

Triggered: Highpoints in a year's journey around the ACT

A selection of recent oil paintings by Simone Annis



Simone Annis

Simone is an artist who has run an e-bike business from home for the past 15 years while raising three children and loves most things about living in the “People’s Republic of O’Connor” (Inner North, Canberra).

Simone graduated with a MBA (Strategic Operations Management) from Charles Stuart University a long time ago and a BA in Visual Arts (Painting) from the Australian National University a very, very, long, long time ago.

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Payment plans are available for each artwork.

About the exhibition

This exhibition includes a selection of paintings based on my recent and ongoing Trig point journeys and the related 'desire lines' theme.

A reoccurring theme in my art practice is the idea of 'desire lines'. In urban and transport planning 'desire lines' refer to the unofficial paths that collective feet make through the landscape over time. These well-trodden paths are both subversive, being illicit, and conversely, the path of least resistance. Desire Lines are paths that form themselves and are evidence of both humanity and the impact of humans in the environment.

Like many Canberrans, I regularly visit Canberra's nature parks and reserves and in 2022, I started going to Trig Points more methodically and using these journeys, to extend the desire lines theme, both literally and as a subject of my art practice. Trig Points are the structures that mark the highest place on a hill or mountain. There are over 100 Trig Points spread across the ACT, 88 of which are accessible to the public. I love that in some cultures, 88 is a magic, lucky number so taking the time to go to all 88 seemed like a good idea at the time.

Some of these Trig Points are easy to find; a 30-minute stroll along a well-trodden, well-known suburban path. However, some of these points, like the high points in life's journey, are less easy to navigate. All require active travel, an act of rebellion against the status quo, in the form of self-propulsion. At some point in the journey to a Trig Point, you must step away from the car and walk or ride a bike. I wanted to see where these journeys would take me and what they might inspire, in me, to paint.

And I hope that these paintings inspire others to actively explore the world around them, as well as their relationship to it.

Sewage Works, Lower Molonglo



Mixed media on canvas

90cm x 60cm x 2cm

\$400

I've always been interested in Sewage Works (and other public infrastructure). It comes from spending too many years in a previous life hanging around landfills and Council Engineering Departments. Essential places that are often down below or on the fringe of something, hidden from view and quite unloved. These places (and others like them for example gaols, refugee processing centres and town camps) are places that we don't like to think about.

Uncomfortable reminders of our impact on the environment, consumerism and literally, human waste. You don't want to live too close.....

While, technically, nothing to do with Trig Points, I've often ridden down to this Sewage Works (it's down the end of a hilly and quiet road). On this occasion, I was on an aborted Trig Point journey where I ended up in Woodstock Reserve. The Reserve had a great view of the Sewage Works, I decided to include it in the exhibition.



Murrumbidgee in flood, Shepherds Lookout

Oils on canvas

95cm x 121cm x 2cm

\$800

I went looking for a Trig Point (it was close by, but not publicly accessible) and ended up instead at Shepherds lookout, Woodstock Reserve.

Recently, I saw a painting of the same view in the 1930's. Surprisingly, there is significantly more trees around now, in this view, than there was then. Unsurprisingly, there are more little tracks and pathways crisscrossing the landscape.

This is the first time I've seen the river being quite this wide and wild looking. The river is normally quieter and more sedate around here.

I really love the view further along from this point if you are heading out on the road towards Wee Jasper, but as that is outside the ACT, my painting stops here.

SW from Mount Rodgers



Mixed media on plywood panel

60cm x 45cm x 2 cm

\$250

Mount Rodgers is another suburban Trig Point that I had never visited, but always meant too. I say this as I'm often in the area delivering used and abused bicycles for repair to our technician, Chris.

I'm normally hurrying along, bustling in and out of the car, feeling as though I've got too much to do to stop and look around. This is silly because often my busyness is manufactured by my own need to feel useful, rather than actually being busy.

