

Jo Bertini

Desertification - Field Work

This exhibition contains the fine distillation of Jo Bertini's intimate, long engagement with the Australian desert. This landscape lies beyond our daily experience, but it has always haunted our imagination. The desert is a hard master. Once burnt by its uncompromising glare, not many artists return to it, and few see through its harshness to the depths of its strange beauty.

Why is she drawn back to the desert, its aridity and silence, its looming dunes, the colour shifts and dipping perspective of its sandy wastes? The answer must lie in this exhibition, but it isn't easily revealed. The clues each painting offers are caught in the heat and sand, the upended colours, the characters and camels which pass into and out of the works, refracted by her art.

Jo paints the desert in the company of scientists and travellers who go there to study and explore it, using it for solace or as a rite of passage. She has another, less definable relationship with the desert, more like a hunger. She'll draw it and paint it until the light goes, filling sketchbooks day after day until the trip is over. Then the real work begins and the pictures become unsettling companions, demanding resolution and the most painterly attention.

Like Drysdale, Olsen and Nolan, Jo is one of a small band of Australian artists over the decades for whom the desert has become an essential subject, whose paintings resonate from the personal to a wider manifesto, propositions for our collective imagination about this country's centre. That doesn't come easily. The struggle is not for control, for taming the desert as others might have tamed the bush - but to expose slender moments of revelation when the desert appears as it is, and the people in it are transformed through being there. The struggle involves a lot of paint, much building up and paring back, overlaying shade, pouring in light, inventing colours - doubling and halving them, until the moment arrives when you see the desert just as Jo does. The result is powerful and transformative. A few minutes alone with these paintings and the authorised, realist version of the arid landscape slips away, and we are facing the beautiful, strange desert of our imagination, once again.

Dr Philip Jones,
Writer, Historian.

Senior Curator
Department of Anthropology
South Australian Museum

On Desertification and Field Work.

Every year I join Australian Desert Expeditions' trips into Australia's remote, inaccessible desert regions as the 'expedition artist.'

Groups of esteemed experts from a range of National Institutions and across various academic disciplines, (history, natural science, archaeology, anthropology, botany, linguistics and ethnography) join these trips, as do indigenous descendants of the original tribal people of the areas.

The expeditions are supported by a string of traditionally loaded pack camels. We walk out into the desert to research, document, decipher and discover the history of this landscape. During the last few years, we have been travelling to desert locations that have become completely transformed by the flood waters moving south through the Channel Country.

These experiences have enabled me to discover what this country has to offer me, in terms of my own artistic education. Historically artists have always contributed to Australia's scientific discoveries and that contribution continues. There are still things in our remote desert regions that only the human eye can see and only the human hand can record. I have come to understand that my role as the expedition artist is most important to not only visually record and represent what is seen but also to record that which is unseen.

These paintings are a continuum of my desert journeying and the revelations of landscape and peoples this continent cradles in its heart. I have seen something of the extraordinary diversity and multiplicity of the Australian deserts. And I have seen that desert places are described by the people who bear witness to them, as much as the people too are described by desert places.

Jo Bertini 2010

BIOGRAPHY

- 1982/83 B.A. Fine Arts, The University of Sydney
1983-91 Travelled to Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, USA, Middle East.
Lived and worked in Italy and France. Writer / Illustrator, various publishers.
1987-90 BA, Literature, Deakin University, Vic. (via correspondence)
1991-92 Returned to Australia. Life Drawing. Painting, Printmaking, National Art School, Sydney
1991-93 Travelled in Australia, Asia and Europe
1995 'Art Beat', Weekly Art Column, Sydney Morning Herald (writer)
Published "A Man and His Camel" (written and illustrated) University of Queensland Press (UQP)
2001 Artist in Residence, The Bundanon Trust, Bundanon, NSW
2003 Artist in Residence, The Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Hill End, NSW
2007-8 Sydney representative and Consultant/Advisor Joel Fine Art
2008-9
Freelance Features writer, 'Australian Art Review'(AAR)
1999-2010 Guest Teacher / lecturer, Mosman Primary School Sydney, Willoughby Art Prize Sydney, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, NSW Institute of Architects Sydney, Mosman Regional Art Gallery, Sydney College of Fine Arts, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Sydney Gallery School, Meadowbank TAFE, 'Art Workshops Australia', Workshop Art Centre
2006-2011 'Expedition Artist', 'Australian Desert Expeditions', scientific and indigenous research in Australian Deserts.

