



SUSAN BAIRD
Painting Place

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3 – 24 May 2025

Perched high in the hills behind Bathurst, the old gold mining settlement of Hill End has become a kind of painter's paradise that inspired a compelling chapter in the annals of Australian art. The site was famously 'discovered' by Russell Drysdale and Donald Friend as they drove down Beyers Avenue on a cold night in August 1947. For both artists, it was a moment of instant recognition. The scarred landscape, the silent ruins and the casual sense of desolation became a powerful motif in the quest for a post-war reappraisal of the Australian experience.

Fast forward to 1994 when an artists' residency was established at the Haefliger Cottage as a prelude to The Artists of Hill End exhibition held at the Art Gallery of NSW the following year. It was an initiative that reinvigorated the region involving NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. It gave artists a unique opportunity to live and work on site, engaging in the historic landscape that evokes a palpable sense of time passing, with its distinct seasons echoing the years of boom, bust, abandonment and eventual renewal.

Susan Baird was one of the artists invited to take up a residency at the Haefliger Cottage in 2011. It was to become a life-changing experience for the artist that persists to this day. Baird described the initial encounter: 'Being at Haefligers in April 2011 allowed me to watch how things unfold in Hill End from morning to night. It was great to be able to drag the easel outside to capture a passing haze or the flicker of a house light – the transitory moments in time.'

Today, Tambaroora is the site that constantly lures the artist from her studio, a short distance south of the painting grounds. Back in the 1850s, Tambaroora had been a thriving centre of activity – alluvial gold was the attraction. The diggings around the creeks and gullies were cleared of all vegetation in the search for gold. When the alluvial gold ran out, the miners moved south to establish Hill End and unearth the fabulous reef of gold at Hawkins Hill. Today, not surprisingly, a forlorn atmosphere pervades the Tambaroora site: smooth-trunked eucalypts have re-established in the clay soils and reappear in the artist's recent body of work. The angles and forms of the trees act as an armature for the artist's abstract impulse to energise the picture plane. It's refreshing to see Baird's loose, yet assured brushwork and tonal modulation take hold in works such as *Dusk at the Creek*, *Quartz and Clay* and *Scrubby Bank Reflections*.

A measured evolution has taken place in her practice over the years largely inspired by the Hill End and Tambaroora landscape. In hindsight, the impact of that initial encounter has endured. Today the artist continues to process the raw beauty of the place with an authority wrought from years of observation and experimentation. Her palette is informed by the varied pinkish/grey hues seen in the clay embankments. The scattering of pines in the gullies provide darker tones that contrast with the varied greens tones of the eucalypt stands as in *Creek with Pines*, *Late Summer*.

Wandering about the battered landscape at Tambaroora and Hill End, the artist noticed interesting shards of pottery and crockery exposed after rains. The finds sparked associations of the tough domestic life women endured on the goldfields. While circumstances were often bleak, the hope of a lucky strike buoyed whole communities. The notion may have inspired works such as *Reverie* and *Back Fence towards Bald Hill*.

The general atmosphere of the Tambaroora site is transformed after rain. Creeks begin to run and pool and a clear penetrating light pervades the place. In such moments, the artist's attention is drawn to the creek beds and ponds that mirror a moment in time. The artist has captured the observation in a fine series of smaller scale paintings that include *Lines in the Creek* and *Stanza*.

The series of works in *Painting Place* is a testament to the commitment Susan Baird has made to a place – a special place that continues to recharge the creative spirit. To a passing visitor, there appears little on offer. Yet, for Susan Baird, a talented and perceptive artist, the Tambaroora painting grounds will continue to inspire inventive excavations further enriching the artist's impressive body of works.