On this beautiful and still morning, I made myself slow down, and change the pace, to walk up to the Trig Point.

I liked the view southwest toward the Brindabellas. This small and pointless interpretation of the view was effortless, compared to the painting I abandoned on the board underneath. As effortless, pointless and meditative as stopping to walk up the hill.

The brush strokes on the tree and the mauve/blue of the Brindy's feel Namatjira-like and really appeal to my visual sensibility.



Exploring Nicholls

Oil on canvas board
50cm x 40cm x 0.3cm
\$150

I've gone past Percival Hill (I had no idea it was called Percival) so many times in my car on the way somewhere else. It was therefore pleasing to stop and make it my destination to explore one afternoon in early summer.

The ever-lasting daisies and Capeweed blooming created a nice contrast to the pinky greys of the Crace roof tops and the dark green pine plantation (so representative of the suburban fringe around Canberra remembered from my childhood). The Stadium and Black Mountain in the distance rounded out the view nicely. I also liked the slightly scuffed haziness of the sky. Although, that and the pink in the roofs, were my additions as the roofs were boringly, more a grey, grey. I hate that faux sophistication of a grey suburb. Pink is more chic, in my opinion.

Exploring Nicholls was the name that my phone came up with for the group of photos that I took that day, so I decided to go with it as the name for this painting.



Harcourt Hill to One Tree Hill

Oil on canvas

90cm x 61cm x 2cm

\$500

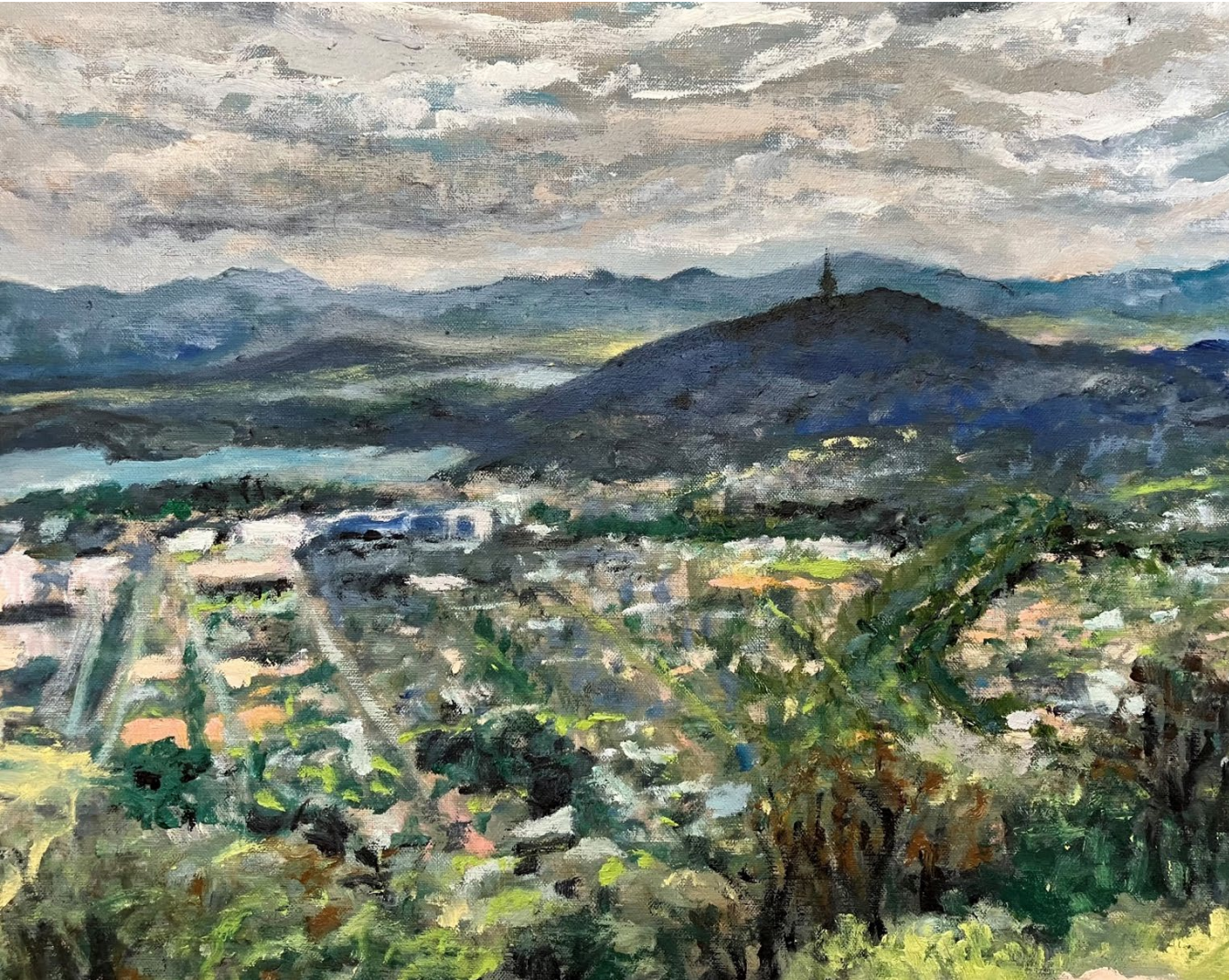
The track up One Tree Hill is part of the Centenary Trail, a 145km walking/cycling trail around Canberra.

