



education kit

hanna kay undertow

a maitland regional art gallery touring exhibition
maitland regional art gallery | 21 may - 11 july 2010
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MIGRATION HERITAGE CENTRE
NEW SOUTH WALES

[A cemetery]... is not a mere field in which the dead are stowed away unknown; it is a touching and beautiful history, written in family burial plots, in mounded graves, in sculptured and inscribed monuments. It tells the story of the past, not of its institutions, or its wars, or its ideas, but of its individual lives, - of its men and women and children, and of its household. It is silent, but eloquent; it is common, but it is unique. We find no such history elsewhere; there are no records in all the wide world in which we can discover so much that is suggestive, so much that is pathetic and impressive.

Rev. Joseph Anderson, American clergyman, 1836 - 1918

cover image
Hanna Kay
Undercurrent (detail) 2008
oil and tempera on linen
180 x 350cm

a maitland regional art gallery touring exhibition

Contents

Focus Works:

- Plate 1: *Undercurrent*, 2008
oil and tempera on linen
180 x 350cm
- Plate 2: *Woodland* (diptych), 2008
mixed media
66 x 132cm
- Plate 3: *Watercourse 11*, 2008
digital photograph and oil paint on canvas
66 x 66cm
- Plate 4: *Shifting Ground 1* (triptych), 2008
mixed media
66 x 268cm
- Plate 5: *Wake* (panel 3 of triptych), 2008
oil and tempera on linen
66 x 132cm

Notes on Use	6
Further Reading	7
Introduction to the Jewish Migration Project	8-9
Artist's life	10-13
Process and Environment	14-16
Evolution of a painting	17-20
Maitland Jewish Cemetery photographs	21-22
Language and Meaning	23
Question and Answer: <i>Undertow</i>	25-26
Suggestions for developing student's understandings:	
Early Childhood and Primary students.	27-29
Secondary and Tertiary students.	30-32
Acknowledgements	33



Plate 1
Hanna Kay
Undercurrent, 2008
oil and tempera on linen
180 x 350cm

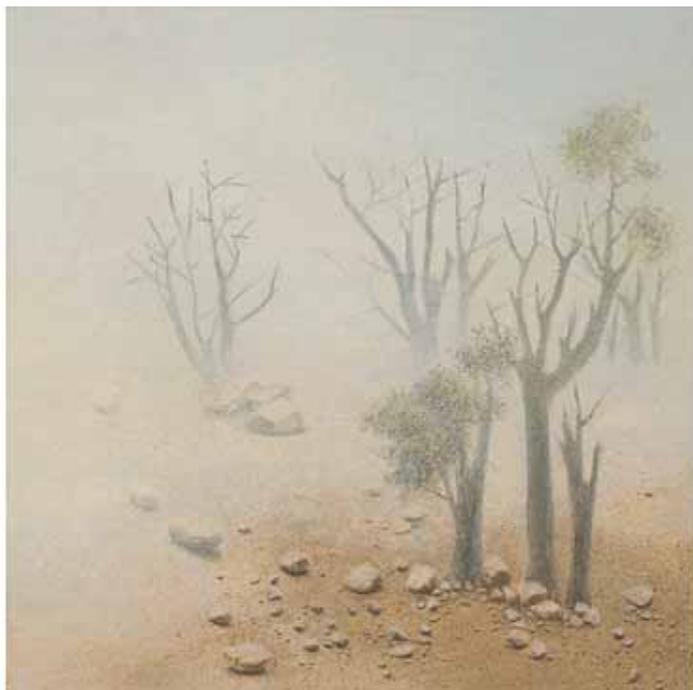
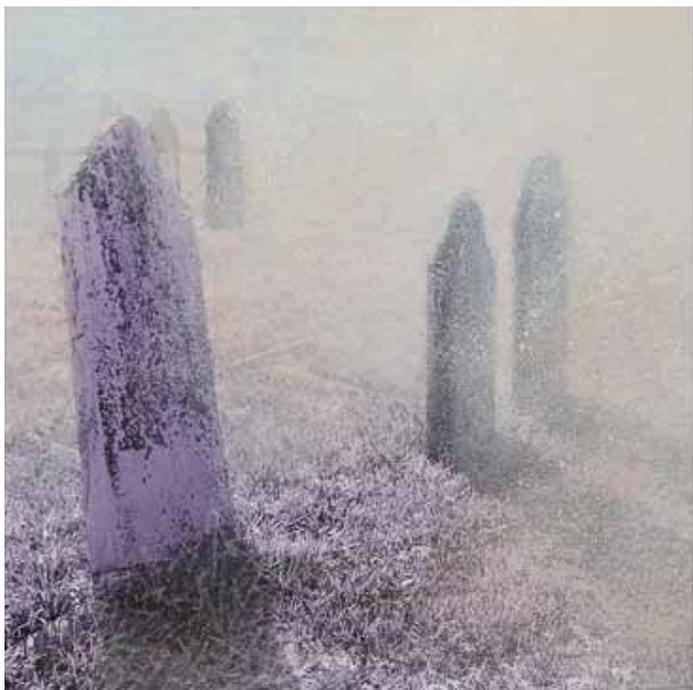