Solo Exhibitions

2010

'Field Work', (scheduled) MARSGallery(Melbourne Art Rooms) Melbourne

VIC.

2009

'Desert Expeditions' - Paintings & Works on Paper, Tim Olsen Gallery, Woollahra, NSW
 2008
 'Drawn from the Desert', MARS Gallery(Melbourne Art Rooms)Melbourne VIC.
 2007 'A Desert Within' Tim Olsen Gallery Queen Street, Sydney
 2004 'Bloodwood', King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney
 2003-4 'Jo Bertini Paintings - from Hill End' Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, NSW
 2003 Paintings (with James Jones & John Turier, sculpture), King Street Gallery at Span Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
 2002 'The Still Life of Landscape', King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney
 2001 'Painting the Shadows / Writing the Light; Reflections of Bundanon', (in collaboration with writer Ben Curnow), King Street Gallery, Sydney
 'Survey show', Steffanie Burns Fine Art, Canberra, ACT
 2000 'Another Sense, King Street Gallery, Sydney
 1998 'North Harbour Series; from a kayak', Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney
 1996 'Lacuna', Access Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney
 1994 'Penumbrae Fall, The Beatty Gallery, Sydney

Selected Group exhibitions

2010

'Sulman Finalist, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, NSW. 'A Little Bird Told Me', for Birds Australia at MARS Gallery(Melbourne Art Rooms), Melbourne, VIC
 2009

'Prelude', Charles Darwin University Art Collection and Gallery, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT. 'Portia Geach Portrait Award, SH Ervin Gallery, National Trust, Sydney, NSW. 'Taronga Artists Camp Project', Sotheby's Art Gallery, Woollahra, NSW.'A Bar to call home - the History of the RSL', NG Gallery, Chippendale, NSW. 'Artists of Mosman', Mosman Regional Gallery, Sydney, NSW.
 2008 Inaugural Opening Exhibition of the Permanent Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, ACT. 'Kedumba Drawing Award', SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, NSW. '2 x 2' Group Exhibition, Tim Olsen Gallery Annex, Sydney
 2007 'Australia's Muslim Cameleers(pionerrs of the Inland 1860s-1930s)', South Australian Museum Touring Exhibition. 'Earth and Water' curated by Kerry Gardner, MARS Gallery, Port Melbourne, VIC. 'BRAG: Recent Aquisitions 2004- 2007', Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW. Portia Geach Portrait Prize, S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney (Highly Commended' Mosman Art Prize', Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW.
 2006 'Fleurieu Peninsula Biennale Landscape Exhibiton' (Invitational), McLaren Vale, SA.
 'Portia Geach Memorial Award Exhibition', S.H.Ervin Gallery, National Trust, Sydney.
 'Same Place Many Views – Painting the Australian Landscape' Defiance Gallery, Sydney.
 'Mosman Art Prize' Mosman Regional Gallery, Sydney.
 'Salon des Refuse" SH Ervin Gallery, National trust, Sydney.

‘Being At Bundanon’ Touring exhibition, Albury Regional Gallery, Mosman Regional Gallery.

2005 ‘Salon Des Refuses’ S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney NSW.

‘In and Out of Hill End’, Gallery and Visitors Centre, Hill End, NSW.

‘Dog Trumpet’, Michael Nagy Fine art, Sydney.

‘Xmas Exhibition’, King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney.

‘The Portia Geach Memorial Award Exhibition’, S.H. Ervin Gallery, National Trust, Sydney.

‘The Touring Blake Exhibition’, Moree Plains Gallery, Gippsland Art Gallery, ACU National Gallery, Strathfield, ACU National Gallery, Melbourne, Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery.

‘Gallery Artists Works on Paper’ King Street Gallery on Burton, NSW

2004 ‘The Year in Art, curated from the best exhibitions of 2004’, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

‘The Blake Prize; for religious art’, Sir Herman Black Gallery, University of Sydney.

‘Kedumba Drawing Award’ (invitational), Kedumba Gallery, Wentworth Falls, NSW.

