

Blue Ridge Moon

Kylie Banyard

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Kylie Banyard, *Blue Ridge Moon*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 152 x 137 cm. Courtesy the artist, Galerie pompom, Sydney, and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne.

Curator Helena Reckitt identifies a tendency amongst a generation of contemporary artists who, although they were born during or after the era of women's liberation, identify strongly with the movement. Seeking information about figures and events, these artists, she says, have become historians.

Reckitt identifies an approach to archival materials and histories inherent within my approach to the Black Mountain College archive. The creative acts, or as Reckitt call them, *activities* I chose to animate in my work, are selected from the college's vast photographic archive and recuperated through the process of painting.

These works form part of my broader practice-led research into experimental modes of living and learning, which seeks to bring the history of social experiments like Black Mountain College to contemporary audiences through a painterly process engaged in the critical and poetic re-framing and foregrounding of previously under-represented contributors, namely, the women. I'm interested in Black Mountain College (BMC) as a historically significant example of radical pedagogy and sustainability based in practices of nurturing others, development of the whole person, and care for community and environment.



Kylie Banyard, *Holding Ground 1*, 2020, oil and acrylic on canvas, 92 x 92 cm. Courtesy the artist, Galerie pompom, Sydney, and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne.



Kylie Banyard, *Holding Ground 2*, 2020, oil and acrylic on canvas, 92 x 92 cm. Courtesy the artist, Galerie pompom, Sydney, and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne.

The research follows a feminist methodology, actively privileging vernacular photography and memoir over canonical historical texts in search of evidence of the situated knowledge and lived experiences of the women of BMC. There is an element of homage in my approach, but, as Reckitt says, these are affective connections and exceed citation or homage.¹

Like many feminist artists and scholars before me, mine is a project that actively side-steps the dominant narrative by shining a light on the contributions of those who have previously been under-represented to forge an alternative asynchronous view of history.



Kylie Banyard, *Ruth in Boone*, 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 112cm x 122cm. Courtesy the artist, Galerie pompom, Sydney, and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne.

My paintings draw attention to moments when female artists and students are engaged in active and intimate exchanges and moments of co-creation. I often combine archival research with fantasy, and through my desire to feel a closeness to the women

and history of BMC, I consciously conflate and position references to my lifeworld alongside and inside imagery derived from the worlds of the women pictured within the images. I sometimes introduce fragments of images of my children as stand-ins for figures in my works to bring about a (co)mingling of my world with theirs.

I am interested in exploring the utopian imagination and the generative potential of revisiting historical experimental models for living and learning, questioning whether the faded optimism associated with discarded utopias of the early counterculture and radical technological and social experiments (like BMC) can be regenerated through aesthetic experiences.

Recontextualizing and mediating histories like this within a contemporary painting practice is an artistic strategy that seeks to provide viewers with hopeful moments of contemplation and speculation, gesturing towards the need to find self-determined and radically other ways of living and learning on our wounded earth today.



Kylie Banyard, *The Pilgrimage*, 2018, oil and acrylic on canvas, 183 x 213 cm. Courtesy the artist, Galerie pompom, Sydney, and Nicholas Thompson Gallery, Melbourne.

¹ Helena Reckitt, "Opening a Closing Door: Feminist and Queer Artists as Historians" in *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture*, issue 3 (2009): 89.