

Jenny Sages

On the Memory of the Imagination

2016



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King Street Gallery
on William

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
T: 61 2 9360 9727 F: 61 2 9331 4458
art@kingstreetgallery.com www.kingstreetgallery.com.au



Jenny Sages

“As artists we’re not nearly as interesting as writers... we’re all just finger painting, but when someone gives me a sentence I can remember, it triggers something very strong inside me.”

Jenny Sages

In one of her new works Sages quotes a poem by Anna Akhmatova, the words picked out in tiny perforations on a waxy board impregnated with colour. Akhmatova’s lines are combined with Sages’s distinctive brand of finger painting, on a surface on which she has rubbed handfuls of yellow pigment. The poem celebrates the peace that comes with forgiveness as the writer frees herself from the contemplation of a great evil. She rediscovers “space and even silence”.

The yellow that envelopes the bottom part of the panel is a sign of the pleasure the Shanghai-born (of Russian parents) artist takes from these lines. Space and silence have been a big part of Sages’s life ever since she gave up her job writing and illustrating travel stories for Vogue.

In her fifties Sages traded in the life of an illustrator for that of an artist. She ceased travelling and buried herself in the studio where she worked obsessively from morning until night, pausing only for the meals made by her devoted husband, Jack.

Sages had always wanted to paint full-time but when she finally committed herself it proved to be a source of overwhelming anxiety. She found that being a painter meant constantly reinventing oneself, transforming anxiety into creative energy. “I felt like a twig on the edge of a cliff,” she said.

Apart from the annual distraction of the Archibald Prize for portraiture, in which Sages has been hung on twenty one occasions, without ever winning, her only respite from the studio has come from trips to the outback. She has returned every year to the Kimberley and Arnhem Land, where she walks around an ancient landscape, soaking up inspiration. When she first started visiting these remote locations she would sit and make studies in gouache, but gradually she realised it was only necessary to walk and to look.

Back in the studio she would work from memory, barely glancing at a few photos tacked to the wall. The real work was condensing and distilling the images in her mind into paintings that might be described as either landscapes or abstractions. She developed a method that allowed her to overcome her facility with a brush or a pencil, applying layers of encaustic onto boards which were then scored with dots and lines.

Sages has used this technique to create works of great beauty and originality which can conjure up visions of the vast open spaces of the desert or the patterns of leaf litter on the floor of the forest. These pieces could hardly be described as 'pictures' - they are sculptural objects whose shape and texture echo the sensations we experience in the bush.

Like Nature itself, Sages's method embraces randomness and repetition. One of the reasons for her anxiety is that she is never really sure where a work is going, although it is always pushing towards a resolution. "By the time you've been through a hundred layers of mistakes," she says, "you can't go backwards."



