

*The story and art of*  
**PHIL WHATMORE**

ARTIST – SKYDIVER – CRIPPLE – SAINT



DONNA BERTHELSEN



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COVER Black cat on pink street (61 x 91.5 cm)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals have contributed to the development of the Phil Whatmore Project, initiated by David McEvoy. Aside from direct contributors to this book, the following individuals have made valuable contributions to the preparation of the artwork, art gallery, or design of the associated website.

- **Egon Andersen:** Organisational support for Phil Whatmore Art Gallery
- **Ula Binggeli:** Artwork restoration
- **Sarah Breeze:** Website development
- **Paolo Fanali:** Framing of paintings
- **David Hancock:** Art photography
- **Kate Harvey:** Art photography
- **Amanda Hutchison:** Graphic design – website and book
- **Isaac Johnson:** Website development
- **Dawn Oliver:** Art consultant on paintings
- **Ken Stonehouse:** Framing of paintings

This book provides a life history and overview of the artwork of Phil Whatmore. His paintings reflect his life journey and provide insight about what was important to him at different times of his life. The interpretative content draws on Phil's own documentation including notebooks, letters, parachuting logbooks, and photograph albums. Several of Phil's friends were also invited to write short reflective narratives about their friendship and these stories are included in this book. These narratives add unique perspectives about Phil's life and his paintings.

## BOOK CONTRIBUTORS

- **Donna Berthelsen:** Donna was a member of the Ramblers Sport Parachute Club, together with Phil Whatmore and David McEvoy. Ramblers was formed in Queensland in the late 1960s, under the leadership of Bob Morrison, an important mentor to many jumpers in sport parachuting at that time. Ramblers operated a dropzone at the Surfers Paradise International Raceway until the early 1970s. Donna has also compiled an oral history of sport parachuting in Australia from the 1960s to the 1990s, with Narelle Hall and Noel Rath.
- **Ula Binggeli:** Ula initiated the formation of the Lockyer Valley Art Group in 2002, when she saw a need for such a group within her community. She has won community awards for this work, in 2007 and 2017. Phil was invited to attend a regular meeting of Ula's art group in 2003, after moving to live at Plainland in the Lockyer Valley, west of Brisbane. Her respect for Phil grew as she learnt about his initial skydiving accident and his efforts to overcome its consequences. She supported his involvement in the Lockyer Valley Art Group and in the local Christian community.
- **Bonnie Chapman:** Bonnie is Phil's older sister. She was born in Manly, Queensland, where she has continued to live for most of her adult life. While Phil and Bonnie were close during their childhood years in Manly, and maintained contact across the years, they became closer again in the later years of Phil's life. Bonnie and her husband, Phil Chapman, owned many of Phil's early artworks painted in the 1960s and 1970s, which feature Wynnum-Manly and Moreton Bay.
- **David McEvoy:** Dave and Phil Whatmore became friends through their membership of Ramblers Sport Parachute Club. With their sport parachuting mentor, Bob Morrison, Dave and Phil were members of the Australian parachute team that competed at the *1970 World Style and Accuracy Championships* in Yugoslavia. Dave has made many significant contributions to Australian sport parachuting across subsequent decades, as a national and international competitor and as an organiser of national and international competitions. Dave operates Ramblers Drop Zone at Toogoolawah in Queensland. He was awarded the Master of Sport Parachuting, for his contributions to the sport, by the Australian Parachute Federation in 2008.
- **Dawn Oliver:** Dawn is a teacher, artist and classically trained musician, who held art openings in galleries in the Somerset Region for many years. She met Phil through these local events. Dawn has studied cartooning and Chinese brush painting and creates abstract and 'Fossil Impressionistic' paintings. In Dawn's words, "I am not a professional artist. I love dissecting art. Colour fascinates me. I have used colour prompts all my life to keep me healthy and happy."
- **Ali Raynor:** Ali lives in the Somerset Region of Queensland and knew Phil Whatmore from the 1980s, through her associations with Ramblers Drop Zone at Toogoolawah. In 2009, Dave McEvoy, Phil Whatmore, and Ali collaborated to photograph, name and classify Phil's 'finished' work at that time. This work was presented on DVD as "*The Original Phil Whatmore Collection to 2009*". Ali is a keen photographer with passions for music, natural history and design.

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The Incinerator (52 x 61 cm)

# FOREWORD

*David McEvoy*

The sub-title of this book, *Artist – Skydiver – Cripple – Saint*, captures major themes of Phil Whatmore’s life. This story about Phil Whatmore and his paintings all started after his untimely skydiving death in 2012. After some urging by friends, I decided I would establish the Phil Whatmore Gallery. Many of his paintings are now framed and will hang in the Phil Whatmore Gallery at Toogoolawah in Queensland.

Phil was a ‘hoarder’. He sold a few paintings through galleries but kept almost every painting that he ever started, except for a few that he either gave away or sold to friends for a few dollars.

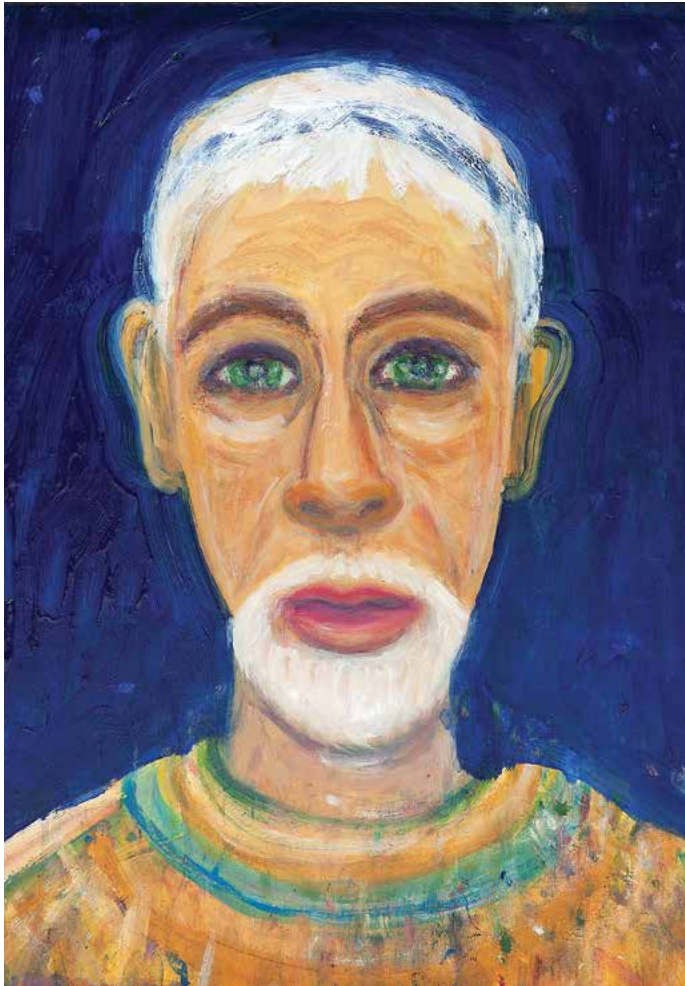
He loved his paintings. They were his world. I loved his paintings too and collected five of Phil’s artworks, during his lifetime. I encouraged him to ‘sign, frame and show them’ but he never held an exhibition.

After Phil’s death, I decided to have a go at naming and cataloguing his extensive collection of artworks; have them photographed; write a book; start a website; get them framed; and have an exhibition.

Luckily for me, Phil’s friends met this challenge. Donna Berthelsen agreed to write Phil’s story and organise the content for this book. Ula Binggeli agreed to restore Phil’s early artworks, clean and preserve his paintings, and arranged to have them framed.

Phil did not sign all his paintings. I had a unique branding iron made of one of his signatures, as he used different signatures across the decades. I have branded the back of every painting in my possession—even the signed ones—to verify their provenance.

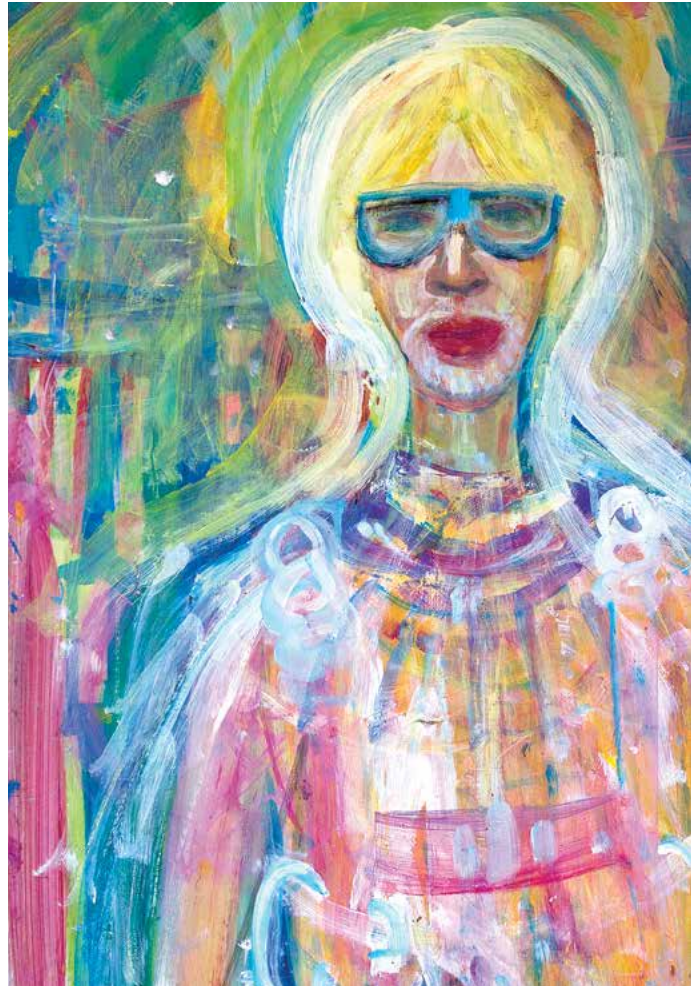
The job is done. Phil’s book is written. His website is launched. Phil has had his first exhibition.



Self-Portrait: I See Blue (59 x 58.5 cm)

## ARTIST

Phil's interest in art commenced at an early age. He kept painting all of his life. Much of his early and later work has a strong focus on landscapes in realist and impressionistic styles. Although over time, there is extensive experimentation and abstraction across diverse subjects with bold brushwork and colours.



Self-Portrait: Portrait of a Jumper (91.5 x 60.5 cm)

## SKYDIVER

Phil started skydiving in 1967, when he was 22 years old. He competed in national and international skydiving competitions, where he achieved considerable success at elite levels. Although his skydiving ambitions were thwarted by an accident, he continued to participate in sport parachuting until the end of his life.

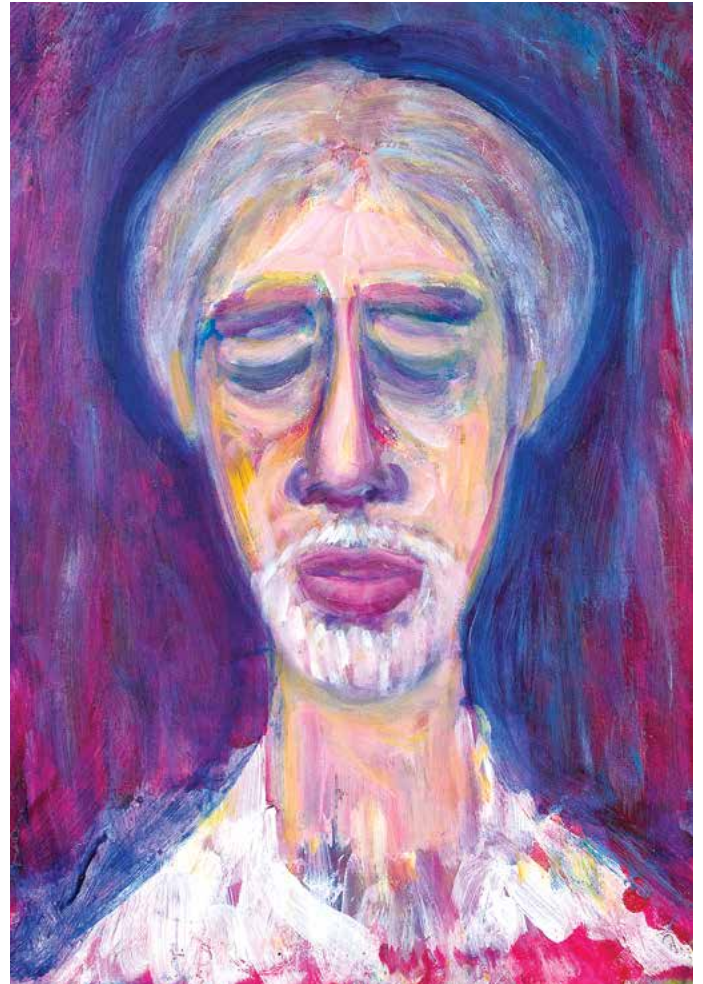




Self-Portrait: Deep Journey (62 x 49 cm)

## CRIPPLE

Phil was on his way to achieving his ambition to be a world champion in sport parachuting, when he had a major parachuting accident in 1976. The accident left him unable to walk without sticks, as well as battling despair across subsequent decades.



