

Lara Merrett

Petrichor

4 – 22 May 2021

Lara Merrett's colour-rich abstract paintings reveal an intimate and intuitive approach to painting. Working on a large-scale, Merrett apposes blocks of velvety dark colour with transparent, amorphous pools of acrylic and ink. These delicately layered paintings evoke senses beyond the purely visual, and hint at connections to memory and place.

"The exhibition title, *Petrichor*, describes the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil. I love this word and even more so learning it was invented in the 1960's by two Australian scientists. It's a word that literally comes from an Australian landscape. I'm always trying to make my work cross over to other senses like touch so it's quite nice to bring the idea of smell into painting.

In early 2020, I returned home to the South Coast of NSW after a year living overseas. Seeing everything charred black from the 2019 bushfires was shocking but also strangely beautiful. There were bigger skies and the opportunity to see so much new growth. The constant rain meant lots of crazy growth. It's work that is very much based in my South Coast post-bushfire landscape.

This body of work has also been informed by my recent installation works including *What we leave behind'* in the Wonder and Dread exhibition at Shoalhaven Gallery. This installation invited the viewer to cut into the painted canvas and turn the painting into a 3 dimensional work over the 6 week period. The decisive act of cutting was something I wanted to include in these new paintings. In the studio the scissors have been replaced by the brush and the dark velvety paint, to create virtual 'cut outs' of the inked painting beneath. These strong paint lines sculpt the painting into being. Like the scissors, the brush strokes meant there was no turning back."

Lara Merrett - 2021

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Petrichor is Lara Merrett's fifth solo exhibition at Jan Murphy Gallery. In 2018, Merrett was commissioned for the Jackson Bella Room at the MCA Sydney. The installation *Paint me in* encouraged MCA visitors to interact with suspended, looped canvases, immersing the viewer in fields of bright colour. In 2019, Merrett was commissioned by The University of Queensland Art Museum to produce *High Stakes* a two-part project beginning with a temporary outdoor studio residency and culminating with a large installation inside the museum. Other recent exhibitions include *WONDER + DREAD* at Shoalhaven Regional Gallery (2020), *Installation Contemporary*, curated by Rachel Kent and Megan Robson at Sydney Contemporary (2017) and *Superposition of Three Types* curated by Alexie Glass-Kantor and Talia Linz at Artspace in Sydney (2017). Her work is held in numerous public collections, including the University of New South Wales, Artbank, Macquarie Bank, Sofitel Hotel and UBS Australia.