



**Hayley Megan French**  
***Against the sky***  
**Galerie pompom, Sydney**  
**30 May - 24 June 2018**

The paintings in *Against the sky* began with a desire to erase or obscure previous workings of landscape. I wanted to capture a physical and emotional vertigo of working with landscape in Australia. The vertical line emerged as a gesture to alternate perspectives: of looking up and down when no discernible horizon line is present.

In previous paintings I have recreated feelings of landscapes—through shapes, forms and layers—performing my own connection to place. Now I am reworking these ideas, masking formations and previous thoughts beneath the surface. Photographs are also obscured, becoming no longer specific. This is not an attempt to displace myself, but to create a space of contemplation within the work. A slowness that brings me here and now, in place and duration. In this space, I can sit with the unsteadiness of place in Australia.

While completing this work in March this year, I read Naomi Riddle's *Letter to the Editor* (Running Dog) in which she advocated for 'the idea of slowness as a critical position.' What slowness asks for, Riddle writes, is 'the ability to afford a response more time—more time for indecision, more time for contemplation.' This feels particularly relevant to working with ideas of landscape and identity in Australia and the ability to sit with uncertainty and unknowing, and to push into a more connected place.

In these works, *landscape* exists as a vertical line, repeated. It also exists as the space between. Somewhat detached from the landscape itself, the build-up of layers and perspectives holds in it a way of thinking about place and its relation to the self, in all its multiplicity. This movement between individual and collective identity is a continued and mutable interrogation of myself and my place: my place among others.

Hayley Megan French, April 2018

[Hayley Megan French](#) is an early-career artist, based in Parramatta, Sydney. Her work is underpinned by the exploration of the idea of landscape: how this constructs, informs and continually redefines an understanding of ourselves. Recent solo exhibitions include *Horizons present and unseen*, Broken Hill Regional Gallery (2017), and *The Red House*, Penrith Regional Gallery (2016). French was a finalist in the 2018 Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize, nominated by established artist Tim Johnson. She has been awarded several artist residencies in Australia and in 2015 was the recipient of a Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship.

French also maintains a collaborative practice with Carla Liesch, and her writing has been published in *Art Collector* magazine and *Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts* journal. In 2017 French was professionally mentored by the Director of Penrith Regional Gallery, Dr Lee-Anne Hall, through the process of co-curating *Landing Points: Race, Place and Identity* (2017-2018). Upcoming projects include the touring exhibition *Legacy: Reflections on Mabo*, which launches in 2019 and is co-curated by Gail Mabo and Jonathan McBurnie. French's work is held in the collection of Artbank Australia and private collections in Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

*Against the sky* is French's third solo exhibition at Galerie pompom.