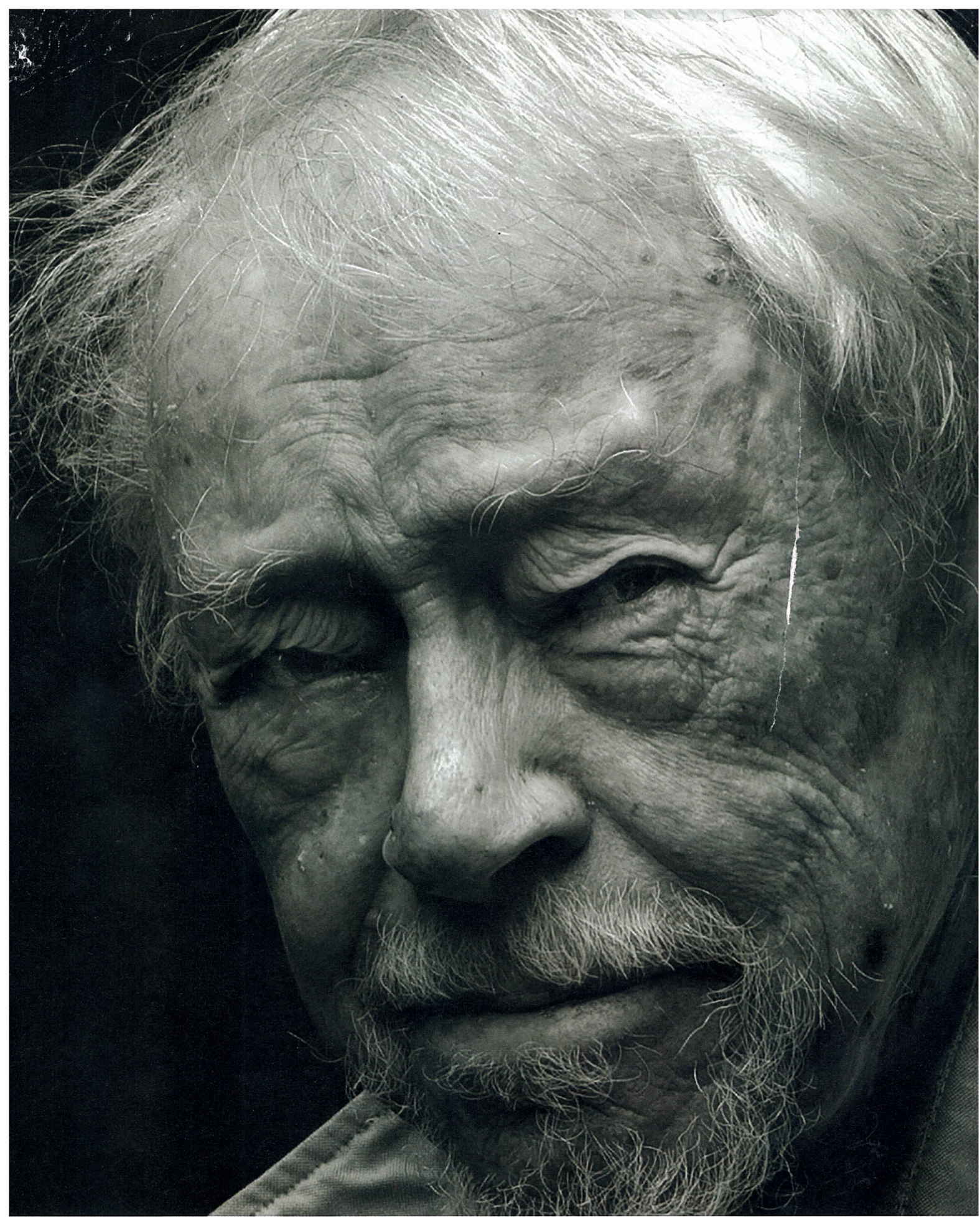




# LIFE'S GREAT WANDERINGS

A centenarian and a visionary, **Guy Warren** has long been counted among the greats of Australian art, and he's not finished yet.

WORDS: SASHA GRISHIN

PHOTOGRAPHY: RISTE ANDRIEVSKI

**Guy Warren** is widely regarded as one of the most important senior figures in Australian art. Not because he is a centenarian, but because of the exceptional and unusual contribution he has made to the visual culture of this country.