Self-Portrait: My Prayer (61 x 46 cm)

## SAINT

In the 1990s, Phil was 'born again'. His belief in God changed him profoundly. He came to terms with his physical disability. Despair and frustration were replaced with love and appreciation. Instead of anger, he felt gifted by a deep commitment to Jesus.



Abstract – Skydiver (36 x 45 cm)

# PHIL'S STORY

*Donna Berthelsen*

## Overview

Phil Whatmore was born on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1945. He died on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012 in a skydiving accident. Phil was interested in drawing and painting from childhood. While not becoming famous or successful through his art in traditional ways, Phil has left a large legacy of artwork that is rich across subject matter and style. His paintings can engender a range of reactions – pleasure in the natural beauty represented in rural scenes but also challenging to understand the intent and meaning of his abstract paintings and the symbolism in his later work.



Phil in the 1960s

In the 1960s, Phil attended a weekly art group run by a well known Brisbane water colourist, David Fowler. Phil valued David Fowler, as a teacher, through the encouragement he gave to Phil about his paintings.

Across his life, Phil's art provided him with endless opportunities for self-expression, through good and bad times. His artistic endeavours sustained him.

In his early twenties, Phil took up sport parachuting. Engagement in sport parachuting also captivated Phil. He found a set of challenges in the new skills that he was required to master in this sport and for which he showed great aptitude.

Phil's parents encouraged him both in his art and in his skydiving ambitions. His love for his family was always evident. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, after a weekend of jumping at the Gold Coast, up to 20 people might turn up on a Sunday night to the Whatmore home in Manly for drinks and food, on their way home to Brisbane. Friends can recall seeing Phil's paintings and easel in his room but this was not a focus that he ever really discussed at that time.

While Phil enjoyed the sociability and community that parachuting offered as a sport, he was quite an introverted person. He never sought to be the centre of attention. While Phil was always determined in pursuing his goals to be the best, he never sought any fanfare when he was successful.



After the Jump (60.5 x 60.5 cm)



Phil after a jump in 1970,  
at Surfers Paradise International Raceway

Phil became an expert skydiver. It was sport parachuting and skydiving that held his interest throughout his twenties. He represented Australia three times at World Championships.

Life can be tough and Phil was severely tested as the result of a parachuting accident in 1976. His main parachute malfunctioned. He ended up under his reserve parachute.

Strong winds blew him backwards onto power lines, which caught him behind the knees on both legs.

This accident left him with nerve damage that subsequently made walking without aids impossible. He always walked with two sticks, and used calipers and boots with straps, to maintain the positioning of his ankles and feet.

He was fiercely independent. From the outset, he was determined that he would not give up on independent mobility.

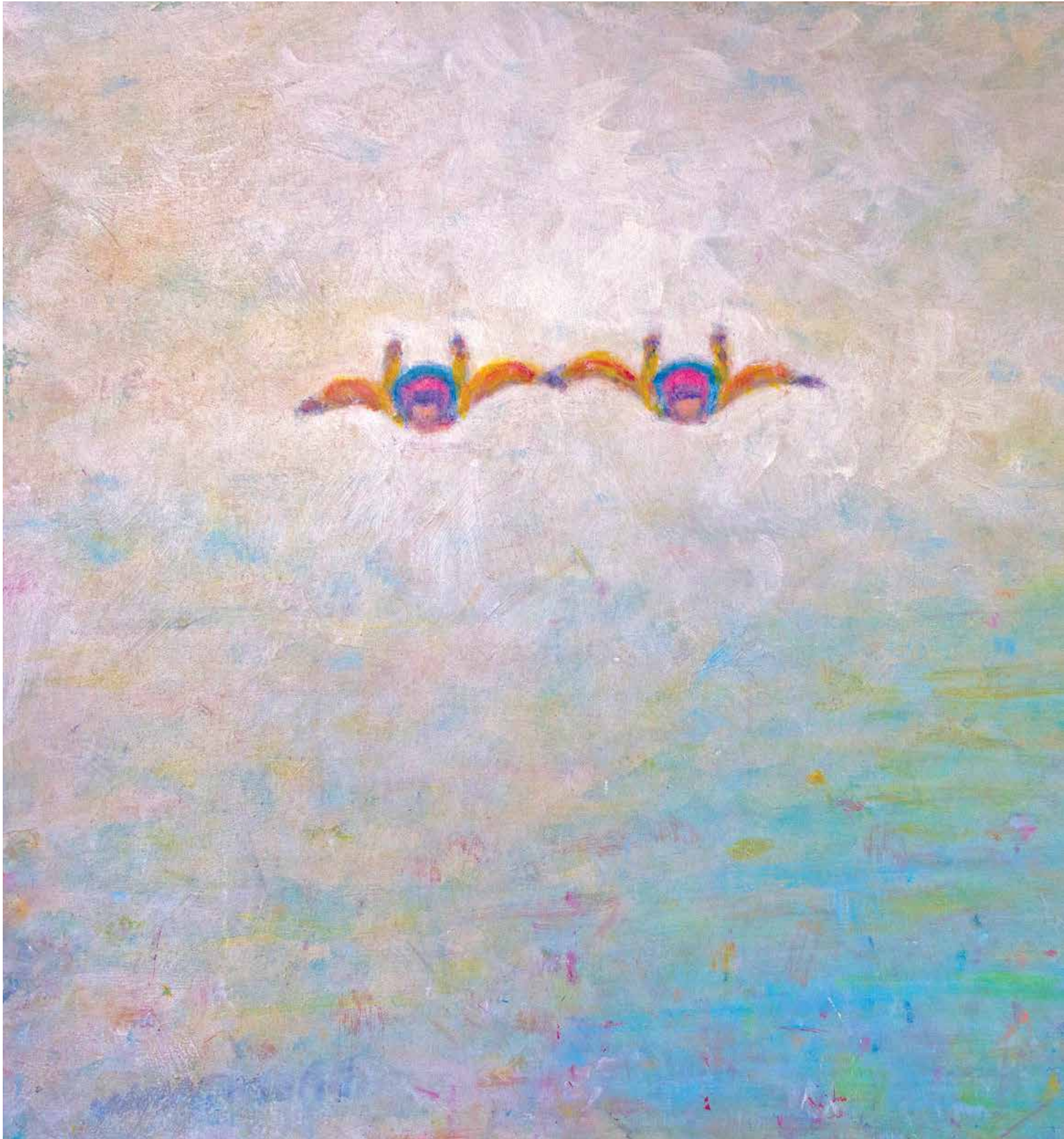
However, the accident dashed his dreams to become a world champion in sport parachuting.

Later, Phil returned to parachuting and skydiving. When he landed, someone would be waiting with his sticks so he could make his own way back to the packing area.

Phil's sister, Bonnie, noted his determination and single-mindedness, even as a child. These qualities served him well as an adult to deal with the challenges that he faced. After his accident, he did not want sympathy, which he found patronising.

In his subsequent search for meaning, Phil became a Christian. His evangelical fervour was overwhelming for his friends.

However, in the decade before his death, he found contentment through the friendships and the support at his church in Gatton.



Friends in Freefall (45.5 x 61 cm)



Phil Whatmore and Donna Berthelsen in a jump over Caloundra airstrip, 1970

# The Skydiving Years

Phil made his first parachute jump at Labertouche Sport Parachute Centre in Victoria on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1967. When Phil began jumping, static line jumps were required for a minimum number of jumps. Phil's first freefall was on his sixth jump in October, 1967. By late November, Phil was back in his home state of Queensland where he was invited to join a newly formed parachuting group, Ramblers.

By the end of 1969, Phil had made more than 400 jumps. He was one of the keenest jumpers in Ramblers Sport Parachute Club. He wanted to be on the next Australian team to compete at the the 10th World Parachuting Championships in 1970. At this time, style and accuracy landings were the two forms of competition at world championships, which became known as the 'classic' events.

Style competition was introduced at the 1962 World Championships, which were held biennially. Phil had completed his first full series of style on his 38th jump. From the outset, Phil demonstrated talent for this form of competitive skydiving.

Style demonstrates freefall control by the competitor and ability to perform a series of set manoeuvres of turns and back-loops in the fastest time. The competitor exits the aircraft at 2,200 metres, and gathers speed in a fall position, before starting a pre-designated series of manoeuvres.

Performance of the style set is timed to hundredths of a second. There are time penalties, if any manoeuvre is not completed on the directional heading, on which the style set commenced.

In the Australian National Championships in 1970, held in Perth, Phil won selection in the Australian Team to the World Championship to be held later that year, in Bled in Yugoslavia. Also on the team were fellow Ramblers, Bob Morrison and David McEvoy.

Phil won the style championships at the Australian Nationals in 1971/1972, and was selected again for the Australian Team to the World Championships in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in the USA in 1972.

After the 1972 World Championships, Phil and other Australian team members, travelled in the United States and Canada to participate in various competitions. At the 1972 Oregon State Championships, Phil tied for second place in the style event. He also took first place in the style event at the 1973 North-West Para Championships at Abbotsford in Canada.





Phil geared up for a jump, 1976



Australian Style and Accuracy Team at the 1970 World Championships, in Bled Yugoslavia. From left: Claude Gillard, Faye Cox, Tony Curl, Jim Cox, Phil Whatmore, David McEvoy, Bob Morrison, Boris (Team Pilot)

After 1972 and 1973 successes, Phil was excited about breakthroughs to improve his style times. By diving head-down from the plane on exit, he was able to build up greater speed before beginning the style manoeuvres. The dive at exit gave him greater momentum to complete the style series in a faster time.

Phil noted in his logbook on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1973, “DIVE—Why haven’t I done this before?” Further enthusiastic comments were recorded in his logbook on this breakthrough, “DIVE is the greatest.”

At the next Australian Nationals, Phil was happy with his style performance. He was placed second in style and second overall in the competition. He was on the Australian team for a third time to Solznok in Hungary for the 1974 World Parachuting Championships.

His style times were now in the top league for international competition. However, he finished 17<sup>th</sup> in the style competition in Solznok. There were 151 competitors in the style event. Phil’s average style time was 7.97 seconds across four style jumps. There was just 1.3 seconds that separated the performance of the top 20 competitors.

Through 1975, Phil did 250 jumps and he remained specifically focused on practice for style competition. He started to break through the 7-second barrier for completion of a style set. In September 1975, he recorded in his logbook a jump that he was very excited about: “Definitely under 7 seconds—fastest yet”. Two jumps later he was timed at 6.8 seconds.

In November 1975, jumping in the Queensland Championships at Gatton, Phil came first in Style; second in Accuracy; and first Overall. His hopes of winning the style competition at a World Championships remained high.

However, on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1976 at the Beaudesert dropzone for Ramblers, on his 1758<sup>th</sup> jump, Phil had a major accident when he hit power lines on landing. He had experienced a malfunction of his main parachute at opening and had to jettison it and use his reserve parachute, which in the 1970s, had minimal steerability. It was a windy day and he drifted backwards under his reserve parachute. He was unable to avoid the power lines as he landed.



Phil with Claude Gillard, long-term president of the Australian Parachute Federation, in 2008



Final skydive: Scattering Phil's ashes at Gatton Dropzone, 2012

The accident bought an end to Phil's career as a competitive skydiver. A long period of recovery followed. He suffered severe burns to his neck and behind his knees, where nerves were severed and he was unable to walk without walking aids. Later, he recorded in his logbook about this life-changing jump, "ZAP (good set tho!)."

Eventually, Phil was interested in ascertaining what effects his leg injuries had on his body control in freefall. On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1977, one year after his accident, he made his first attempt. It was not a successful jump. Phil noted in his logbook: "Out of control – totally – legs just trailing behind in a head-down attitude, on back. Landing okay."

Across the next few years, Phil made a few jumps each year, gradually working out his capabilities and limitations, and how to best compensate for a lack of control over his legs in freefall. In 1984, he did 50 jumps at Aratula Dropzone near Ipswich, including relative work with others in freefall, as well as attempts at style sets. In 1989, he competed in the Aratula Pub Accuracy Meet and came 7<sup>th</sup> in a field of 15 jumpers.

Phil's last parachuting logbook, which could be located, had a record of his jumps only to 1994. Each jump logged after his 1976 accident had Phil's meticulous recording in his logbooks. These records show his enjoyment of every jump experience, as well as his continued efforts to improve. It was a lonely road to pursue as he continued to strive to do style series and participate in the sport that he loved.

Phil died in a skydiving accident at the Gatton Dropzone on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2012, after a malfunction on his main parachute. He was slow to enact emergency procedures and activate his reserve parachute. He was also wearing gloves, which may have compounded his difficulties in enacting fast emergency procedures. He had not had any equipment malfunction for 24 years. The accident investigation attributed the cause to modifications to his gear.

Phil went for one more skydive when his ashes were released by friends on a jump over the Gatton Dropzone in June 2012.



