

KAY NORTON-KNIGHT: THREADS

"Drawing is taking a line for a walk"

-Paul Klee

A passion for nature and an intimate knowledge of the property that she has managed for over thirty years inspired Mudgee artist Kay Norton-Knight to create **Threads**, her first solo exhibition. This exhibition also launches **HomeGround**, Western Plains Cultural Centre's exhibition program for emerging regional artists. It's a nice symmetry that the very first **HomeGround** exhibition should feature the landscape of the Central West so prominently. **Threads** delves deeper than a surface examination of the rolling hills and vineyards that surround the artist's home. Norton-Knight sketches the landscape, following its curves and crevices, in the search of a deeper understanding of the line. What does the line represent in nature and in art? Where does the line take the viewer in this exhibition, where the artist has taken the line for a walk across terrain, observing both the geographic and the metaphysical landscape. **Threads** is a collection of works on paper including drawings, collage and woodblock prints, and of sculpture. The exhibition makes a study of the line; its power and its potential.

After a successful career in business, managing the property and raising four children, Norton-Knight enrolled in print-making at Meadowbank TAFE. It was here that her fascination with the line and a life-long habit of seeking the line in nature found an outlet. For Norton-Knight, bringing such rich life experience to the practice of drawing and print-making became a meditation on the line. Could the line be interpreted as a thread? Something that stitches our lives together and that binds us together in our relationships? Could this thread could join the patchwork of memories, experiences and observations that shapes us, that makes us who we are as a person? If so, can the line be seen as a way of understanding our path through life as a narrative, and as a way of embroidering ourselves into history?

With these thoughts in mind Norton-Knight began to sketch her surroundings, focusing on the way the line manifests in nature. Having worked the property for decades, Norton-Knight knows it in forensic detail; the curve of every hill, the ant tracks scattered by the onset of rain, the scribble patterns on the gums that seasonally shed from the tree and get crushed underfoot, the horizon line that meanders in and out of the built environment. Norton-Knight's use of perspective is diverse. Some works create a feeling of immersion in the landscape, of confrontation with it "Bushfire" has the viewer almost point blank within the scorched trees. At times the artist surveys the scene ahead, whilst other works use an aerial perspective. Others are a curious blend of the two, a technique employed so skilfully by Central and Western desert Indigenous artists recording their country, or the non-Indigenous artists who have explored this melding of perspective such as John Olsen. Another influence may be found in John Wolseley, the English born painter, printmaker and installation artist who channels a powerful dedication to capturing nature's cycle of renewal and decay, leading to adventures on the paper. Wolseley has, at times, buried his paper in the earth so that the dirt, roots and sands leave an imprint untouched by man, the paper becoming document to the forces that shape the land. The paper is implanted into the land, the land embedded in the final image. This idea is evident in Norton-Knight's layering of line work and use of collage.

Like Olsen and Wolseley before her, Kay Norton-Knight turned to the outback for inspiration, not only for a juxtaposition of colours and landscapes, but also for an uninterrupted perspective into one's soul. In 2014 Norton-Knight was successful in gaining a three month residency in Alice Springs, NT. Every day she cycled to the studio, through the dry creek beds, relishing the time and space alone in the landscape and in the studio. The intensity of the desert environment left her in awe, its throbbing colours burning into her consciousness.

Back in the comparatively peaceful surrounds of her home studio, a mud-brick cottage open to the elements and nestled amongst her vineyards, Norton-Knight aimed to re-create the scorching colours of the desert. She did this by using a printmaking technique called viscosity roll. Viscosity roll prints multiple colours of ink from a single plate, rather than using multiple plates to build up dimensions of colour. In Norton-Knight's work the viscosity roll adds an immediacy that fits the subject matter. In Australia, nature can turn dangerous very quickly. The Australian bush is an entity that burns, bites and sucks the water from every living thing. Norton-Knight's use of the viscosity roll seems to suit Australia's climate and landscape, one smear of dense colour is able to represent the sweeping plains and sense of timelessness. Both ancient and immediate, the feeling of the afternoon sun penetrating beyond the skin and deep into your core being. That is the feeling of standing in the Australian landscape and that is the feeling Norton-Knight hopes to create in her work.

