

PRESS RELEASE

Joanna Cole: *The Familiar in the Unfamiliar-A Spanish Landscape* Presenting works from a 10-day residency, Southern Spain

"The Spanish Landscape holds a rich tapestry of culture and ecological diversity. Through chosen motifs, thistles and eucalypts, traditionally seen either as native or introduced, pests or crops, my aims are to provoke contemplation about the dynamic relationships between humans, history and the environment" Joanna Cole

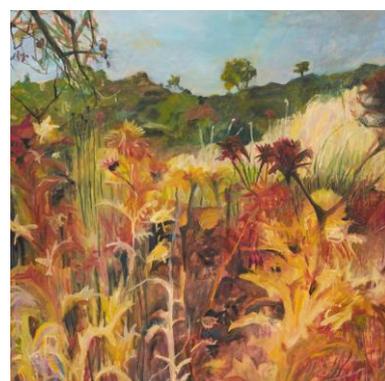
**Opening Saturday 26th August 2023 3-6pm
At Brenda Colahan Fine Art Putney**

**Guest Speaker- Miguel Olmo, Gallery Manager + Curator,
Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios**



WHERE: Brenda Colahan Fine Art, 78B Charles Street PUTNEY
WHEN: 26 August – 9 September 2023
OPENING: Saturday 26th August 2023 3-6pm Tapas and Tempranillo
WEBSITE: <https://www.brendacolahanfineart.com/exhibitions/34/works/>
Artists CV: Attached below

For further information or to make a time to preview please contact Brenda Colahan on Brenda@brendacolahanfineart.com or 02 98082118



Images from left to right: *The Familiar in the Unfamiliar-Introduced Species, Sacred Thistle; The Familiar becomes the Unfamiliar*, each 2023 Oil on linen, 120 x120cm



What is it to gaze upon a landscape painting, its flora and fauna replicated through memory, perception, and craftsmanship? Painting can be an unmoving vehicle, transporting us to far off places or into our nostalgia. Sydney-based painter Joanna Cole has created a fusion of these experiences. In her newest collection of works, *Familiar In The Unfamiliar*, Cole asks us to traverse into the beautiful unknown and question our notions of "otherness" in an era of global connectivity.

Presented by Brenda Colahan Fine Art, Cole began this ensemble of vibrant oil paintings while on residency in the south of Spain in 2022. Living and working in the small village of Gaucín, two hours from Picasso's birthplace of Málaga, Cole was immediately grabbed by a strange sensation of reacquaintance despite the new territory. Recognising the presence the European thistles she had known in her youth in rural South Australia, the Spanish landscape felt like home despite its complete novelty. Meanwhile, the sight and smell of Australian eucalypts throughout the Andalucian countryside further blurred the line between foreign and intimate. This limbo shines through in Cole's new works. Through vibrant, textured reds, pinks, and yellows we are brought into the artist's mind's eye and are transported into a hybrid Australian-Spanish landscape.

As Cole skilfully documents in her studio notes during the composition of this collection, both Spaniards and Australians are acutely affected by the legacy of the historical transplanting of thistles and eucalypts in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thistles, prickly and fast-growing throughout the Australian countryside, are often perceived as invasive and disruptive. Similarly, Eucalypts have also found a place in the Spanish landscape, bringing something exotic and unexpected to the Spanish terrain. Alas the imported Eucalypt plays a double role as, a weed, a bushfire hazard, and simultaneously a prolific cash crop and shelter for marching soldiers. The juxtaposition of these foreign elements within the Spanish landscape prompts contemplation about the complex relationship between globalization, colonization, and the reshaping of ecosystems. Cole furthermore challenges our perception of what is considered natural, native, and welcome.

Fitting of the historical period, Cole's expressive style is evocative of the European fauvists and early Australian modernists. Cole's paintings easily sit alongside the works of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh, friends not only personally but through their deep need to journey for their art. Just as Cole links the first import of plants to present-day ecologies, her strong brushstrokes and strong colour usage rejuvenate expressive landscape painting in contemporary celebration.

And yet Cole is also asking more of us through the wild pigments of these works. While Gauguin painted Polynesia through the lens of an inspired outsider, Cole uses the environment to make us question the very nature of our prejudices. In works such as *In and Out of Bounds*, Cole presents her juxtapositions with serene contemplation. Reminiscent of Sydney Nolan's depictions of Australian draught during his lifetime, Cole's representations of "local foreign" plant species create windows into the surreality of our current, global-native reality in which life-changing environmental, economic, and interpersonal phenomena traverse locale to connect us and cause what Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han calls "de-distancing" through culture.