Gavin Wilson

Author & Curator

March 2025



Dusk at the Creek

oil on linen

140 x 140 cm

\$12,500

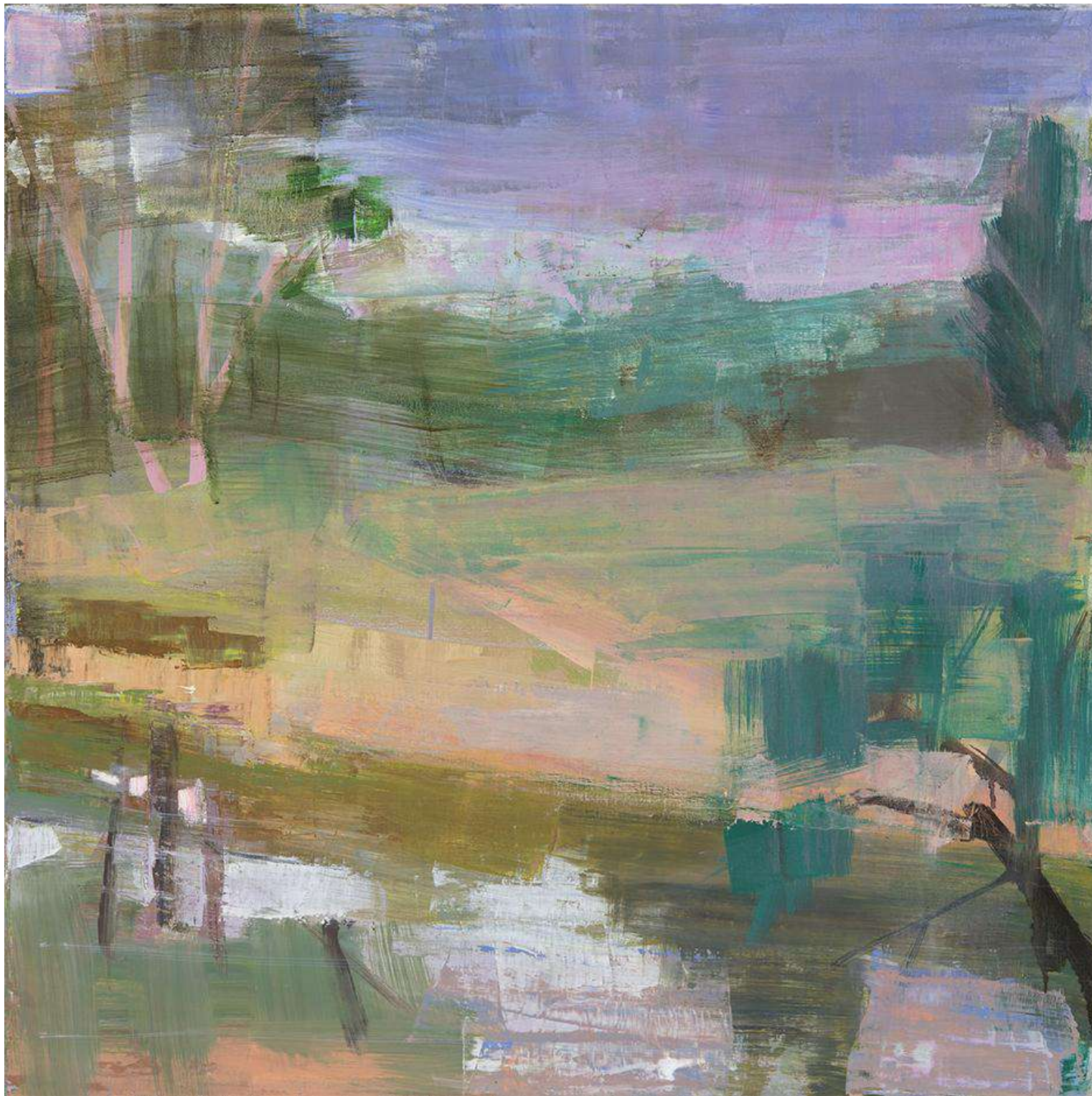


Wilyacali Country

oil on linen

92 x 213.5 cm, 96 x 217.5 cm (framed)

\$15,000

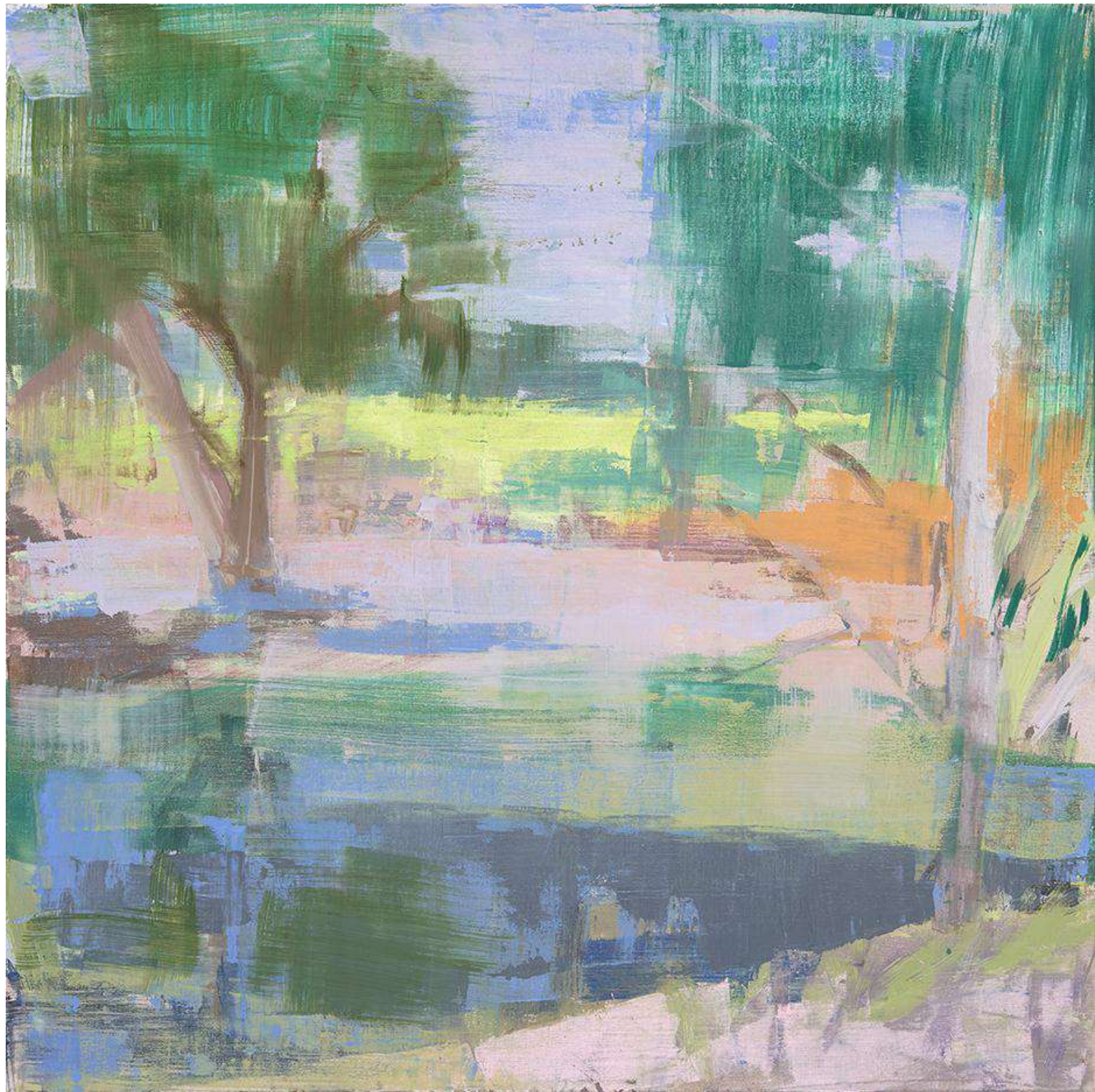


Golden Gully

oil on linen

80 x 80 cm, 84 x 84 cm (framed)