From the soft, scrubby greens and browns of the Central West, to the searing reds and oranges of Central Australia, what is constant throughout **Threads** is the meandering path of the line. Norton-Knight has documented her exploration of the line, and hopes for her audience, that it's study is a path that is familiar yet full of discovery.

Caroline Edwards, Assistant Curator, WPC

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LIST OF WORKS

1. This Way and That 2012

Welded Iron

2. Nature III 2012

Collage mixed medium

3. The Nature Series

(1st State Ghost print) 2012

Etching with mixed media

4. The Nature Series: Tree Roots 2012

Etching with mixed media

5. The Nature Series 2012

Mixed media with collage

6. Untitled I 2012

Pen and Ink drawing

7. Nature I 2012

Woodcut with relief roll

8. Meandering 2015

Intaglio Woodcut with Viscosity roll

9. Tracks 2015

Intaglio Woodcut with Viscosity roll

10. All the Rivers Run 2012

Etching with Viscosity roll

11. The Return 2012

Intaglio woodcut with Viscosity roll

12. Valley Floor 2012

Intaglio woodcut with Au La Pompee

13. The Outback N.T. 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

14. The Glow N.T. 2014

Intaglio woodcut with Viscosity roll

15. West MacDonnell Range 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

16. West MacDonnell Range II 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

17. Outback Lizard 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

18. Horizon 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

19. Branches 2015

Intaglio Woodcut with viscosity roll

20. Turbulence 2015

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

21. Struggling N.T. 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

22. Sunburnt Country 2012

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

23. Reflection 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

24. Cultivating 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

25. Tranquility 2015

Intaglio woodcut with Au La Pompee

26. Outback Rangers 2014

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

27. Landscape 2015

Intaglio woodcut with AuLa Pompey

28. Mother and Child 2012

Welded Iron

29. Sails 2012

Welded Iron

30. View from Alice Springs 2014

Pen and ink drawing

31. West MacDonnell Ranges Valley Floor 2014

Pen and ink drawing

32. West MacDonnell Ranges Tranquility 2014

Pen and ink drawing

33. The Dancers in Red 2014

Welded Iron

34. West MacDonnell Ranges Cavities 2014

Pen and ink drawing

35. West MacDonnell Ranges Without the Glow 2014

Pen and ink drawing

36. Twisting and Turning 2012

Welded Iron

37. Ebb and Flow 1 2014

Pen and ink drawing

38. Untitled II 2012

Pen and ink drawing

39. Ebb and Flow II 2012

Pen and ink drawing

40. Untitled III 2012

Pen and ink drawing

41. Untitled IV 2012

Pen and ink and wash line drawing

42. Nature I 2012

Pen and ink and wash line drawing

43. Tranquility 2014

Welded Iron

44. Line Drawing 2012

Collage mixed medium

45. Line Drawing 2012

Pen and ink drawing

46. All Angles Red 2014

Welded iron

47. Nature II 2012

Pen and ink with wash

48. Bushfire 2014

Pen and ink drawing

49. Line on Blind - bone 2015

Pen on fabric

50. Line on Blind - black 2015

Pen on fabric

51. Untitled I 2015

Welded Iron

52. Untitled II 2015

Welded Iron

53. Bark 2011

Intaglio woodcut with viscosity roll

54. Mountains 2011

Woodcut with relief

55. Nature 2012

Woodcut with relief roll

56. Riding High 2012

Tantalon and iron

57. Rolling Hills 2015

Intaglio woodcut with Au La Pompee

58. Tree Trunks 2015

Intaglio woodcut with Au La Pompee

59. Ten Line Drawings 2015

Pen and ink drawing