Phil making his way to the plane for a skydive, at Toogoolawah Dropzone in the 1990s



Phil in freefall at Toogoolawah Dropzone in the 1990s

# ART AS LIFE: LIFE AS ART

*Donna Berthelsen*

Phil pursued his art with single-mindedness—exploring and experimenting with various styles in his paintings over the years. Across more than four decades, Phil amassed a large collection of artwork that including reworking many of the paintings over time. He never really wanted to part with any paintings, for either private sale or through commercial art galleries.

Phil's paintings show his willingness to experiment stylistically. Many different moods of the artist are apparent across the more than 400 paintings in the Whatmore collection. Most of his paintings are on hardboard, using acrylic paints.

Many of his paintings are not dated or signed and, over time, he used different signatures on his paintings. The paintings can be dated only broadly, by subject and style.

The early influences of David Fowler, a Brisbane artist, with whom Phil took art classes in the 1960s, stayed with Phil across his life. This is evident in the compositional layouts and strong interest in landscapes that David Fowler favoured in his own work and that Phil also favoured.

After Phil's parachuting accident, he spent most of his time painting and engaged in extensive experimentation in his artwork. His early paintings of peaceful and serene landscapes gave way to deeper and darker emotional expression.

Many of Phil's abstract paintings can be viewed as 'primitive' forms of expression, alive with violent strokes and colours. He sometimes uses symbols, repetitively—such as eyes and lips—and, at times, in disturbing and obsessive ways, although humour is conveyed sometimes in their usage.

Phil's impaired mobility limited his interest in travel beyond local areas. He took many photos in the rural localities in which he lived. In his studio, he interpreted and re-interpreted many familiar places.

Phil also completed many portraits of people he knew, as well as self-portraits. He often represents himself in his paintings, for example, skydiving, playing guitar at his local church, walking with his sticks down a local road. The observer can see Phil in the story being told.



Narelle bathing Skeeter



Precious Moments (30 x 25 cm)

When Phil lived in Toronto, in 1972 and 1973, he visited many art galleries. He became interested in the work of the Canadian artist, Tom Thomson, who painted landscapes in the early twentieth century, as well as the associated Canadian landscape artists, known as the 'Group of Seven', whose artworks from the 1920s and 1930s, are also well known for bringing impressionism to Canadian landscapes, by depicting light and its changing qualities in landscape paintings.

Phil owned many art books and experimented extensively with other artists' styles. The influences of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century 'avant-garde' movements, including impressionism, post-impressionism, and abstract expressionism are evident in Phil's work.

Phil was especially interested in the post-impressionistic work of art of Van Gogh, Monet, Cezanne and Modigliani. His work also reflects the Fauvists, such as Matisse and Derain, with their preferences for landscapes and figures, depicted with less realism.

After his parachuting accident in 1976, Phil lived for about 15 years near Beaudesert, south-west of Brisbane. Later he moved to the Lockyer Valley, and lived at Plainland, near Laidley. These rural settings provided extensive content for his paintings. These localities were also adjacent to parachuting dropzones, where Phil could also engage in parachuting and catch up with friends.

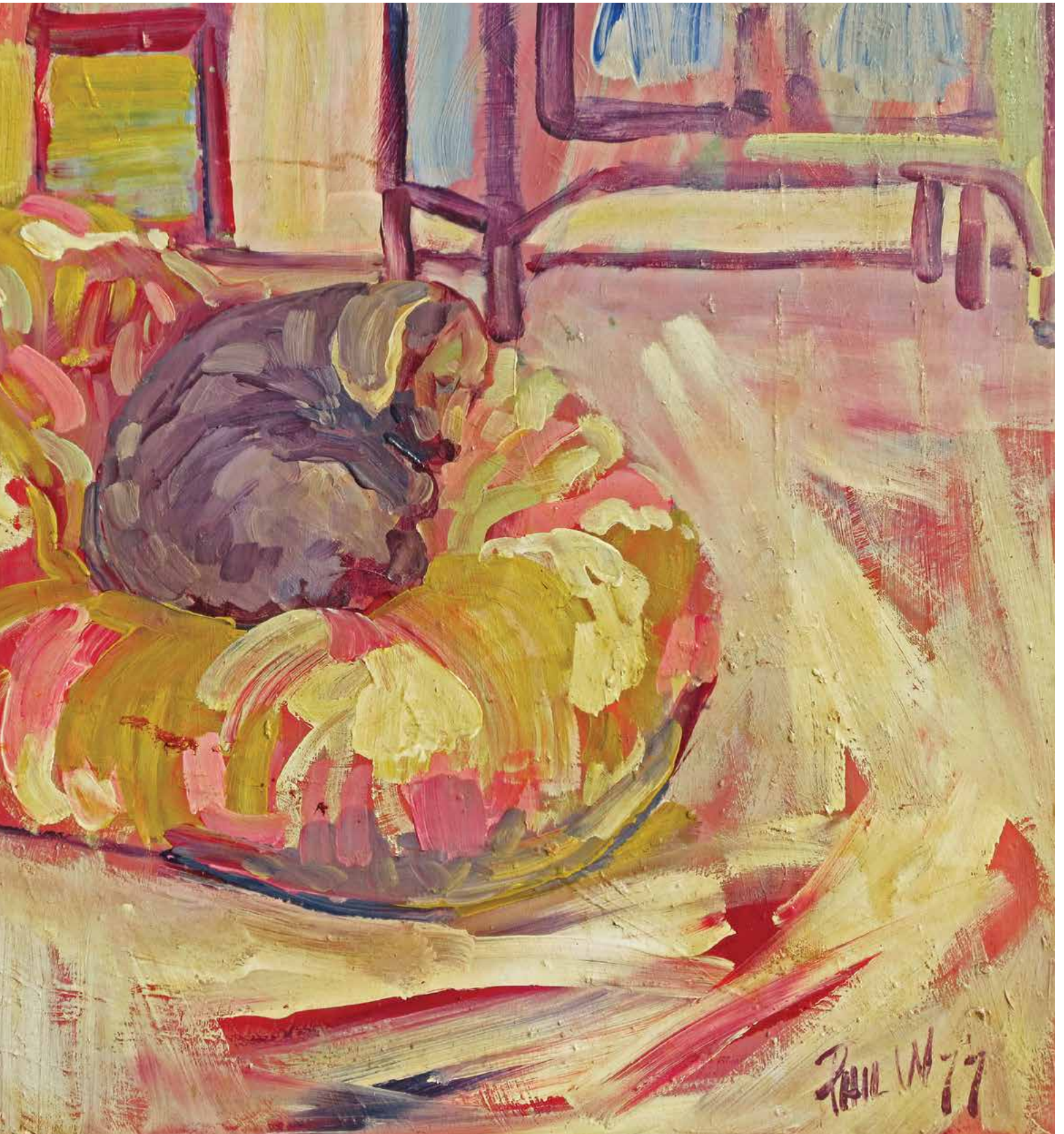
Represented in Phil's artwork also are the haunts and the pleasures of his childhood—living by the sea at Manly and being out on Moreton Bay on his father's boat—scenes of the bay, beach scenes, and paintings of boats moored in Wynnum Creek.

In his later paintings of rural scenes, including the street scenes in the town of Laidley, Phil departed from his carefully composed traditional landscapes to a more playful style with the strong use of the colour pink—a departure from his usual use of colours.

Significant contributions of Phil's artwork are the depictions of skydiving. Artistic representations of parachuting and freefall are not a common theme in the visual arts. There are a variety of ways in which parachuting is represented – skydivers in freefall and parachute canopies in different landscapes. Phil captures this unique subject matter and his own experiences in such paintings in realist and abstract representations.

Phil left many depictions of his life and the contexts in which he lived in his artwork. These paintings communicate much about his life experiences. Phil speaks to us through his paintings. We can hear his voice, relate to his vision, and appreciate his talents.





Skeeter on a Beanbag (Private Collection)



Early days at Manly (60.5 x 91.5 cm)





# FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

*Bonnie Chapman (Phil's sister)*

When we were kids we lived at Manly and went down to Moreton Bay a lot. We spent a few weeks every year in Dad's boat out on the bay and often talked about how wonderful it was when there were only half a dozen boats there. We would go to Moreton Island and there were no people around. On our holidays we'd go down to Southport and stay in the boat there.

We had our own little rowing boat. Phillip always said later just how lucky we were. He often said he never thought the world would change so much. He thought things would stay as they were when we were children. We had loving parents, and we also spent time at Nanna's. We always had a dog and cat.

Phillip did well at school. He went to Manly State Primary School and he did his secondary schooling at the Anglican Church Grammar School (Churchie) in East Brisbane.

Phillip was a perfectionist. If he had to write an essay or something like that, and made one mistake, he would tear out the page. He'd use a whole writing pad every week and rewrite everything until it was perfect. He kept everything. He always did that, even as a boy. He was so very determined about everything.



Whatmore family, 1960s: Phil, Bonnie, Myrtle (Mother), Phil (Father)



Phil, his dog, and the Alvis family car, early 1960s

Phillip loved to draw—especially when he was a teenager. He used to draw a lot of war things, lots of uniforms. I don't know why particularly. Maybe because Dad was interested in war history.

He had a hard time dealing with life after his accident in 1976, accepting what had happened to him. He had trouble dealing with people. He shut himself away for a while.

While Phillip was very single-minded, he became more tolerant in the last year or two. He had this quirk in his nature that, when it was important that he be 'good', he could be especially difficult.

On religion, Phillip didn't do things by halves. I used to say, "Think of the bigger picture, Phillip, think of other people".

Once he came into contact with the minister at the church in Gatton, where he had attended most recently, he seemed to change quite a bit. He seemed more content with his life. He'd say to me, "I've changed, Bon. I've learned to forgive people."

However, all his life, I never heard him ever say a bad word about anybody or gossip about people. I miss him. And I'm glad that we became so much closer again in the last few years.





Bayside Outlook (40.5 x 58 cm)



Time Pieces (34.5 x 46 cm)



# MAN OF MANY COLOURS

*Alison Raynor*

When I first met Phil, he was living in Ipswich and my first impression was that the skydiving accident had not only left him with terrible crippling injuries, but had also left him quite embittered.

Ten years on, I met a totally different Phil at his home in Beaudesert where he lived with his much-loved mate, Rusty the dog. He loved dogs and Rusty—like his other loyal canines—feature in many of Phil’s paintings.

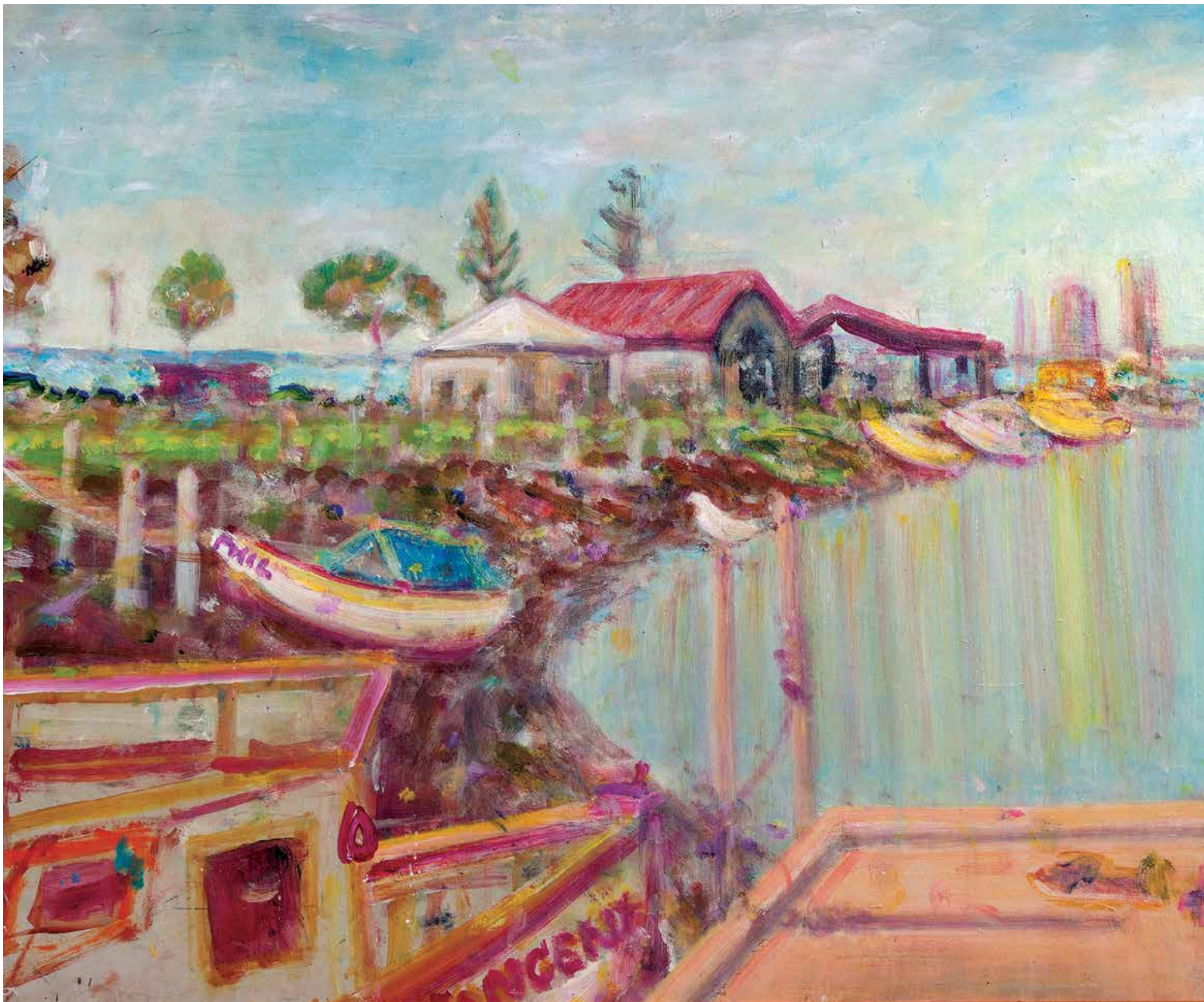
At Beaudesert, Phil found peace and happiness. He had discovered Christianity and through the church, had met and fallen in love with a woman named Allison. Together they planned their marriage and future.

