The background is a complex, abstract composition of red and blue textures. The red areas are vibrant and somewhat saturated, while the blue areas are a deep, rich blue. The textures appear to be layered, with some areas looking like peeling paint or rough, weathered surfaces. There are also some lighter, yellowish-brown tones interspersed throughout, suggesting a mix of materials or a long-term process. The overall effect is one of intense contrast and organic, almost chaotic, beauty.

CLASH

13 SEPTEMBER - 8 OCTOBER 2022

JULIENNE HARRIS



[COVER] *FRACTURED I* [DETAIL] 2019 acrylic and marbled dust on canvas 51 x 37 cm

CLASH

13 SEPTEMBER - 8 OCTOBER 2022

JULIENNE HARRIS



Space Of Speculation

The work of Julie Harris has the magic of tone, the ability of art to invite us into it's own space, which here is a poetic space of dream, space of nostalgia, space of speculation and a space of the possible. Her work encapsulates this in strikingly distinguished and authentic way. (Terence Maloon, 2008)

Julienne Harris is a contemporary artist based in Blackheath, New South Wales. Harris' practice explores how paint can become an emotive visual language, using its trace and natural fluidity to recall personal experience to visualise memory and knowledge. Embracing the freedom of abstraction, Harris is primarily led by her intuition, applying and erasing layers of paint over multiple session, akin to an evolving performance.

Consumed by a painting process that is without parameters and, the results can be unpredictable. Each studio session becomes a balancing act between exertion, removal, creation and repair. Harris draws parallels of this unrestrained methodology to the current instability in the world and the perpetual frustration of trying to make sense of such a confronting time. However, confident that the materials will guide her, any inherent risks are balanced out with serendipitous moments, each work ultimately taking on a life and internal logic of its own.

As such, each painting becomes an archive of creative exploration, manifest across a surface that appears to dissolve and resynthesise simultaneously. Overall, Harris' work carries the complete essence of contemporary painting as both a noun and a verb, where the process of painting and the painted object become united.



Clash

To understand painting in the 21st century, the tropes of the 20th century need revision. No longer does the linear succession of styles offer aspiring geniuses (of either gender) a competitive field out of which their giant ideas will burst fully formed and ready for battle. Instead, we have more considered, more articulate and better educated hands that find their milieu in painting from among the best of what has been and then make that their own. Painter Julie Harris is one of these latter artists. Her milieu is modernism and yet it is pursued according to particular variants of modernism such as "Informe." Her aim is to give us works that lift the spirit, engage viewers and set in motion art as part of a functioning civilised community.

Yet, despite this purpose, Harris' modernist heritage is firmly rooted in resistance and contradiction within art making itself rather than with worldly issues to which they might be connected and as such her paintings are resolutely and calmly revolutionary in a personal sense. But resistance to what? Modernism itself has become an institutional force against which most artists react and indeed still do. Given the flood of minor revolutions in the second half of the 20th century can there still be a resistant form of modernism?

Painters have long used various forms of the relationship between black, white and colour to represent space. However, it is in modernist practices that the disparity, the disruption and new forms of space made comes to the fore. In architecture it is typified by Le Corbusier's "Modulor," but in painting it is everywhere, from the early 20th century German painters, the Bauhaus and other movements to Joan Miro and on to every kind of abstract painting. In the early 20th century, the black line no longer outlined the coloured areas in a painting

as they had done for generations. No longer would line and colour be bound to the production of coherent representation. Instead, the black marks and lines painted over areas of colour produced non-perspectival and perhaps more importantly, non-objective space. One of the most notable and yet not by any means exclusive examples of this in the early 20th century is the work of Wassily Kandinsky. In Australia, artists were also exploring non-objective space and, in Australia, there is the great Grace Crowley.¹ And in our region, various Chinese traditional art forms and Korean Dansaekhwa monochrome and minimalist painting also influence various artist's work.²

In her latest work, Harris uses coloured compositions, some of which are partially erased, covered or disrupted with new, gestural layers. She also uses rectangular human scaled canvases in portrait format, which gives the paintings an anthropomorphic scale.