New Acquisition ‘Kitty Kantilla and Freda Warlapini – Milikapiti’, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, ACT.

‘Kings School Art Prize’, (invitational) Sydney.

‘Mosman Art Prize’, Mosman Regional Gallery, NSW.

‘Artists in Residence at Bundanon – A Bundanon Exhibition’, Shoalhaven City Arts Centre, Nowra, NSW.

‘Visions from Down Under – Contemporary Australian Painting’ Mudanjiang Public Art Gallery, Mudanjiang, China.

‘Salon des Refuse’, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

‘Artists of Mosman’, Mosman Regional Gallery, NSW.

2003 ‘Portia Geach Memorial Exhibition, S.H Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

‘10X10x10’ Women Painters of Mosman, Mosman Regional Art Gallery NSW.

‘Packsaddle’ Exhibition, New England Regional Art Gallery NSW.

‘Bendigo Bank Tatterstall’s Art Prize’ (invitational) Brisbane QLD.

‘Mosman Art Prize’ Mosman Regional Gallery, Sydney NSW

‘Art on the Rocks’ Weekend Event and Exhibition, ASN Gallery, the Rocks, Sydney.

‘Postcard Show’ (invitational), Grafton Regional Gallery, Grafton, NSW.

‘Artists of Mosman’, Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW.

‘Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award’ Touring Exhibition, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, QLD, Tamworth Regional Art Gallery, Albury Regional Art Gallery, Redland Art Gallery QLD.

2002 ‘Contemporary Australian Portraits’, Opening Exhibition, National Portrait Gallery at Commonwealth Place, ACT.

‘Painting 2002 -The Year in Art’, (curated by Jane Watters) SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

The Fishers Ghost Art Award’, Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, NSW.

‘The Portia Geach Memorial Award’, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

‘Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award’ and Touring Exhibition, Grafton Regional Gallery, NSW.

‘Selected artists of King Street Gallery at SPAN’, Melbourne, VIC.

‘The 32nd Alice Prize’, The Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT.

‘Mosman Art Prize’, Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW.

‘Salon des Refuse’, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney.

‘Artists of Mosman’, Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW

2001 'Gallery Artists' King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney.
 'Collage', Steffanie Burns Fine Art, ACT.
 'Packsaddle' Exhibition, New England Regional Gallery, NSW.
 'The 2001 Portia Geach Memorial Award', S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney, (invited speaker).
 'Mosman Art Prize', Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW.
 'New Abstracts', King Street Gallery, Newtown, Sydney.
 'Salon Des Refuse', S.H Ervin Gallery, Sydney.
 'The Roche Contemporary Art Award', Touring Australian Technology Park, Sydney; St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Brisbane Exhibition Conference Centre; PCL Gallery, Sydney.
 'Artists of Mosman', Mosman Regional Art Gallery, NSW
 'Bat Ball & Brush-A Summer of Cricket & Art at the SCG' Sydney Cricket and Sports ground, NSW.
 'Creative Madness', for the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Volvo Gallery, Sydney NSW.

2000 'Last Show of the Year', King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney.
 'The Fleurieu Landscape Prize and Exhibition', McLaren Vale, S.A.
 Australian Contemporary Artfair 2000, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, Vic.
 'Women and the Landscape', King Street Gallery, Sydney.
 'Packsaddle' Exhibition, New England Regional Gallery, NSW.
 'Toowoomba Biennial Acquisitive Exhibition, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, QLD.
 King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney.
 'First Show of the Year', King Street Gallery, Newtown, Sydney.
 '2088 Artists of Mosman', Mosman Regional Gallery, Sydney.
 1999-2000 9"x12" National Travelling Exhibition, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Gippsland VIC, Sydney, Grafton NSW, Cairns, Tennant Creek NT.

