

## **Art Workshop, Paiwalla, 12-13th October, 2019.**

### **Collaborating with nature to create a visual record of place**

I spent a lovely weekend at Paiwalla, a beautiful wetland on the River Murray, which is cared for by a group of volunteers.

I arrived mid-morning and I was immediately struck by the beauty of the place and the ongoing work that is involved in caring for this part of the Murray. The sounds of birds were all around. The Whistling Kites were spiraling overhead, the terns were diving to catch food, the wrens flying between the reeds and families of black swans were swimming together. It was awesome.

Not long after I arrived some of us watched two very large red-bellied black snakes as they were mating. This was something I had never seen and the colour of red and black twisting and rolling together was amazing.

A group of six artists experimented with a number of different methods of being present within a place and recording that experience visually. Together we created visual accounts of how we see a place, the sounds we hear, the movement, the forms and the textures. We spent several gentle hours being mindful of the sights and sounds around us and created some lovely art that is a record of that time spent.

We talked about other artists who also collaborate with nature to create amazing art; in-particular we looked at the work of John Wolseley, Gosia Wlodarczyk and Cameron Robbins.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some artistic times with lovely people, also for the camping, the walks, great food and wine, campfires and conversations.

Maxie Ashton.

What a great weekend. Loved spending the time with you all at Paiwalla and the special moments with

We had a fantastic weekend enjoying the magic of Paiwalla in stunning weather.

A group of us (Michelle, Inta, Denny, Gaynor and Annie) joined Maxie Ashton in exploring her approach to depicting the sights and sounds of Paiwalla. Absolutely loved her gentle, relaxed and skillful style in leading us to explore. A very gifted artist with a willingness to share. My fears of lack of artistic ability were overcome by the different activities we did – free form drawing of contours, bird flights, tracing and rubbing of nature surfaces, sound drawings and more.

It was complimented by a great camp experience with communal fire, camp oven meals and pizza. Other company included Steve, Peter F, Cam, Spiro, Lucy. Susan, Sue, Sandy and Peter S.

Annie Fisher

Paiwalla is a breathtakingly unique wetland with a remarkable story of innovation, vision, and a labour of love by a very special group of people who have an unwavering passion to create a remarkable example of what's possible. The habitat they have created has to be explored and experienced to truly realise what a magnificent environment we once had and could still have more of. It's a legacy and an inspiration. I've heard about Paiwalla but have only appreciated it from the weekend we have spent there in the most idyllic camping spot imaginable overlooking the vast wetlands, skirted by our colourful River Murray cliffs and overflowing with the sights and sounds of our beautiful Australian wildlife. Maxie was our leading artist for the weekend. We didn't need to have an ounce of artistic ability to begin with as she in her lovely laid back way led us to explore and simply enjoy the time to take it all in, look closely, listen and capture our own interpretation of it. What a beautiful way to simply be, create and enjoy the wetlands. Thank you so much for bringing us together and sharing your wealth of knowledge and experience with us..... until next time.

Inta Sellick

I'm so glad I took the time to slow down and enjoy the experience that is 'Paiwalla'. Walking around the wetland is sensational with birds and animal life everywhere. The hum of nature is ever present.

Our artist leader (Maxi Ashton) inspired us to try different ways of recording this experience. I loved it and will try the techniques suggested and practised at Paiwalla again. A big thank you to all who contribute there. It's a magnificent retreat.

Michelle

Thank you for a wonderful weekend at Paiwalla, it is truly a very special place I enjoyed experimenting with the different artistic expressions that Maxi introduced us to. This allowed me to see, hear and experience Paiwalla quite differently from my first visit. I felt safe to explore drawing for the first time since childhood and was surprised how involved I became in the processes. I was confident enough to show some of my drawings to the entire group on Sunday, something I would never have done prior to this workshop.

Denny Ellul

The wetlands, the company, the art and the food were all wonderful! I thoroughly enjoyed meeting other like-minded people in such a beautiful and precious environment. It was a time to really immerse oneself in the landscape. Responding to Maxi's suggestions created an atmosphere of relaxed artistic activity. I appreciated the quiet way that she encouraged everyone to feel comfortable with exploring mark-making and enjoying the experience without

judgement. I would certainly recommend other such weekends and look forward to meeting you all again.

Gaynor Hartvigsen