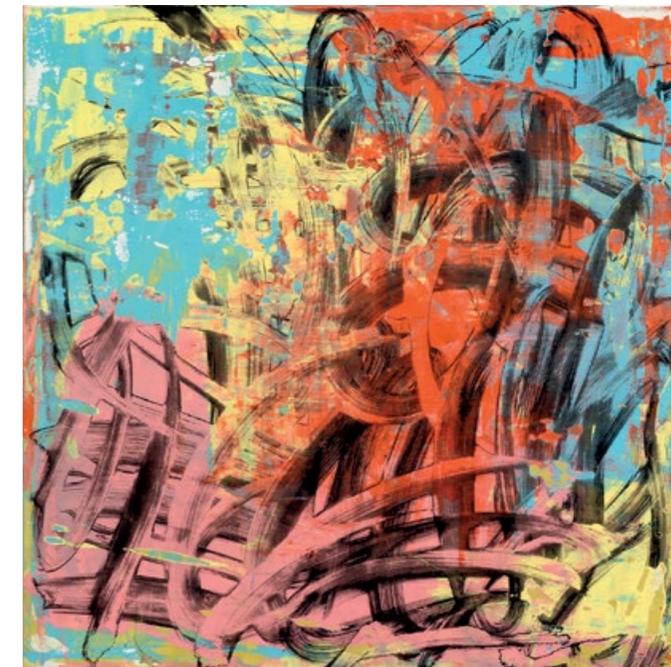
The results are mysterious objects with a range of influences and sources that are subjective and express her relationship with the world or at least that part of it from which she makes paintings.

Harris' paintings present a non-dimensional space using mostly dark coloured gestural sweeps and brush strokes layered over coloured sections. Solid primary and secondary colours are applied using a range of techniques including canvas blending and various degrees of edge control between colours, including erasure and scraping. The darker gestural marks contrast with the brightness of the pure colours as well as contradicting their edges and blending.

While a modernist lineage is clear in the works, there is another and possibly more important way to understand Harris' paintings: *Informe* (Formless). While its origin is often attributed to French curator, collector and theorist Michel Tapié (1909-1987), it is more common to attribute a theory of *Informe* to French philosopher George Bataille (1897-1962).³

Informe was one of the revolutionary ideas associated with French theory in the middle of the 20th century. *Informe* begins as a resistance to or a revolution

CLEMENTINE 2 2022
acrylic, marble dust and
ink on polyester
72 x 72 cm



[OPPOSITE]
FRACTURED 1 2019
acrylic and marble dust
on canvas
51 x 37 cm

against both academic figurative representation and modernist *formalism*. This meant that *Informe* had to resist constructed formal geometry, such as that of Kandinsky, along with modernist forms of figuration such as that of the early French modernists. Like all revolutionary artists, those who adopted *Informe*, believed both of these formal approaches were limiting not only material transformations of art but also actual human freedom.⁴ For Tapié this meant eschewing figuration and geometry in painting, while for Bataille, *Informe*, meant reducing the materials of art to their base state by stripping away the authority of academic genres, including those in abstraction. In that state, the traditional materials such as canvas and paint were equal to any other materials for making art – and the line must be separated from the plane. The effect was to make a new and democratically level playing field for art materials in which no work could present itself as art without argument.⁵



REGENERATED 4 2020
acrylic, marble dust and
ink on polyester
71 x 73 cm

Harris is reviving *Informel* in the 21st century by offering a way to reach across the space between self and the world in artworks. For her, *Informel* means *without a pictorial form* in the sense that Tapie intended. And yet there is also a search for the abject in layers of erasure and marking over a palimpsest reminiscent of Bataille's *Informel*, influenced by *Dansakhwa*.

In Harris' work, a rectangular canvas surface presents no natural or geometric form other than its own rectangularity and yet which is pictorial and formal in another way. The works are pictures of her relationship with the materials as a system of physical gestures – gestures consisting of the presence of hands, feet, arms, legs, hips, shoulders, torso and oddly enough eyes somehow without the head. The paintings constitute a kind of thinking-with-the-body.

Along with being non-objective thinking-with-the-body, the works are *temporal*. Because they are embodied rather than intellectual, the paintings are also not miniscule moments or the famous "slices of time" of figuration but are, rather, evidence of the time of the process between the artist and the materials. Looking at the paintings it soon becomes clear that rather than a completely unconscious expressive bodily gesturing, there is a kind of tempering of bodily movement as if that movement were a form of thinking. Included in her tempering of expression are materials and other ways of making marks and spaces. Clearly, the work is only formless in as much as it does not represent natural forms. Its forms – the curves, rolls, waves and lines constitute an inner nature – the inner nature of an intuitive art practice brought to life in paintings. In that sense her work is also an index of material transformations brought about by bodily interaction with materials. These consist of mark-making, erasure, over painting, gestural movement drawn from other art practices as well as her own inventions. In taking a modernist approach and modifying it with her own particular versions of other theoretical ideas, Harris builds a practice closely tied to her life and person and yet it also touches that which is shared by us all; body and world. Harris seems to want us, the viewers, to feel the things she felt when making the work and in sharing that feeling, be part of an aesthetic community, a human community.

