

Contemporary Fine Art

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## **SARA MAHER**

### Artist Statement

My large works on paper arise from my solitary encounter with landscape and the liminal space between physical and intangible experience. They explore memories of space, isolation and solitude, and the experience of co-existing in states of absorption and unease within the dark and starkly beautiful landscape of Tasmania. I am interested in how the sensory experience of being in landscape can intersect with the embodied, spatial experience of painting large organically evolved works on paper within my studio environment.

I see each work as lasting evidence of a slow encounter between gravitational forces, the subtle accumulation of actions of liquid media on/through paper, and my own bodily presence and movement through the confines of a small room as I influence their coming together. Within this room, its walls and floor blackened with ink over time, the works come to evoke bodily presence and a sense of threshold, looking out to an ever-shifting distant spatial realm. They are, in a way, distillations of sensory immersion - linking the experience of their creation (in the studio) with the experience of immersion in the source of inspiration itself (the landscape).

Dombrovskis Residencies have been highly influential in the development of my work, enabling me to live for extended periods within wilderness environs of Tasmania. These residencies are an open creative process of memory making in which a listening to place becomes layered with the stories and encroachments I bring to place. Moments of sensory immediacy that heighten my appreciation and apprehension of place offer a poetic window through which to consider the abstract language behind my making.

Works in this exhibition stem from a two month winter residency in the highland environment of Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park (2016). Each day I walked through dense forest, out to misty glaciated mountain and lake terrain. The world through which I moved was amorphous, fluid and quietly fluctuating - details were obscured, colours were muted, and at times it was difficult to gauge distance and depth as well as my own sense of bodily presence and boundary. This inspired much reflection on the liminal space between mental and physical terrain. The

concept of 'deep time' was significant and it was through the atmospheric dimensions of place that I came to apprehend this concept.

The central question I ask myself is what is my relationship to this place, Tasmania? To make art here - and to draw on the memory of my time here - is to touch on what is present and absent, to reflect on my relationship with those presences and absences. In the vastness of geological time I am fleeting, and I am always cognisant of the fact that this is not my ancestral home.... a land inscribed with deep memory and spirit presence is silently watching...