\$7,500

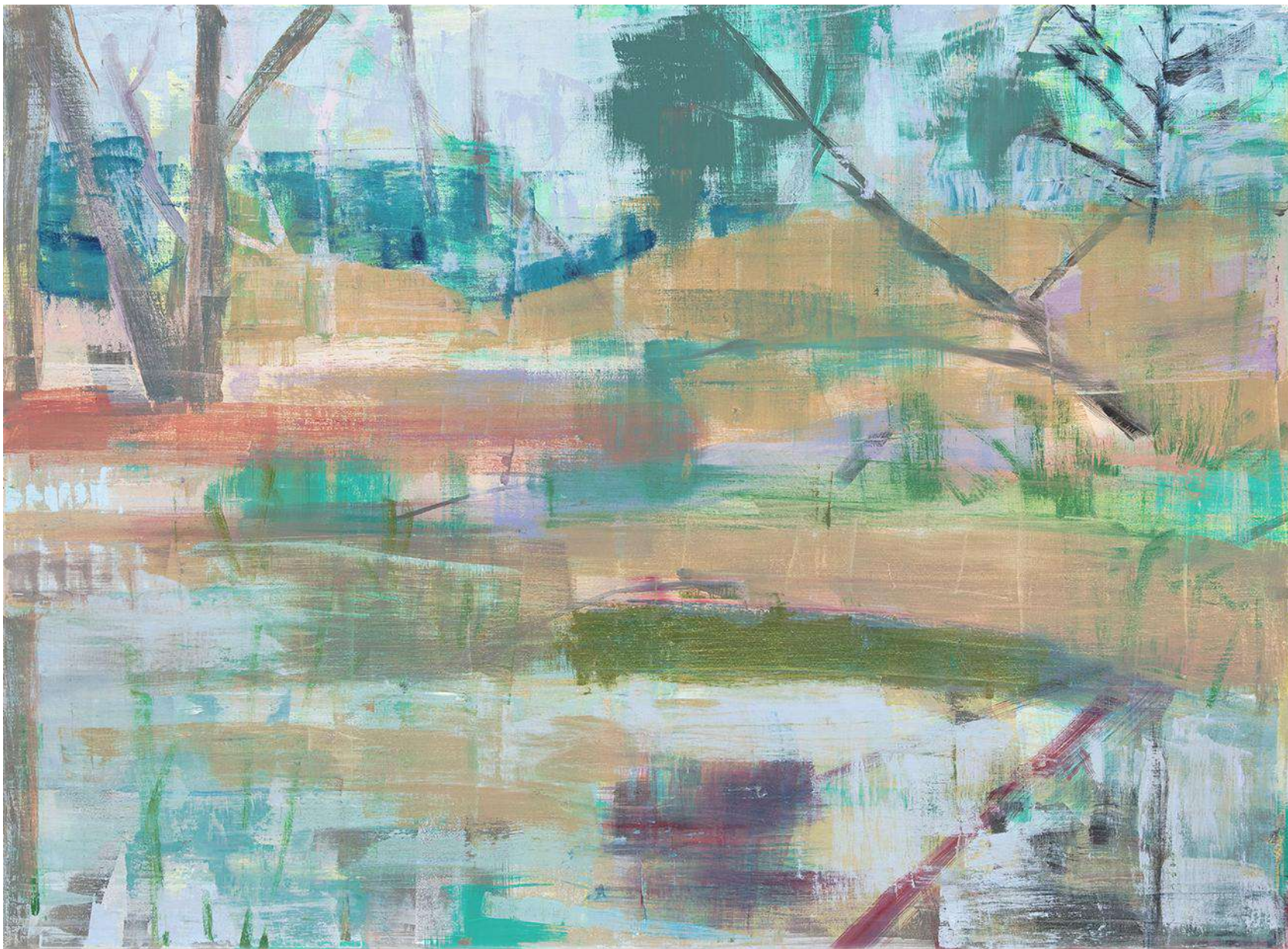


Painting Place, Summer

oil on linen

80 x 80 cm, 84 x 84 cm (framed)

