

THE PIPELINE READING LIST



The Architecture of Happiness by Alain de Botton

The Pipeline project began when my partner and I moved into this house on Dharug Country, Old Guildford in 2018. Soon after we moved in, I picked up a copy of Alain de Botton's *Architecture of Happiness* at a second-hand book fair. The book both articulated and inspired the relationship I was building to the first home which we have filled with everything we own (we both have hoarding tendencies though I prefer to think of myself as a collector).

I have surrounded myself with art in this house. Over time, I have come to realise it is not just the artworks that I love, or that make me feel at home. It is the way they hang from the picture rails. The way they interact with the geometry of the fibro panelling. The way they rest guardian-like above the thresholds.

Architecture works on us slowly, de Botton writes, asking us 'to imagine that happiness might often have an unostentatious, unheroic character to it, that it might be found in a run of old floorboards or in a wash of morning light over a plaster wall...'

This book inspired me to take more notice of the intensely personal nature of other people's houses. Their temperament, their vices and virtues. To see every house as a home, and their collective, a neighbourhood.

Suburbanism: Poetics by Robert Wood

On residency at The Border Line on Miriwoong Country, I was introduced to Robert Wood's collection of essays *Suburbanism: Poetics*.

I immediately connected with his writing 'about how our place, people and relationships can be renewed by thinking poetically ... about how we can live in our suburbs with a utopian spirit in order to make our world better materially.'

Wood writes of the poem as a way to

generate a considered understanding of suburbia. I find this in my process of over-painting. I paint over the Polaroids because I want them to be more than photographs of a place, to also be narratives that can recall different and broader experiences.

Reading *Suburbanism* was a revelatory experience. I was lucky that the founder of The Border Line introduced me to the author, and we corresponded via email during my residency.

Wood left me with some recommended reading, including *Holy Land: A suburban memoir*.

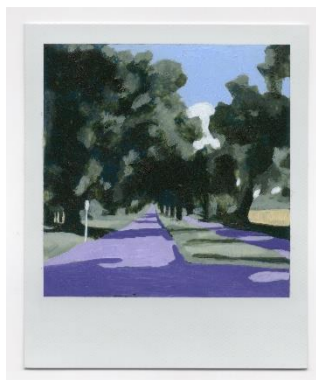


Holy Land: A suburban memoir by D J Waldie

This painting is from Toowoomba, a Garden City resting atop the remnants of a volcano. Work is undertaken all year round to prepare for the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers in Spring. The unique landscape of this region gives the city a misty feel, described to me as the *Toowoomba magic*. The identity of this place is written on signs, in flowers, in the mist. But we know that it is more than this – it is in the hopes and habits of everyday life.

DJ Waldie's *Holy Land* illustrates, through stories of a life lived in one place, how the design of a suburb affects how we feel, how we move about and exist there. So too, its residents enact and adapt these designs, shaping its identity. I was deeply moved by the power of Waldie's observation:

'After work at city hall, I walk home on straight, flat sidewalks... The sidewalk is four feet wide. The street is forty feet wide. The strip of lawn between the street and the sidewalk is seven feet. The setback from curb to house is twenty feet. This pattern-of asphalt, grass, concrete, grass-is as regular as any thought of God's.'



I keep returning to this book, for its earnest teachings on how to fall in love with wherever we are at.

Holy Water by Joan Didion and How to Blow Up a Pipeline by Andreas Malm

This pipeline, the namesake of this project, has served many metaphors. It is a locating device for anyone who lives or travels through the area where I live. It is an engineering feat of the Upper Nepean Scheme that continues to transport most of Sydney's water supply.

These pipes make me think of Joan Didion's essay *Holy Water*, recommended by a friend. Didion writes on the availability of water as a defining factor in where and how we live. She reverently traces the source of her own drinking water in Malibu. In Sydney, I have traced a similar path, following these overland pipelines from the Prospect Reservoir east to Potts Hill. Starting three houses down from where I live, I have followed this pipeline to within a stone's-throw of the house where my father grew up. In Sydney we are all connected by this water journey.

Of course, these pipelines are also signifiers of the violence of colonialism on this land.

I was also recommended to read *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. I struggled through this confronting manifesto.