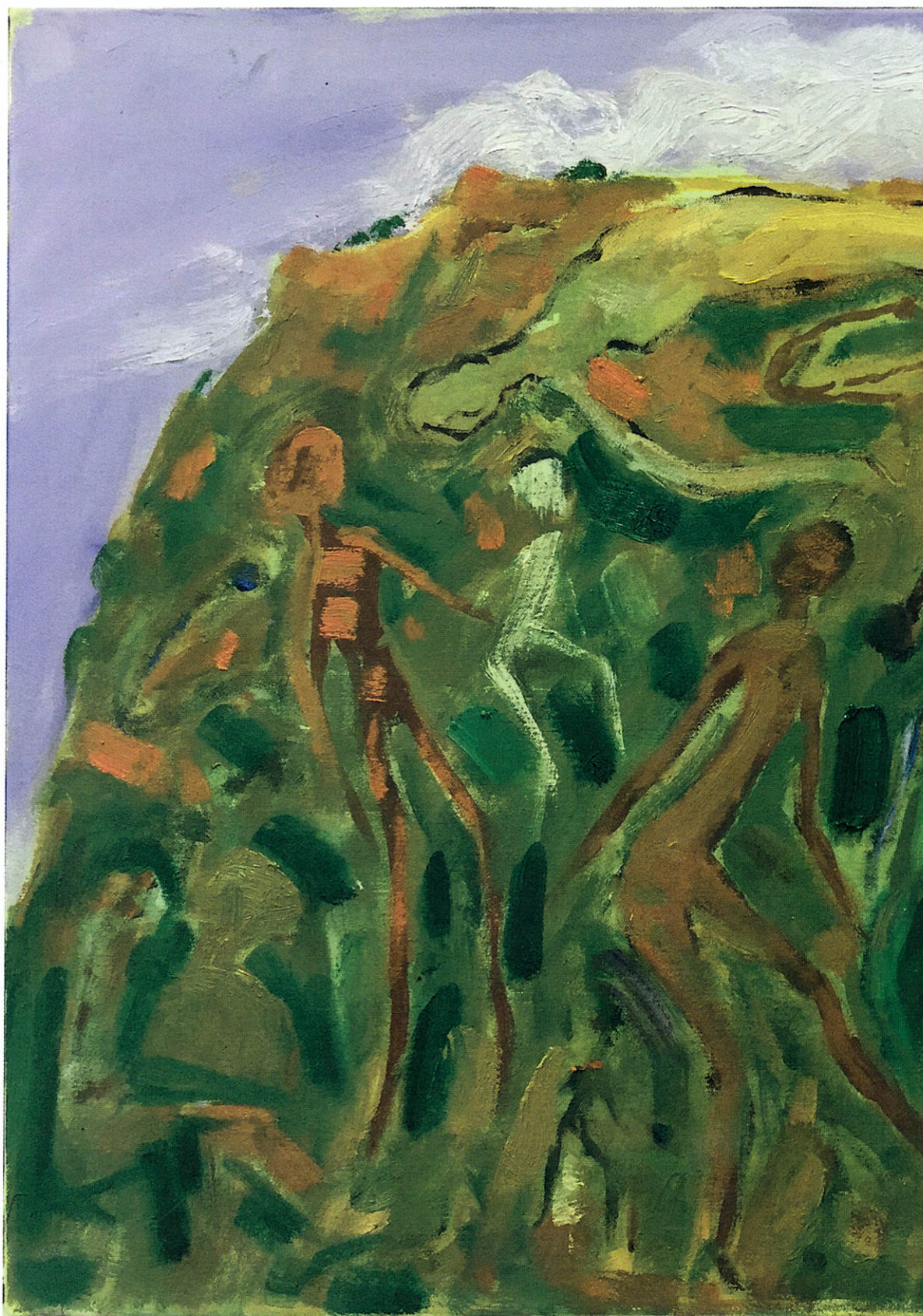
He was born in 1921 in Goulburn in rural NSW to a father who was a pianist and a mother who played the violin. It was a family receptive to the arts and to the natural environment, but he grew up during The Great Depression when the pressure was on economic survival and art was thought of as commercial art rather than as art for art's sake. He fell into being a professional artist with a long and celebrated career almost by accident – it was as much a surprise to the artist as to anyone else.

In 1941, when Warren commenced his

war service, he was sent to the Canungra Military Area in the Gold Coast hinterland in South East Queensland. At the Land Warfare Centre, he was prepared for jungle warfare in a thick rainforest.

Although the training was tough, he fell in love with the rainforest, with its steep ravines and gullies, rushing streams and lush vegetation. This became his “soul country” that has since permeated much of his art.

When sent into combat in 1942, it was into Papua, New Guinea and Bougainville Island, where Staff Sergeant Warren was once more surrounded by jungle with its exceptional fecundity of plant and insect growth. His love affair with the rainforest was to last a lifetime, so when he married after the war, he took his bride to Canungra for their honeymoon.



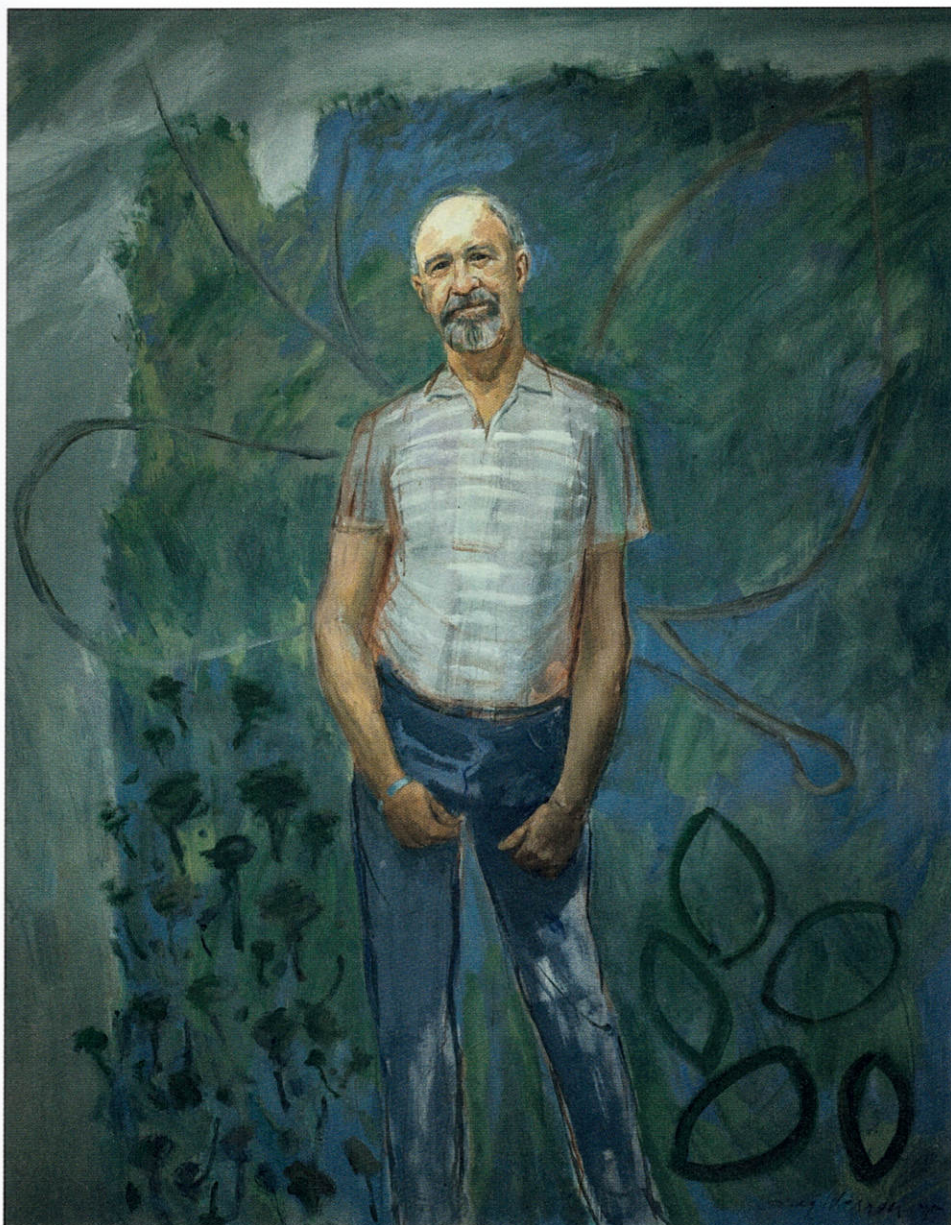
Guy Warren, *The Land & Us Together*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 46 x 66.5cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.