\$7,500



Quartz and Clay

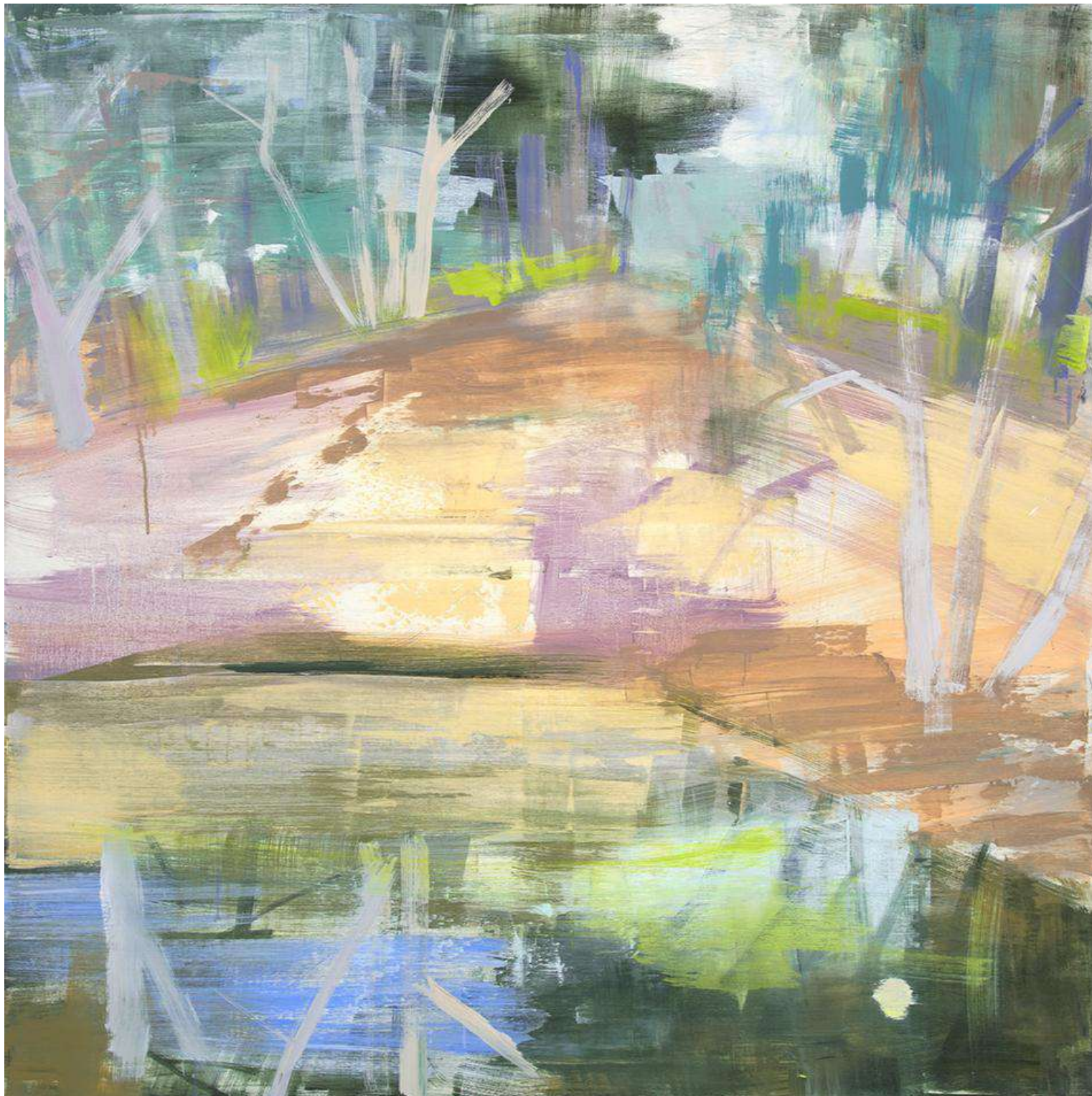
oil on linen

112 x 153 cm, 116 x 157 cm (framed)