It has been an important reminder of these pipelines as signifiers of the oil pipelines servicing the fossil fuel economy.

These pipelines shape a landscape that enables us to live in ways that are ecologically and morally unsustainable. Their expansive sightlines, at once beautiful and unique to suburbia, are a reminder that our roads, footpaths, bridges, and borders are arbitrary, artificial, and damaging.

They are also the reason I can call this place home.



Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino

I picked up a second-hand copy of *Invisible Cities* part way through this project. In it, Venetian traveller Marco Polo recounts to the emperor Kublai Khan details of the cities he has visited on his expeditions around the empire.

Polo describes fantastical places of all shapes and characters: Thin Cities, Continuous Cities, Cities & Desire. These are not recognisable cities. They are imagined cities and they are every city. Written almost as poems, each city reflects on how we connect to place through memory and imagination, 'Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a part of his that he did not know he had...'

I have painted the suburb of Toogoolawah from afar. During the Sydney lockdowns in 2021, my collaborator Alexandra Lawson visited, Polaroid camera in hand, and photographed on my behalf. The Polaroids were posted to me, and through this postal conversation, I formed my own stories and memories of Toogoolawah in paint.

I was able to visit in early 2022 but my relationship to this place exists almost entirely in my imagination. The road pictured above is the entrance to the town off the Brisbane Valley Highway.

The street is flanked by signposts listing local services. On the left:

Vehicle Sales, Engineering, Electrician, Produce, Tyres, Mechanical, Real Estate. On the right: Butcher, Groceries, Bakery, Chemist, Newsagency, Hardware, Plumbing, Child Care. Not included on the signs: Specialty Picnic Store, Regional Art Gallery and Skydiving.

Suburbia by Helen Garner

Our backyard was the first place I painted after we moved here. When I look at this painting, I hear our neighbour's birds. As I write this text, we are packing to move out of this house. This house where we have spent more time than we could have imagined, after years of lockdowns and working from home. This house where the wall paint does not match the door frames and where we have started our family.

I have read Helen Garner's short story *Suburbia* here. It traces her movements between outer and inner-city suburbs – a story of shifting priorities and perceptions. A story of housemates, neighbours, and reluctant domesticity. I read echoes of my own shifting relationship to suburbia in her words – brought about by embracing this new home, by noticing the details of this neighbourhood. A shift guided, in part, by these seminal texts.

At the end of the story, Garner recounts the evening in 2009 when Victorian writer Gerald Murnane was awarded the Melbourne Prize for Literature. In his acceptance speech Murnane declared his intentions to travel within Australia to visit all the houses he had ever lived in.

Then he tilted back his head, closed his eyes, and recited a long list of all his former addresses in the suburbs of Melbourne: plainly named streets in obscure, lower-middle-class suburbs... And as he recited them off, by heart, without hesitation, in chronological order, we all held our breath, with tears in our eyes, because we knew that he was reciting a splendid and mysterious poem.



COVER: HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH. FROM THE SERIES: THE PIPELINE. 2018-2022. ACRYLIC ON POLAROID PHOTOGRAPH. 9 x 10CM. EACH MOUNTED ON TISMANIAN OAK.

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FOREWORD

Hayley Megan French paints the streets of suburbia, homes, yards, and her memories of landscapes.

Abstracted and stripped of ornamental detail, her landscapes are brought back to almost structural fundamentals, just as one's memory of details may become faded, subdued or obscured over time, or coloured with a particular hue or glow. French's landscapes each take on a range of pigments that is personal and borne of recollection and feeling.

With each exquisitely honed painting, whether it be on canvas or on top a Polaroid, Hayley Megan French's tonal range is evocative of more than the representative. She imbues each with a sense of place, marking the pleasure and significance we should feel in the daily routes we walk or spaces we dwell, but often overlook.

The Pipeline is of particular relevance to the Somerset region. Begun with her locational connection to the vital infrastructure that allows suburbs, like the one where she lives, to exist. So too is our region characterised by a network of pipelines that supply much of Southeast Queensland's water needs. Across the country we are all united by the journey of water, as we are by land.

It is a privilege and a delight to be able to present Hayley Megan French's work at The Condensery, particularly the new paintings of Toogoolawah and our very own building added into *The Pipeline* series for all to enjoy and ponder. With their own presence and colour palette, they are as unique and as special as we are.

