

Wyndham Art Gallery

# LOCAL

by Sue Anderson and Aubrey Comben



11 May to 26 June 2016

Wyndham Art Gallery is very pleased to be able to show the work of two very talented local resident artists. Following in the footsteps of our previous mother son exhibition which presented Carol and Richard Rowlands, Sue Anderson and Aubrey Comben, mother and son, again prove that creativity runs in the family in the west.

Sue Anderson has been living and working as an artist in Point Cook for nearly 30 years. When she moved to the area with her husband they were two of only fifteen people living in Point Cook. It was a rural town in those days and Sue lived with her husband who has deep roots in the area coming from the Comben family.

Sue's studio is nestled in a large block surrounded by trees, looking onto a lake that is full of bird life. You would not know you were in a bustling suburb. This dichotomy has been the material for her work over those thirty years.



*Sue in her studio*

Favoring painting, Sue is also adept in many other mediums including ceramics, printmaking, pastel, sculpture, and even public art.

Her painting style is lyrical and joyful. Even her brush strokes have an energy that lifts the spirits.

She is also a master of colour, being able to move from moody blues such as can be seen in *Squall*, to the subtle ochre's and greys in *Avalon*.



*Squall* – Oil on Linen



*Avalon* – Oil on Linen

She also paints what is around her but with a very personal perspective. The You Yangs are probably the most painted landscape feature of artists in the west and yet her small mountains are hazy in the background, seen across a long middle ground that includes grasses, rabbits, the freeway full of cars, service stations and the shadow of a plane across the ground. Her landscape is looked down on from above and yet at the same time stretches toward a horizon. No attempt is made at realism and this is what makes Sue Anderson's work unique. If you look closely you can find many things hidden in her paintwork.