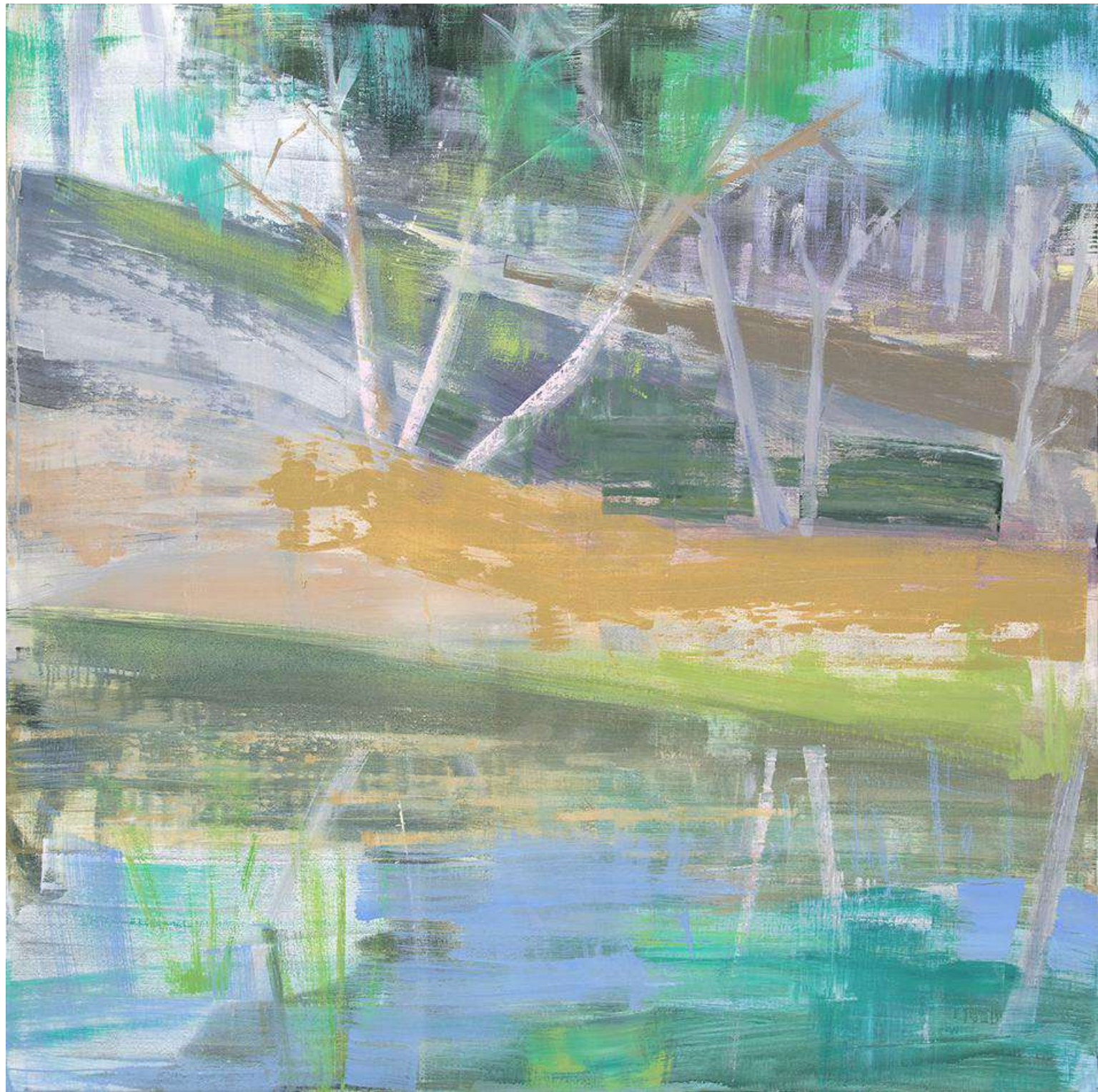
\$11,000



Reflected Bank
oil on linen
102 x 152 cm, 106 x 156 cm (framed)
\$10,000



Bush Melody
oil on linen
140 x 140 cm
\$12,500

