

Starting from scratch

Sediment and Sedimentation

Caroline Rannersberger

Despard Gallery, Level 1, 15 Castray Esplanade

Until April 10

\$2950-\$15,000

I couldn't stop wondering if Caroline Rannersberger had abandoned whatever tool she was using to make her triptych image *Neck Lagoon Nocturnal* and simply started scratching at the paint with her fingernails. There's something about the intense physicality of the result that suggests an artist almost literally attacking her work to get a desired result.

Of course, I doubt that's what she did: the scratches into the paint are entirely too precise to be the result of uncontrolled urges. Still, I cannot shake the image in my mind's eye: the artist, intently at work, engaged with the act of realising her art.

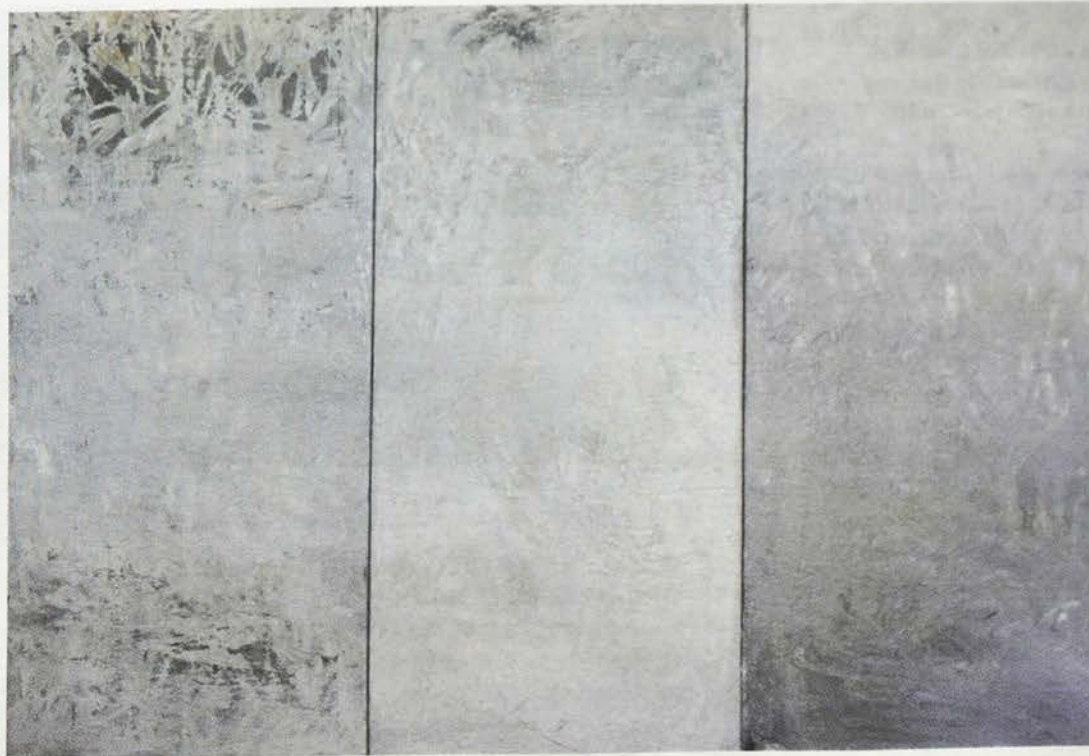
Rannersberger's work, along with exhibiting a fascinating range of decisions and techniques, has a strong thread of presence. She seems to be right there in all her work: her movements, ideas and decisions are all fluid and vivid. Each painting is happening and alive in a very direct way.

Rannersberger is ostensibly making landscape-derived work and that's clear from the formal decisions she's made: her Neck Study series of vivid drawings on rough edge paper show rocks and water, but throb as if being pummelled by the tide.

This is enhanced by how they've been hung - in Perspex boxes, almost as if they were specimens captured in the wild. This is where the art breaks free of the idea of "landscape" and becomes something else: a kind of undomesticated abstraction.

Rannersberger's art is about the elemental power she sees on Bruny Island. She is painting a landscape being acted on by weather and tide, and celebrating the power of these forces: the vigorous interaction between strong winds and powerful tides.

This is wild work. It doesn't quite fit into a traditional idea of what a landscape painting is supposed to be. Close inspection reveals a grittiness to certain works, a layered, obsessively worked surface upon others. It's a remarkable balance between fierce artistic commitment and studied mastery of technique.



VIVID: Clockwise from left, Caroline Rannersberger's *Scrub, Water, Silver Grey, Neck Study VII*; and *Neck Study III*.