*The London sojourn lasted eight years and when he returned to Australia, accompanied by his wife and two children, he had acquired a painter's toolbox of skills.*

The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme took Warren, together with scores of other future artists including **Tony Tuckson, Robert Klippel, Tom Bass, Herbert 'Bert' Flugelman and John Coburn**, to study art at East Sydney Technical College (later known as the National Art School). Many of these artists became lifelong friends. In 1950, Warren moved to London with his wife Joy for 18 months to continue his studies at the Chelsea School of Art, London School of Art and the Central School of Arts and Crafts. The London sojourn lasted eight years and when he returned to Australia, accompanied by his wife and two children, he had acquired a painter's toolbox of skills. However, despite his best efforts, he could not be drawn into British modernism or paint the park-like English landscape.

While still in London and trying to find his feet, he painted a number of memory paintings based on his experiences with the local Indigenous people in Bougainville where he was amazed by their body decorations and innate sense of patterning. By chance, on television he had seen a BBC documentary about the Mount Hagen dancers in the New Guinea highlands and enquired whether he could purchase some of the photographic stills as source material for his paintings. It turned out that the young film producer was **David Attenborough** who was more than happy to give him some photographs and Warren rewarded him with a painting. The two have remained friends ever since.

The attraction to New Guinea that both he and Attenborough shared was for people living as one with their environment, something he also experienced later in Aboriginal Australia. The desire to be part of the landscape, the environment, and to paint from within and move inside the landscape rather than observing it from outside has been central to Warren's practice, and is still evident in his most recent paintings.



ABOVE: Guy Warren, *Flugelman with Wingman*, 1985. Oil on canvas, 225 x 178cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ART COLLECTION, WOLLONGONG.

OPPOSITE: Guy Warren, *Wingman and Mountain*, 1997. Ink and acrylic on paper, 229 x 144cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.

He bought a block of rainforest land at Jamberoo, on the south coast of NSW near Kiama, and the sculptor Flugelman became his neighbour. While spending time teaching and working in various administrative roles, he would spend weeks in the

rainforest painting. In 1985 he was awarded the Archibald Prize for his painting of his neighbour from Jamberoo, titled *Flugelman with Wingman*.

A recurring theme in Warren's art that is evident in his recent paintings is the idea of

*"The great problem in making art is this battle we all have between intuition and logic; one can become too logical about the work."*

