



MARTINE EMDUR

Synergia



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26 - 25 April 2026

Opening Celebration, Thursday 26 March, 6 -8 pm

The immersive ocean paintings of Martine Emdur are acts of emotional excavation. For over two decades, the Sydney-based artist has cultivated a distinctive practice that sees figures poised between presence and dissolution, probing intimacy, vulnerability, and the weight of being. The recurring perspectives in her work – looking down into water, floating bodies, solitary swimmers – serve as surrogates for interior states and moments of emotional suspension. Largely self-taught, Emdur’s brushwork is layered and alive, capturing both the pulse of human experience and the shimmering light of the sea.

Emdur has always lived by the sea. She speaks of the ocean as an old friend: “It’s always been a big part of my life... I miss it when it’s absent.” The “eternal patterns” on the water’s surface – endlessly warping and weaving light – inform her latest series, ‘Synergia’, which delves into pattern as language. “The thin surface is like a skin covering the whole ocean, a dance of veils, with secret texts in every ripple,” she explains. “It’s a conduit that absorbs surrounding information and translates it into its own perfectly organised language.” Emdur describes an abstract communication system borne by the sun, streaming through the water to trace contours like nature’s own cartographer, emulsifying and transmitting its shimmering intelligence below the surface. “It’s like an ancient text, a hieroglyphic,” she remarks.

Amidst this optical symphony are Emdur’s figures, unaware of the kaleidoscopic net of light inscribing their bodies. Suspended in moments of surrender, these underwater swimmers appear ethereal – haloed by aureate glow as heat and light emanate, scattering to create a supple iridescence. There is something gently uterine here: figures held in an oceanic embrace, vulnerable, embryonic. They are adrift in a space surging with nascence, the water’s surface an amorphous membrane between two worlds. On it and through it, Emdur’s brush balances translucence and opacity, muddy depths and luminous highlights. This play of light is more than visual flourish – it is a conceptual anchor through which human experience, memory, and emotion refract. As surfaces ripple with shifting sunlight, light captures impermanence: bodies dissolve, reflections distort, and the boundary between self and environment grows fluid – moving towards a state of Synergia.

Emdur's process is deeply observational and profoundly patient. She spends hours daily watching the ocean and learning its morphology. To create 'Synergia', the artist has been honing her photographic skills, capturing compositions above and below the surface of the sea. "I need a particular motion," she says, describing the hours spent familiarising herself with locales, tides, and temporal nuances. Some works in the series are devoid of figures as Emdur magnifies segments of the sea, conjuring magic within a mundane ripple or a simple swell. The artist takes thousands of photographs, printing and arranging images on her studio floor to find those that move her. Often she knits several images together, creating her own compositions. Though largely working mimetically, Emdur's painting process is intuitive – sometimes she maps figures with outlines and blocks them in with oil; other times she lays a tonal base and paints the figures on top. Colour is instinctive – opalescent, muddy, electric, raw – serving emotion before representation. Always is a dialogue with light, a luminous tussle between highlights and shadows that traces curves and refracts across surfaces.

The paintings in 'Synergia' are, in Emdur's words, "an ode to women", the solitary female subject framed as life-giver, peace-maker, goddess. She paints her swimmers with deep devotion, focusing on the interiority of women's bodies in space – how it feels to inhabit them rather than how they appear to others. Her painterly restraint allows the works to hold intimacy without confession, where being seen is not a concession but a choice, and looking becomes an act of recognition rather than control. The female gaze here is neither idealising nor apologetic – it is embodied, intimate, felt. Emdur's layered oils assert agency through a refusal to smooth or resolve, leaning on subtlety and nuance to offset the vast expanse of blue ocean. Light here is compass, its viscous swirls and spectral shafts piercing the endless blue and delineating depth. There is nothing polished or performative; instead Emdur's subjects are in a constant state of becoming. As they swim, submerge, and surrender to the boundless blue, we look not at them but through them, with them.

Emdur's paintings invite the viewer not merely to observe, but to linger within intimacy, to float in our own fragility. In her hands, the physicality of paint on canvas is a trope for immersion itself: for the sensation of being in water and for the shifting psychological textures of reflection and vulnerability.