Plate 2
Hanna kay
Woodland (diptych), 2008
mixed media
66 x 132cm



Plate 3
Hanna Kay
Watercourse 11, 2008
digital photograph and oil paint on canvas
66 x 66cm



Plate 4
Hanna Kay
Shifting Ground 1 (triptych), 2008
mixed media
66 x 268cm



Plate 5
Hanna Kay
Wake (panel 3 of triptych), 2008
oil and tempera on linen
66 x 132cm

Notes on Use

This document has been produced by Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) as supporting education material for the touring exhibition *Hanna Kay - Undertow*. It aims to support teachers of primary and secondary students and focuses on NSW Visual Art syllabi K-12, and further related syllabi for years K-6.

Additionally, this resource can be utilised by public program staff, tertiary students, the general public whilst visiting the exhibition, and other interested parties, to give insight into Hanna's unique art and practice.

Hanna Kay - Undertow is a touring exhibition presented by MRAG, showcasing in various regional galleries along the east coast of Australia from 2009-2011.

MRAG strongly supports experience-based learning, particularly in the area of arts and culture. This education kit should be used as part of a unit of work that includes a visit to the art gallery to view *Hanna Kay - Undertow*.

Suggestions for developing student's understandings have been included in this education kit. This section contains several suggestions for further study, art making activities, and questions or concepts relating to the exhibition that could be expanded upon in the classroom. You may need to adapt these ideas to suit the specific needs of your students.

Further reading:

Additional exhibition publications:

Hanna Kay Undertow (2009). Catalogue, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Australia. Catalogue text by Joseph Eisenberg, Hanna Kay and Janis Wilton. ISBN 978-0-9806631-6-7

Wilton, J. (2010) *Maitland Jewish Cemetery: a monument to dreams and deeds*, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Australia. ISBN 978-0-980752014

Articles and Publications of interest:

Kay, H. (2007) *Notes from the Shed; a journal*. Macmillan Art Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria. ISBN 978-1-876-83258-2

Hanna Kay Weightlessness: paintings 2004-2010 (2010) Catalogue, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Australia. Catalogue text by Brad Franks and Katrina Rumley.

Wand, L. (1991) *HQ Magazine*; Diary of a reluctant soldier. June Ed. p 97-103
Sourced 1 November 2009,
Available: http://www.lesliewand.com.au/pages/hq_article.pdf

Websites regarding Jewish cemeteries, symbolism and headstones:

<http://cemeteries.wordpress.com/category/jewish/>
Sourced 2 November 2009

<http://www.memorials.com/Headstones-Symbolism-information.php>
Sourced 2 November 2009

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070605190353AAsEhkk>
Sourced 2 November 2009

Visit the artist's website:

<http://www.hannakay.com>

View Hanna Kay's most recent body of works, *Waterways 2009*:

<http://www.wilsonstreetgallery.com.au/pages/exhibitions.php?exhibitionID=39>
Sourced 2 November 2009

View *Turning the Pages* science and environmental project:

<http://www.turningthepages.com.au>
Sourced 27 May 2010

Introduction to the Jewish Migration Project

Undertow is proudly presented by Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) and Maitland City Council (MCC), with additional support from the Migration Heritage Centre NSW.

Hanna Kay's evocative paintings in the exhibition *Undertow* often use water as metaphor. Aptly demonstrated in the subtlety of colour and skillful application of paint, meaning is conveyed through the skillful capturing of varying qualities of water; reflection, stillness, clarity and opaqueness. These qualities of water are also human qualities. Water can adapt to the shape of a new vessel or environment, and forge paths through new terrain according to its own intent.

Hanna's paintings in *Undertow* reflect stories of displacement and migration in regional NSW during colonial times. These are the stories of people and their adaption to new environments whilst preserving their cultural heritage. *Undertow* is the first in a series of artistic and historic exhibitions to be presented by MRAG focusing on the many waves of migration to regional NSW with a specific focus on the Hunter Valley.

The premise for the project hinged around an artistic response to Maitland's Jewish Cemetery, set in a forgotten corner of Louth Park in West Maitland. This cemetery, and a similar cemetery located in Goulburn in the Southern Highlands, is unique to rural New South Wales. Whilst several regional cemeteries have their 'Jewish' sections and others still, bury their Jews in sections sometimes titled 'Other' or 'General', Maitland and Goulburn are the only remaining Jewish cemeteries outside of Sydney. As such, Maitland's Jewish Cemetery contains some fifty-odd graves of Jews from across the Northern Tablelands and Hunter regions, all buried between 1849 and the mid 1930's. Kay was commissioned by MRAG to develop a body of work that responds to the cemetery. The exhibition now tours the east coast of Australia as a way to re-tell the stories of Jewish immigration and community in colonial New South Wales.