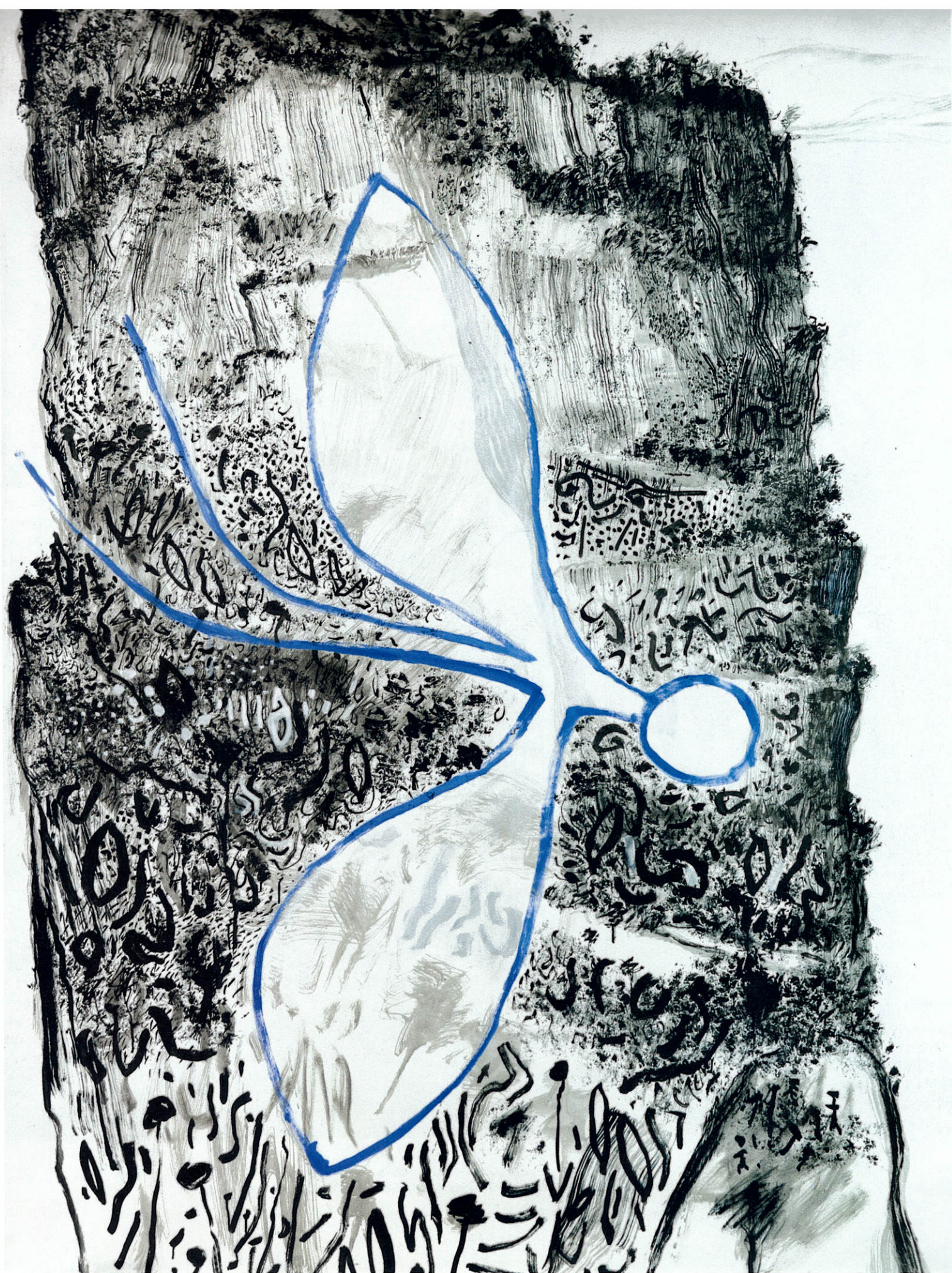
GUY WARREN

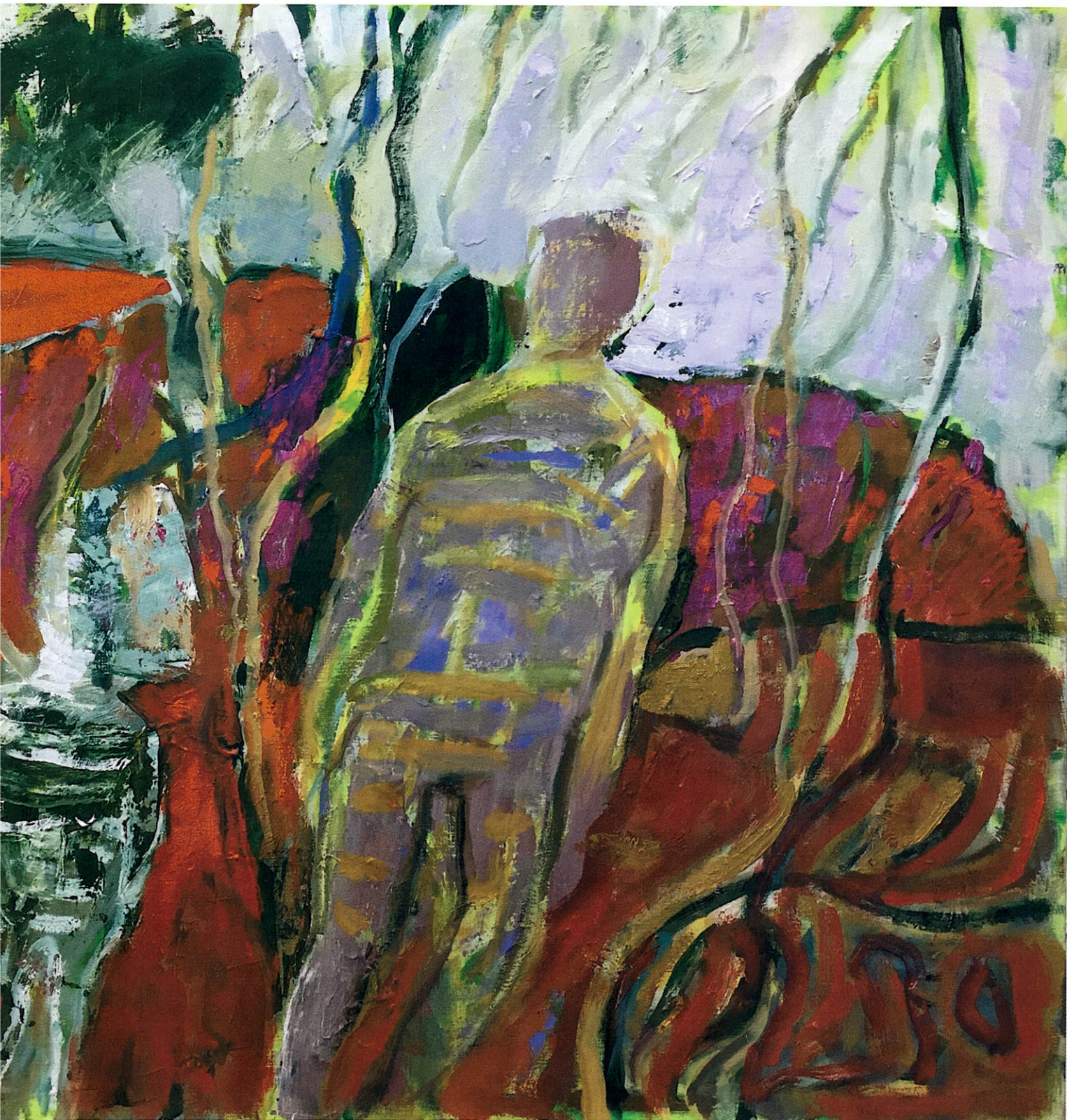
the figure not only being in the landscape but appearing as part of this landscape. For many years, like his great idol in Australian art **Ian Fairweather**, he would paint in acrylic, standing over the canvas on the floor mapping out the forms of the landscape and the figures. In more recent years, when the physical effort of standing over the canvas became too arduous, he turned to painting at his easel in oils with a heightened tactility and frequently a great lightness of touch. Some of his most successful late works are highly textured pieces in oil stick on paper where there is a sense of illusion – a visionary fleeting image – a spiritual quality. The rainforest is rarely distant from his art, along with the idea of overlapping forms that surround you from all sides and that encourage you to call upon your imagination to travel within them.