Tom Loveday

Dr Tom Loveday is a contemporary artist and writer living in Sydney.

¹ Of course, there are many more painters, both male and female who have used the disruption of line over plane in many different ways. see the entry on Grace Crowley in the Art Gallery of New South Wales website: https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/?artist_id=crowley-grace and the recent exhibition "Know My Name" at the National Gallery of Australia, <https://knowmyname.nga.gov.au/artists/grace-crowley/>

² <https://publicdelivery.org/dansakhwa/>

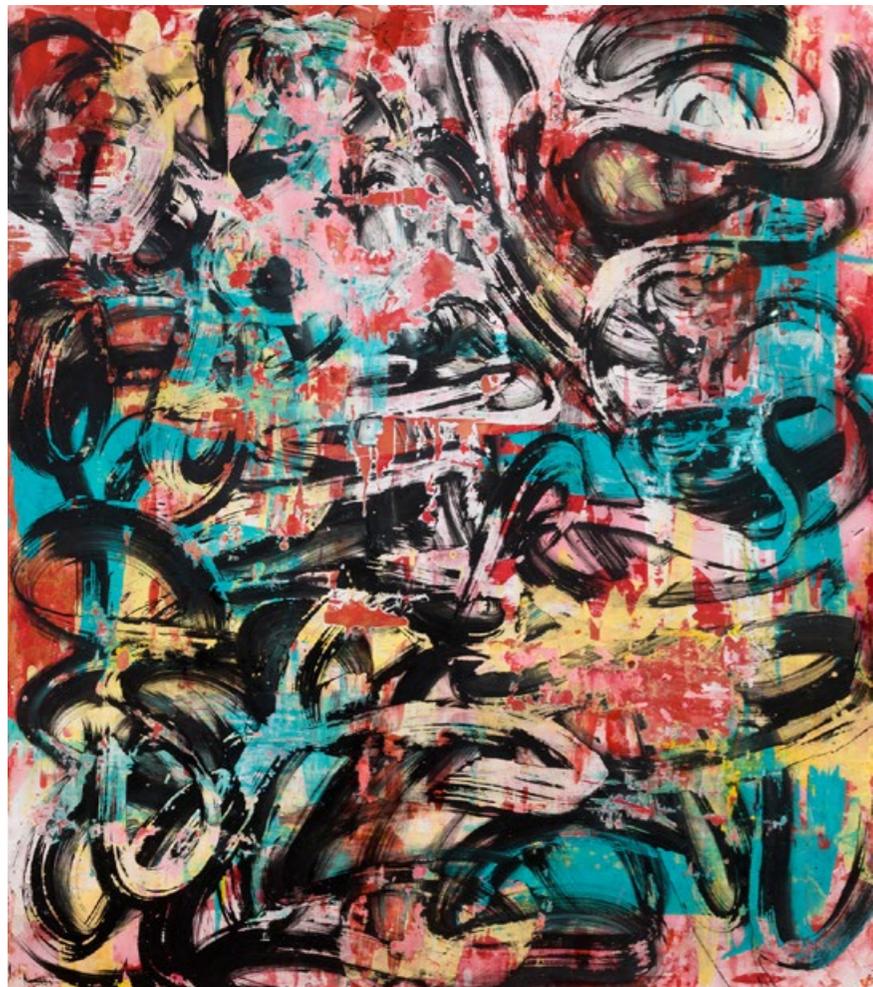
³ Tate Modern Website, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/formlessness>

⁴ See Michel Tapie (1909-1987), *From An Other Art*, 1952 in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900-1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell, 1997, pp. 619- 620. It is worth noting the tone of Tapie's text – it matches that of many other earlier 20th century polemicists with attacks on academic intellectuals, the history of art and the work of current artists and claims that its author is the only one with the answer to freedom from these limiting conditions. See, Conrads, Ulrich, 2002 (first published 1964), *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, MIT Press, USA. The revolutionary anti-formalism of the term Art Informel has led to a theoretical line that runs from the rather simple description offered by the creator of the term, Michel Tapie, to the byzantine theorising of the mid 20th century by Rosalind Kraus and others. Artworks hardly understandable as art, such as that of Joseph Beuys, have been drawn into this theorising.

