

Rural

NSW artist Jo Bertini inspired by rich Murray Valley landscape

ABC Rural

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[NSW artist Jo Bertini in front of her oil on canvas Last Light at her latest solo exhibition in Albury.](#) (ABC: Laurissa Smith)

You could not find two more opposing environments.

The flat, arid deserts of Central Australia and the rolling valleys that hug the Murray River on the border of New South Wales and Victoria.

Jo Bertini admits her latest solo exhibition Hortus Conclusus — The Enclosed Garden was a challenging break from her traditional work depicting Aboriginal people and their connection to country.

[Artist Jo Bertini speaks about her latest exhibition on the Murray Valley landscape](#) (ABC News)

"Artistically my area of interest was the desert and to move into a rural context, I kept thinking, artistically, how am I going to make this interesting for me?" she said.

Bertini said those reservations evaporated during the course of her residency on farms in the Wymah Valley near Albury.

"I found very strong parallels between my interest that I had focussed on," she said.

"That transformative nature of place, the people-place relationship.

"How people transform place and place transforms people.

Interests that have developed over a professional career, spanning more than thirty years, include the best part of the last decade as an expedition artist.

A path Jo Bertini was destined to travel given her heritage.

Now based at Peelwood north of Crookwell, in the central tablelands of NSW, she was born to a family of artists, stretching back to ornithological painter John Cotton who came to Australia as a free settler in the early 1800s.

Her mother is sculptor Anne Ferguson, her aunt New York painter Judy Cotton and grandfather Robert Cotton was a photographer.

Ideas for her latest works on the Murray were gathered in pen, ink and graphite from a helicopter above Lake Hume or perched on a ridge overlooking sheep and cattle properties.

These would develop into large landscapes in oil on canvas in rich hues of green, midnight blue and burnt sienna.

"Those three rivers, the Kiewa, the Mitta Mitta and the Murray River, seem to have such a natural conclusion into Lake Hume," she said.

"If I was going to do any kind of landscape work it had to be obviously significant to the geography of the place I was focusing on.

"It had to be around rivers, it had to be around hortus conclusus or a well or a fountain at the centre of that concept.

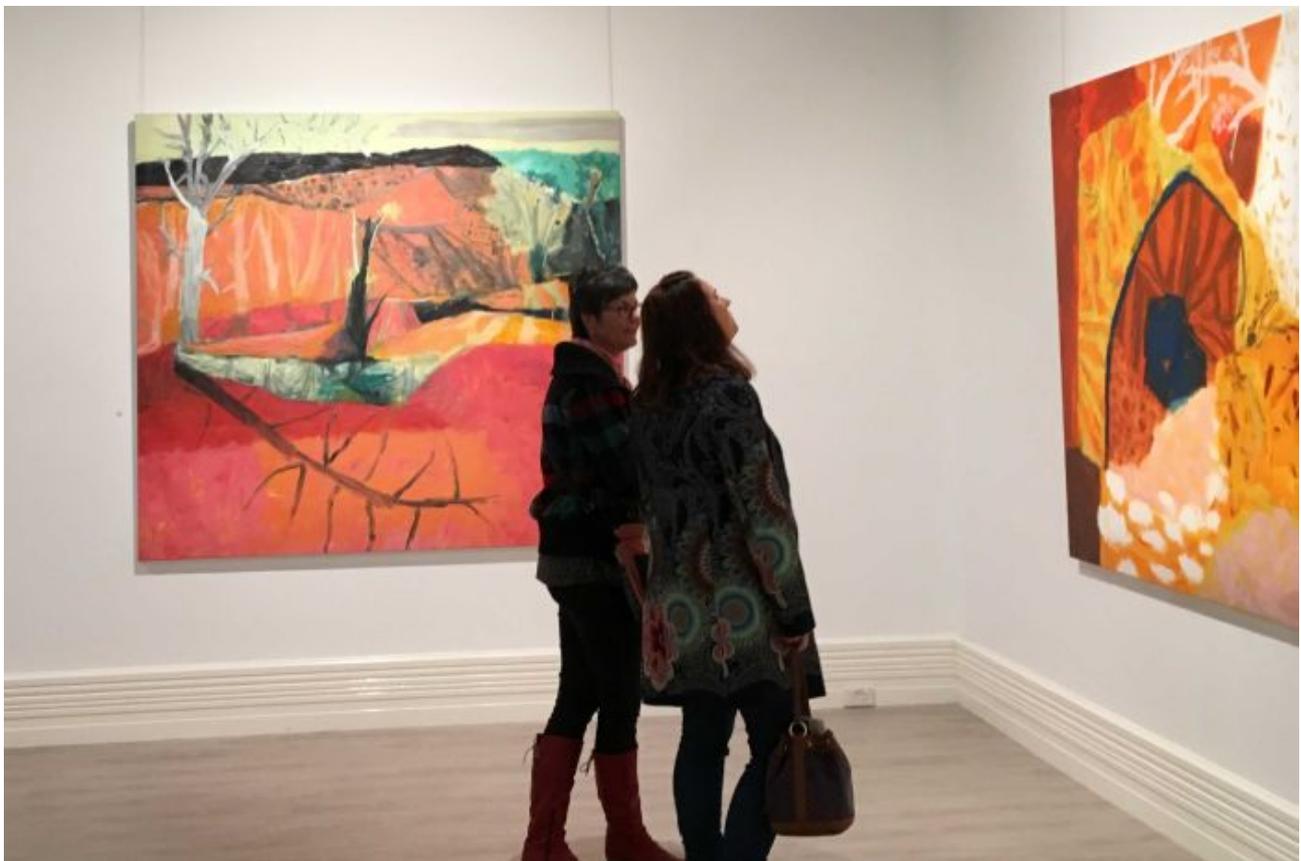
"The Murray was just a gift really."

Jo Bertini will spend the rest of 2016 in the deserts of New Mexico in the US, to complete a three-year residency.

Her next exhibition will be in New Dehli at the Indira Ghandi Centre for the Arts sponsored by the Australian Government, featuring the remote Maldhari herders from the far-north-western frontier.

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Artist, Jo Bertini



[Locals admire Jo Bertini's Low Lying Cloud on canvas at her exhibition Hortus Conclusus — The Enclosed Garden.](#) (ABC: Laurissa Smith)

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