For Warren, the art process involves something intuitive and not a programmed act and there is a stage where the painting or drawing takes over and the artist's intellect moves to the background. As he recently said, "The great problem in making art is this battle we all have between intuition and logic; one can become too logical about the work. If one could only get back to the innocence of childhood – where one doesn't think too much but simply does – then I think it would be a great deal better."

In 2021 Warren became one of Australia's best-known artists as the subject of **Peter Wegner's** portrait of the artist at the age of 100, for which Wegner was awarded the Archibald Prize on the Archibald's 100th anniversary. Being 100 as an artist in Australia is no longer such a rare phenomenon – **Erwin Fabian** and **Inge King** are two other recent examples. What is changing is that we now look up to artists like Warren as elders who have attained experience and wisdom that they share with us through their art.

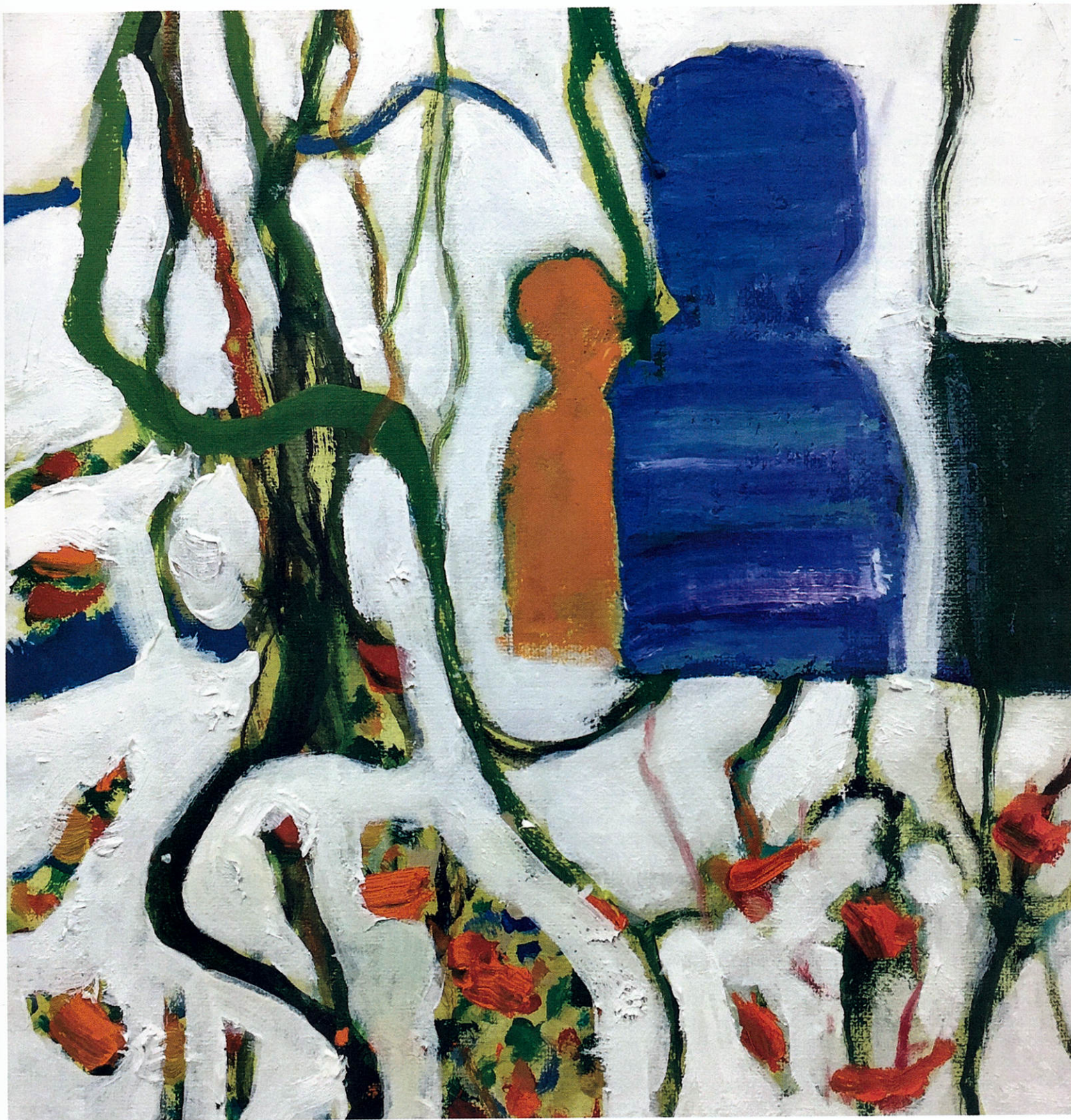
GUY WARREN'S EXHIBITION *NEW PAINTINGS & WORKS ON PAPER* SHOWS AT NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE FROM 30 NOVEMBER TO 18 DECEMBER 2021.