John McDonald
Art critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald*

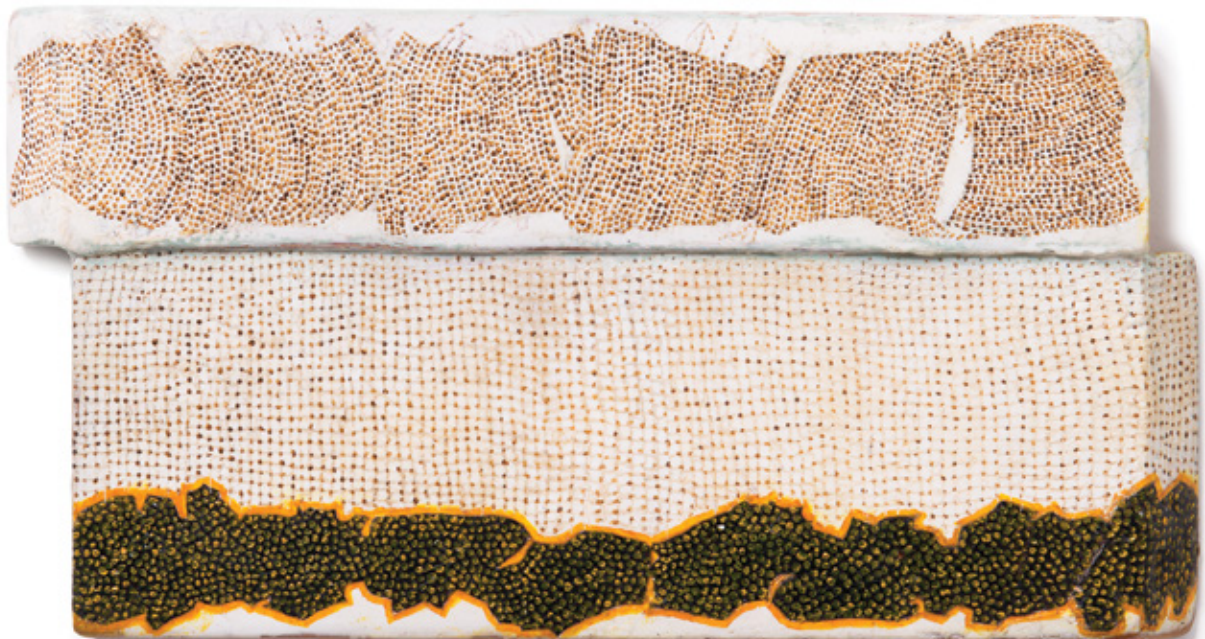


Let the Hand Lead the Mind 2015 encaustic and oil on board 60x16.5cm



The Earth Trembled 2015 encaustic and oil on board 23.5x17.5cm





Follow On 2015 encaustic and oil on board 20x29.5cm



Let the Australians 2015 encaustic and oil on board 38x12.5cm



Stand Alone 2015 encaustic and oil on board 44x12.5cm





Space Between 2 2015 encaustic and oil on board 26.5x20.5cm





Landscape of the Mind (front and back) 2016 encaustic and oil on board 44x9x4.2cm



Jawoyn Plants 3 2015
 encaustic and oil on board 120x20cm



Jawoyn Plants 1 2013
 encaustic oil and pigment on board 120x20cm

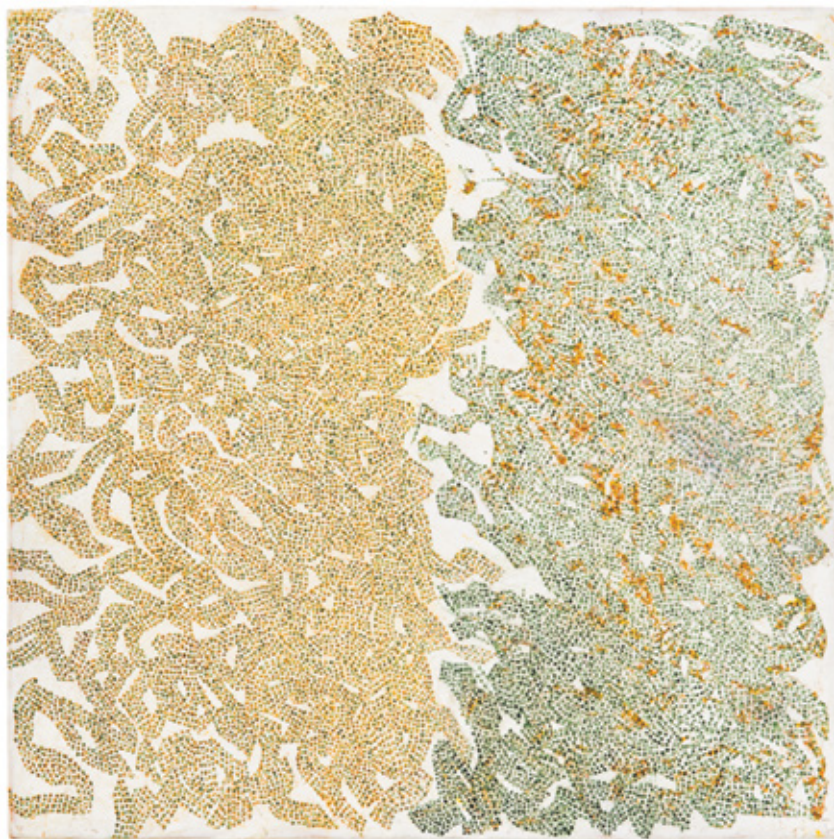


Jawoyn Plants 4 2015
encaustic and oil on board 120x20cm



Finding a Way 2016 encaustic and oil on board 50x10.2cm





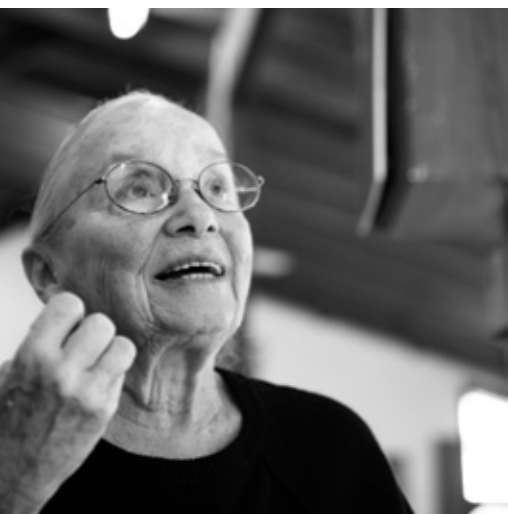
On the Way 2016 encaustic and oil on board 30x30cm