1999 'Mosman Artists', Mosman Regional Art Gallery, Sydney.
 'Animal Tales', Dubbo Regional Gallery, Dubbo NSW.
 'Last Show of the Year' King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney.
 'Big Thoughts, Small Works', Defiance Gallery, Sydney.
 1998-9 '13th Survey Exhibition', Access Gallery, Sydney
 1998 Australian Contemporary Art Fair #6, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne. VIC
 'Fleurieu Biennale Australian Landscape Exhibition', McLaren Vale, S.A.
 'The Defiant Six' Sculpture show, Defiance Gallery, Sydney.
 'Martin Hanson Memorial Art Exhibition', Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum, QLD
 1997-98 '12th Birthday /Survey Exhibition', Access Gallery, Sydney
 1997 'Mosman Art Exhibition', Mosman Civic Centre, Sydney.
 'Conrad Jupiters Art Exhibition', Gold Coast City Art Gallery, QLD.
 1996/97 '11th Birthday / Survey Exhibition', Access Gallery, Sydney.
 1996 'Hung at the Hyatt', Curator Anne Loxley, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sydney.
 'Fisher's Ghost Art Exhibition', Campbelltown City Art Gallery, Sydney.
 'Conrad Jupiters Art Exhibition', Gold Coast City Art Gallery, QLD.
 Australian Contemporary Art Fair #5, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, VIC
 1995-6 'The Blake Prize Exhibition', Mitchell Galleries, Sydney.

'The Touring Blake', Orange Regional Gallery, Campbelltown City Art Gallery, NSW; Hibiscus Gallery, Hobart, TAS.

1994 'Random' The Beatty Gallery, Sydney

1992 'Printmakers' Cell Block, East Sydney Technical College, Sydney.

'The National Art School', Juniper Hall, Sydney.

'Willoughby Art Prize', Willoughby City Council, Sydney

1987 'Magical Illustrations', Seasons Gallery, Sydney

Published/Reproduced

2009 'Oh, if I could Just Chalk with the Animals', Sydney Morning Herald, Feb 28 – 1st March.

2008 'In Good Company', Christopher Allen, Review, Weekend Australian, Nov 1-2

'Adversity Brings success as self-portrait proves a winner', Louise Schwartzkoff,

SMH Oct 3, 'Fabulous four in the Frame for Fame', Mosman daily Oct 23

'Up Front', Good Weekend, Sydney Morning Herald, and The Age, August 23rd

'Pictures by the River', by Karen Cotton, Country Style magazine, August

'Real Queen of the Desert' by Sally Bennett, Herald Sun p.63 Wednesday April 23rd

'Turning the Desert into an Art Form' by Anne Peacock, Sunday Herald Sun, April 20th

2007 "Australia's Muslim cameleers – Pioneers of the Inland 1860's-1930's" by Dr Philip Jones and Anna Kenny, Wakefield Press 2007

'Desert Heart', by Kirsty De Garis, VIVE Magazine, July

'Places to Travel' Explore Magazine Sun Herald, August. "Painted Landscape",

House and Leisure, South Africa, Jan/Feb, issue 154.

2006 'Piece Activist' by Judy Adamson, My Domain, Sydney Morning Herald Feb 16.

'Just Like being at Bundanon', Mosman Daily, Thurs June 22.

2005 'Cotton Club Celebrates twin talents', by Susan Wyndham, SMH, March 4.

'Art House', by Prue Gibson, Prue Ruscoe & Tami Christiansen, 'Inside Out', p.112 – 118. Sept-Oct.

'Being at Bundanon' A Bundanon Touring exhibition, Exhibition Catalogue, Vision of Australia.

'Kedumba Drawing Award' Prue Gibson, Australian Art Review, Issue 08, p54.

2004 'Colourful Exchange of Culture', Mosman Daily, Thurs, Dec. 2.

'Australian Visions From Mosman to Mudanjiang, China' exhibition catalogue.

'The China Connection', David Shapter, Mosman 2088 Magazine Issue 14, June.

'Taking our Art Culture to China'. Kate Crawford, Mosman Daily Aug 5.

Art & Australia, reproduced, inside cover, vol. 41. no. 3.

Feast of Art on show at Gallery', Western Advocate, Jan 17.

'Your Chance to see inside an Artist's Studio', Trish McDonald, Weekend Advocate, Jan. 17.

"Artist to give free talk at Gallery", Western Advocate, Jan 22.

'Artists Flock to Hill End' 48 Hours, Western Advocate, Mon. Jan 26.

'From the Regional Galleries of Explorer Country', This Month in Explorer Country, Feb.