Sadly, Allison died suddenly of a brain tumour not long after they announced their engagement. Despite the tragedy and personal loss, Phil’s grief was outweighed by his faith and trust in his best friend, his Lord. I remember telling him how sorry I was for his loss and him replying, “Don’t be sorry. Ali is safe. She has gone to Paradise and she is with our Saviour.” He believed that beyond a doubt. It obviously gave him strength.

Phil and Rusty left Beaudesert and moved to a house in Plainland, not far from Laidley and also the Gatton dropzone, where he loved to visit and go for the occasional jump.



Phil in Laidley (45.5 x 61 cm)



Boats in Wynnum Creek – Phil & Vincent (59.5 x 87.5 cm)





The house at Plainland suited Phil because it had a separate painting studio with easy access. He set up his easel and chair and surrounded himself with hundreds of tubes of paint, innumerable paintbrushes, and mountains of painting rags. He worked tirelessly on his massive collection.

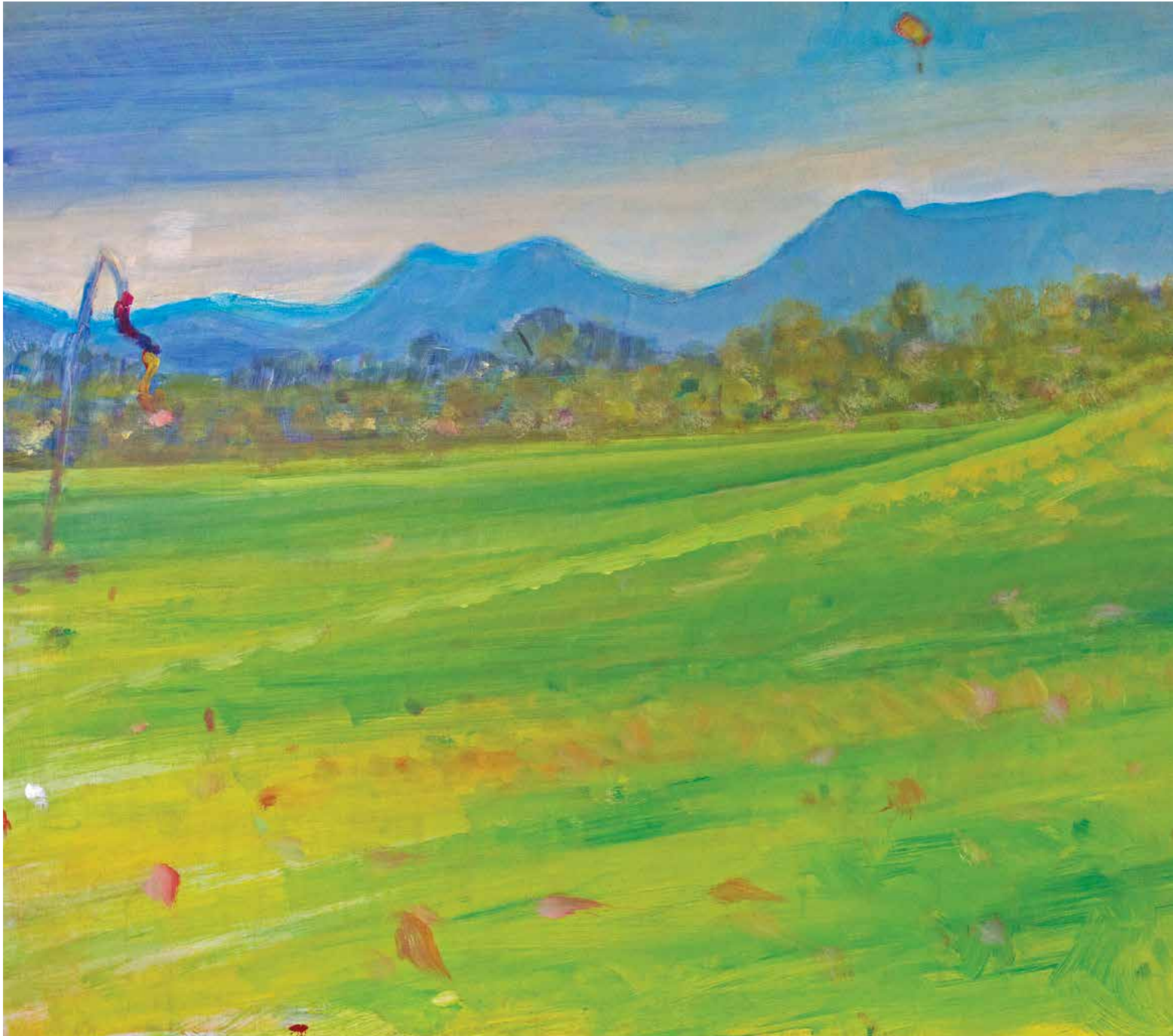
Phil's painting style varied over the years and it was easy to see that famous artists influenced him at times. He had a fondness for the French Impressionist movement and an affinity with Vincent Van Gogh. Both are apparent in his series of paintings called 'Wynnum Creek', especially the one in which he has named one boat 'Phil' and the other boat 'Vincent'.

He was seldom satisfied with his paintings. What seemed to be a fabulous work was often 'unfinished' and set aside to be painted over later, altered or even disfigured beyond recognition, for reasons known only to Phil.

When he wasn't painting or skydiving, Phil was practising his guitar. His music blossomed when he moved to Plainland and he joined a group of people who shared his passion for God, music and painting. He seemed to be in a happy place once again. He attended church, belonged to an art group, and played in the church music group.

Phil had another setback in the late 1990s when he developed diabetes, but he took it in his stride believing that the Lord had sent him another challenge to overcome.

I came to admire Phil Whatmore, the man who never quit. The man of many beautiful colours whose artworks will continue to tell his story. A man of infinite faith. A man who fulfilled his insatiable need to paint and his relentless desire to fly.



Aratula Outlook (61 x 91.5 cm)



# ART, FAITH AND SKYDIVING AT PLAINLAND

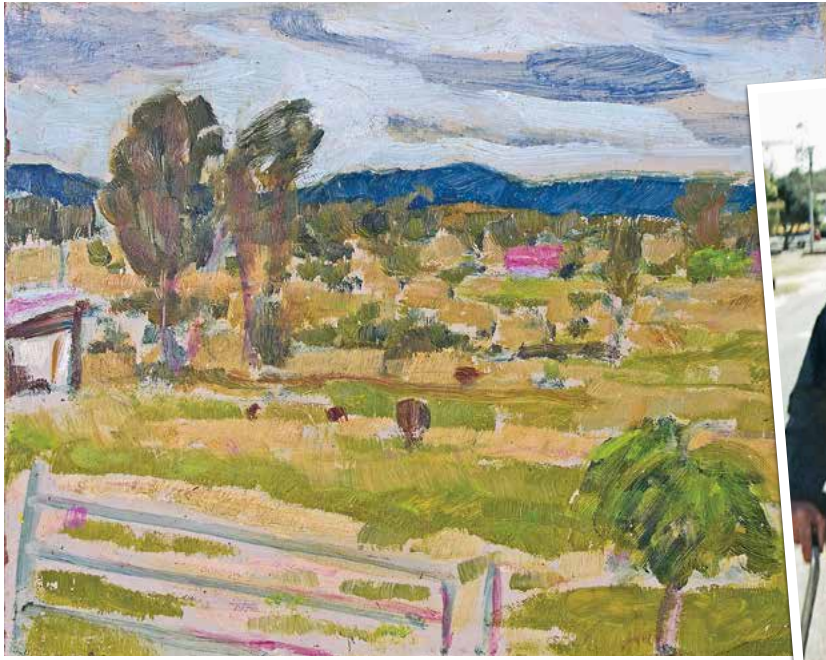
*Ula Binggeli*

The freedom of parachuting was to Phil a surreal expression of release from the shackles of his life. He often did a late afternoon jump because he enjoyed the beauty and vastness and the changing colours from high in the sky. His artist eye was full of colour.

Phil's art was an expression of his life. At times, his work showed great frustration whilst, at other times, it had themes of beauty and strength. He painted the local landscapes including many scenes around Laidley. He liked the unique buildings in Laidley. He loved his dog, Rusty, and often featured him in his paintings.

He longed for the elation and joy of skydiving that had been his life. His paintings often featured skydivers. Phil painted people he knew and also people he remembered.

Phil's earlier paintings were of areas around Manly where he grew up. The series of Wynnum Creek boat scenes bloom with colour. Phil spent his days painting and repainting, always trying to complete his collection. But he never quite made it here on Earth. I look at his work and see a life of hope and a man of courage who picked himself up and tried to paint a life in spite of extreme difficulties.



Towers Place – Beaudesert (22 x 27 cm)



Phil walking in Laidley

My heart would sink when I saw a good painting completely altered. Phil did this continually in his times of insecurity.

In the visual arts, there is the skill to know what to paint and equally another skill that is 'when to stop'. A good painting is when the more you look at it, the more you see. It is not just a painting—it has atmosphere, colour, and tone. It lives and has meaning. Look into the eyes in Phil's paintings and consider the empathy conveyed. They tell the story of the person.

When painting, Phil could not even carry his art boards. He would throw them from where they were in his art shed across the room to his easel. He'd then make his way there and pick them up to put on the easel which often fell over in the process.

Phil fell so many times. Shopping was an ordeal and he would invariably fall over a few times. Getting his groceries into the house had its own problems.

Phil was always devising new ways to manage his daily tasks. To put his guitar and sound equipment into the car and then get ready to go to church on a Sunday by 9.30am, meant a 5.30am start.

Phil looked for beauty in everything, but, in the early period, after his accident he was exceedingly angry at what had happened to him. After the initial trauma of the accident, hospitalisation and the loss of relationships, Phil came to the realisation that his injuries were forever.

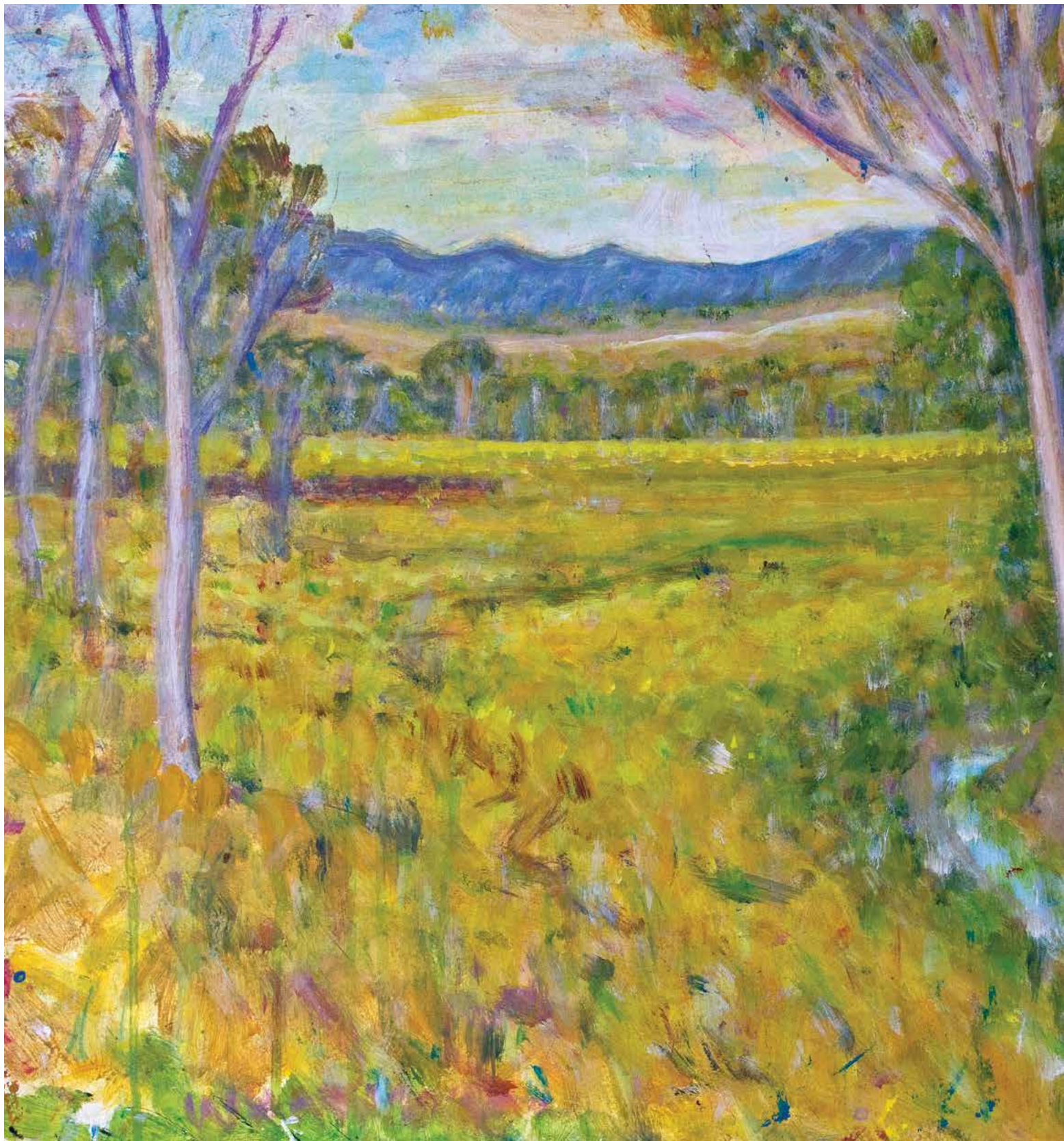
With two walking sticks, and initially with the use of callipers, and later with the use of a long strap under his foot and other straps around his leg for support—he remained relatively mobile.