Guy Warren, *Figures in a Red Land*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 66.5 x 66.5cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.



Guy Warren, *Restless Land*, 2021. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 30.5 x 30.5cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.

## NICHOLAS THOMPSON

Founder and director, Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne

I have represented **Guy Warren** since I opened my gallery in 2015. In addition to his considerable history as an important Australian artist who has exhibited since the 1950s, I am amazed at how vibrant, layered, joyous and relevant Guy's work continues to be. His paintings and drawings have a continuing engagement with the natural environment and man's relationship with it, themes which remain significant and very contemporary.

Guy celebrated his 100th birthday this year, with several commemorative exhibitions at the National Art School and the University of Wollongong Gallery. **Peter Wegner's** Portrait of Guy was awarded the 2021 Archibald Prize and Guy was featured in ABC's *Finding The*

*Archibald*. It is terrific to see him celebrated so widely in his 100th year.

The last few years have been an exciting time for Guy and it feels like a real reassessment of his work has occurred, with considerable interest from media and institutions. Prices have increased accordingly, but for a significant Australian artist his work remains accessible, especially his drawings and works on paper.

Guy is a truly unique artist in that his work appeals to both seasoned collectors and followers of Australian art history, but also to younger buyers – his colour-driven and expressionistic works have attracted a good following among new collectors. It is really rewarding to see a new generation respond to his work.

*"Guy's continuing influence is in his constant depiction of the landscape and humankind's relationship to it – something that seems more relevant now than when he began."* GLENN BARKLEY

## GLENN BARKLEY

Artist, writer and curator

I first met Guy when I studied at the University of Wollongong (UOW) where Guy was the director of the UOW Art Collection. Guy has had a long-sustained career that has constantly been in a state of reinvention and re-invigoration. I think Guy found his themes quite early – the figure in the landscape and humankind's relationships to that landscape. These are big themes to which you can constantly loop back.

I think Guy also had the good fortune, although it may not have felt like that at the time, of being at the experimental Tin Sheds in the early 1970s when the whole practice of painting was in a state of flux. This led to some of his most radical work, like running a painting through a washing machine. He was able to

reconstruct a new kind of painting practice.

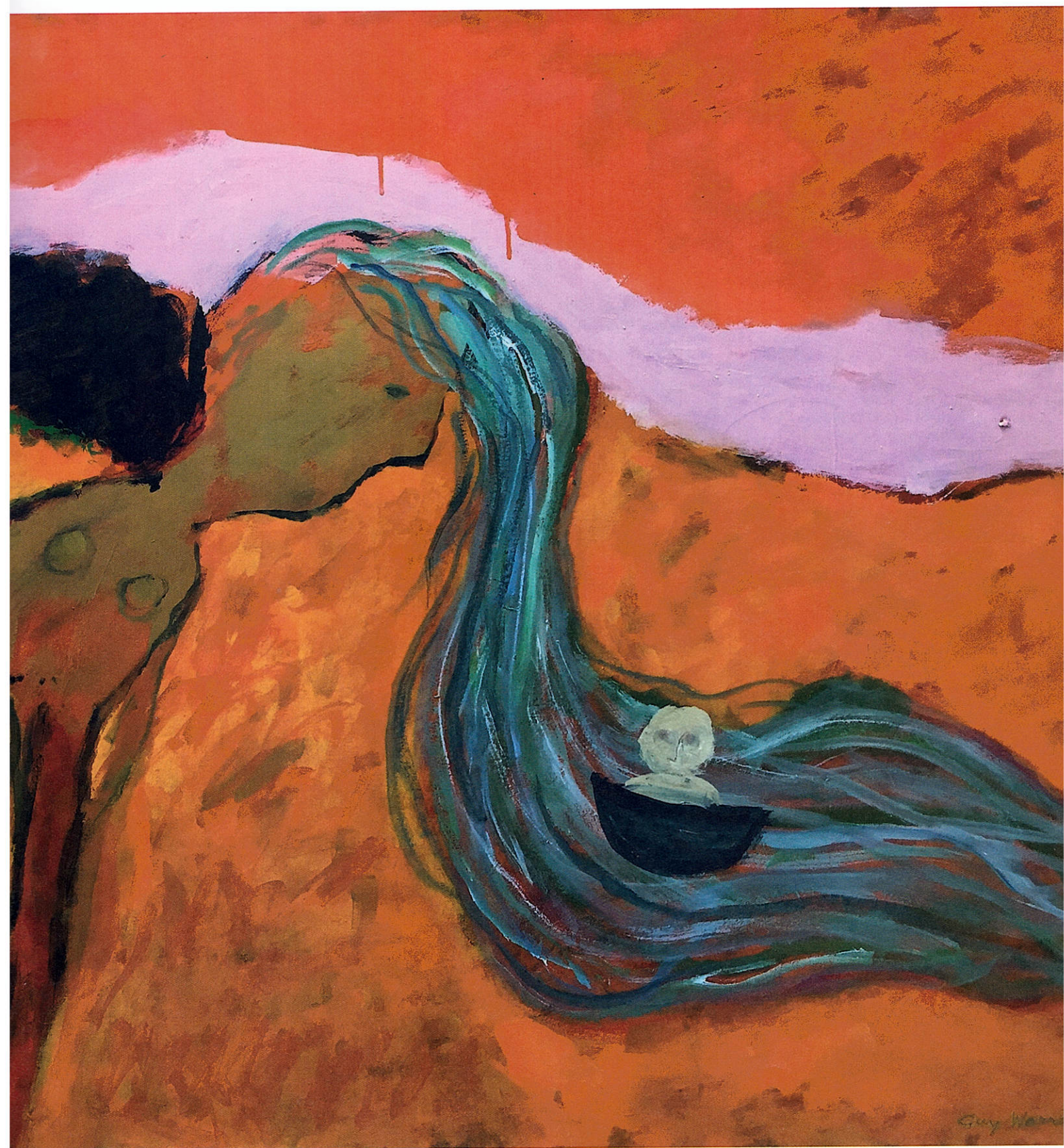
Guy's continuing influence is in his constant depiction of the landscape and humankind's relationship to it – something that seems more relevant now than when he began. I think Guy has always had doubt about art's potential to solve problems of the world – but I don't think that has deterred his belief in the value of making and of asking these big global questions and there is something really admirable about that.