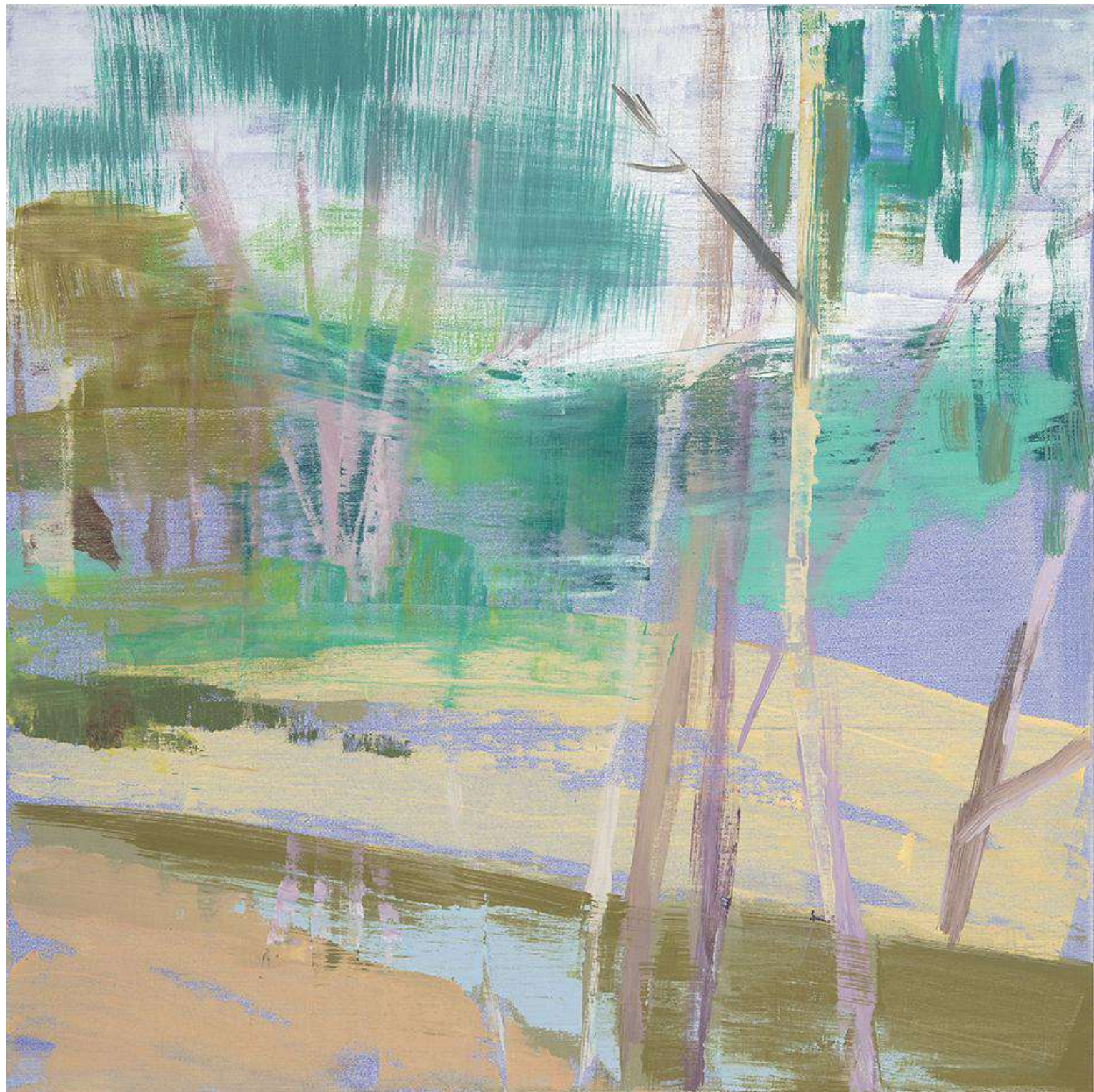


Scrubby Bank Reflections

oil on linen

140 x 140 cm

\$12,500

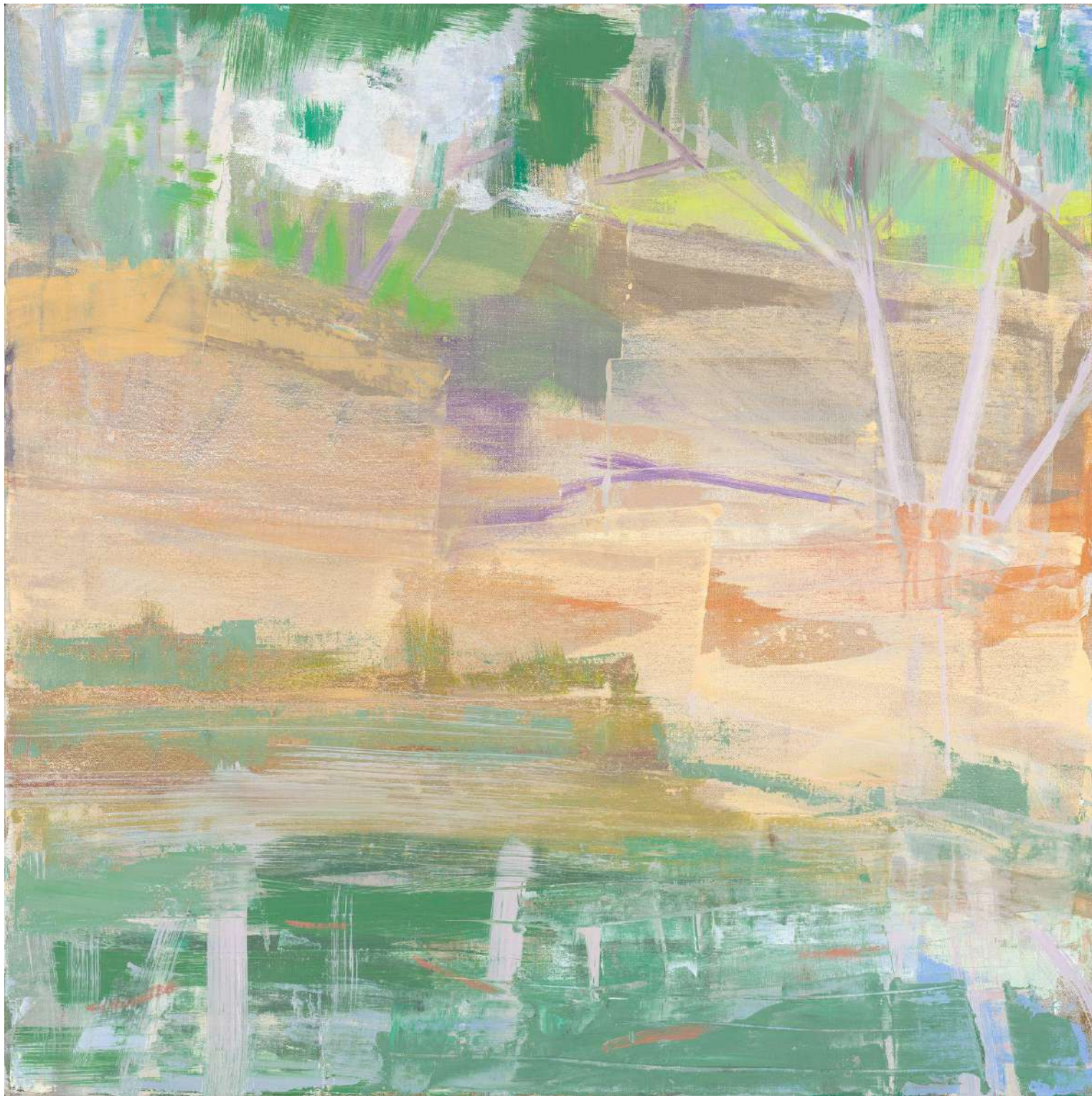


White Light Gully

oil on linen

80 x 80 cm, 84 x 84 cm (framed)