After his initial accident, Phil moved down to the Beaudesert district where he made friends with a man who owned a laundromat who had suffered severe burns in an accident. Phil spent a lot of time talking to this man who accepted his burns and appearance. Phil never forgot the kindness of this man and his wife who met his needs at that time.





Beadesert Way (Private Collection)



Towards Mulgowie (61 x 45.5 cm)



Then he met Allison. I only know what Phil told me, but Allison made an impact in his life and they had fun together. They shared an interest in skydiving. He painted her and he fell in love with her.

They both shared a love for God and they were both baptised in a swimming pool together, confirming their belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This was precious to Phil.

Phil took many photos of Allison that he treasured. Phil was truly happy and Allison accepted him as he was. They planned to become engaged. But Allison was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Phil's grief was all consuming. He stayed by her side until she died.

Phil eventually bought a rural block with a house at Plainland. As soon as he saw it he knew it was for him. It was the right size and comfortable. There was a sunny place to sit and—best of all—had an attached studio to paint in, and house his art. Ripcord Skydiving Dropzone was nearby and he could see the plane in-flight.

Phil joined the New Hope Church in Gatton, enjoying the fellowship and music. He played his guitar in their music group. He was very happy there and grew in faith and expressed often that his finding the Lord was the best thing that had happened to him. He commented that if he had not had the accident he may never have found God.

Phil got on well with both his neighbours and was genuinely fond of them. He loved living in the good environment of Plainland, close to all that he needed. At church, he loved to tease some of the children who knew that he had barley sugar in his pocket.

He loved playing guitar. He would come home from church refilled and refreshed. He loved a good sermon from John, the Pastor. He made the best of his life. If people complained he would tell them to have faith in God. Not everyone understood this new Phil, but he persisted in his faith, telling everyone who would listen.

Like any person who has started life successfully and competed in world championships, then becoming a crippled and disfigured man was a lifetime challenge.



Phil had lapses from grace, as people who knew him observed, but there is not a person alive who is without fault.

I believe it is important how we end our life and Phil, who died suddenly, would have asked this one thing of me, as I too suffered by his death.

He would say, "Tell everyone I'm great, I am with Jesus. Tell everyone to remember what I tried to tell them. I want them to listen. Jesus is the Lord. He is real. He is here. God is so good. I am healed. Throw my sticks in the garbage bin. I'll be looking out for you."





Hope on the Hill (21.5 x 44 cm)



Dreaming Tiger Dog (61 x 45.5 cm)

# PHIL'S LOVE OF ART

*Dawn Oliver*

Phil was a great host despite his difficulties. When I visited him at Plainland to chat about an art opening, we shared his paintings, stories and passion while nibbling chocolate biscuits, cherries and strawberries.

I sipped tea and watched the late afternoon sun reflect through the doorway onto his art, and allowed it all to enter my life. It was then, and still is, my belief that Phil's work has value—perhaps not always in monetary terms.

In my opinion, the messages that he portrays in most of his works have greater value. Rarely are artists paid for the time, effort, love and unique, creative thought and energy that go into their pieces. Artists need to be uplifted. There are so many artists, so many shows, so many garages stuffed with unfinished, unframed, and framed paintings. All this passion deserves a home forever, as we do ourselves.

“How much are my paintings worth?” was Phil's million-dollar question. If you are a genuine artist you will certainly understand where Phil was coming from. It's not vanity. Only time can answer such a question.

As artists, we put our hearts and souls into our creations and we want to know that they are going to good and deserving homes where they are going to be loved as much as we desire love for ourselves.



Country Oasis (46 x 60.5 cm)



Art gives humans a chance for comradeship, bonding with each other and something to discuss. Art draws participants together in a spiritual way and aids in healing broken hearts, minds and bodies. This was Phil.

He wanted to talk about, as well as create art, relating it to his personal connection with a Creator, a Maker and a Saviour.

He was more interested in that aspect than having an art opening, where he would have to speak to the public and undergo scrutiny.

What sort of artist was Phil? An escape artist! He escaped by creating landscape, seascape, skyscape, cityscape, portrait, abstract, impressionist and expressionist paintings. He painted with acrylic paints on boards, in the main. He studied the techniques used in different art movements and tried to paint similarly. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

He painted Jesus and religious scenes. He painted dogs. He painted himself and some of his friends. He painted the bush. He was a recreational painter, not an employee who was creating historic records for the archives. He possessed artistic licence. Hence, he could make a scene look more interesting by adding to it, or taking from it.

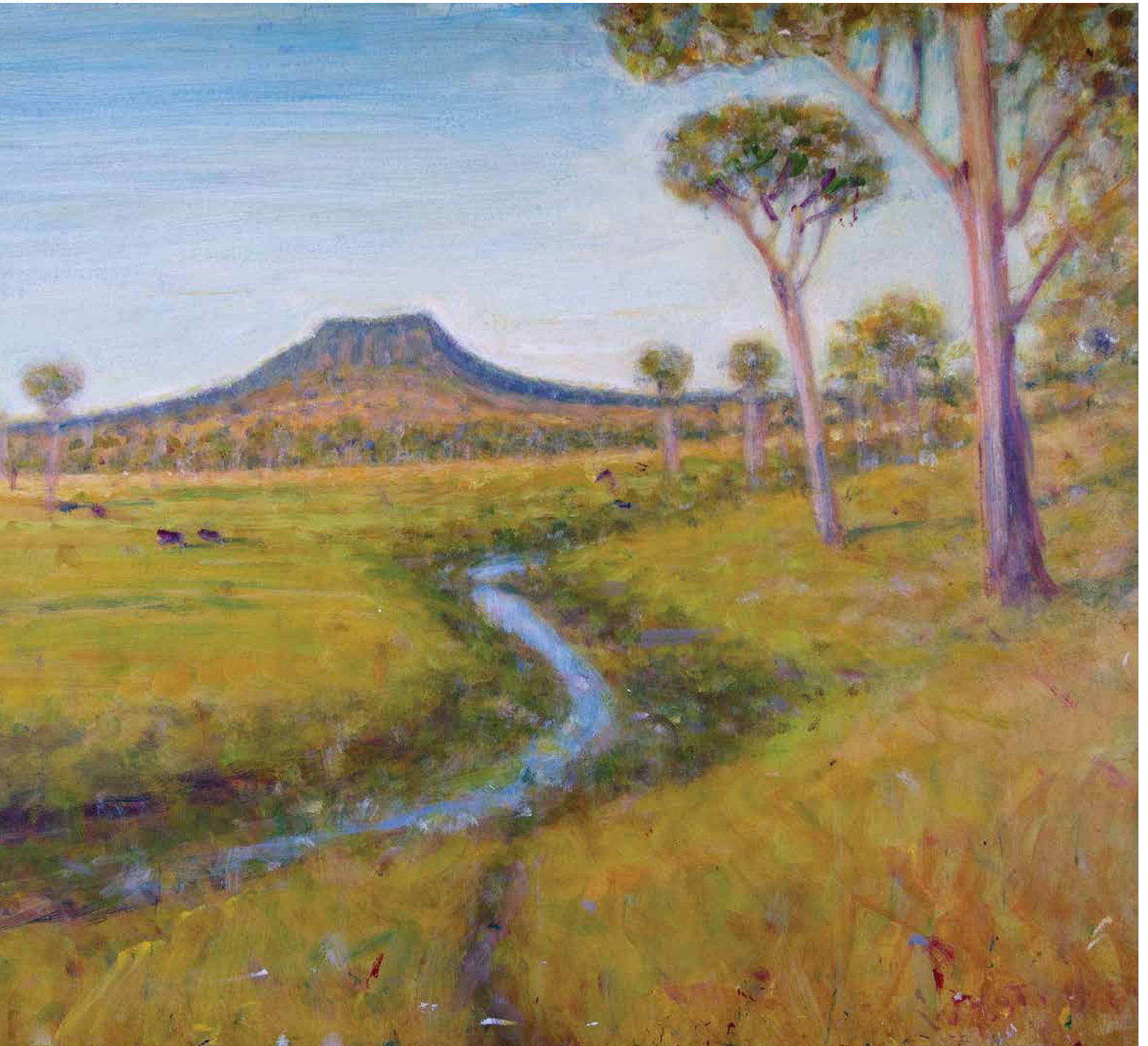
The works of Canadian artist, Tom Thomson, and J.M.W. Turner impressed Phil. He appreciated the French impressionists, especially Monet, the post-impressionists such as Vincent van Gogh, Cezanne and Georges Seurat, Picasso and Modigliani. He was also interested in the work of the Fauvists, such as Matisse and Derain, and the surrealism of Dali, as well as abstract artists, such as the expressionist, Kandinsky, and the abstract expressionist, Mark Rothko.

However, he loved the Australian impressionists—and they influenced his art. Their paintings of the bush, beach, sky and roads were more natural, lifelike and delicate than their European counterparts. Some of their techniques are paralleled in Phil's earlier paintings and they are very good.

Phil was an amazingly brave person, who refused to allow misfortune to reduce him and make him small.

The wonderful thing is that Phil never denied his humanity. Above all, Phil loved colour and his knowledge of the colour wheel and paint-mixing is evident through all of his paintings.





Mt Walker Series – Open Hilltop (59 x 89 cm)

# POEMS BY PHIL WHATMORE

Phil kept a notebook in which he had written poems that had been reworked a number of times. His friends had previously seen the poem about Bob Morrison included here. Bob was Phil's friend and parachuting mentor, who died in a car accident in Brisbane in late 1971. Three other poems found in Phil's notebook reflect other matters which were important to him.

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## **Wishful Thinking**

I wish I was a successful man  
And had some peace of mind,  
Instead, I want for everything  
And have no peace of mind

Still I'll try attain a plane  
Of restful inner peace,  
Although it's hard for one  
Who wants for everything.

And though I know not where to start  
I pray in some small way,  
That through it all I'll find the path to  
Purest truth and peace.

---

## **Contemplating My Dad**

Thoughts of him are in my head  
I have them locked inside  
To fill me with the greatest joy  
To cast me as a boy.

I'd like to see his darling face  
His bright and sparkling eyes  
And always with a cheerful grin,  
A 'How are you bumface' cry.

So I'll drink alone and wait until  
I catch up to his side  
It's like waiting till the sun sets  
Or sailing on the tide.



---

### **Of Bob Morrison**

A deeper vision rests with him  
And we suffer for his loss.  
But I'm sure when 10-mans  
Take the sky he's still the bloody boss.

And style of course, he watches close  
To see we try our best.  
For that's all he ever asked of us,  
The best and nothing less.

So now and then we carry on  
In this the *Morrow* manner  
And take our places with the best  
And bear the *Morrow* banner.

---

### **The Swim**

The tent was bathed in evening light  
So I thought I'd take the hint,  
And grab a towel and hoy the dog  
For I knew he'd like a dip.

We wandered down the winding track  
A whistling and a barking,  
Across the fence that marks the line  
Of twisted boughs and shadows  
To an open spot of wondrous hue  
A lime green colour wheel.

Its centre was a nestling pool  
Of liquid sheer delight,  
So in we went to take a splash  
And frolic for a while.