Australians all share a common connection in some way to the experience or effects of migration. *'Unless we are Aboriginal people, we are all migrants or descendants of migrants.'*¹ The stories of 18th and 19th century Jews, who came to find themselves living in Australia, both reflects and parallels the stories of a wide range of others who have made their way here, both in colonial times, through the mid 1900s and into the current day. Kay herself, having migrated to Australia from Israel in 1989, acknowledges her own

histories in addition to those of her ancestors in her portrayals of the Jewish cemetery. She has prepared a thought provoking and solemn body of work. Kay acknowledges *'I have to admit that I have never lost the particular consciousness that makes me Jewish and Israeli.'*²

Kay's delicate representations of the beauty inherent within the cemetery, as a solemn, personal and yet public place, speaks of history, respect and reverence – things that we all, from all religions and walks of life, can relate to our own cultures and customs for the dead.

For more information on Maitland Jewish Cemetery including the stories of those who are buried there:

Wilton, J. (2010) *Maitland Jewish Cemetery: a monument to dreams and deeds*, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Australia.
ISBN 978-0-980752014

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1 Petersen, J. (Manager, NSW Migration Heritage Centre) Manager's Message.
Sourced 2 November 2010:
<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/about-us/managers-message/>

2 Kay, H. (2007) p31 *Notes from the Shed; a journal*. Macmillan Art Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria.

Artist's life

In all aspects of my life, I live with an artist inside me.

At times this person is intriguing, and at others - quite unbearable. ¹

1947 Hanna Kay, born in Tel Aviv, Israel. Hanna's mother was Lithuanian and her father was Polish.

1964 Hanna was drafted into the Israeli army. National military service is mandatory for any non-Arab Israeli citizen over the age of 18. Israel is unique compared with other nations in its conscription of women for service, usually for a term of 2 or more years. ²

1967 For a time, Hanna considered the idea of studying architecture in the army to become a military architect. In early 1967, she chose to extend her stay with the army. In her published journal, Hanna considered the *'other lives [she] might have lead'* had she made her choices differently and potentially avoided the experiences to come.³ In June, the Six-Day War took place in Sinai, Egypt, between Israel and neighbouring states Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Hanna was in Sinai serving in the Israeli army at the time of the conflict. Soon after, Hanna concluded her army duties.

In September 1967, Hanna travelled overseas to New York, USA and parts of Canada. After enjoying her time in New York, she left determined to return to live there one day.

1970 Hanna held her first solo show at New Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Also in 1970, a collection of Hanna's drawings were published as images in a Hebrew anthology of erotic poetry, *The Love of Women; an anthology of classic and contemporary erotic poetry.*⁴ The book became a best-seller, helping to keep Hanna's name in lights for years to come.

1971 Hanna travelled to Europe experiencing parts of Italy, Germany, Holland, France, England and Austria.

1972 In Vienna, Austria, Hanna studied art for two years at the Vienna Academy of Fine Art.

1973 Hanna married her first husband, an Austrian artist who was assisting the professor at the academy.

1974 July, Hanna gave birth to her daughter, Maya.

Not long after Maya was born, Hanna realised her intent to live in New York eight years after she had left. The family lived in Soho, New York. Hanna was to live there for a decade, during which time Hanna and her husband separated, and she lived as a single mother with Maya for the last 4 years of her time there.

1976 Hanna exhibited a painting in a group exhibition in a contemporary art museum, New York. Her painting was singled out in a review by the New York Times, buoying Hanna's confidence in her talents.

1984 Hanna and Maya returned to Tel Aviv, Israel

1986 Hanna married Leslie Wand, an Australian born videographer. It was Leslie who created the documentary included in *Undertow*.

1989 Hanna, Leslie and Maya left Tel Aviv to live in Sydney, Australia. For Leslie, it was a move of necessity, for, as an Australian-born Jew who had come to live in Israel and had liked the country and its people, he had taken up citizenship, and was thereby required to undertake mandatory military service in the army. He was placed in a frontline unit serving in Rafiach in the Gaza strip. Leslie served in a reservist unit, deployed as a show of force. His experiences caused him to question how it was these average people serving beside him, called to service for only a few weeks at a time each year, could turn into brutal oppressors. In a pacifist gesture, Leslie refused to serve in the occupied territories again, and was court martialled for the third time before leaving Israel.⁵

1990 Hanna held her first solo exhibition in Australia at BMG Fine Art Gallery, Sydney.

1996 Hanna enrolled in Philosophy and Semiotics courses at the University of Sydney.

Also in 1996 Hanna travelled through the centre of Australia for the first time. Compared to Sydney and coastal NSW, she was fascinated by the polarity of the landscape. The trip was the beginning of Hanna's love affair with the Australian semi arid landscape.