⁵ See Yves Alain Bois and Rosalind E Krauss, *Formless, a User's Guide*, Zone Books, 1997.



GALLERY VIEW, *Clash*, September 2022



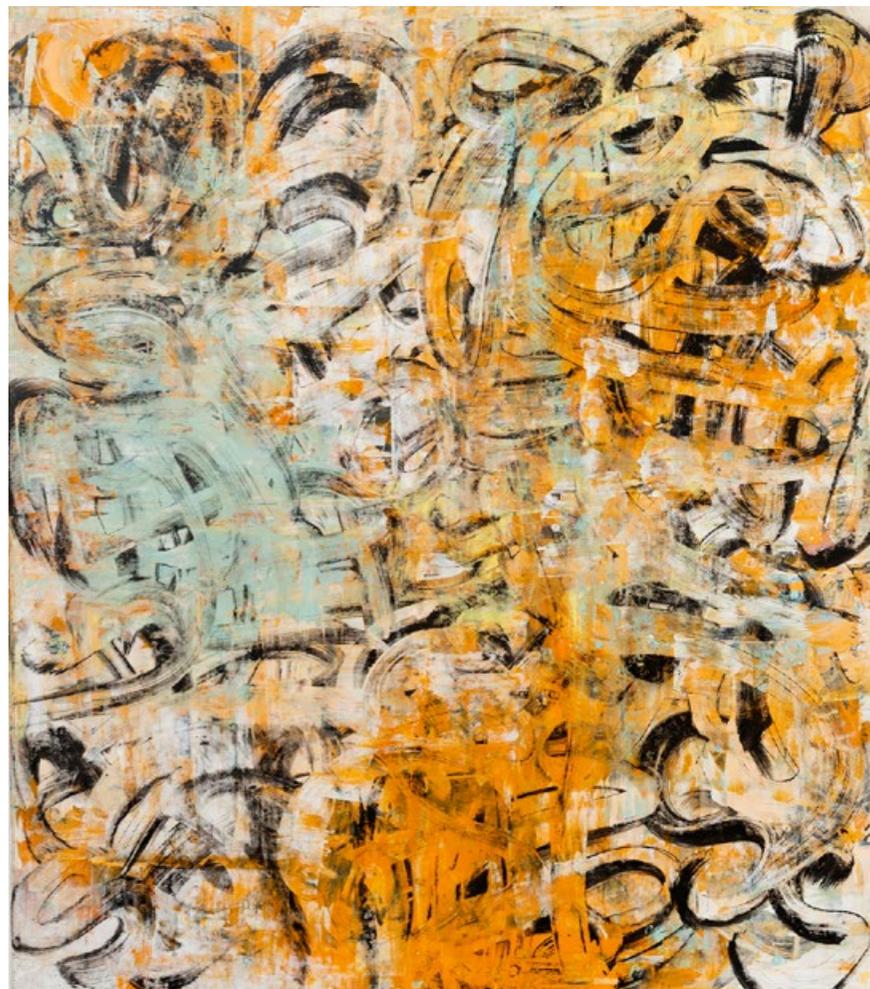
CLASH PAINTING 1 2021
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
155 x 137 cm



CLASH PAINTING 2 2021
acrylic, marble dust and ink on
polyester
153 x 137 cm



CLASH PAINTING 8 2021
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
153 x 137 cm



SUMMER HEAT 2020/21
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
155 x 137 cm