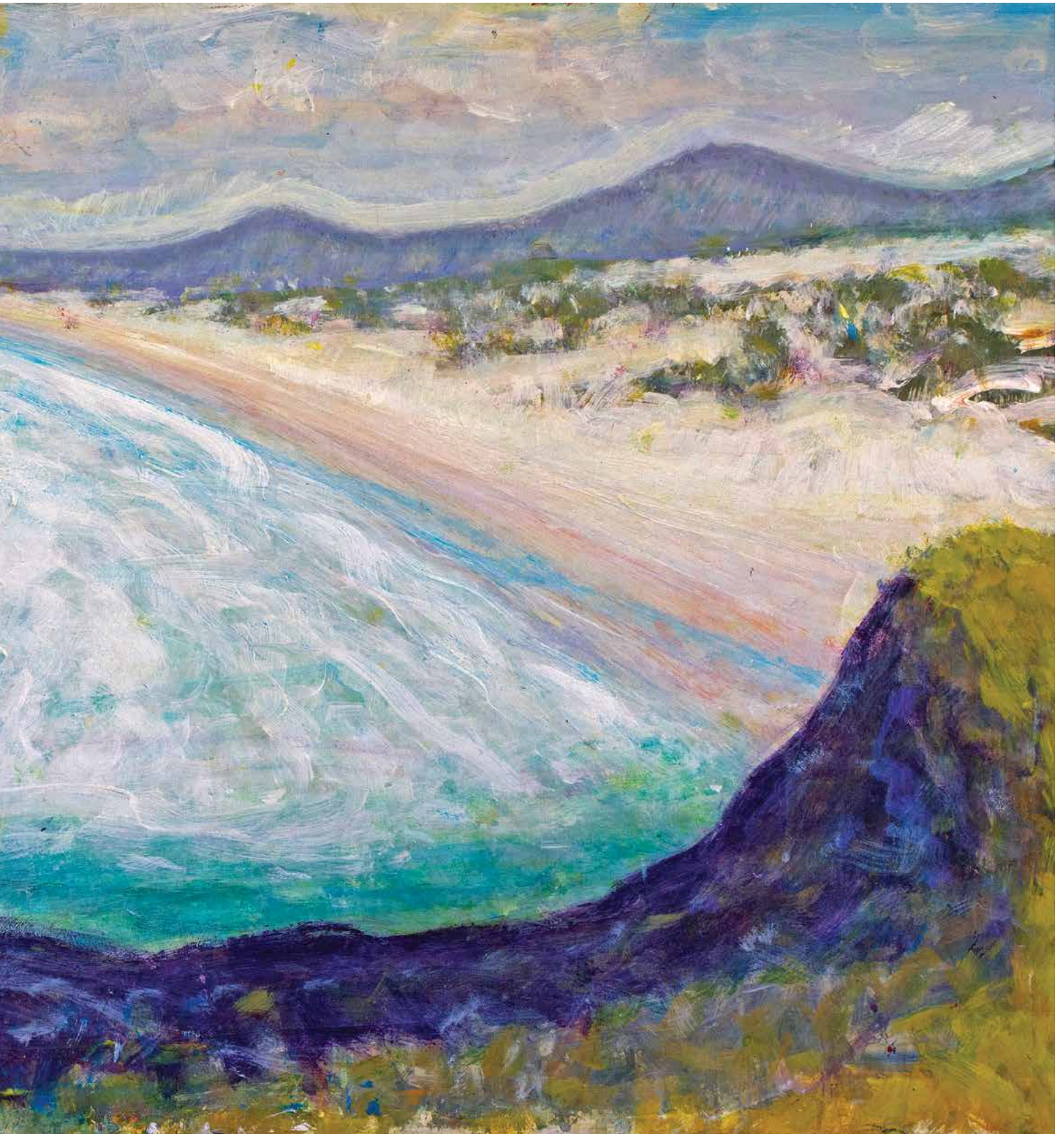
The while turned into sunset time  
And a cup of tea was calling –  
I always thought that scenes like these  
Belonged in fairy stories.

# ODE TO PHIL

David McEvoy (January 2016)

There he is back at the sea  
Just looking around, how lucky is he  
There's peace, and fun, and sounds for free!  
He feels the wind, and the sand, and the surf's spray  
And there's that music to hear 'till the end of the day  
He hears the sound of the waves as they break on the sand  
That golden stretch of beauty where the sea meets the land.  
He'll sit, and watch, and listen and pray  
Taken in by the beauty of the colour of the day.





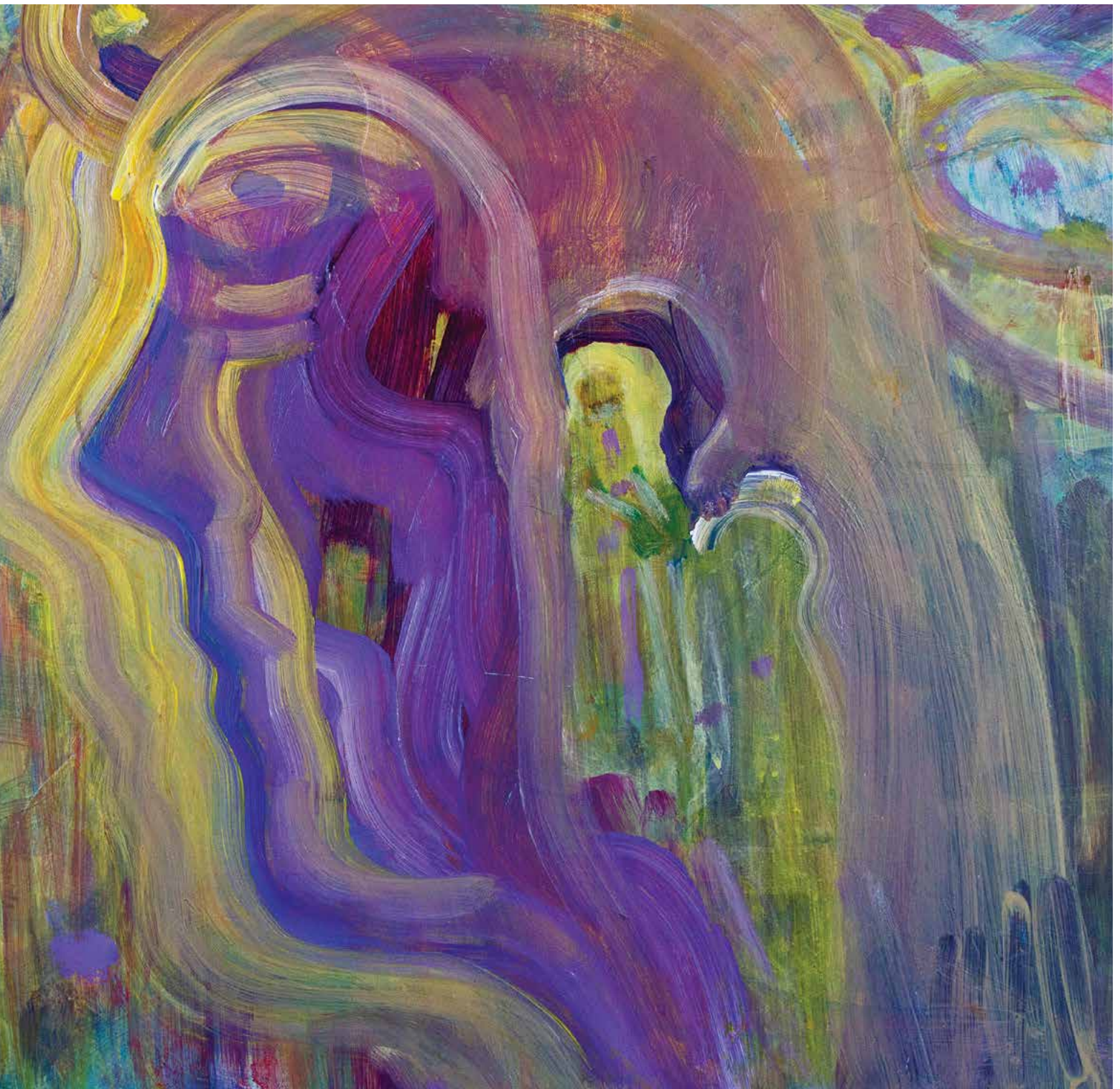
Headland Lookout (45.5 x 61 cm)

# SELECTION OF WHATMORE PAINTINGS

In the following pages, a selection of Phil Whatmore's paintings are presented from the range of subject categories, in which his body of artwork of more than 400 paintings, has been categorised. The selection of paintings also represents different eras in which these paintings were completed.

- Abstract
- Animals
- Beachside
- Bush Scenes
- Portraits
- Religious
- Skydiving





Whispering (44 x 59 cm)

# ABSTRACT



Kiss Me (43.5 x 60 cm)



The Blue Curtain (23 x 30 cm)





Circles (45.5 x 61 cm)

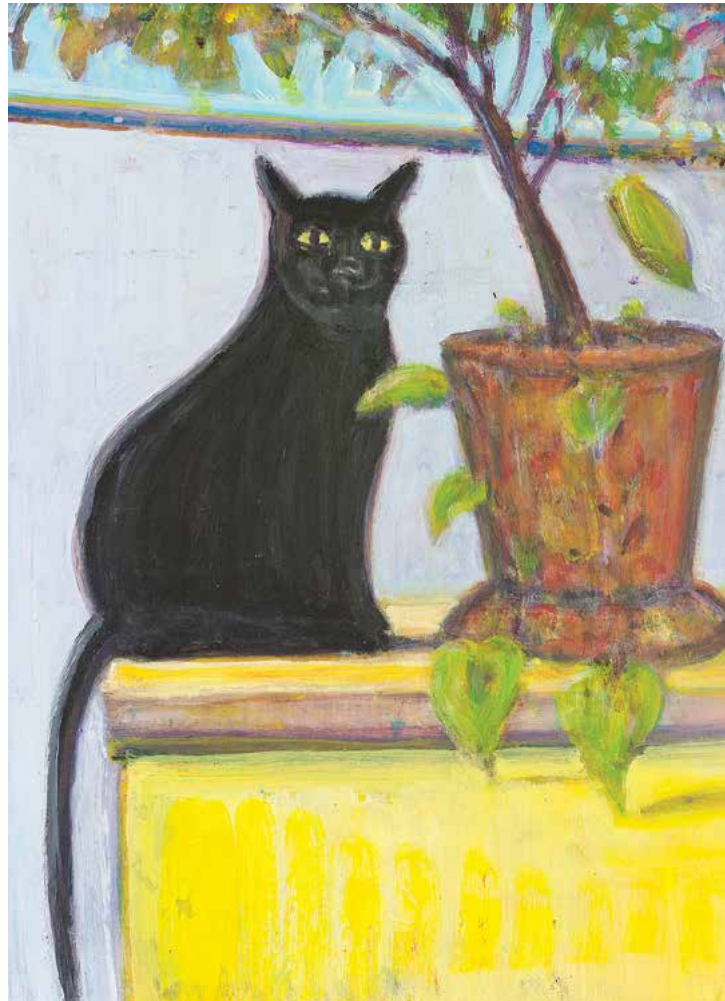
# ANIMALS



Fishtank (30 x 46 cm)



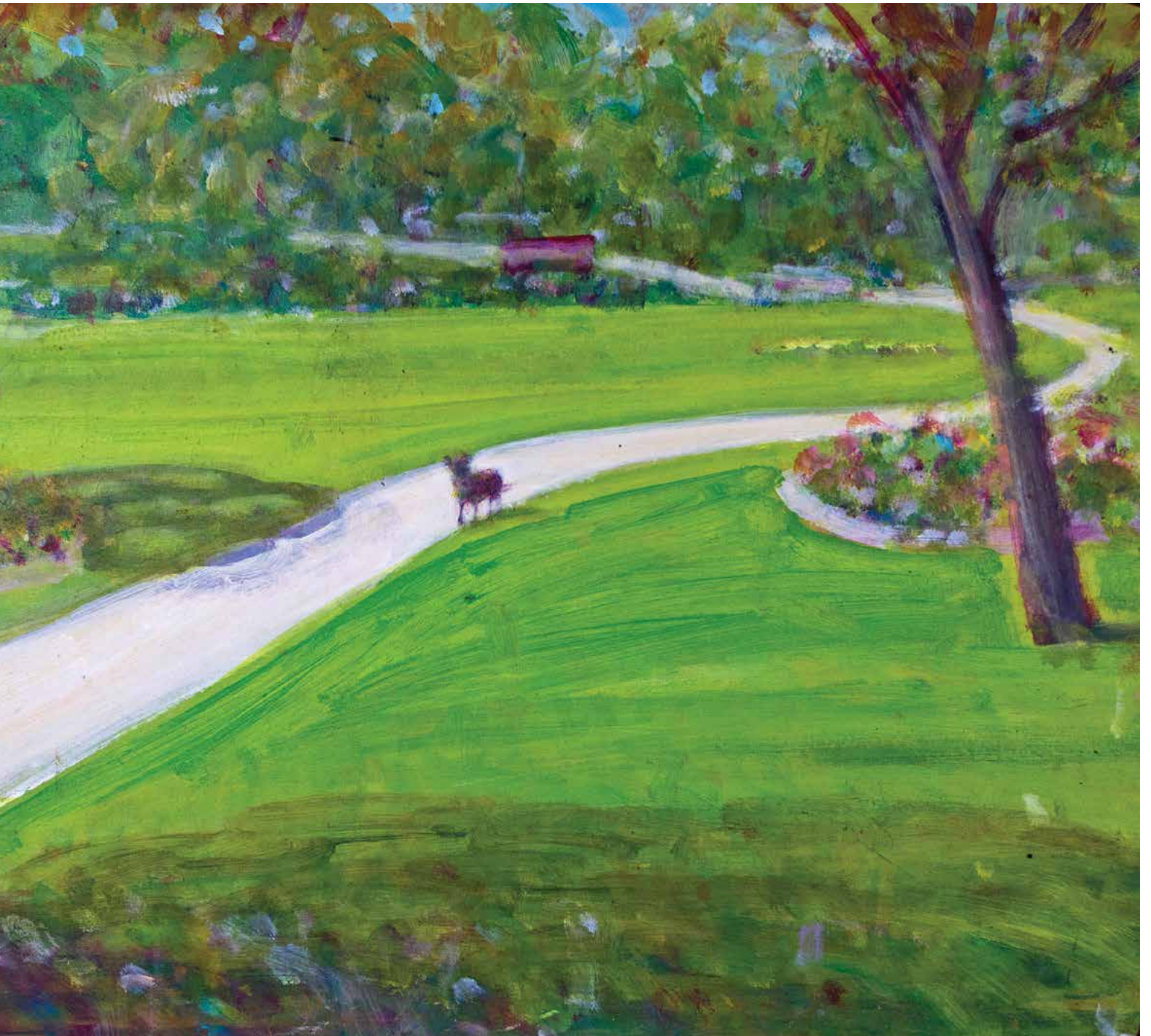
Young Cockerel (41 x 44 cm)