\$7,500



Tambaroora After Rain

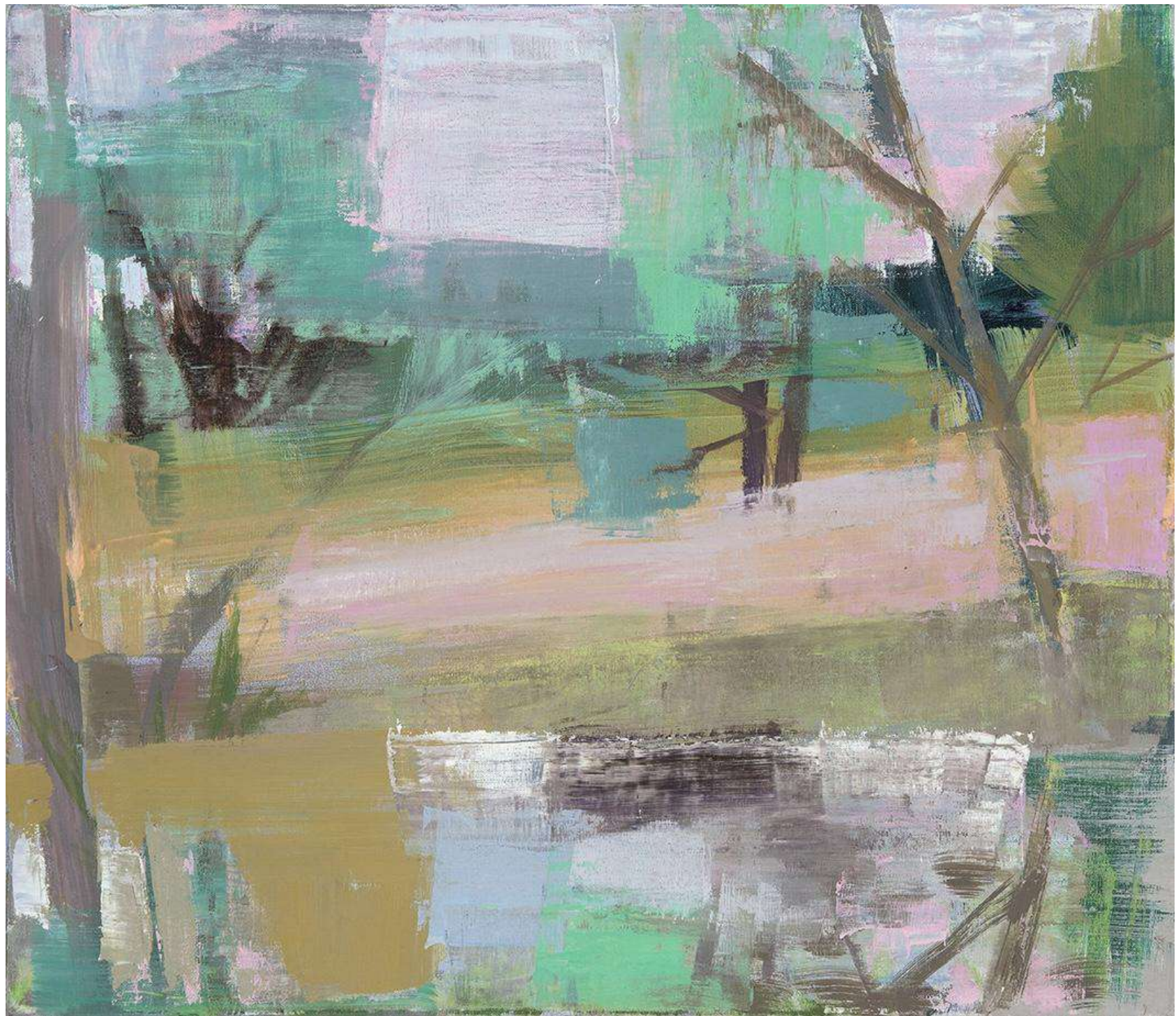
oil on linen

80 x 80 cm, 84 x 84 cm (framed)

\$7,500



Creek with Pines, Late Summer
oil on linen
66 x 76 cm, 70 x 80 cm (framed)
\$6,500



Tambaroora Dusk

oil on linen

66 x 76 cm, 70 x 80 cm (framed)

\$6,500

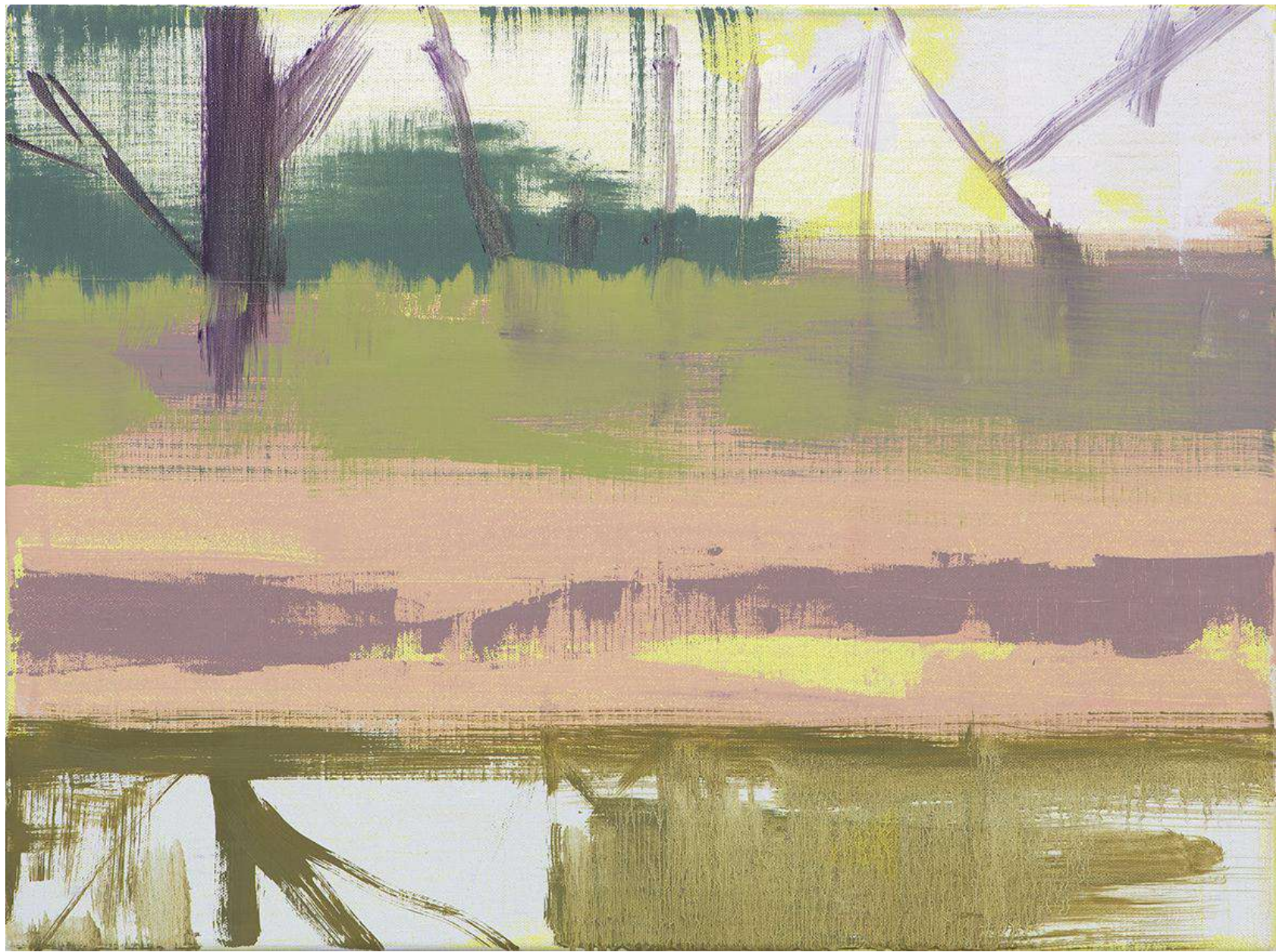


Reflected Gully

oil on linen

46 x 61 cm, 50 x 65 cm (framed)