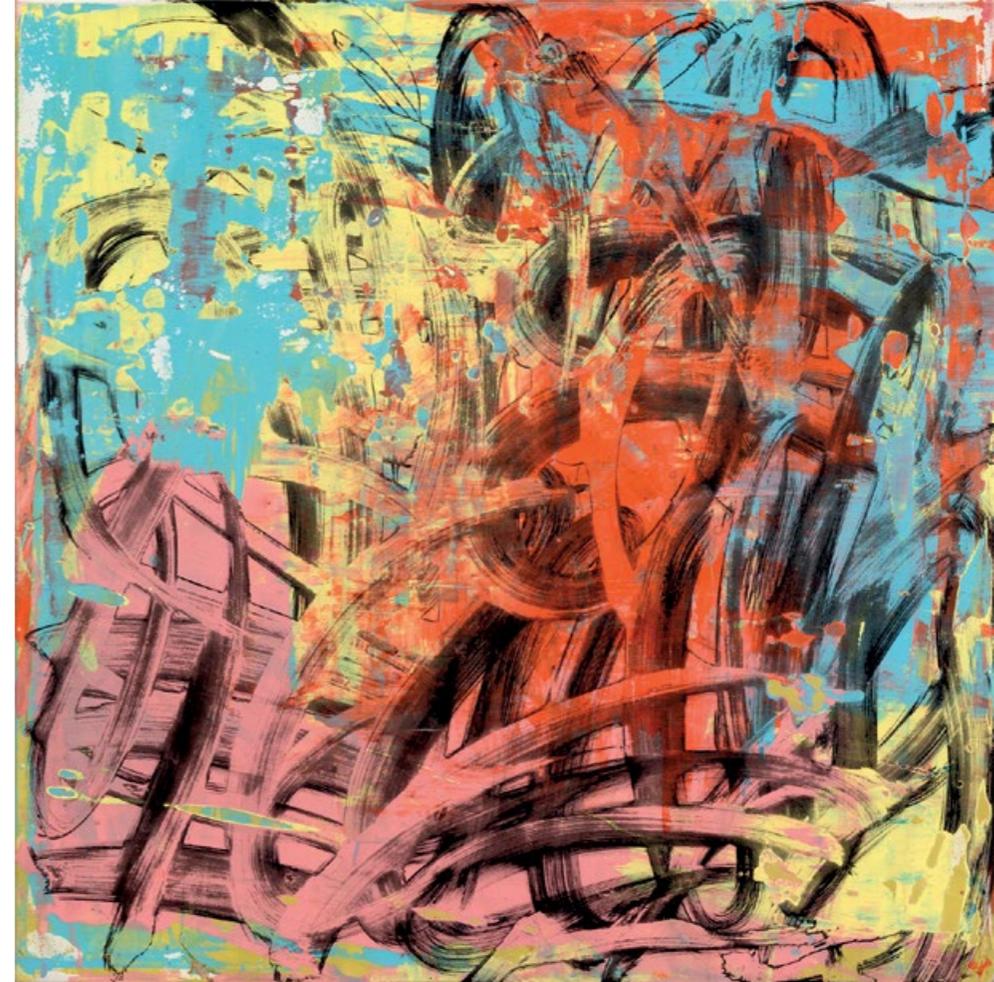
[LEFT]
Juju 2 2021
acrylic, marble dust and
ink on polyester
150 x 80 cm

[RIGHT]
Juju 1 2021
acrylic, marble dust and
ink on polyester
150 x 80 cm

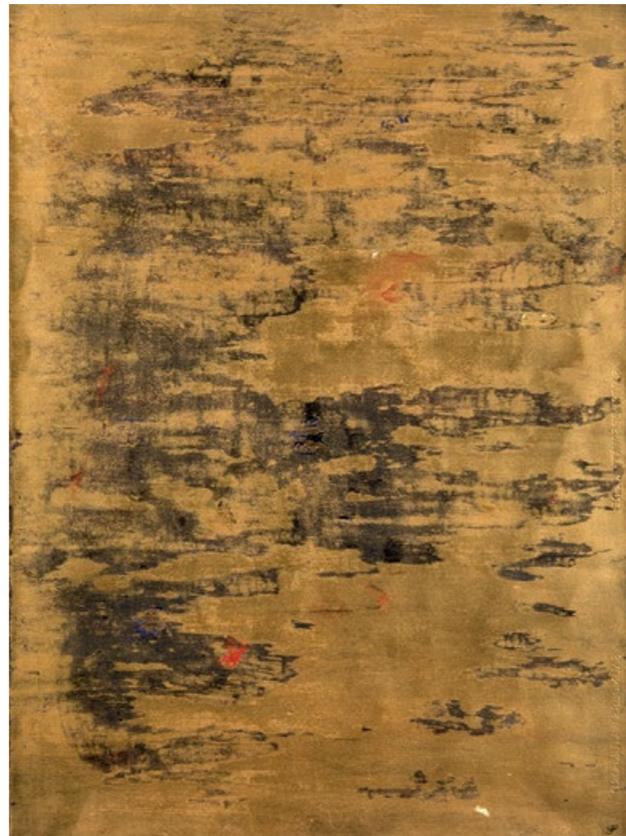




CLEMENTINE 1 2022
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
72 x 72 cm