Prin (Private Collection)







Lost In The Park (44 x 58 cm)

# BEACHSIDE



Beach Scene (Private Collection)



The Honeymooners (43.5 x 60 cm)



Bayside Beach (Private Collection)

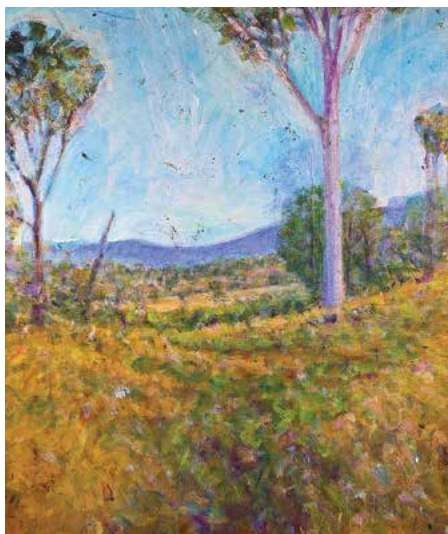


Beach View (Private Collection)



Wellington Point (Private Collection)

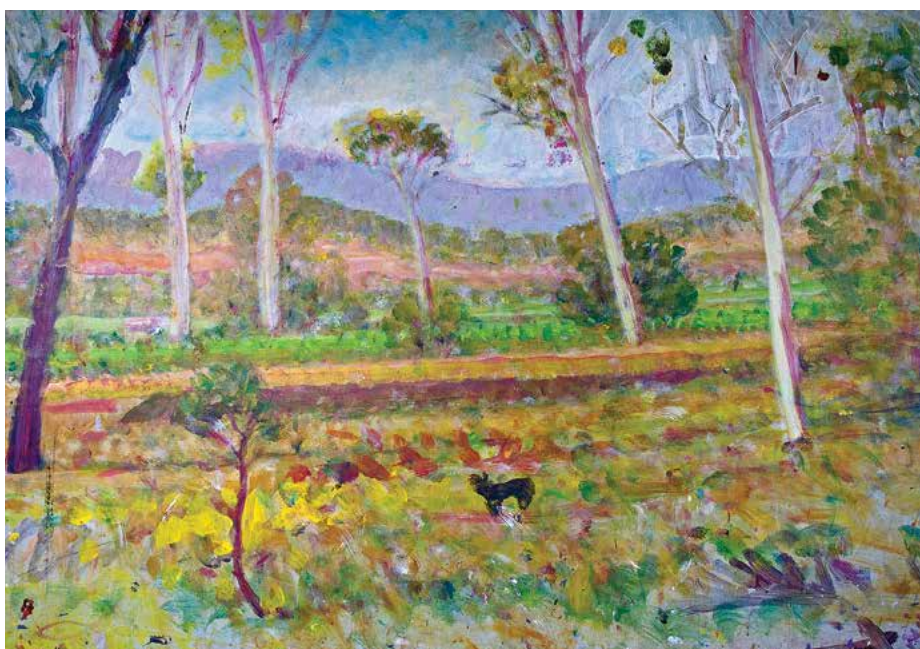
# BUSH SCENES



Afternoon at Rosevale (60.5 x 45.5 cm)



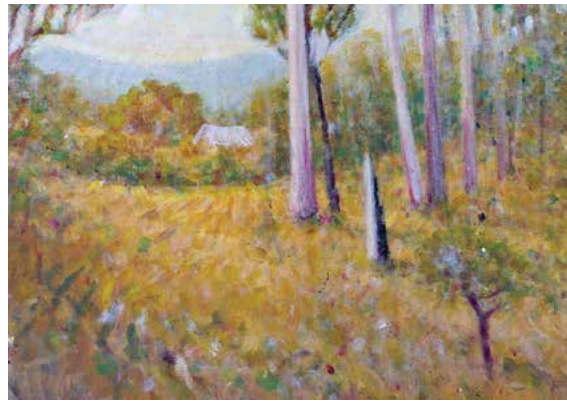
Creek Crossing (60.5 x 45.5 cm)



Dog in a Paddock (61 x 91.5 cm)



Bush Bend (45.5 x 61 cm)



Bush Hut (51 x 67 cm)



Dry Spell (59 x 85 cm)

# PORTRAITS



Left Wondering (91 x 61 cm)

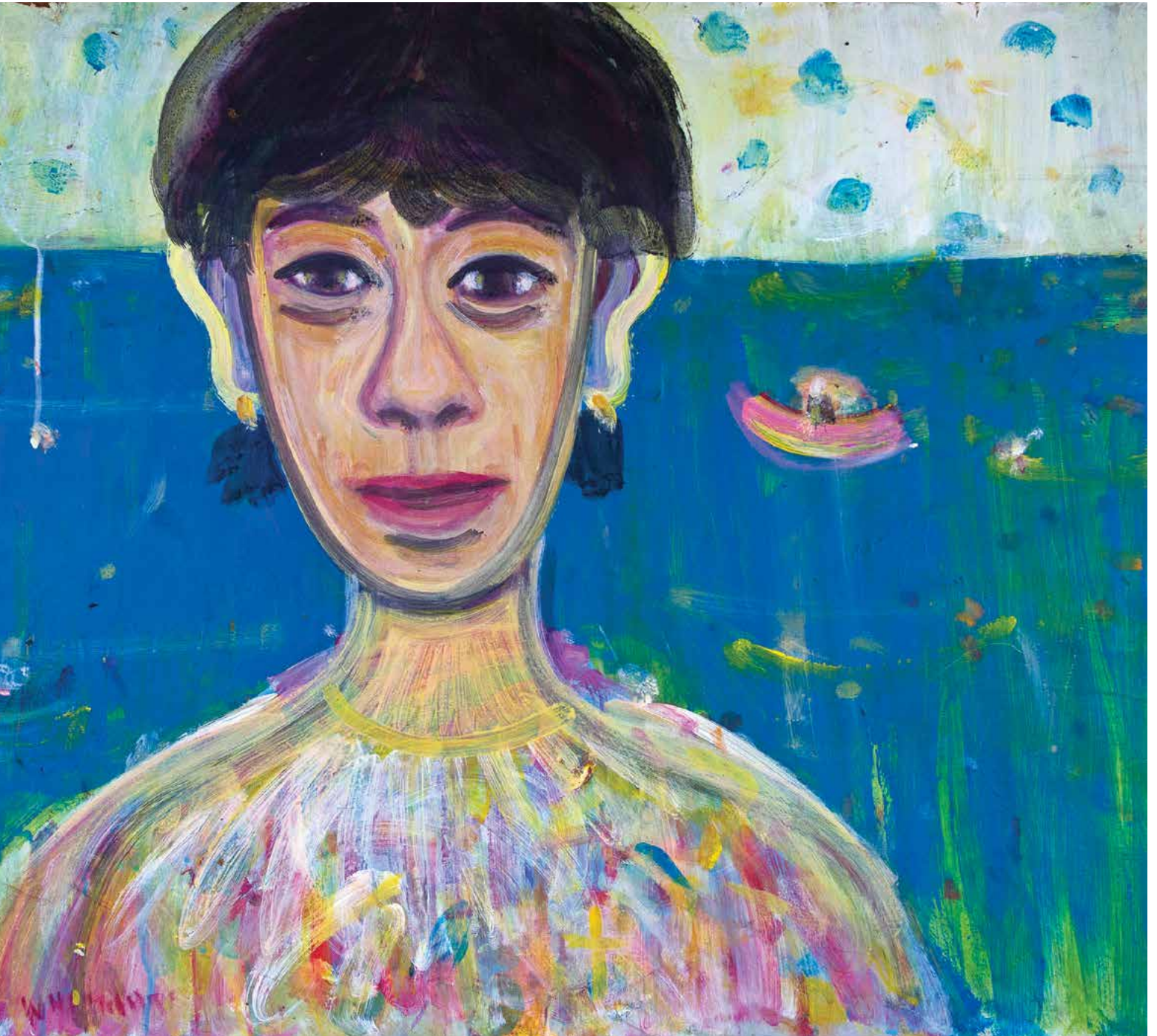


Pauline (44 x 36 cm)



The Smoker (30 x 45 cm)





Boat People (60 x 88 cm)

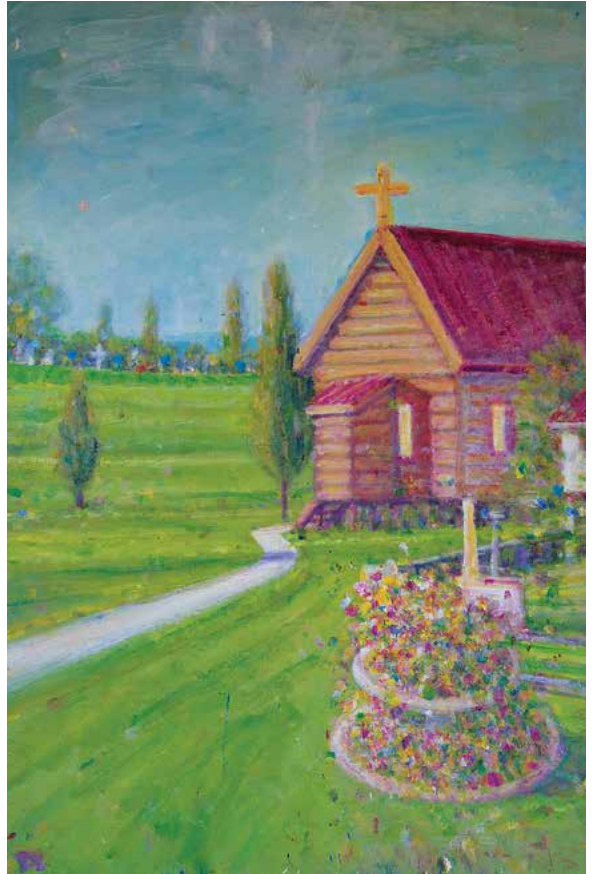
# RELIGIOUS



Acceptance (43.5 x 60 cm)