Over such a long career there are also pockets of his practice that still need to be unravelled. And Guy is still making in the studio, trying to understand the world – so there is great work still to come.

Guy Warren, *River of Life #1*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 120cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.





**1920s-1950s**

- **1921**  
Born in Goulburn, NSW
- **1941-46**  
Completes war service in Australia and New Guinea
- **1947-49**  
Attends the National Art School, Sydney under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme
- **1950**  
Wins the Mosman Art Prize for his work *Valley of the Albert, Queensland*
- **1950-66**  
Studies part-time at Chelsea School of Art, Central School of Arts and Crafts and London School of Art, London
- **1955-57**  
Included in group shows *Australian Artists' Association*, Imperial Institute Gallery, London, and *The Commonwealth as Seen by the Artist*, Bridlington Art Gallery, London
- **1959**  
First solo exhibition at Obelisk Gallery, London



ALL IMAGES COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.

**1946**

1. Guy in 1946 on the day of his discharge from the army.

**1945**

2. Guy Warren, *Crashed plane, Bougainville*, 1945. Watercolour, 22 x 32cm.

**1959**

3. Guy with his wife Joy and their children in Paris, 1959.

**1958**

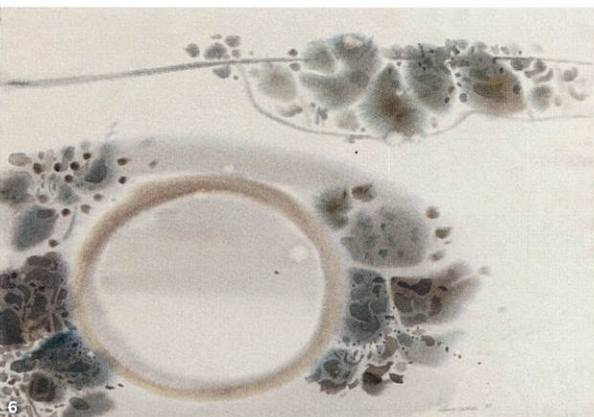
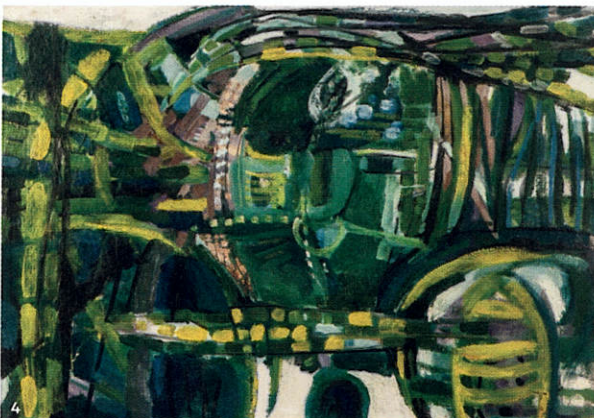
4. Guy Warren, *Princess*, 1958. Oil on canvas, 76 x 101.5cm.

**1963**

5. Guy Warren, *Children Playing*, 1963. Oil on board, 90 x 122cm.

**1968**

6. Guy Warren, *After Mungo Brush*, 1968. Watercolour on paper, 57 x 76cm.

**1960s**

- **1961**  
Included in group shows *Pan Pacific Artists' Exhibition*, Japan and *São Paulo Biennale*, Brazil
- **1964**  
Included in the Australian Print Survey (Australian tour)
- **1965**  
Solo exhibition at Macquarie Galleries, Sydney
- **1965**  
Wins the Mosman Art Prize
- **1966-73**  
Lectures at School of Architecture, University of Sydney and the Department of Industrial Design, University of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1966**  
Included in group show *Recent Australian Painting*, Los Angeles and San Francisco
- **1967**  
Included in group shows *Perth Festival Invitation Prize Exhibition*, Perth and *Australian Pavilion Expo*, Canada
- **1968**  
Receives British Council Grant to study educational practices in UK art and architecture schools



## 1970s

- **1972**  
Included in *Australian Paintings and Tapestries of the Last 20 Years*, London and Sydney
- **1974**  
Awarded Special Projects Grant by the Australia Council
- **1975**  
Included in Australian Pavilion Expo, Okinawa, Japan
- **1976-85**  
Inaugural director of Art Workshop, University of Sydney and principal lecturer and head of Painting at Sydney College of the Arts
- **1977**  
Solo exhibition *Guy Warren – Survey, 1955-77* stages at Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, NSW and Paddington Town Hall Art Centre, Sydney

## 1975

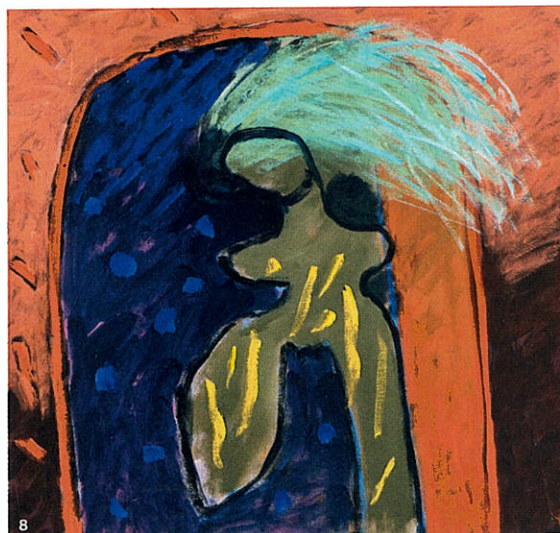
7. Guy Warren, *Double Figures*, 1975. Acrylic on cotton duck, 198 x 229cm.