RACHEL ARNDT

THE CONDENSERY ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LANDS AND WATERS WHERE WE LIVE AND WORK. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH. WHAT I REMEMBER. 2020. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 51 X 41CM.



HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH, FROM THE SERIES: THE PIPELINE, 2018-2022. ACRYLIC ON POLAROID PHOTOGRAPH, 9 X 11CM EACH, MOUNTED ON TASMANIAN OAK. INSTALLATION VIEW.

WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE

HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH

10 Sep – 20 Nov 2022

I'D LOVE TO WALK YOU THROUGH HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH'S NEW EXHIBITION *WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE*. FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS 'TOUR', I'M ASSUMING THAT YOU'VE ENTERED THE EXHIBITION THROUGH THE MAIN DOORS AT THE CONDENSERY, AND YOU ARE STANDING IN THE MAIN GALLERY WHICH HAS ONE LONG SHELF THAT TURNS THE CORNER AND SPANS THE ROOM. THE SHELF IS HOLDING SMALL PAINTINGS WHICH APPEAR TO BE COLOUR CODED AND ARE IN THE SHAPE OF A POLAROID.

This series is titled *The Pipeline*, with paintings depicting four suburbs. The works are Polaroid photographs taken by the artist, who has then painted over the Polaroids with acrylic paint. Why *The Pipeline* I hear you ask? Old Guildford, in Western Sydney – the suburb in which French lives – has a monumental water pipeline running through it, defining the location. This pipeline network is the reason that suburbia can occur. The pipeline is therefore an undercurrent, and a necessity for all suburbs.

The four locations that are featured in *The Pipeline* have been chosen specifically – they are places where French has spent time, and connected with. Old Guildford, on Dharug country, is the artist's home, it has a green and blue palette and a brick-red pipeline. Kununurra, on Miriwoong country, has earthy desert tones and is a place where French undertook *The Border Line* residency program. The Kimberley region is a place she has laid roots over time and true to the nature of the artist, a place she returns to. The Toowoomba connection is identifiable by the Jacaranda purple, developed in a similar way. French initially visited Toowoomba, the land of the Giabal and Jarowair people, to show her work in 2012. She has regularly returned and is now embedded in the art community, which has become an extended family.

Finally, Toogoolawah, land encompassing the Jinibara peoples, is the fourth locality. You are standing where French has stood, and from where she has started her walk of the suburb, often in the rain, defining and developing an understanding of the location by photographing buildings and places that caught her attention. When embedding herself in a suburb and community, French slows down and considers a palette evocative of the place, choosing colours that give a sense, or a 'feel' for that location.

If you move around the paintings, looking from different angles, you'll see flashes of the original photograph, made in real time. These glimpses of the real, escaping through the paint, remind us that there is a photograph behind the painting, which has been reinvented through French's consideration of the space, shifting the accuracy of the Polaroid, to a subjective, emotive view. These detailed works are a close.

consideration of moments in suburbia, houses especially, the over-painting adding a sense of humanity.

If you continue walking through the exhibition, you will come to the smaller space where you will find a series of larger paintings on canvas, built up with layers of paint over a black surface. The lines in these works depict paths made by walking (imagine a route on a map). The lines come from French's own suburb, they describe walking routes that she took from her home in Old Guildford. At the time, these walks emotionally connected her, to her home and suburb, creating a sense of place and grounding during the Covid-19 lockdowns. The interesting thing about these works are that they are her memory of the route, and often feature desire lines, where she has drifted from the known path and found her own way across the landscape. The veiling (the faint white layer over the red path), developed when French started to paint over a route, believing it to be incorrect. As this layer emerged, she realised that the memory and perception of a space or experience is our reality, and therefore the original line was, in a way, correct.

These imagined or encountered lines made by walking relate to the Polaroid paintings, depicting French's reimagining of a place. By painting and creating a new image on the original photograph, she is overlaying her understanding, and experience. This is what each of us do, in our lives, and our suburbs – we take certain routes, we have emotional connections to sites, buildings, and our homes, based on our perception or feeling towards these places. This exhibition, and French's work at large, is her way of understanding where she exists in the world, and through doing so, she invites us to do the same.

