

Savanhdary Vongpoothorn

Artist Statement and Biography

Artist Statement

Viriya is inspired by dual sources of beauty. The name of the artwork is a spiritual reference to Theravada Buddhism, and in particular, the Lao-Pali term for 'energy' and 'vigor', especially that which is essential for and returned through meditative life practices and rituals. A further inspiration is the remarkable 'scribbly' pattern found on the smooth white trunk of the Australian 'scribbly gum' tree, an icon of the Australian bush landscape.

This tree derives its name from the scribbly patterns left behind on its bark skin. These 'scribbles' are actually tunnels carved by the larvae of the Scribbly Gum Moth (*Ogmograptis scribula*) and they record the insect's life cycle. As if a strange, indecipherable ancient script, the scribbly gum markings have fascinated Vongpoothorn for their enigmatic beauty but also their unique code to the life cycle of the scribbly gum moth. Moreover, the artist finds Buddhist resonance in the scribbly gum moth's narrative of life cycle and transition, its clues to the temporal or transient dimension of existence, and the beauty it records and manifests in its dynamic patterns, forms and phases of life.

Vongpoothorn was born in Laos in 1971, and came to Australia in 1979. These two sources of cultural experience have greatly influenced her art practice: Lao textiles and calligraphy, Buddhist philosophy, Australian Aboriginal art, and the Australian landscape are often woven together and layered through Vongpoothorn's paintings. As with the life stories that are written in the scribbles of the scribbly gum moth, Vongpoothorn's paintings are representational markings of her own Laotian heritage and Australian condition, tracing her life story. Ultimately *Viriya* is a response to the transient nature of belonging to the physical world, and an acceptance of change as a vital, inevitable and liberating force.

Artist Biography

Savanhdary Vongpoothorn Australia

b. 1971, Laos

Vongpoothorn came to Australia in 1979. She completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of Western Sydney and a Masters of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales (COFA). She has undertaken numerous residencies in Australia and overseas including Scotland, Japan and Singapore and recently in 2013 she was invited to participate in an Artists' Retreat in Jaipur, India, organised by the Australia India Institute, University of Melbourne. In 2006, Vongpoothorn was commissioned to create a major new work for Zones of Contact, the 15th Biennale of Sydney.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2014 *All is burning*, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
- 2013 *The Beautiful as Force*, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
- 2011 *Stone Down a Well*, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
- 2008 *Re-enchantment*, Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney
- 2005 *Incantation*, Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney
- 2004 *A Certain Distance*, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
- 2003 Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney
- 2002 *bindi dot tartan zen*, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
- 2000 Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2013 *Crossing Paths III*, RAFT artspace, Alice Springs, NT
the Imperceptible something ..., Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Morten Bay
Vibrant Matter, Tarra Warra Museum of Art, Victoria
- 2012 *Korea International Art Fair*, Niagara Galleries, COEX, Seoul, Korea
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

- 2011 *Korea International Art Fair*, Niagara Galleries, COEX, Seoul, Korea
Artist Artists, Benalla Art Gallery, Victoria
- 2010 *Muster: A Round Up of Works from the Stockroom*, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Audible Surface, M16 Artspace, Canberra
Fletcher Jones Art Prize Finalists' Exhibition, Geelong Gallery, Victoria
Ephemeral but Eternal Words: Traces of Asia, the Australian National University School Of Art Gallery, Canberra
Blue Chip XII: The Collectors' Exhibition, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
- 2006 *Crossing Paths II*, Martin Browne Fine Art, Sydney
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Zones of Contact, 151" Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2005 *This and Other Worlds: Contemporary Australian Drawing*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Awards and Grants

- 2013 Australia India Institute Artists' retreat, Jaipur, India
- 2012 NAVA Janet Holmes a Court Artist's Grant
- 2011 NAVA Janet Holmes a Court Artist's Grant
- 2005 Artist in Residence, Print Media Workshop, Canberra School of Art, ANU
- 2004 Australia Council New Work Grant
- 2003 Artist in residence, Painting workshop, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, Australian Capital Territory
- 2001 Australia Council Tokyo Studio Residency
- 2000 Royal Overseas League Studio Residency, Scotland, Sceggs Redlands Westpac Art Prize
- 1997 Australia Council New Work Grant
- 1996 34th Fisher's Ghost Art Award (Youth Encouragement Award), Campbelltown
- 1995 St Gregory's College Art Award, Campbelltown
33rd Fisher's Ghost Art Award (Open Local and Youth Encouragement Award), Campbelltown

- 1994 32nd Fisher's Ghost Art Award (Youth Encouragement Award), Campbelltown
- 1993 Mary Alice Evatt Art Award, New South Wales
- 1992 William Fletcher Trust Grant

Commissions

- 1999 *Braided Channels*, commissioned by Macquarie Bank, Sydney
- 1997 *Rice Line*, commissioned by Campbelltown City Art Gallery, New South Wales

Collections

- Artbank, Sydney
- Atanaskovic Hartnell, Sydney
- Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Campbelltown City Art Gallery, New South Wales
- Holmes a Court Collection, Perth
- Jim Wolfensohn World Bank, New York
- Lady Cruthers Collection, Western Australia
- Macquarie Bank, Sydney
- Macquarie University, Sydney
- Monash University, Melbourne
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Sherman Foundation
- University of Western Sydney, New South Wales
- University of Wollongong, New South Wales
- University of Melbourne
- World Bank, New York
- Private collections Australia and overseas