on paper 42 x 59 cm



Wallaga Lake Bridge
copyright ABC South East NSW Bill Brown 2015

Sayers' oeuvre is marked by a curiosity in exploring elements of time – as he has said, “I don't think nature can be painted without some sense of the time embodied in the picture – fleeting time, precise points in time, long and drawn-out time, narrative time, cyclical time, time without beginning or end.”

We can see this in the exhibition where a series of bridge works created over a period of five years, are placed together – the contrast of an historic structure stretching back to a different time against the vagaries of the elements at the particular time of painting; from windy days with the waves whipped up and fast moving; to the calm of a paddleboarder and promenaders enjoying the light; to green shadows on a grey day.



Andrew Sayers *On the Spot Sketch Wallaga Lake Bridge* 2012 gouache on paper 23.8 x 32 cm

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Andrew Sayers *Cuttagee Bridge Sketch* 2012 gouache on paper 23.8 x 32 cm



Cuttagee Bridge copyright ABC South East NSW Bill Brown, 2015

Whilst some of the gouaches focus on the picturesque bridges in the context of the surrounding landscape, such as *Cuttagee Bridge Sketch* (showing the iconic one lane bridge, located 7 kms south of Bermagui), others seem more concerned about the structure itself, perhaps lending the possibility of a more symbolic interpretation.

As Matt Chun who hosted Andrew's exhibition, *Trembling Bridges* in 2015 at Mister Jones in Bermagui recalls, "The subject of the Bridge as symbolic of metaphysical transition was perhaps too blunt a metaphor to waste any precious time in discussing. In any case, I think this would have felt uncharacteristically self-indulgent to Andrew. He was always more interested in conversations about the broader art-historical and cultural context of his work, the representation of nature, the bridge-form as a compositional device, and the philosophical

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act of painting. Yet, despite his pragmatism, there was always a sense that these, specifically, were the marks he wanted to leave.” (in conversation with Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, 2018)

Other works are evident of the artist’s observation and keen attention, with close up details bordering on an almost abstract vision.



Underside of Cuttagee Bridge
copyright sapphirecoast.com.au



Andrew Sayers *Bridge Pier, Bermagui* 2012
gouache on paper 23.7 x 34 cm

Sometimes the imagery is stripped back to a minimalist vision, with the stark white posts of the bridges almost seeming to float in the air with no other reference point. Matt and Andrew spoke together about “the local phenomenon of the mist-shrouded bridge, interesting to an artist in its function as an observable abstraction; the passage from form to ephemera. This passage is effectively and disquietingly evoked by Andrew in muddled greens, as his Bridges gently disappear into the picture plane.” (in conversation with Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, 2018)



Andrew Sayers *Wooden Bridge* 2010 gouache on paper 57 x 76 cm (each, diptych)

ANDREW SAYERS: Defining the Artist showing until Saturday 27th April 19

Visit our website www.diggins.com.au

to preview the artworks; download the illustrated catalogue; watch a video of the exhibition opening with speech by Doug Hall AM and read *A Closer Look At...* essays.

Gallery Hours: Tues – Fri 10am – 6pm, Sat 1pm – 5pm during exhibitions
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