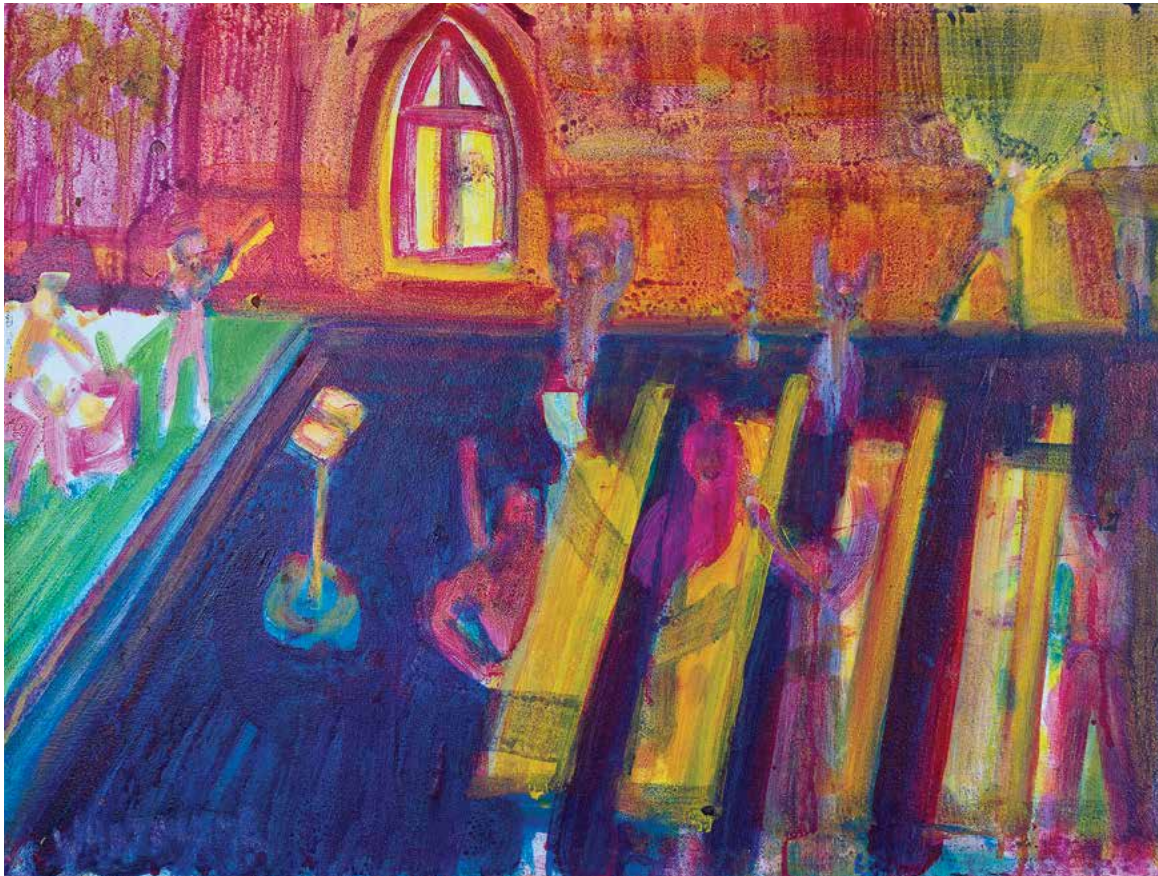


Rough Passage (45 x 60 cm)



Backyard Philosophy (91 x 60 cm)





Pentecostal Experience (45.5 x 61 cm)

# SKYDIVING



On the Money (Private Collection)



Moonlighters (60.5 x 60.5 cm)

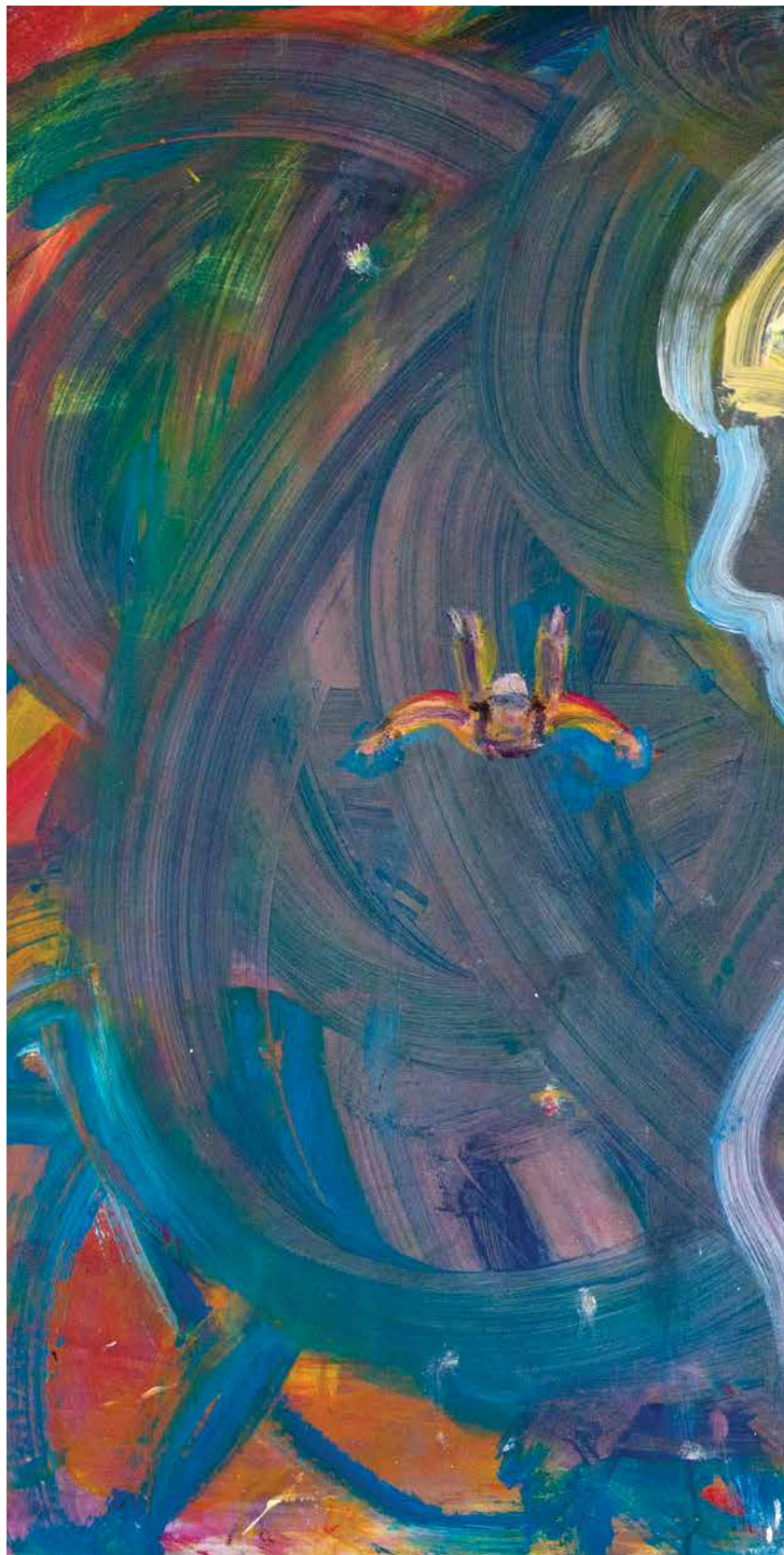


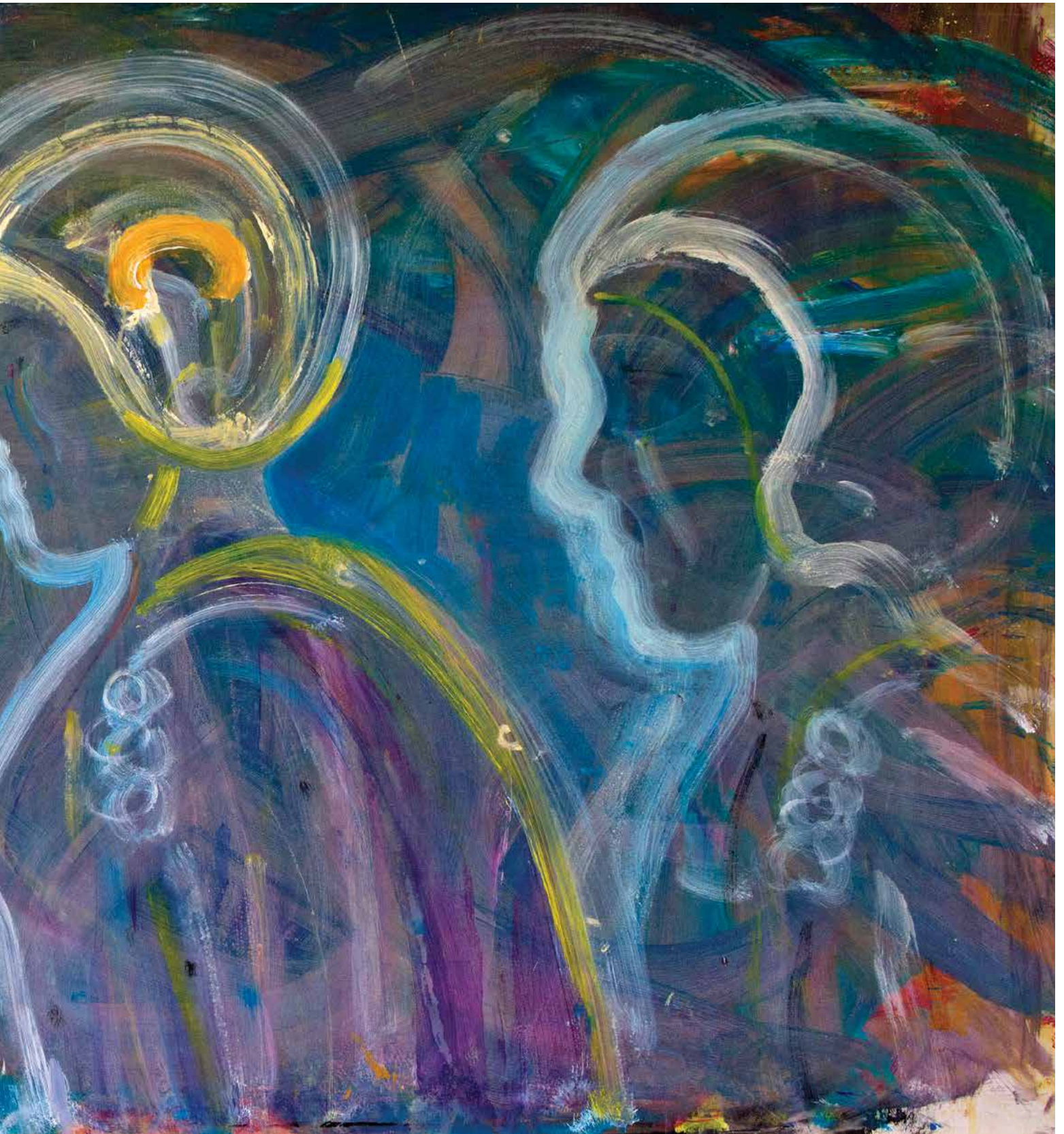
Night Guard (61 x 91.5 cm)



The Canopies (21.5 x 44 cm)

# SKYDIVING





Next Load (60 x 88 cm)

# List of featured paintings

PAGE	TITLE	HEIGHT BY WIDTH
Cover	Black Cat on Pink Street	61 x 91.5 cm
2	The Incinerator	52 x 61 cm
4	Self portrait: I see Blue	59 x 58.5 cm
4	Self portrait: Portrait of a Jumper	91.5 x 60.5 cm
5	Self portrait; Deep Journey	62 x 49 cm
5	Self portrait: My Prayer	61 x 46 cm
6	Abstract – Skydiver	36 x 45 cm
8	After the Jump	60.5 x 60.5 cm
10	Friends in Freefall	45.5 x 61 cm
17	Precious Moments	30 x 25 cm
19	Skeeter on a Beanbag	Private Collection
20	Early Days at Manly	60.5 x 91.5 cm
23	Bayside Outlook	40.5 x 58 cm
24	Time Pieces	34.5 x 46 cm
27	Phil in Laidley	45.5 x 61 cm
28	Boats in Wynnum Creek – Phil & Vincent	59.5 x 87.5 cm
30	Aratula Outlook	61 x 91.5 cm
32	Towers Place – Beaudesert	22 x 27 cm
33	Beaudesert Way	Private Collection
34	Towards Mulgowie	61 x 45.5 cm
37	Hope on the Hill	21.5 x 44 cm
38	Dreaming Tiger Dog	61.5 x 45.5 cm
40	Country Oasis	46 x 60.5 cm
43	Mt Walker Series – Open Hilltop	59 x 89 cm
47	Headland Lookout	45.5 x 61 cm
49	Whispering	44 x 59 cm
50	Kiss Me	43.5 x 60 cm
50	The Blue Curtain	23 x 30 cm
51	Circles	45.5 61 cm

PAGE	TITLE	HEIGHT BY WIDTH
52	Fishtank	30 x 46 cm
52	Young Cockerel	41 x 44 cm
52	Prin	Private collection
53	Lost In The Park	44 x 58 cm
54	Beach Scene	Private collection
54	The Honeymooners	43.5 x 60 cm
55	Bayside Beach	Private collection
55	Beach View	Private collection
55	Wellington Point	Private collection
56	Afternoon at Rosevale	60.5 x 45.5 cm
56	Creek Crossing	60.5 x 45.5 cm
56	Dog in a Paddock	61 x 91.5 cm
57	Bush Bend	45.5 x 61 cm
57	Bush Hut	51 x 67 cm
57	Dry Spell	59 x 85 cm
58	Left Wondering	91 x 61 cm
58	Pauline	44 x 36 cm
58	The Smoker	30 x 45 cm
59	Boat People	60 x 88 cm
60	Acceptance	43.5 x 60 cm
60	Rough Passage	45 x 60 cm
60	Backyard Philosophy	91 x 60 cm
61	Pentecostal Experience	45.5 x 61 cm
62	On the Money	Private collection
63	Night Guard	61 x 91.5 cm
63	Moonlighters	60.5 x 60.5 cm
63	The Canopies	21.5 x 44.8 cm
64	Next Load	21 x 44 cm