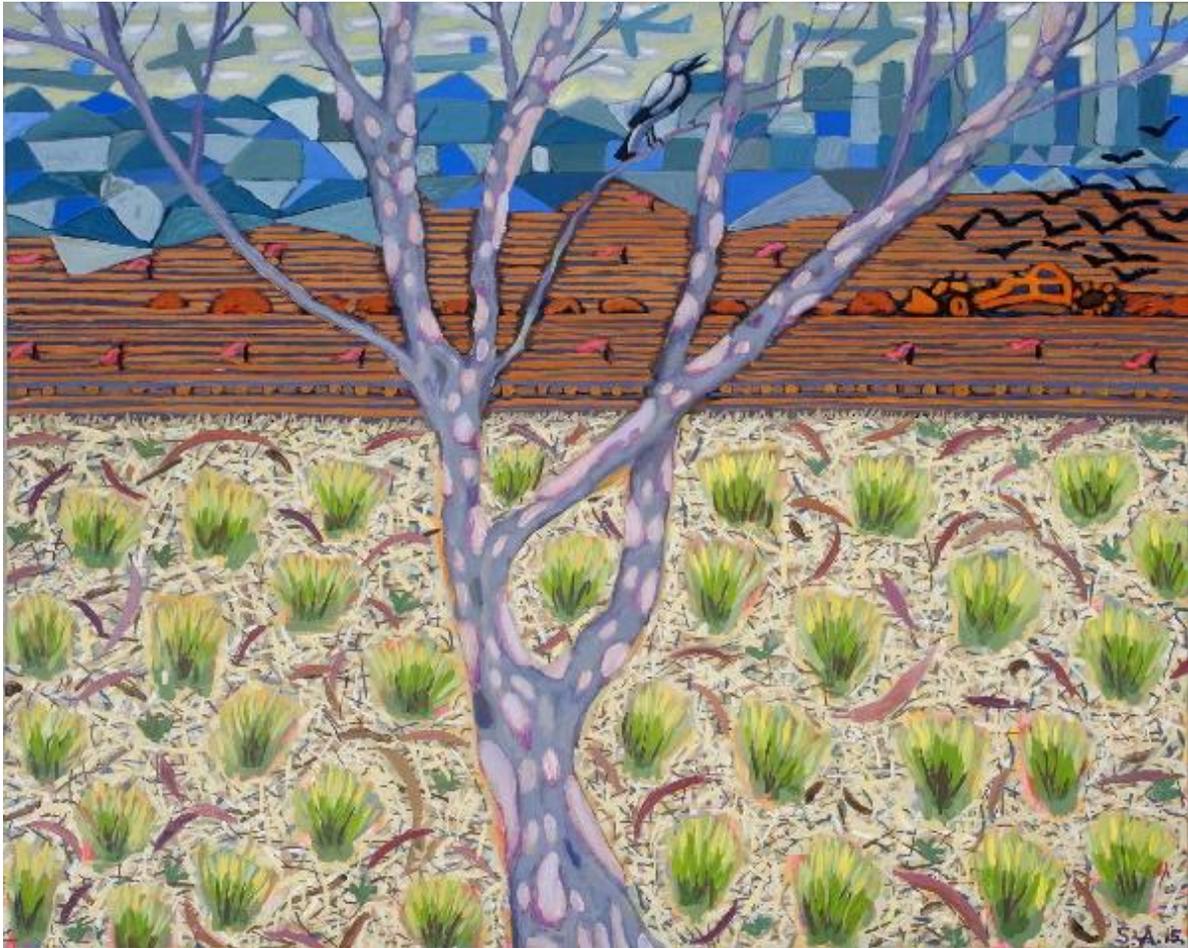


*I see red* – Oil on linen

In *I see red* the border between the natural world and the built environment is made clear. A mother magpie feeds her young, a fox runs through and rabbits play, while in the human world the space becomes crammed with no space for the trees. Sue's quiet protest can be seen in the signage which says 'slow down'. The sky over the distant city is red and ominous and yet overall her work is always joyful. She entices the viewer and then when you least expect it, she tricks you into finding her message.

There is a difference in the forms she uses to represent the natural and man made environment. In *Calling* the earth is being prepared for the market gardens which populate Werribee South and are, at present, the food bowl of Melbourne. The lines are straight and above them the angled

shapes represent roofs and the city beyond. These are overlaid with a tree, surrounded by grasses and leaves in organic shapes which contrast with the top half of the painting. The magpie calls and the birds lift off from the tractor that moves the earth, more alive than the planes that fill the sky above.