Hanna writes: *'The first time I went to the Australian desert I was surprised by the lushness of the country.'* She explains that the qualities of the light affected her even more than the rugged cliffs, textured scrubland or unique flora and fauna. *'It [the light] washed over stones baking for eons in the unrelenting sun. It squeezed into nooks and crannies, swept shadows and distorted perspective. Stones in shades of reds, yellows, whites and purples carried primordial memories. It was as if I had walked into my own paintings and ambled among the pigments.'*⁶

2000 Hanna received a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Semiotics Philosophy, Linguistics. She also began lecturing for the School of Languages and Culture, Modern Hebrew Department at the University of Sydney.

Hanna and Leslie moved to the Upper Hunter, New South Wales, purchasing a house on the outskirts of Blandford. Since then, Hanna and Leslie have divided their time between Blandford and Sydney, or as Hanna puts it, between *'academia and bohemia.'*⁷ Their five acre block of land, referred to affectionately by Hanna as 'the estate,' included old horse stables at the far end of the backyard, which Hanna and Leslie converted into a large open studio for Hanna. Hanna's studio has become known affectionately as 'the shed' by locals.

2007 Hanna published selected writings from her journal, *Notes from the Shed*. Published by Palgrave-MacMillian Art Publications.

Hanna coordinated an art, science and environmental project entitled *Turning the Pages* funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. The project involved over 180 students from schools in the upper Hunter, in addition to volunteers, scientists and artists, and aimed to

promote community awareness and appreciation of the Pages River.
The project won several cultural and environmental awards.

2009 -

2011 *Hanna Kay - Undertow*, a touring show produced by Maitland Regional Art Gallery, tours galleries and museums along much of the east coast of Australia including the Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne.

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1 Kay, H. (2007) p20 *Notes from the Shed; a journal*. Macmillian Art Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria.

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces Sourced 28 October 2009.

3 Kay, H. (2007) p73.

4 Bitan, Israel 1970. (Title of book is a rough translation from Hebrew, supplied by H. Kay).

5 Wand, L. (1991) *HQ Magazine*; Diary of a reluctant soldier. June Ed. p 97-103
http://www.lesliewand.com.au/pages/hq_article.pdf Sourced 1 November 2009.

6 Kay, H. (2007) p127.

7 Kay, H. (2007) p74.

Process and Environment

*'All my life I have lived with city hum as a backdrop for my dreams, and now the sound of silence has taken over.'*¹

Hanna Kay's estate is located on the outskirts of Blandford, a small town on the New England Highway, up the road from Muswellbrook, or in the other direction, Tamworth, New South Wales. Having lived in Tel Aviv, Vienna, New York and Sydney during her life, Kay once explained to a local journalist that when choosing the setting for her sea change from Sydney, the Upper Hunter had appealed to her because of its imperfections. *'There is something very soothing about living here and it is conducive to creating, more than in other places that might be more devastatingly beautiful.'*² Blandford resides in the centre of a pretty valley known for horse studs. The Pages River meanders alongside the highway, and although greener than some of the towns on either side, the area is seemingly always in varying degrees of drought.

Through both her art and writing, Kay defines herself as an artist whose relationship with the landscape is key to the creative process. The path to Kay's studio from her house is a long string of rubber mats laid along a dirt path, neatly dividing the green or yellowing grass of the well loved yard lined with gardens, chicken coops and vegetable patches. The studio is a large, renovated horse stable with a suspended wooden floor and large windows in place of the old entrances which allow the light and landscape to come in freely. From here, Kay will work on multiple canvases at once. *'Around me are two or three, sometimes six or seven, paintings in different stages of completion. Each, with its own rhythm, each an adventurous journey of arranging, splattering and gathering.'*³

Her art making process is thoughtful and methodical, but Kay will also allow a level of intuitiveness into her work, interested to see where it will take her. In the documentary that accompanies the *Undertow* exhibition, Kay is filmed standing comfortably at an arm's length from her painting, a fine brush and small pot of white paint in hands. Her hand moves assuredly from the pot to the canvas, and with small rotations of her wrist the line of the brush becomes uneven, capturing the haphazard line of a piece of hay. *'When I paint I follow a course which I trace roughly at the start of the work. I follow this course, watching carefully for new terrains. These new places are what make the process interesting.'*⁴

The stunning paintings of *Undertow* are all made using a technique Kay adapted from the techniques of old masters, which she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Austria. Kay alternates between oil paint and tempera paint, layering oils and water-based paints. As the oils and water-based tempera paints won't blend, the process could be compared to photographic printing processes, where the basic colours cyan, magenta, yellow and black are layered in differing levels of thickness to create entire tonal ranges. In another similarity to photographic printing processes, for *Undertow*, Kay varied from her usual technique and

often used a photograph printed on canvas as the basis for the composition. *Watercourse* (Plate 3) and *Shifting Ground 1* (Plate 4) are both examples of this. Using photographs in this way has provided inspiration for the work she has done since finishing the paintings for *Undertow*, but each painting still utilises layer after layer of oils and tempera. Each painting could contain several layers, perhaps even twenty. *Undercurrent* (Plate 1) is made up of fifteen layers, ranging from whites to reds and greens. This method allows Kay to 'make light prominent in [her] artworks.'⁵

