

Holly Grace

Clearing

“Together we build, pulling and pushing, working together our sawblade in constant motion. A saws edge is both the future and the past a sharpened blade we draw across the land. To clear is both an act of building and of destruction, emptying of a place is to empty it of life.

Life something as fragile and ethereal as glass.”

Clearing is a culmination of recent life changes and artistic developments, following Holly Grace’s move from bayside Elwood, Victoria, to Queanbeyan on the NSW–ACT border. The exhibition brings together a body of work informed by a series of residencies, research projects and creative exchanges that have deepened her connection to the Australian landscape and expanded her exploration of glass as a medium.

The works are inspired by a 2023 joint residency at Gudgenby Cottage in Namadgi National Park and the National Portrait Gallery, followed by her participation in the Sharing Stories Art Exchange, a creative field project facilitated through the Environmental Art program at the Australian National University. The program connects Canberra’s arts community with local Indigenous communities, creating opportunities for cultural exchange, dialogue and engagement with Country. The exhibition also reflects Grace’s recent Christine and Stephen Proctor Fellowship at the Australian National University. The four-week residency at the ANU Glass Workshop provided an opportunity to experiment with new glass techniques while connecting with the Fenner School of Environment and other disciplines across the university. These experiences have contributed to an evolving practice that brings together artistic, environmental and place-based research.

Living closer to nature and the surrounding Namadgi and Brindabella wilderness has given Grace the opportunity to engage with the local landscape on a daily basis. This constant presence has reinforced her appreciation of the immense value and interconnectedness of Australia’s unique flora and fauna, while prompting questions about the value society places on the natural environment in comparison with consumerism, development and monetary profit.

Beginning with the camera as a tool for observing and recording the landscape, Grace translates these observations into glass. Through layering, transparency and material transformation, she creates a multi-dimensional glass canvas that reflects the complexity of the Australian landscape and humanity’s historical and ongoing relationship with it

The artist would like to acknowledge the Christine and Stephen Proctor Fellowship for its generous support for a four week residency in the Glass Workshop at Australian National University. Holly would also like to acknowledge both Annette Blair, Tom Rowney and the talented team of artists that she works with in the hot glass studio at the Canberra Glassworks.