ALEXANDRA LAWSON

Dr Alexandra Lawson is based in Toowoomba, Queensland. She has owned and run commercial galleries and art spaces and currently works as an academic, art curator and agent/dealer and as the Coordinator of Educational Events for the School of Creative Arts at the University of Southern Queensland.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Hayley Megan French works primarily in painting, moving between abstraction and representation. She paints the streets of suburbia, homes, yard, and memories of landscapes. French loves the capacity of painting to create an intimacy and slowness that can bring different ideas and experiences into conversation with each other. She lives on Bidjigal land in Western Sydney. She believes it is important to engage with the places that we live with a renewed wonder and critical attention to better understand who we are and how we live.

Alongside her painting practice, French writes, curates, and works as Curator and Artist Development at Parramatta Artists' Studios.

In 2015 French completed a PhD on the influence of Aboriginal art on how artists think about and make paintings in Australia. This PhD research was awarded the Council for Humanities and Social Sciences Australia prize for a student. This thesis informs her understanding of contemporary landscape as place, and the connections between landscape and power, modes of self-formation and identity. She presented on this research at the Sydney College of the Arts PhD Conference, 2012 and the Museums Australasia Conference in Auckland, 2016.

French's writing has since been published in *Art Collector Magazine*, *Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts Journal*, *Semaphore*, *MOP Projects 2003-2016* publication and various exhibition publications.

French has presented solo exhibitions at Penrith Regional Gallery and Broken Hill Regional Gallery and exhibited in group exhibitions across Australia, including the nationally touring exhibition: *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo*, co-curated by Gail Mabo and Jonathan McBurnie. Most recently French exhibited in the curated group exhibition *Looking at Painting* at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. French has exhibited as a finalist in prizes including Hazelhurst Art on Paper Award, Grace Cossington Smith Art Award, Paddington Art Prize, and the Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize; and has previously been awarded the NSW Artists' Grant and the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship.

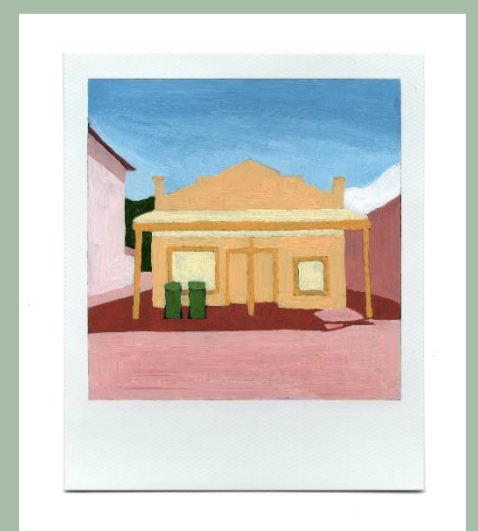
French has held four solo exhibitions at Galerie pompom in Sydney and is represented by Alexandra Lawson Gallery, Toowoomba. Her work is held in the Artbank collection, The Stevenson Collection in New Zealand and private collections in Australia, New Zealand and America.

Since 2018 French has been developing a major new body of work titled *The Pipeline*. This project is a portrait of the suburbs she lives and works in. It is a growing archive that engages in a conversation of what suburbia means in the Australian imagination.

In the development of *The Pipeline*, French has been an invited artist at *The Border Line* in Kununurra, Western Australia; and published correspondence with Western Australia-based poet Robert Wood on *Semaphore* (2019), and a collaborative essay with writer Felicity Castagna on *Sydney Review of Books* (2021).

The photographs in *The Pipeline* have been taken on Dharug land in Old Guildford and Guildford, New South Wales; Miriwoong country in Goonoonoorrang/Kununurra, Western Australia; the land of the Giabal and Jarowair people in Toowoomba, and Toogoolawah in the Somerset Region encompassing the land of the Jinibara, Jagera, Ugarapul, Yuggera and Kabi Kabi peoples.

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HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH, FROM THE SERIES: THE PIPELINE, 2018-2022. ACRYLIC ON POLAROID PHOTOGRAPH, 9 X 11CM EACH, MOUNTED ON TASMANIAN OAK.