It's a section that I've run and cycled a few times and it's a lovely bit of track with some great views back toward Canberra.

However, I love the look of the One Tree Hill ridge line. It gives me a feeling of calm and well-being when I look at it. Meditative in fact.

I have roamed all around Gungahlin looking for a good vantage point to capture this view. Finally, I found what I was looking for from another of the Trig Points on top of Harcourt Hill.

This should not have been a surprise as Trig Points are often visible from other nearby Trig Points. That after all is the point of a Trig Point.



Mount Ainslie View

Oil on canvas board
51cm x 41cm x 0.3cm
\$150

The view of Black Mountain, is the one I like best from the summit of Mount Ainslie.

My daughter and our two Great Danes accompanied me up the track on this walk. I prefer this view to the other, better known one looking across the Lake, down Anzac Parade to Parliament House, as this view covers the streets of the Inner North that I know best. If I look in this direction, I can pick out the general location of houses where I have lived, where my dad worked for 30 years, where I went to university and the streets that I still walk down.

While a lot about the area has changed over the years, I like how the bigger picture, the layout of the streets, the Lake and the Brindy's in the background look the same and give structure to the view. It allows me to reflect, without negativity, on impermanence and the way that time works to change everything and nothing.



Mount Tennent

Oils on canvas

102cm x76cm x 4cm

\$800

I saw an ACT Government post advertising activities for World Mountain Day (who knew there was such a thing). One of the things on offer was a walk up Mt Tennent, in Namadgi National Park. How appropriate for me, I thought. I hassled my partner, Kim, into getting up by 5.30am to be there by 7am sharp. There was us two and three rangers.

It was a glorious walk, two hours up, almost two hours down and there had been a lot of track work done since last time I was there many years ago. This painting depicts the rocks at the summit and the magnificent view out towards the Bimberi Wilderness area.

On our way down the Mountain, we met up with three more rangers who had walked all the way from the Victorian Alps, via this wilderness area. The track up Mount Tennent forms part of the Australian Alps Walking Track. This year, rain and mud made their walk a bit difficult. Ironical considering the visibility of dead and burnt trees from the recent bushfires.

The optimist in me wanted to focus on the beauty of the recovering bush, rather than the depravity of the bush fire and climate change. The realist in me put in a few dead and burnt trees for good measure.



Ridge

Oil on canvas

122cm x 30cm x 4cm

\$300

This painting combines several images to create a panorama along a ridge line. I can't quite remember which Trig Point it is, except that it's down south, facing towards the Brindabellas. It may be (in part) Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve. I suspect it's not a very accurate representation of what is there. But that doesn't matter.