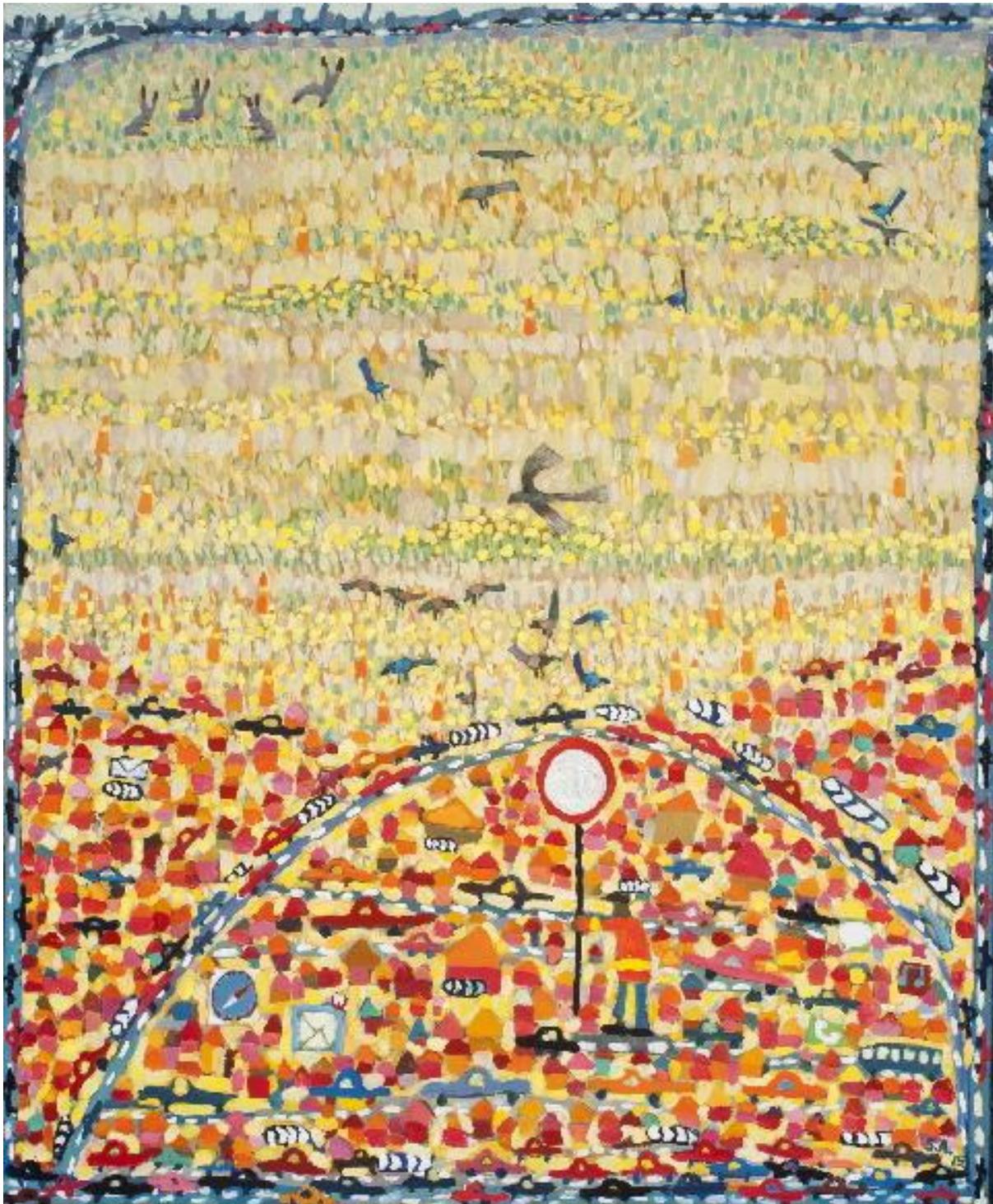


*Calling* – Oil on Linen

It's tempting to imagine the magpie's familiar call and to hear him crying out the same refrain of 'slow down'.

Most of Sue's paintings over the last 30 years have in some way documented the encroachment of the suburbs into her country home. I used to visit her when she lived on the edge of farmland. Many years later I could hardly find her amongst the thriving metropolis that is 21<sup>st</sup> century Point Cook. Many would say that this is progress and while there are benefits to people who have been able to live here, so close to the bayside which

was formerly only available to the eastern side of Port Phillip, it is also important to consider the land we have occupied and what went before. Sue's work asks us to plant more trees and create more green wedges between the development to allow for the land to breathe and the natural world to flourish as it nourishes us.



*Give me a sign* – Oil on Linen

Aubrey Comben is as perceptive of humans as Sue is of nature. It is common for children of talented artists to stay away from the area their parents dominate, quite often becoming accountants or lawyers, tempted by the better financial future than their parents presumably had. However in Aubrey's case he has taken up the mantle of artist, becoming a photographer and video artist, and threatening to compete with his mother for attention. While still young, he shows great promise and early success, having already shown his work in New York.