CLEMENTINE 2 2022
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
72 x 72 cm



[LEFT] *GOLD WORK 38* 2020 ink and metallic paint on paper 75 x 54 cm

[RIGHT] *GOLD WORK 39* 2020 ink and metallic paint on paper 75 x 54 cm





RUBY 2020
acrylic and marble on
canvas
153 x 137 cm



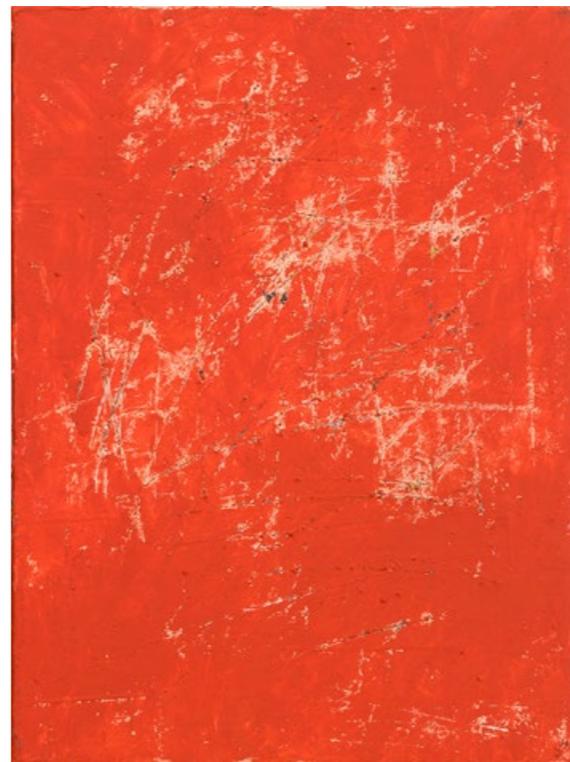
RUBY REWIND 2020
acrylic and marble on
canvas
153 x 137 cm



FRACTURED I 2019
acrylic and marble dust
on canvas
51 x 37 cm



FRACTURED GOLD 2022
metallic paint and marble dust
on polyester
51 x 37 cm



[LEFT] *WEATHERED WORK 5* 2019 metallic paint and ink on polyester 51 x 37 cm

[RIGHT] *NIL TALES* 2019 acrylic and marble dust and ink on polyester 51 x 37 cm

[LEFT] *WEATHERED WORK 6* 2019 acrylic and marble dust on polyester 51 x 37 cm

[RIGHT] *WEATHERED WORK 8* 2019 acrylic and marble dust on polyester 51 x 37 cm



REGENERATED 5 2020
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
72 x 72 cm



REGENERATED 4 2020
acrylic, marble dust and ink
on polyester
71 x 73 cm

Julienne Harris

"I've always been interested in abstraction as a language. I feel it affords me a way of understanding and interpreting the world. My practice can be summarised by a fascination with the materiality of paint and its inventive possibilities. Each painting records a state of mind and a passage of time, taking influence from everything I experience, from the natural environment, music, literature, memories and art.

There is a freedom in abstraction that allows me to become part of paint's natural process. The results are often unpredictable, like a continually evolving performance. There is also a risk of failure and surprise, which keeps me returning to the studio each day, searching for the moment when a painting takes on a life of its own and an internal logic is found."

Julienne Harris studied at the National Art School in Sydney, before moving to London in 1976 to learn restoration and water gilding with Paul Levi and Bourlets. Harris has been exhibiting nationally since the 1980's, being awarded the Adelaide Perry Drawing Prize in 2008, the Fleurieu Landscape Prize in 2011, the Kedumba Drawing Prize in 2014 and more recently, the KAAF Art Prize in 2019. She was a recipient of the Bundanon residency in 2002, the AGNSW studio at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris in 2009. Her work is held in numerous collections globally including Artbank, New England Regional Art Museum, University of Sydney Union, Mosman Art Gallery, Hawkesbury Regional Art Gallery and Baker and McKenzie.





CLASH

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