

Neil Williams
Girt by Sea



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Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery

26 March - 29 May 2022



This body of work *'Girt by Sea'* by Neil Williams explores the coastline of the Mornington Peninsula where Neil lives and works, and its vast vistas across Bass Strait. It evolved from a series produced whilst on artist's residency at Police Point AiR, Point Nepean in May 2021. At this time Neil was immersed in the exploration of the quarantine station and was deeply moved by its history. It was here that passengers disembarked after a long sea passage, to undergo quarantine, be treated or cleared for infectious diseases like Typhoid and Dysentery. He felt the isolation, sadness, and heartache amongst the buildings that he imagined would have been experienced by those detained there. The Ticonderoga ship expedited the creation of the quarantine station when it arrived at Point Nepean in early November 1852, with nearly 300 on board sick with fever. During the passage from Liverpool, 100 died from Typhus. 168 in total lost their lives, including 86 children. The quarantine station was actively used for its original purpose up until 1980, and the many journeys made by such ships as they transported immigrants from Europe to Australia, led Neil to focus on the ocean that carried these people to a new home.

“Whilst exploring the coastline and researching areas of interest, I came across Eugene Von Guerard's sketch books. He visited the Mornington Peninsula, spending time sketching the coastline along John Barker's property at Cape Schanck (Bushrangers Bay area). The dates on the sketches were 1858/1860 & 1863. This sparked an interest in me to try and locate the exact spots that he had drawn from, and thanks to google earth and a few hikes and rock scrambles around the area, I found them. Sitting in those very spots and sketching my own take on the scene in front of me, I felt quite an emotional connection to that time. The first four works in this catalogue are the result of those findings. I wondered what it might have been like to see a ship like the Ticonderoga nearing the end of its voyage, and in the two large works *'Waiting (View from Log Bay to Cape Schanck)'* and *'One More Day (View to Westernport from Barkers Bluff)'* I have brought this to life.”

Neil paints his emotional response to the dramatic coastline and sea, with the underlying history of the journeys made, and of those ships and people that didn't quite make it to this land, girt by sea. These seascapes are timeless. Standing on the beaches or cliff tops you can pause and imagine oceans past, and be reminded that we are part of something continuous.

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Waiting (*View from Log Bay to Cape Schanck*), 2022
oil on canvas
250 x 150cm
(253 x 153cm framed in raw timber)
\$15,000





Listen (*Cape Schanck*), 2022
oil on canvas
90 x 85cm
(93 x 88cm framed in raw timber)
\$4,200



Wading in the Water (*Elephant Rock, Cape Schanck*), 2022
oil on canvas
90 x 85cm
(93 x 88cm framed in raw timber)
\$4,200



One More Day (*View to Westernport from Barkers Bluff*), 2022
oil on canvas
250 x 150cm
(253 x 153cm framed in raw timber)
\$15,000







Breathing Low (*Flinders*), 2022
oil on linen
117 x 101.5cm
(119.5 x 104.5cm framed in raw timber)
\$5,500



Softening (*Flinders*), 2022
oil on linen
117 x 101.5cm
(119.5 x 104.5cm framed in raw timber)
\$5,500

Silence in the Moment (*London Bridge Rock, Portsea*), 2022
oil on canvas
91.5 x 81cm
(94.5 x 84cm framed in raw timber)
\$4,500



Surrounded (*Sierra Nevada Rocks, Portsea*), 2022
oil on canvas
90 x 85cm
(93 x 88cm framed in raw timber)
\$4,200



Damaged (*Cheviot Beach, Portsea*), 2022
oil on linen
91.5 x 81cm
(94.5 x 84cm framed)
\$4,500





The Australia Wreck at Corsair Rock, 2021
oil on cedar panel
28 x 14cm
(40.5 x 26.5cm framed)
\$900



Beach Study at Point Nepean
oil on cedar panel
28 x 14cm
(40.5 x 26.5cm framed)
\$900



Western Sister, Sullivan Bay, 2021
oil on cedar panel
28 x 14cm
(40.5 x 26.5cm framed)
\$900



Eastern Sister, Sullivan Bay, 2021
oil on cedar panel
28 x 14cm
(40.5 x 26.5cm framed)
\$900

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