\$4,900



Lines in the Creek

oil on linen

46 x 61 cm, 50 x 65 cm (framed)

\$4,900



Clay and Bank

oil on linen

25 x 30 cm, 29 x 34 cm (framed)

\$2,500



Stanza
oil on linen
25 x 30 cm, 29 x 34 cm (framed)
\$2,500

SUSAN BAIRD CV

Education

- 2013 MA Painting, UNSW College of Fine Arts, Sydney
- 1997 National Art School, Sydney
- 1995 Printmaking Summer School, Parsons School of Design, New York, USA
- 1992 Painting and Drawing (Intensive Studio Practice), New York Studio School, USA

Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 Painting Place, Defiance Gallery, Sydney
- 2021 Where the Light Falls, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2019 All Around Me, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2017 Land By Water, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2016 Sense of Place, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2014 Landscape and Light, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2013 Being in Landscape, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
Being in Landscape, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
- 2011 Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2006 Urban Fragments, Axia Modern Art, Melbourne
- 2004 Saatchi & Saatchi, Sydney
- 1995 Bridge St Gallery, Paddington
- 1993 New Work – New York, Mary Place Gallery, Sydney
- 1990 Urban Landscapes, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney
- 1989 Movement Through Water, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney
- 1988 Schubert Gallery
- 1986 Schubert Gallery

Group Exhibitions

- 2025 30 Years of Defiance, Defiance Gallery, Sydney
- 2024 Collection in Focus, Cowra Regional Art Gallery
- 2023 Paper and Clay, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2022 Out of the Blue, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2021 9x5 exhibition, Hill End Art Gallery
Under the Sun, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2019 Reflections of a Fading Sky, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2018 Here and Now, Orange Regional Art Gallery
Postcards to Hill End, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
The Way You Came, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2017 At Bull Bay, Despard Gallery, Hobart
Hill End: Seven Decades, Penrith Regional Art Gallery
- 2016 Coastal, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2015 Under the Sun, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney

BRAG 200X200, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

In The Still, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney

Off Road, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

2014 Under the Sun, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney

Australasian Arts Projects, Singapore Affordable Art Fair

25th Anniversary Exhibition, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne

The Third Wave: Two Decades of the Hill End Artists in Residence Programme, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

2013 Under the Sun, Arthouse Gallery, Sydney

2012 Hill End 1850 –2011 from the Permanent Collection, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

2010 Salon des Refusés, Tweed River Regional Gallery

Salon des Refusés, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney

2007 Presence Absence, United Galleries, Sydney

Unwrapped, United Galleries, Perth

2006 Unwrapped, United Galleries, Sydney

2003 Hallelujah, Michael Carr Art Dealer

Artists of Mosman, Mosman Art Gallery

2002 Artists of Mosman, Mosman Art Gallery

1996 Arthouse Gallery, Sydney

1994 Westpac Private Bank, Melbourne

Awards & Residencies

2024 Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2023 Calleen Art Award, Finalist

Fishers Ghost Art Award, Finalist

Paddington Art Prize, Finalist

2021 Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2019 Paddington Art Prize, Finalist

Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2018 Paddington Art Prize, Finalist

Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2017 Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2016 NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize, Finalist

Mosman Art Prize, Finalist

Calleen Art Award, Finalist

2015 Artist in Residence, Bull Bay, Bruny Island

Mosman Art Prize, Finalist

2013 Colville Lloyd Rees Art Prize, Finalist

2012 Jenny Birt Award, UNSW COFA, Highly Commended

2012 Artist in Residence, Murray's Cottage, Hill End

2011 Blake Art Prize, Finalist

Artist in Residence, Haefligers Cottage, Hill End

Paddington Art Prize, Finalist

- 2010 Paddington Art Prize, Honourable Mention and Peoples Choice Award
 Mosman Art Prize, Finalist
 NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize, Finalist
- 2009 Paddington Art Prize, Finalist
- 2008 Hills Grammar School Art Prize, Highly Commended
 The City of Canada Bay Council & Mirvac Group Public Art Competition, Winner
- 2005 Art on The Rocks, Finalist
- 2004 Hills Grammar School Art Prize, Winner
 Art on The Rocks, Finalist

Collections

Cowra Regional Art Gallery
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
Artbank

Artist Talks

- 2013 Artist Forum, Susan Baird, Luke Sciberras and Virginia Cuppage, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
- 2010 Salon Des Refuses, Sharing Observations of the Australian Landscape, S.H. Ervin Gallery

Bibliography

- Brooke Boland, See the Light, Artist Profile Magazine, Iss.55, Jun 2021
- Elli Walsh, All Around Me, Catalogue Essay, Sept 2019
- Elli Walsh, Land by Water, Catalogue Essay, 2017
- Marguerite Brown, Landscape and Light, the Melbourne Review, Iss.29, Mar 2014
- Robina Booth (BRAG), The Arts – Hoping for Hill End Inspiration, Weekend Advocate, 3 Nov 2012
- Gavin Wilson, Being in Landscape, Catalogue Essay, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Nov 2012
- Sasha Grishin, Inside the Archibores, the Canberra Times, 3 Apr 2010
- John McDonald, Thankful for Small Mercies, the Sydney Morning Herald, 2–4 Apr 2010
- Art and Reverse, An Urban Canvas, Guiding Light Productions, Sunday Arts ABC, 2007
- Belle Magazine, Talent Pool, Apr/May 2006
- Tim Benzie, In the Frame, the Sun Herald Arts, Oct 2004
- Art and Australia, Exhibition Commentary, Émigré Issue, Winter 1993
- Elwyn Lynn, Calm Amidst The Frenzy, the Australian, Apr 1993
- Elwyn Lynn, Balmly Zephyrs from Inland Banish Angst, the Australian, Jun 1990



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