*'Even though the studio's windows can present an alluring disruption, I consider myself extremely fortunate to be able to work surrounded by nature, to walk among the trees covered with blooms and busy bees.'*⁶

To aptly convey light in painting is a difficult thing, and for Kay is something which she works on with each new painting. During her time working on the paintings for *Undertow*, an interest in water has also emerged. *'To be able to paint water is to think about colour rather than about shape. Usually, when painting, I consider the source of light and its effects. Now I need to think in terms of fragmented colours and broken patterns.'*⁷

Water has a strong presence in the paintings for *Undertow*. Historically, Maitland, and the Jewish Cemetery both have strong connections to water. Prior to the 1850s, when rail was introduced to the nearby coastal town of Newcastle, Maitland was a growing town, and one of the largest in Australia. Situated on the Hunter River, *'Maitland was... the point at which goods were unloaded for, and distributed to, the prosperous riverland of the Hunter Valley.'*⁸

Maitland's proximity to the Hunter River helped establish it as a strong colonial town, but hand in hand with the benefits of Maitland's river industry, several significant floods have made their mark on Maitland's identity. *'Over 200 floods have occurred on the Hunter River since settlement, 13 of those extending the peak limit of 10.7 metres. Of these 13, all have had a direct effect on the City of Maitland.'*⁹ Two of the worst of these floods occurred in 1955 and 2007, indelibly marking water and flood into the living memory of Maitland residents.

Kay's artistic practice is also affected by water and the impact of nature, landscape and her surroundings. *'I feel the river's presence [Pages River] day and night. It plays on my imagination the most when it rains. When I lie in bed just before sleep takes over, I can almost hear a light breeze rustling the Casuarina branches. I can almost hear rainwater seeping into the riverbanks and gushing towards the south.'*¹⁰

At times throughout her journal, Kay writes of the taunting heavy grey clouds, full of promise, but ultimately unrewarding. The effects of rain or its absence is often a feature of her writing as Kay reflects on the ironic situation of plants that have long suffered with thirst only to find themselves overburdened with rainfall. Kay is undoubtedly an artist influenced by the environment around her. *'I took the dogs and set out to explore the river, aware of an urgent*

need to have the sound of water as a background for thinking.’¹¹

‘I find the ethereal qualities and properties of water fascinating’¹² Kay explains. In her paintings, not only is it the artistic challenge of accurately depicting water that compels her, it is the significance of water: a force that can give or take life; an element which has no defined shape or form or colour; an essential human need; a signifier of cleansing. In its calmness or turbulence it is a symbol for the human condition; and with particular reference to the Australian bush often perceived as a rarity; a luxury; a gift; a commodity; felt just as much in its absence as it is in its presence.

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1 Kay, H. (2007) p37 *Notes from the Shed; a journal*. Macmillian Art Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria.

2 ABC Newcastle, *New York, Vienna, Blandford – the improbable trajectory of Hanna Kay*.
7 Aug 2007 <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2007/08/17/2007996.htm> Sourced 7 July 2008

3 Kay, H. (2007) p27

4 Kay, H. (2007) p110

5 Excerpt from an interview with the artist, October 2009. See the Question and Answer section of this Education Kit.

6 Kay, H. (2007) p201

7 Kay, H. (2007) p34

8 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maitland,_New_South_Wales Sourced 2 November 2009

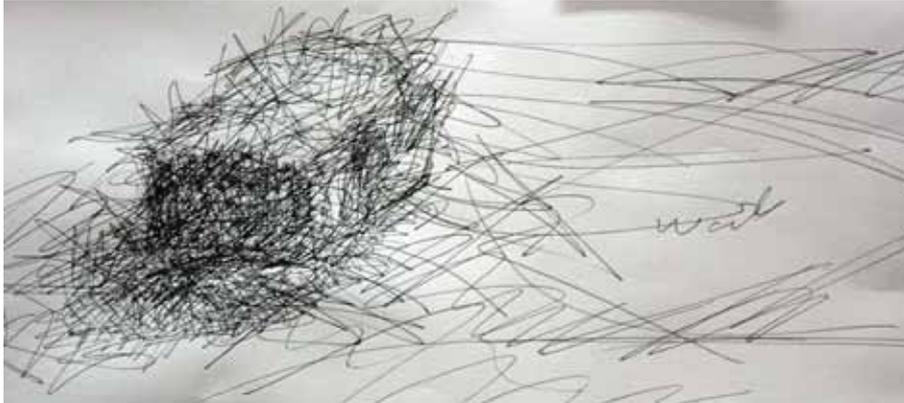
9 <http://www.maitlandhuntervalley.com.au/pages/area-history/> Sourced 2 November 2009