It Talks to Me 2015 encaustic and oil on board 30x30cm



It's All in the Doing of It 2016 encaustic and oil on board 30x20cm







Space Between 1 2016 encaustic and oil on board 30x20cm



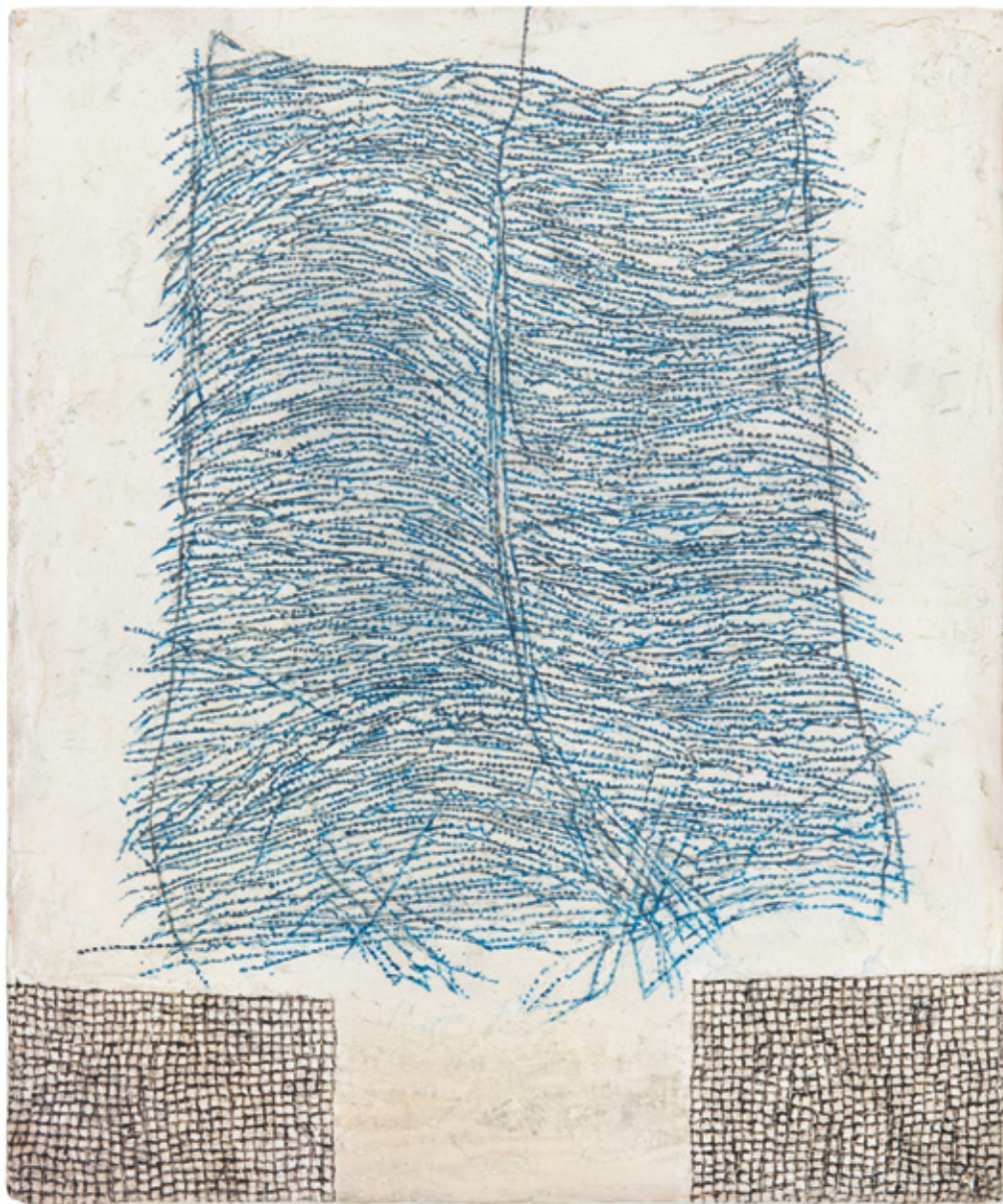




An Image of Memory 2016 encaustic and oil on board 26.5x19.5cm



Subterranea 2014 encaustic on paper on board 40x26cm



The Blue One 2016 encaustic and oil on board 30x25cm

THOSE WERE
THOSE DAYS,

THESE ARE



POCKET
ROCKET

LET THE HAND
LEAD THE MIND

IT'S ALL IN THE
DOING.
OF IT



Photography: Roller Photography
Design: Sam Woods
Essay: John McDonald
Full CV available at www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

street scene but her
on at the King
outstanding. Sages has entered
that zone of artists aware to find
where ideas follow one another
with exceptional fluency without
ever appearing slick or facile.

All the pieces are abstract
form but powerfully suggest
the dry Australian landscape
the harsh, bright light of
outback, where the artist's
part of every year, being there
- which is basically was im-
mated with pigment - Sages
surfaces as smooth and hard
into this bone-like gr
intricate des





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