It was a dreamy, stormy afternoon sometime in early Spring. I liked the many paths and rocks that were scattered around. I painted this painting over a very ugly painting I did of Shanghai inundated by Corona Virus illustrations that I never finished. I decided it was time to move onto more positive subject matter.



Lawson Trig Point view

Oil on canvas

45cm x 60cm x4cm

\$250

Like its sibling, Lawson Trig Point, in this painting I was playing with a strongly contrasting ground as a counterpoint to the simplicity of the mostly green foreground.

I liked the way that I could see Black Mountain from this viewpoint as I am often putting views of Black Mountain in my paintings as a signifier of place and location.

There is a long history of this in art dating back to Japanese artist Hokusai's *36 views of Mt Fuji*, where Mt Fuji is depicted from different locations and in different seasons. Hokusai also inspired the French Impressionists: Riverie's *36 Views of the Eiffel Tower*.

Therefore it seems both fitting and comfortingly silly that Tower and Mountain are combined in the context of Canberra and in many of my paintings. Black Mountain Tower is now an endearing icon from an era where we thought putting a lump of concrete on a hill would make us at least feel superior to the world around.



Lawson Trig point

Oil on canvas

60cm x 45cm x4cm

\$250

Lawson Trig Point is in a very suburban location sitting as it does on a hill in the middle of the relatively new suburb of Lawson.

In this painting I was playing with a strongly contrasting ground as a counterpoint to the simplicity of the mostly green palette of the grass and surrounding trees. I wanted the painting to feel both warm & whimsical as that's how this Trig point felt to me.



Into the light

Mixed media on canvas

92cm x 122cm x 2cm

\$800

The subject of this painting is the start of a walk, in the suburbs, close to home. So close to home in fact, that it is personal, the start of a journey of the mind, my mind. This painting is about placing oneself in an emotional state where making a conscious decision to act with compassion for oneself and others is possible.

This is both an act of will, of love and a process of taking power back. It requires both physical action IRL and dedication, symbolised perhaps by the start of footpath and the anticipated process of walking. That I am painting from the perspective of myself as walker, is also meant to encourage you, the viewer, to take this path. The depiction of the parallel paths going towards the light also signifies that:

- a. there is a choice in direction taken;
- b. there is more than one pathway towards the light;
- c. and that taking this direction to look toward the light requires actively seeking out the beauty in the everyday and all that is good in people and our surroundings.

Before the run

Oil on plyboard

41cm x 51cm x 4cm

\$200



This painting depicts the early morning start of the annual Sri Chinmoy 100km Centenary Trail Run. This is an event people do in teams, in pairs or by themselves, around Canberra. It takes participants up and over many of the accessible Trig points and this year, I was supporting my partner who was doing the event in a team of two.

At the start of an event like this, there's always a lot of pent-up nervous energy. People are anticipating something they have trained for weeks, months or even years. They know it's going to be a journey of self discovery, often through pain. There's also almost always an element of the unknown. Mostly, if you've trained well, you'll be fine. Sometimes, things go wrong, you stumble, or the weather is foul, you feel terrible and wished you paid more attention to your nutrition. It's all part of the process.

In this painting, people are ambling around, on the red gravel, doing what they do to feel less nervous before the start: some will be talking excessively; some will be reliving past glories; some will be reflecting on their lack of preparation; some will be going over their clothing choices. They will all feel better once they get started.

Painters, however, make unreliable witnesses and I've changed many of the aspects of this scene to make a better composition, suit my own needs and world view. Being able to recreate the world as how I would like it to be is part of the magic of being creative. Without trying to sound superior, I do this with love and a view to reducing injustice to others, rather than through anger. Kim's shoes, for example, while especially big and paddle board like, were not really this big.