Elli Walsh
Principal Writer, Artist Profile

Ephemeral Mapping

oil on linen

180 x 245 cm

\$85,000



Sun Catcher
oil on linen
180 x 245 cm
\$85,000



Light Code
oil on linen
198 x 198 cm
\$75,000



Daystar Bloom

oil on linen

180 x 245 cm

\$85,000



There Are No Edges in Blue

oil on linen

183 x 198 cm

\$70,000



Sacred Water II

oil on linen

183 x 245 cm

\$85,000



Sacred Water

oil on linen

183 x 198 cm

\$70,000



Coasting II
oil on linen
183 x 229 cm
\$80,000

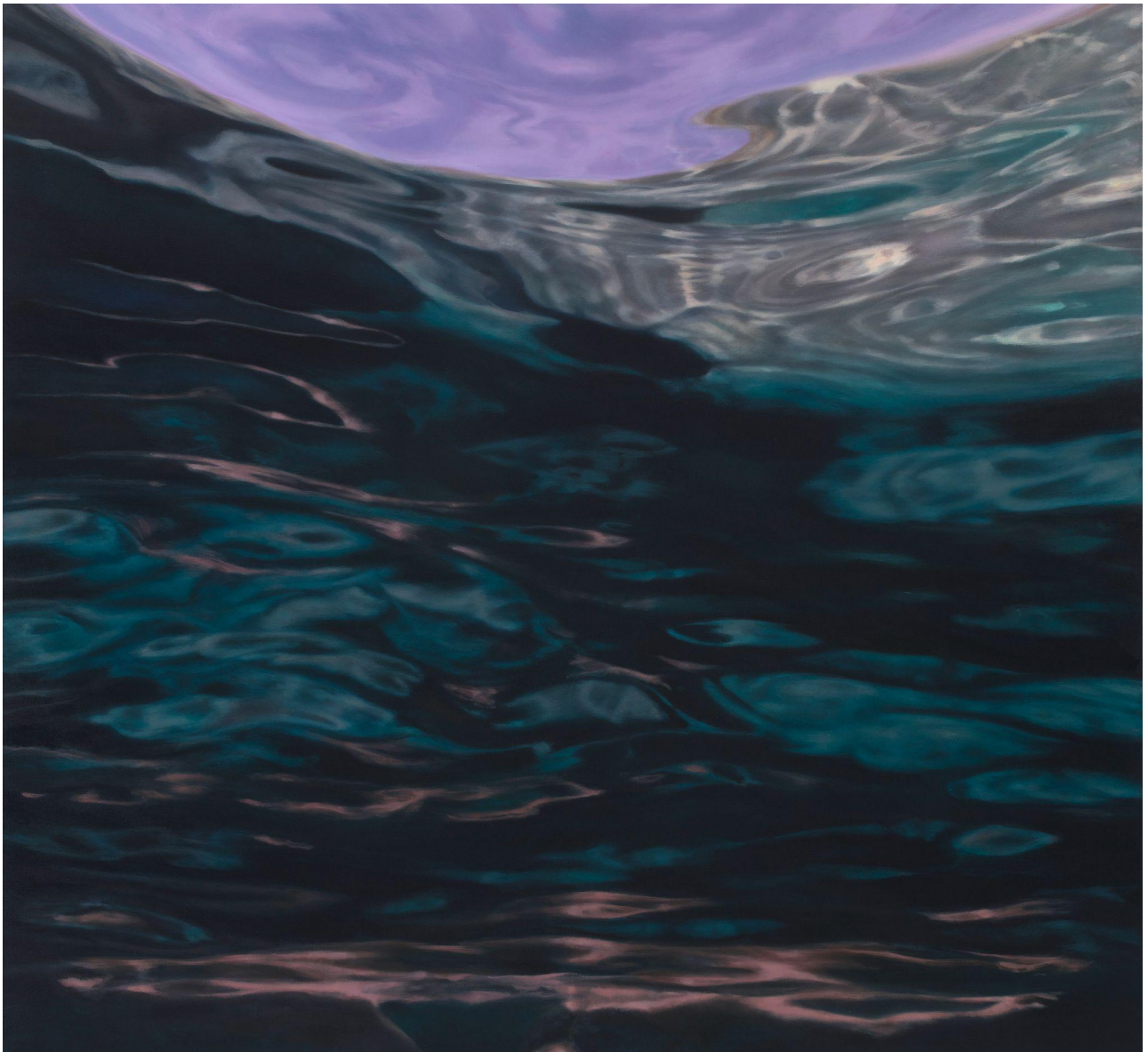


The World At Her Feet

oil on linen

183 x 198 cm

\$70,000



Blaze

oil on linen

122 x 152 cm

\$38,000



Constellation
oil on linen
142 x 163 cm
\$45,000



Deep Lazuli
oil on linen
122 x 168 cm
\$40,000



Obsidian Reverie

oil on linen

173 x 244 cm

\$85,000



MARTINE EMDUR

Born 1966, Sydney, Australia

AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES

- 2011 Salon des Refuses SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
- 2005 Portia Geach, S.H. Ervin Gallery Sydney, NSW, Finalist
- 2003 Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
- 2002 Kings School Art Prize, Kings School, Sydney, NSW, Winner & People's Choice Award
- 2001 Waverley Art Prize, Bondi Pavilion Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Winner
Kings School Art Prize, Kings School, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
- 2000 Salon des Refuses SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist
SCEGGS Redlands Art Prize, SCEGGS Redlands, Sydney, NSW, Winner, People's Choice Award
Waverley Art Prize, Bondi Pavilion Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Highly Commended
- 1999 Waverley Art Prize, Bondi Pavilion Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Winner & People's Choice Award
Kings School Art Prize, Kings School, Sydney, NSW, People's Choice Award
Second People's Choice Awards, Tap Gallery