## 1980s

- **1980**  
Included in *Adelaide Festival Exhibition*, Adelaide and *Australian Contemporary Paperworks: Drawn and Quartered*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
- **1980**  
Finalist in the Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and awarded the Trustees' Watercolour Award
- **1981**  
Wins the Manly Art Prize
- **1981**  
Included in the Second International Drawing Triennale, Poland
- **1982**  
Included in *Recent Australian Works on Paper*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1982-83**  
Artist in residence, Australian Visual Arts Board Studio, New York
- **1985**  
Awarded Archibald Prize for Portraiture for his work *Flugelman with Wingman*

## 1983

8. Guy Warren, *New York Woman at Arthur Boyd's No.9*, 1983. Acrylic on board, 91.5 x 91.5cm.



- **1985**  
Included in *Salute to Lloyd Rees*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney; *The Drawn Image*, Penrith and Armidale regional galleries and Macquarie Galleries, Sydney; and *Perspecta*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Finalist in the Archibald Prize and the Sulman Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1988**  
Awarded the Bronze Medal at the 4th International Triennale of Drawing, Poland
- **1989**  
Included in *Prints and Australia*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and *Twentieth Century Australian Watercolours*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1989-92**  
Solo exhibition *Person, Place and Process – a Survey of the Work of Guy Warren* stages at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, NSW and tours NSW

## 1995

9. Guy Warren, *Treefern Woman and Icarus*, 1995. Ink and acrylic on paper, 229 x 144cm.



## 1990s

- **1990**  
Artist in residence at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
- **1992-02**  
Director of the University of Wollongong Art Collection, NSW
- **1993**  
Included in *Identities: Art from Australia*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan and Wollongong City Art Gallery, NSW
- **1994**  
A series of Warren's works are presented as sky drawings above Sydney Harbour using a Cessna 182 aeroplane at 14,000 feet
- **1995**  
Finalist in the Dobell Drawing Prize and the Sulman Prize at Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1996**  
Finalist in the Archibald Prize and the Dobell Drawing Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- **1998**  
Awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong
- **1999**  
Awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

## 1997

10. Guy Warren, *The Arrival*, 1997. Acrylic on linen, 274 x 274cm.

**2000s**

- **2000**  
A solo exhibition of Warren's work shows at Annandale Galleries, Sydney
- **2001**  
Survey exhibition *A Painter's Journey* stages at Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns
- **2001**  
Included in *Australian Masters*, Solander Galleries, Canberra
- **2002**  
Survey exhibition of Warren's work stages at University of Wollongong, NSW
- **2003-04**  
*Presence and Landscape – Guy Warren in Retrospect* stages at Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney and tours NSW
- **2005**  
Completes a study tour in Russia, UK and Japan
- **2007**  
Awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Visual Arts from The University of Sydney

**2010s**

- **2011**  
Completes an Artist Profile tour of Fowlers Gap and Broken Hill, NSW
- **2012**  
Solo show *Work from the Dry Country* stages at Rex Irwin Galleries, Sydney
- **2013**  
Appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM)
- **2015**  
*The Drawn Image: Colin Lanceley, Alun Leach-Jones & Guy Warren – 30th Anniversary Commemorative Exhibition* stages at Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne. Included in *Opening Exhibition*, Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
- **2015**  
Solo show *Dust of Memory* stages at Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney

- **2016**  
*Genesis of a painter: Guy Warren at 95* stages at the National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- **2016**  
Included in *Luminous – Australian Watercolours 1900-2000* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



- **2017**  
Solo show *Works on paper from the artist's studio* stages at King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
- **2017**  
Solo show *Works on paper* stages at Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne
- **2018-19**  
Survey exhibition *River Rainforest Rock* stages at Shoalhaven Regional Art Gallery, NSW
- **2019**  
Solo show *Forward and Back* stages at King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
- **2019**  
Solo show *Paintings and Drawings: Selected by Suzanne Archer* stages at Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne

**2020s**

- **2020**  
Solo show *New work + stages* at King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
- **2020**  
Included in *Salon des Refuses*, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- **2021**  
Included in *Hills and Wings*, Wollongong University Art Gallery, NSW
- **2021**  
Solo show *The 100th year* stages at King Street Gallery on William, Sydney; *From The Mountain To The Sky: Guy Warren Drawings* stages at National Art School, Sydney and solo show *Paintings and Paper* stages at Gallery Lane Cove and Creative Studios, Sydney

ALL IMAGES COURTESY: THE ARTIST, NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY.

**2001**  
11. Guy Warren, *Threshold(3)*, 2001. Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 57cm.

**2012**  
12. Guy Warren, *Land of the Patient Creeks*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 120 x 200cm.

**2010s**  
13. Guy in his studio. PHOTO: GRAHAM MILLER.

**2020**  
14. Guy Warren, *Covid Lockdown Exercise Bob Campbell Oval no.1*, 2020. Watercolour on paper, 38 x 57cm.

**2021**  
15. Guy Warren, *River of Life #2*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 70 x 80cm.