10 Kay, H. (2007) p188

11 Kay, H. (2007) p33

12 Excerpt from an interview with the artist, October 2009.

The evolution of the painting *Undercurrent*



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Maitland Jewish Cemetery, photographed by Noel Wilton



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hanna kay undertow



Language and Meaning

*'While painting I don't think about what the work says. A painting of mine is not a statement, rather, it is a droplet in an infinite stream of artworks, some of which I will make while others will remain part of an imaginary necklace.'*¹

Kay's parents met in Israel, her father was Polish and her mother Lithuanian. Privately they would speak in Yiddish to each other, and publicly they would speak Hebrew. She began to learn English around the age of eleven, and studied in Vienna using German and English. Intermittently throughout her published journal, Kay often talks of the inadequacies of language: the chasms between translations; the discrepancy of interpretation and her own struggles attempting to convey meaning both in her writing and art. *'I live in a chasm between languages, I cannot express words in certain experiences, neither can I render in images certain feelings.'*²

Talking about her art troubles her. *'Artists talking about their own artwork seems to have become almost more important than the artwork itself. I find it a questionable custom.'*³ To Kay, the artwork should be the true testimonial and her intentions as an artist, her ideas or thoughts, undermine the artwork either by rendering an over-simplification of meaning, or by burdening the work with words that might have more weight than the painting was intended to convey. In the end it is an interesting dilemma – one that Kay acknowledges she is unable to free herself from.

Kay feels caught between the vocabularies of the accumulated visual and written languages she has picked up throughout her lifetime and within those languages, the dialects of the different worlds her life now encompasses. In Kay's own words she travels between *'academia and bohemia,'*⁴ during her working week and flickers back and forth between the use of local comfortable language and formalised academic treatment of words. She explains she does not know why she paints some of the things she paints, and is often intrigued or surprised at the metaphors her imagery conjures for different audiences. *'I do feel that there are correct and incorrect interpretations of my work.'*⁵ Much like the challenge and difficulty of adequately conveying the qualities of light and water in painting, Kay tests herself to conjure qualities of human emotion and experience.

*'I once agreed with the notion that we cannot think beyond our vocabulary. But it does not ring true anymore. I think in glimpses. My morphology is comprised of images, and of words that don't have phonemes.'*⁶

Question and Answer: *Undertow*

'Art theory is to artists like entomology to insects.'

Tom Wolf ⁷



*'I prefer to let the artwork evolve rather than have it as an illustration of an idea. What I create is essentially an outpouring of uncertainties; a dialogue between the probable and the improbable. Perhaps this is why I find talking about my art difficult. I use repetitions as a way of exploring possible interpretations of a situation, and usually I cannot elaborate much more than what I have already depicted in the artworks.'*⁸

LVK What does being an artist mean to you?

HK *The freedom to follow, sometimes obsessively, an intuitive drive to explore an idea: to give it an aesthetic expression and then communicate it whilst pointing out different viewpoints and other aspects of the very same issue.*

LVK Can you talk a little bit about your artistic process? How do you go about beginning an exhibition of paintings?

HK *Usually an exhibition will be a result of several years of working and examining a subject matter. When I feel that I am ready to show what I have done, I choose the ones that best depict the idea I would like to convey, and following their lead, I work towards putting together an exhibition.*

*For *Undertow*, which was commissioned by MRAG as a specific project, I went through a somewhat different process. First I had to educate myself in the history of both the Hunter Valley and the Jewish people who migrated to Maitland in the 1800's, some of whom are buried in the cemetery.*

Second, I had to 're-educate' myself - be the historiographer of my own heritage. For this I went back to texts that would have informed the Jewish consciousness in general and in particular those of the migrants.

LVK **Water is another recurring visual theme. What has the water signified for you in these works?**

HK *While leafing through the stories and legends, especially through the Old Testament, paragraphs referring to 'water' would leap out. I did not take it as a 'sign' as such, but rather an affirmation of my artistic interests at that time - to explore the qualities of water, its properties and the way it interacts with its environment.*

Thus 'water' or the 'lack of water' has become the means by which I approached preparing the exhibition. It was an intuitive decision that was validated when I delved deeper into the project realizing the important role 'water' has played in the lives of the people of Maitland, and of the European migrants to the Hunter valley in the 1800's.

I find the ethereal qualities and properties of water fascinating. On one hand, there is the illusive nature of a surface that reflects its surroundings, that absorbs the light and interacts with the atmosphere. On the other hand, water is a force in flux that has no intrinsic formal characteristics such as shape, colour or form, and yet it creates and destroys. I used fragments of wet lands in which gravestones from the cemetery are reflected. In addition to signifying movement and change, devastation and regeneration, water has become a layer through which the past resonates into the present and impacts on it.

LVK **In your paintings, bales of hay have been used repeatedly over several of your works. Can you explain a little bit more about their meaning in *Undertow*?**

HK *Grass, hay and hay bales are my way of locating the exhibition narrative in a rural environment.*

LVK As you can see in the documentary which is part of the exhibition, when creating the work *Undercurrent*, the painting undergoes several different layers of paint. Can you talk a little bit about how important this layering process is to the finished painting, and how do you know when you have finished?