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 'Bird of Paradise', Twenty Twenty Six Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2021 'Sydney Sider', Twenty Twenty Six Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2019 'Undercurrent', Nanda Hobbs, Sydney, NSW
- 2018 'Shimmer', Survey Exhibition, Manly Regional Gallery, Manly, NSW
- 2017 New Paintings Olsen Irwin, Sydney
New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne
New Paintings Palm Beach, Art Fair, Florida, [Olsen Gallery]
- 2016 New Paintings Olsen Irwin Here and There Scott Livesey Galleries
- 2015 New Paintings Olsen Irwin
- 2014 New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries Small Paintings Olsen Irwin
- 2013 New Works Olsen Irwin New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries
- 2012 New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries
New Paintings Tim Olsen Galleries

- 2011 New Paintings Tim Olsen Gallery
New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries
- 2010 The Cat Street Gallery Hong Kong
New Paintings Scott Livesey Galleries
- 2009 New Paintings Tim Olsen Gallery
Linton and Kay Perth
- 2008 'Deep', Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
New Works Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2007 Arthouse Gallery at Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne, VIC
- 2006 Limelight Schubert Contemporary, Main Beach
New Works Arthouse Gallery
- 2005 New Works Arthouse Gallery
- 2004 Arthouse Gallery, Melbourne Art Fair
- 2003 New Works Arthouse Gallery
- 2002 New Works Arthouse Gallery
- 2001 'Sapphire', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2000 'Descent', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 1999 'Coasting', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 1998 'Sanctum', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 1997 Global Gallery, Paddington, Sydney
Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 '30 Years of Arthouse Gallery', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2024 'Beauty Runs the Gauntlet', Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2023 'KYUP! – Archibald Winners', Project Art Gala, Sydney, NSW
- 2021 'Make My Daisy', Twenty Twenty Six Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2016 'Merge', Olsen Irwin, Sydney, NSW
- 2014 'Twenty Fourteen', Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
'Day Exhibition', Australian Galleries, Sydney, NSW
- 2011 'Wattle: Australian Contemporary Art', The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
Inaugural Exhibition, Reis Gallery, Singapore
'Christmas Exhibition', Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
'Underwater Paintings', Linton and Kay, Perth, WA
- 2010 The Cat Street Gallery at Hong Kong Art Fair
- 2008 'Group Show 08', Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
- 2004 Christmas Show Arthouse Gallery
- 2003 Ned Kelly Framed Charity Auction, SH Ervin Gallery National Trust Centre

- 2002 Flesh Arthouse Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 Global 4th Anniversary Exhibition, Global Gallery, Sydney
- 2000 Melbourne International Art Fair, Arthouse Gallery
- 1998 Landscapes Arthouse Gallery
- 1997 Kevin Brennan Bondi Pavilion Gallery

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- John McDonald, 'Swimming Pools: Deep & Shallow', John McDonald, Feb 5, 2021
- Felicity Carter, 'Artist Martine Emdur on Human Form and Affection', Forbes, Sep 27 2018
- Madeline Gray, 'The Beast, Martine Emdur – Celebrating the Human Form', Jun 27, 2017
- Anna Johnson, Catalogue Essay, Olsen Gallery,
- Tess Gibney, 'Sydney Observer, Aquatic Artistry: Martine Emdur's Water-Born Inspiration', Aug 2014
- Kate Bryan, 'The Cat Street Gallery, 'Wattle: Australian Contemporary Art', Catalogue Essay
- Elissa Blake, 'Out of the Blue', The Sydney Morning Herald, Feb 21 2009
- Colin Vickery, 'The Deep Thinker', Herald Sun, Jul 11, 2008
- The West Australian, Aug 9 2007
- 'Open Gallery', The Sydney Morning Herald, Mar 31, 2006
- 'Critics Circle', The Sydney Morning Herald, Dec 3 2005
- Domain, The Sydney Morning Herald, Feb 26, 2004
- Janet Hawley, 'The New Kelly Gang', Good Weekend, Mar 1 p. 38, 2003
- Yvette Alcott, 'Spectrum Close Up', The Sydney Morning Herald, November 8-9 2003
- Lenny Ann Low 'Exhibitions', The Sydney Morning Herald, November 8-9, 2003
- 'Metro', The Sun Herald, December 8, 2002
- Richard Jinman, 'The Weeks Best', Sydney Morning Herald, December 6-12, 2002
- Courtney Kidd, 'Artnotes', Art Monthly Australia, Ed. 156, December 2022
- Elizabeth Fortescue, 'What's on, Elizabeth's Best', The Daily Telegraph, December 21, 2022
- Sophie Toomey, 'Painters make work of art', The Weekend Australian, September 7-8
- Maria Lum, 'On the Waterfront', S Magazine, July 2001
- Terri Dodd, 'Class Act – 2001 Archibald Prize Finalists', Artist Magazine, 2001
- Melissa Penfold, Domain, The Sydney Morning Herald, August 31, 2000
- Courtney Kidd, 'Metro', The Sydney Morning Herald, September 8, 2000
- Richard Zachariah, The Sunday Telegraph, September 3, 2000
- Chris Boyd, 'Image Makers', The Big Issue, September 4-19, 2000
- Sebastian Smee, The Sydney Morning Herald, November 1999
- Australian Artist Magazine, October, 1998



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