*Dugga 4 – Chromira Print Photograph*

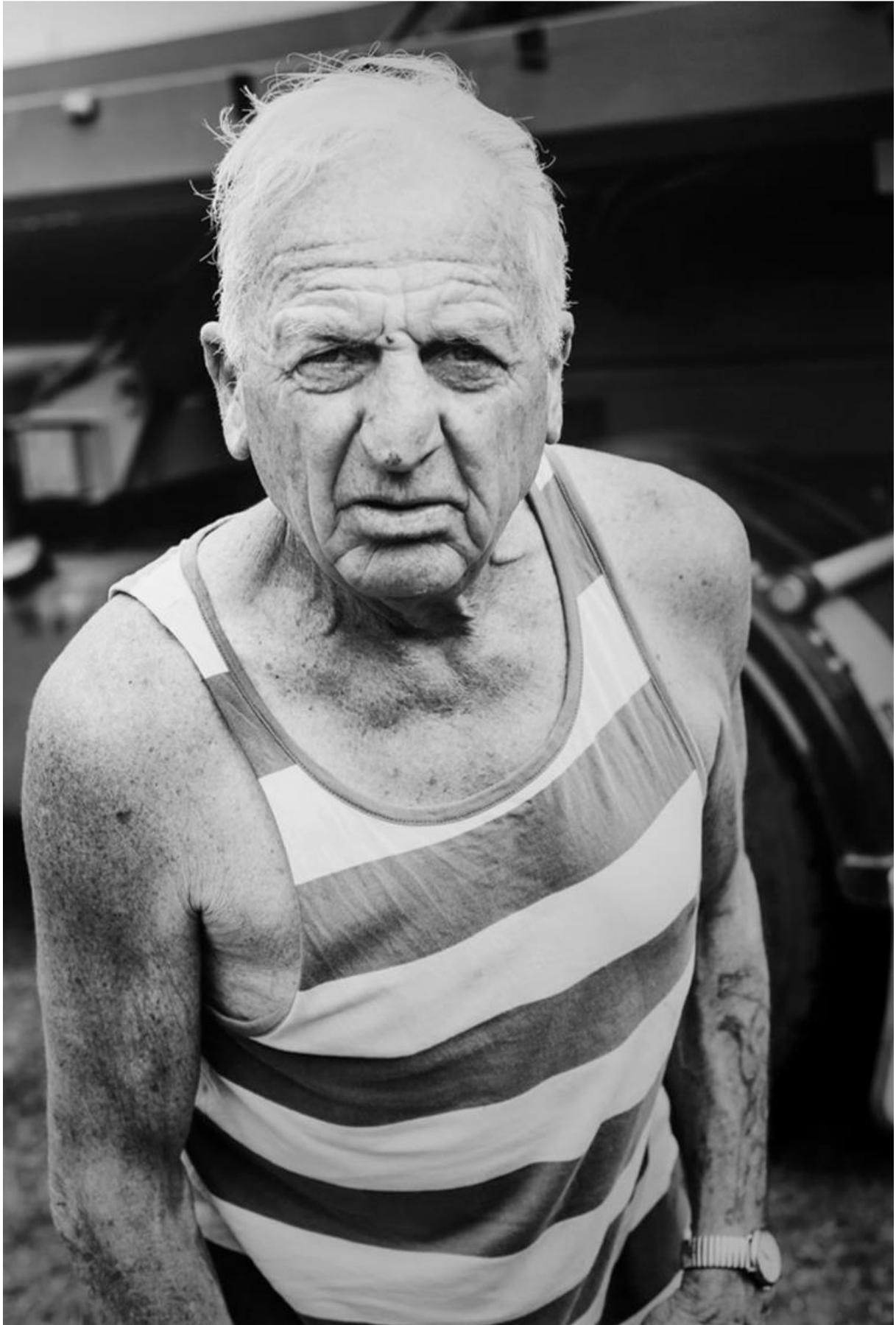
This is not surprising as he obviously has a good eye and his mother's ability to compress a lot into a simple image. Aubrey also has a fascination for his local environment but his gaze rests on the inhabitants of his local area.

Three sets of work are on show in LOCAL, the fishing community, the market gardening community and someone who has emptied the septic tanks of Wyndham for countless years. Ron Graham is shown either climbing out of or going into

a septic tank in *Ron Graham 3*. An ambiguous portrait with the face obscured but the message clear, he does a messy job.



*Ron Graham 3* - Chromira Print Photograph



*Ron Graham 4 - Chromira Print Photograph*

Aubrey manages to capture the strength and resilience of the people he photographs in a way that avoids sentimentality. The hard work of everyday life in Werribee is ground into the lines on their faces. His striking black and white images show simple acts made beautiful by their representation. This is not the upwardly mobile new Werribee but the people who have lived and worked here for an age. Aubrey knows these people. His family has lived in Werribee for generations.

*‘Comben is a strong Werribee name. The Comben family were past mayors, councillors and very involved in the sports community. Aubrey’s great great grandfather (Alfred Comben) was one of the first people in the area to have a phone in his home in 1917. They were the grocers and the undertakers! How things have changed !! Now we all have one in our pocket!!’ Sue Anderson*



*Dugga 5 - Chromira Print Photograph*

Together these artists reflect back to our community a collapsed history that we are grateful to be reminded of.



**WYNDHAM ART GALLERY EXHIBITIONS 2016:**

RACE - Opening 6<sup>th</sup> July – 7<sup>th</sup> July – 28<sup>th</sup> Aug  
Group exhibition examining racism

SAKRID - Opening 7<sup>th</sup> Sept – 8<sup>th</sup> Sept – 6<sup>th</sup> Nov  
Group exhibition examining the sacred

VICKI WEST – Opening 16<sup>th</sup> Nov – 17<sup>th</sup> Nov – 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2017



WYNDHAM ART GALLERY  
177 Watton St, Werribee, Vic 3030

PH: +61 3 8734 6021

Visual Art Curators:

Maree Clarke [maree.clarke@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:maree.clarke@wyndham.vic.gov.au)

Megan Evans [megan.evans@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:megan.evans@wyndham.vic.gov.au)