After 10 k's

Oil on Plyboard

51cm x 41cm x 4cm

\$200

At 10 kms into a 50km run, you are feeling pretty good. You have just warmed up. You are smiling for the camera, looking relaxed and admiring the views. You are feeling pretty smug about yourself, your ability to do what you are doing and the hills don't seem so big..... I intentionally left the hill in this painting blank to signify that it was one of many and could have been any. I also liked the texture and look of the plywood below. And yes, he did change shoes along the way.



After 50 k's

Oil on plyboard

46cm x 61cm x 2.5cm

\$200

After 50k's your legs feel like the muscles are melting, which is how I've depicted Kim's (pictured) legs. You feel sore, but probably elated. Not at running 50 kms, but at finishing and not having to run any further. Some people who are better suited to long distance running than myself or Kim, probably look and feel quite fresh at 50kms and like they did at 10kms.

Apart from trying to capture, in some cartoon like way, the essence of fatigue in the figure of Kim, I was also interested in the shadow in all three of these running related paintings. In this one, I like how myself as a helper and observer (and as photographer and painter) is alluded to in the shadow in the bottom right corner. A reminder of my presence as a supporter (and our mutual support for each other) in our life's journey together.

Kim and I have often discussed how great (and mediocre) men talk about how they have done it (the event, the job, the achievement), for "their family". No! You do it because you want to, because you can and often, because it gives you time away from your family.



Mt Arawang with dogs

Oil on plywood panel
60cm x 62cm x 40cm
\$350

This painting is a combination of two separate trips up Mt Arawang. One on the edge of a thunderstorm and one with dogs. I wanted the painting to feel like an illustration of a fairytale, and not particularly realistic. Why? I'm not sure, but that's the vibe I was going for.

Vibe seems to be an expression of the moment which stands in for a whole lot of other emotions that we are unable, or too lazy to define.

Maybe it's because the Great Danes often look quite comical and like cows when they are snuffling around eating grass.



Wattle 2, Black Mountain

Mixed media on canvas

76cm x 76cm x 4cm

\$500

Late winter on the Black Mountain Circuit track, about three quarters of the way up, the wattles were in full bloom against a highly saturated blue sky.

One of those glorious Canberra days, frosty and crisp in the early morning. Beautiful, still and clear by 11am. A perfect day for a wander around Black Mountain.



Mt Ainslie summit track

Mixed media on canvas
76cm x 76cm x 4cm
\$500

I hated Campbell High School and especially Physical Education. Except for the occasional lesson where we got to walk/run up Mount Ainslie rather than playing some god-awful ball sport.

That's what the walking track up to the top of the mountain reminds me of.
Hence, I've left this view from about halfway up intentionally vague. Like a memory of this journey clouded by the mists of time (about 35 years).



Bruce Ridge

Mixed media on canvas

76cm x 76cm x 4cm

\$500

I frequently run or ride around Bruce Ridge. I am always ridiculously smug with myself when I manage to continue to run until the top of the hill next to the caravan park.

It's not that physically hard to do, but I must grit my teeth and not give up halfway up as the run gets steeper near the top.

Mostly nowadays, I'm too mentally lazy for that caper.

A favourite view of mine is from the fire trail above the caravan park looking through the trees over to Black Mountain. It's not a particularly special view but as I'm taking it easy, recovering from my effort, I will look over in that direction and notice the blue grey and mauve tones of the gum trees.

A friend of mine, once told me that she found that area around the caravan park creepy and avoided it. I don't know what she's talking about. I've never felt that myself.



Snow gum, Mt Gingera

Oils on canvas
121cm x 95cm x 2cm
\$800

Mount Gingera is the second highest point in the ACT. At over 1,800m it's one of the highest points in Australia. Mt Gingera is reached via Mt Franklin Road, followed by a four-hour return easy walk along a fire trail. Along the way you can also go up to the weather station atop Mount Ginini.