HK *In my paintings I use layers of oil paint and tempera, which is water based paint. It is a technique that was used by the old masters which I adapted to fit my needs. This way of creating an image allows me to make 'light' prominent in my artworks. While painting I don't follow a predetermined path, and though I might start a painting with a precise composition of the various elements, I let the painting take me along on a journey whose end I know only when I see it.*

In addition to my usual way of painting, for Undertow I used a combination of photographs and oil paint. Creating the multimedia canvases was a new process which has inspired some new approaches in my current work. I have also discovered a certain empathy with my Jewish heritage which I did not know I had.

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- 1 Kay, H. (2007) p27
- 2 Kay, H. (2007) p110
- 3 Kay, H. (2007) p61
- 4 Kay, H. (2007) p74
- 5 Kay, H. (2007) p196
- 6 Kay, H. (2007) p74
- 7 Kay, H. (2007) p99 *Notes from the Shed; a journal*. Macmillian Art Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria. (as quoted by Hanna in this text)
- 8 Kay, H. (2007) p99

This interview was conducted for this education kit, October 2009.
Interview by Lauren van Katwyk

Concepts for developing student's understanding

Early Childhood and Primary students

Art Making

- Hanna alternates between oil paints and water based paints to construct layers in her paintings. Try the same technique, by using oil pastels or crayons and then paint over these marks with acrylic paint.
- Go to a local creek or river to photograph the water. Try to capture different aspects of the water, ripples, splashes, drops, water being poured and as many other ideas as you can. Use these images as the basis of an artwork, by tracing or photocopying it onto paper and painting over the top.
- Create a mixed media painting using acrylic paints and natural found elements, such as hay, small twigs, grass, dirt and sand.
- Set up a still life display consisting of elements from nature you have found in the area. Draw this still life in as many different ways as you can. Use only lead pencil, then use coloured pencils, then restrict the colours you use to only one or two shades. Try using other mediums such as pastels, oil sticks and acrylic paint. Make all your artworks the same size then turn your artworks into a book.
- Set up a scene of your choice in front of water, such as a puddle of water or a water fountain. Capture the reflection of your scene by photographing the water. Create an appropriate name for your artwork.

Art Appreciating

- Look at one of Hanna's paintings and see if you can decipher the layers of paint and which colours she had used.
- Hanna explained that her use of hay bales was a way of placing the exhibition in a rural context. Talk about what other signifiers achieve this end. Discuss the differences between urban and rural.
- Work in small groups and pick out a few different artworks in the exhibition. Make a report about your artwork: describe what is happening in the artwork, what colours have been used, what the name of the artwork is, what size it is, and what it is made of.
- The colour range Hanna has used in her paintings is quite sombre. Look around the exhibition, what colours are missing? What colours are present? How do these colours make you feel?
- The size of selected artworks in *Undertow* are quite large. What impact does the size of the artwork have on the audience? Hanna used often over a dozen layers of paint to create each artwork. How long do you think an artwork took to make?

Links to other key learning areas

English and Literacy

- Make a list of adjectives that can be used to describe water. Discuss in groups how many of these adjectives could also be used to describe people.
- Hanna keeps a journal as part of her art making. Keep a journal yourself, writing and drawing a small part of it every day.

Mathematics

- All the paintings in the exhibition represent a large amount of effort on Hanna's part. While visiting the exhibition, record all the dimensions of the paintings. Find the area of each painting by multiplying the width by the height. Add together all the totals to find out the total area of all paintings.
- Look at each of the paintings in the exhibition. Hanna creates her paintings making layers and layers of colour. How many colours can you see in each painting? Collate this information, and then create a graph to see which colours are the predominate colours of the exhibition.

Science and Technology

- Make a collection of different interesting rocks, pebbles sticks and elements found in nature. Put your objects in an exhibition, keeping information with these objects such as where you found them, what material they are, and how big they are.
- When she paints, Hanna constructs her compositions using alternating layers of oil paints and water-based paints. Experiment with layering oil paints and water based paints, and also oil and water in a glass. What happens? Research oil and water to find out why.

Human Society and its Environment

- Talk as a group about the nature of cemeteries. How do people feel when they visit cemeteries and why do they feel this way? Are there other places in society which make us feel certain ways when we visit them? What is the value of a cemetery to a community?
- The Jewish Cemetery that inspired these paintings is in Maitland, and in 1955 Maitland experienced a disastrous flood. Research this flood and write a news article about it.

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

- Hanna would often go for walks along the Pages River, which was near where she lived in Blandford. Follow in her footsteps and go for a nature walk in an area of bushland which has lots of water.
- In her journal, Hanna describes some aspects of her painting techniques as like 'invigorating gymnastics'. Often the process of putting paint to canvas can be quite a physical one. Imagine you are a painter, and create a dance routine inspired by making a wonderful new painting.