Each painting in *The Familiar in the Unfamiliar* invites us to challenge our own perceptions, and recognise the commonalities that exist in the in-between spaces of culture, history, and place. As Cole writes in her studio diary, "What is first perceived as a weed - when the history is unlearned and a new history is introduced - becomes a plant with a different, possibly more endearing story, as a staple, a resource, a herb, an object steeped in tradition and culture, and valued." This collection therefore becomes an opportunity to reassess the unknowns we fear, illuminate them with a desire to endear, and appreciate them like a beautiful plant in summer.

Gregory Uzelac
Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The University of Sydney



Joanna Cole b.1972- South Australia. Lives and works in Sydney, NSW

Joanna Cole is a landscape painter with a foundation of continuous line drawing learned with Margie Hooper at the University of South Australia in the late 1990s.

Completing a Masters in Art at UNSW in 2020, Cole continues to issue an organic line rendering unexpected placements of colour to elicit recognition of seasonal and human contributions to the landscape. Her plein air process extorts a sense of wonder in the ephemeral. Light and the beauty of landform and tree formations linger and distort through memory and repetition and the studio processes. Road trips offer the artist a fresh perspective on urban nature. Joanna uses collaboration and poetry, as well as philosophical study, to examine the liminal spaces between reality, the imagined and yearned for, and screen worlds.

Over the last few years Joanna's paintings have been included in national publications, group and solo exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne and regional NSW and held in private collections around the world. Finalist in the Waverley, North Sydney, Blacktown, NSW Parliament en Plein Air and Bowral District Art Prizes, Cole is interested in how contemporary art can prompt conversations about how we see the world and ourselves, how one thing leads to another.

Selected Exhibitions

2023 The Familiar in the Unfamiliar- A Spanish Landscape Brenda Colahan Fine Art
2023 Affordable Art Fair, Sydney Brenda Colahan Fine Art
2022 Waverley Art Prize 2022 (Group)
2022 Affordable Art Fair, Sydney Brenda Colahan Fine Art
2022 Brenda Colahan Fine Art, Putney Autumn 2022 group exhibition
2022 Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf (Group) These are Picasso Days – Working from Home
2022 Duck Rabbit Gallery (Group) The Unbearable Lightness of Being
2022 Sheffer (Duo) July
2021 The Toowoomba Gallery (Group) Spring
2021 Barangaroo TOAF (Group) Land Forms
2021 Purple Noon (Solo) Magical Mystical
2020 Project Gallery 90 (Group)
2020 Mounted ARI (Group)
2020 Jardan (Group)
2019 Project Gallery 90 (Group) Small Works Christmas
2019 Wentworth Street Projects (Group) Groundwork
2019 Comber Street Gallery (Group) Capstone Project
2019 The Facility (Group) The Other Art Fair Melbourne
2018 Saint Cloche (Group) Sgraffito
2018 Grace Cossington-Smith Gallery (Group) Lifeblood
2018 Hazelhurst Regional Art Centre (Group) Movers & Shapers – Women and the land.
2018 Saint Cloche (Collaboration) Sunburnt Country
2017 Dank Street (Group) The Other Art Fair Sydney
2017 Saint Cloche (Group/Collaboration) Common Ground
2017 Saint Cloche Gallery (Solo) Never Fenced Country



Experience

2022 Residency with Sian Faber, Gaucin, Spain
2022 Residency with Bondi Pavilion Housewarming, NSW
2022 Residency with Magnetic Island Creative Residencies
2022 Workshop tutor – The Pleasure of Looking & Seeing. Woollahra Gallery At Redleaf.
2021 Workshop with Idris Murphy, Royal National Park, NSW
2018 Square One Studios tenancy
2018 Residency with Movers & Shapers Group, Yellow Box, Turondale
2018 Workshop with Clark Barrett, Broken Hill, Willangee Station
2017 Workshop with Peter Sharp, Sanctuary Point
2017 Saint Cloche Studio tenancy
2016 Bondi Pavilion Art Studio tenancy
2015 Workshop with Luke Sciberras, Hill End
2014 Workshop with Alan Jones, Newcastle

Education

2014-2020 University of New South Wales –Master of Art (with Excellence)
1996-99 University of South Australia – Bachelor of Visual Communication (Honours)

Selected Publications

2021 Art Edit March Promotion
2019 Art Edit March Feature Ones to Watch
2018 House & Garden Magazine May Front Cover & Contents
2017 House & Garden Magazine September p36

Awards

2022 Waverley Art Prize Finalist
2022 North Sydney Art Prize Finalist
2021 Blacktown Art Prize Finalist
2018 NSW Parliament en Plein Air Art Prize Finalist
2018 Bowral District Art Society Art Prize Finalist

Collections

Private collections in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, Brisbane, Perth, UK, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, India and United States.

Public Works

2019-2020 Internal wall murals – Wylie’s Landscapes – The Nest Creative Studios