On this morning, the road in was potholed and foggy and the drive took ages. I have never seen so many wallabies both in numbers or varieties jumping around in the mist. The wallabies alone made the trip worthwhile. Pryor's Hut, and an old arboretum (a folly from the '50s) are also on the walk.

The panorama from the summit was magnificent with 360-degree views and it was very difficult to choose what to paint. Apart from the views, the area had its own unique ecosystem. There was an abundance of beautiful little things, colours and textures such as wispy grasses, wildflowers, mountain streams, rocky knolls, moss and snow gums. Bush fire damage and recovery were also evident.

This wind-swept snow gum sits in a beautiful grove on top of Mount Gingera's summit. The grove reminded me of a Japanese garden. Beautiful enough to make me cry. Beauty like this does that to me and I had a similar reaction to seeing Cressida Campbell's woodblocks at the Gallery earlier in the week.



Mount Taylor to Black

Oils on canvas

121cm x 95cm x 2cm

\$800

One of my dilemmas with this Trig Point project is deciding what to paint. I often have multiple ideas from one journey, and many Trig Points still left to paint. A view from the summit is lovely, as is a detail from the journey itself, or a view from below looking up at where you are about to go or have just been. So many possibilities.

For example, I have a fondness for the view of Mount Taylor, from Tuggeranong Parkway. However, I decided to go with this view as it required me walking up the Mountain, rather than sitting in my car. Getting out of the car is a self-imposed requirement after all.

This is the view from about three quarters of the way up towards Black Mountain. I like seeing Black Mountain and the Lake from a less known (to me) viewpoint. From a visual perspective, I like the definiteness of the line formed by the steep downhill of the track.



Mount Ainslie Puddle

Mixed media on canvas

122cm x 92cm x 2cm

\$800

For a longtime Mt Ainslie was my local. The view from the summit is well known to Canberrans, as is the view of the War Memorial at the base of the Mountain, from Anzac Parade. But it's the foothills which resonate most for me.

As a teen I would sometimes choose this less than direct route to ride my bike to and from Downer to Campbell High. In my early 20's dog walks around this area became a daily ritual.

On this day, after weeks of rain, areas of the track were both unrecognisable and unpassable, as large dam-like puddles had formed in low lying points along the track.



Mount Painter Trig 3

Mixed media on canvas

49cm x 39cm x 4cm

\$250

In this painting the collage on the surface is the envelopes from all the bills which awaited me on my return from holiday. I liked the way that you could see the Belco town centre in the distance behind this trig point.



Mount Painter Trig 1

Mixed media on canvas

49cm x 39cm x 4cm

\$250

It was a cool, cloudy and non-descript morning in late Autumn when I walked up to this Trig Point.

In this painting, loosely based on the path up to Mt Painter, I used some single-use cardboard, collaged elements.

I liked the look, feel and texture of the mowed ribbons of grass, next to the main path so I thought I would emphasis that in the painting.

Praise Be Thy Water Storage



Mixed media on canvas

39cm x 49cm x 4cm

\$250

This painting is a mediation on the importance of public infrastructure and the monolithic look of these tanks. Tanks like this can be found in the bush, above the suburbs, all around Canberra. Anyone who has done any leg of the classic Shi Chinmoy Triple Tri will have cycled or run or walked past one or many such tanks. I think of this event as the water tanks tour of Canberra.

In this painting, the surface of the tanks is black collaged tissue paper from a gift hamper. I have cupboards full of the stuff waiting to be reused.



Mount Painter Trig 2

Mixed media on canvas

49cm x 39cm x 4cm

\$250

In July 2022, we went to Bali. At the time there was a lot of stuff in the media about Foot and Mouth and the potential for Aussie tourists to bring the disease back from Bali. Having just returned from Bali, where we had been treated wonderfully by the locals, and meticulously vetted by Customs, I got very sick of the political beat up.

So, I embedded a souvenir shopping bag from Ubud into the landscape. I was ruminating on our interconnectedness with Bali and the way we've embedded Australian culture in Bali for good and bad and all that this entails.