Creative Arts (music and drama)

- Find different items in the bush such as sticks and rocks. Develop as a class percussion performance using these items as musical instruments.
- Pick some of the colours Hanna has used in her paintings. Look up those colours on the internet and find information on how these colours make people feel. Pretend that each colour is a person, and write a performance using characters.

Concepts for developing student's understanding Secondary and Tertiary students

Artist

- For Hanna, her surroundings and environment are very influential to her moods, and her paintings. Looking at her paintings, find evidence to support ideas about her feelings on this project. What colours has she used? What impact do those colours have on the overall composition of one painting? When viewed as an exhibition, what is the overall effect?
- Read the Artist's life section of the Education Kit. In small groups make a list in order of their importance, of the influences that have shaped Hanna Kay as an artist, and then compare your findings.

Art Making: Mimic Hanna's application of paint by layering oil sticks, oil paints and tempera or gouache paints. If you like, you could begin from a photograph you have transferred onto canvas.

Additional Research: Look up Hanna Kay's website, available in the Further Reading section of this Education Kit, and investigate paintings that she had made in the past. Are they different? How so? What are some prevailing themes that are of interest to Hanna?

Artwork

- Research Hanna's latest body of works, *Waterways*. You will find a web address for these works in the Further Reading section of this Education Kit. Develop a list of similarities and differences between this body of works, and the paintings she has made for *Undertow*. What links can you see between the subject matter of both exhibitions?
- Water is a recurring metaphor used by Hanna to demonstrate many different things; the passing of time; change; and even human feelings such as thoughtfulness, sadness and sombreness. Record some of the names of the works. How do the names of Hanna's artworks reflect some of her meaning? How often has the metaphoric use of water been demonstrated in the titles? Why do you think that is?

Art Making: Experiment with mark making and layering, by using a simple mono-print method. Begin with a drawing inspired by *Undertow*, which you have photocopied many times. Apply a thin layer of paint to the reverse of one sheet, and place paint side down on a piece of good paper. Using the back end of a paintbrush, trace the design onto the paper, and pull off the photocopy to reveal the print. Use the other photocopies to add multiple layers and colours to this print to achieve different effects.

Additional Research: Read the edited journal notes that are in the exhibition catalogue for *Undertow*. Hanna talks about the impact of light, and about how people arriving in a new place react to their first encounters.

World

- *Undertow* is an exhibition that showcases the personal and public histories of Jewish migrants who had come to the Hunter during the 1850s-1930s. Watch the documentary at the exhibition, or available in the web address supplied in the Further Reading section of this Education Kit.
- There are many customs and symbols within Judaism that are present in the gravestones at the Maitland Jewish Cemetery. Use the websites referred to in the Further Reading section of this Education Kit to research some of the history and meanings behind these symbols.

Art Making: Hanna was often influenced by the natural surrounds of her home in Blandford. Create a collage of the inspirations that are present around you in your own world.

Additional Research: In her journal, Hanna writes of an address which Colin Powell was making to the United Nations, at which a blue cloth was put over the iconic Picasso masterpiece '*Guernica*' to hide it during his speech. Hanna wrote: 'the veiled black and white artwork shattered any hope left in me that art could make a difference' (page 165). Research Picasso's *Guernica*. What possible reasons would they have to cover his painting?

Audience

- Hanna's paintings aim to depict a peaceful old cemetery, as a way of commemorating the histories of Jewish migrants who had come to live in rural New South Wales during the 1850s -1930s. In addition, the project was an impetus for Hanna to personally explore her own links to this heritage, as she describes in the documentary, the people buried there are her ancestors, who had travelled a very similar path to the path she had travelled in her lifetime. Consider different audience members; those with links to Judaism, those who have lost loved ones; those who are interested in knowing more about their own ancestors, or those that perhaps have come close to death themselves. Think about what sort of feelings or emotions these audiences would have.
- Select a work as the basis for a brief descriptive passage or poem, perhaps 4-6 lines. Compare your responses with other students in the class. Do your responses differ considerably or is there some connection? What conclusions can you draw about how different audiences interpret artworks, based on this activity?

Art Making: Audiences perceive artworks according to their context. Take any one of the works in *Undertow* and contort its meaning by contextualising it in an advertisement for a cause or product of your choice. What other meanings can you produce?

Additional Research: The use of natural elements in Hanna's paintings, elements such as twigs or stones, could also have added meanings for Jewish audiences. Did you know that it is customary to place a pebble or stone on the gravestone of a grave you have visited? Why do you think this might have become a custom? Research this custom, using the websites in the Further Reading section of this Education Kit. What additional meanings could be interpreted by the use of pebbles and stones in some of Hanna's paintings?

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30-34 Wilson Street, Newtown NSW 2042
www.wilsonstreetgallery.com.au

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Written by Lauren van Katwyk, Education Coordinator, MRAG, 2009.

Designed by Cressida Goddard, Print and Web designer, MRAG.

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