2003 'Paintings Inspired by Hill End Landscape at Gallery', Western Advocate, Dec 15.

'Women recognised', Kate Crawford, Mosman Daily, Dec 11.

The Grand Plan', reproduced, Inside Out, Nov, p56.

'Critics Pick', Bonnie Malkin, Metro, SMH, May 30-June 5
 'Troubled Expressions', inaugural exhibition; Contemporary Australian Portraits, Robin Wallace-Crabbe, Australian Art Review, Issue 01 March-June
 2002 'Drawing in full Flower', Benjamin Genocchio, Review, Weekend Australian Nov 9-10.
 'Exhibitions; Critics Pick', Victoria Hynes, Metro, SMH, Jun28-July 4.
 'The Archibald's Close Brush with Fame', John McDonald, The Weekend Australian Financial Review, June 8-9.
 'Two Kings', Carrie Lumby, Australian Art Collector, Issue 19. Jan-March , p62.
 'Arts Briefs', Sue Hicks, Mosman Daily, Thursday, June 6.
 2001 'Seven artists' ways with collage', Sonia Barron, The Canberra Times, Fri 7 Nov.
 'Exhibitions; Critics Pick', Victoria Hynes, Metro, SMH, Nov 16-22.
 'The Sydney Morning Herald Domain; Houses Inside and Out' Cerentha Harris, Viking, Penguin Books 2001.
 'Uncharted streams of consciousness', Sue Hicks, Mosman Daily, Thurs Nov 8.
 'Painting in the Paddocks', Mosman Daily, Sue Hicks, Thurs April 5.
 2000 'Exhibitions; Critics pick', Metro, SMH, Courtney Kidd, Oct 13-19. Reproduced, Art & Australia, vol.37 no.4.
 Review "Hierarchy of Hues falls to wrecking ball", SMH, Sebastian Smee, April 29.
 Review "Painter Jo's abstracts capture the landscape", Mosman Daily, Sue Hicks, April 20.
 'Bennelong Dreaming' Summer Places, SMH, Jan 14.
 1999 Reproduced, Belle magazine, supplement No.153 June-July, p20.
 Review "Budding Artists Learn from a Pro", Sue Hicks, Mosman Daily, Dec 16.
 1998 Feature, 'Gone Bush', Domain, SMH, July 23.
 Review 'Kayak Yourself Silly', SMH, Sebastian Smee, July 31-Aug 6.
 Profile 'A Day in the life of Jo Bertini', Australian Elle Magazine, Dec.
 Review, 'The Best of a year of Fridays', SMH, Sebastian Smee, Dec. 24-30.
 1996 Review, 'Galleries', SMH, Bruce James, Oct 11.
 'Images 3': Contemporary Australian Painting, Nevill Drury, Craftsman House.
 1995 Review, 'Souls linked by their craft', SMH, Bruce James, Dec 22.

Collections
 Artbank,
 Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. NSW
 Bundanon Trust Collection, NSW
 Charles Darwin University Art Collection, Darwin. NT
 Children's Hospital Collection, Westmead, Sydney NSW
 Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum. QLD.
 Hideaway Resort, FIJI
 KPMG Collection, Sydney.
 Kedumba Collection of Contemporary Australian Drawings
 Macquarie Bank Collection
 Millennium Hotel, Sydney. NSW
 Mosman Regional Gallery, NSW
 National Museum of Australia, Canberra ACT
 National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, ACT
 Sydney Opera House Collection
 Wollongong University Collection, NSW

Private and corporate Collections in Italy, France, Switzerland, USA, Fiji, Asia, U.K., Australia.

Awards/Commissions

2009

Inaugural 'Artists' Camp' – Artist in Residence, Taronga Zoo Sydney NSW

2008

Portia Geach Memorial Award, Highly Commended and Peoples Choice

Award Winner

2006-2010 'Expedition Artist', with Australian Desert Expeditions, scientific and indigenous research in Australian Deserts.

2003/4

Commission, 10 paintings KPMG Sydney Inaugural Art on the Rocks'

Invitational Prize and Exhibition, Highly Commended

2002/3

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Hill End Artist in Residence (February-March

2003) Hill End NSW.

2001

The Bundanon Trust, Artist in Residence (February and November),

Bundanon, NSW