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Gosford Regional Gallery & Edogawa Commemorative Garden

36 Webb Street, East Gosford, New South Wales, 2250

www.gosfordregionalgallery.com

gallery@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

02 4304 7550

Open 9:30am - 4pm daily

The gallery is open all year round with the exception of Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Good Friday.



Gosford
Regional
Gallery



Cover image: Gary Shinfield *Abrasion 3* 2022, courtesy of the artist, photo credit Irena Conomos

Porous

GARY SHINFIELD



Gary Shinfield's Porous exhibition

“*There is a crack,
a crack in everything*

*That's how the
light gets in*”

Leonard Cohen, Anthem (1992)



Gary Shinfield *Origin 2* 2023, courtesy of the artist

Gary Shinfield is one of Sydney's most admired, senior artist printmakers for whom the sense of place is central to his art practice. Technically, he is a very accomplished artist, but one who makes artwork that does not exude a sense of technical virtuosity. In the present body of work on display at this exhibition, he combines relief and intaglio printmaking techniques with painting, drawing and staining and employs handmade papers from Japan, Korea, China and Thailand as well as tapa cloth. However, the sophistication of techniques and the variety in materials results in works where the shapes, lines and marks, as well as veils of colour, appear as if breathed onto the surface of the paper and vibrate with energy.

'Porous', the title of Shinfield's exhibition at the Gosford Regional Gallery, may be interpreted on a number of different levels. On one level, it may be seen as a metaphor for the artist's primary method of work – he is a person for whom the experience of the world seems to flow through him like water passing through a net with certain elements caught and retained. These elements serve as the building blocks from which he will structure his compositions. Porous may also have a more specific, technical meaning, of minute spaces or holes in rocks and stones through which water or air may pass. The rocky outcrops, where the artist lives on the Central Coast of New South Wales, is dominated by waterways, the Hawkesbury estuary, Brisbane Water and the Pacific Ocean, where the water finds the tiny cracks in the rocks and stones and starts to sculpt them. The shapes created may be startling and unexpected and form a diary of the creation of the landscape.



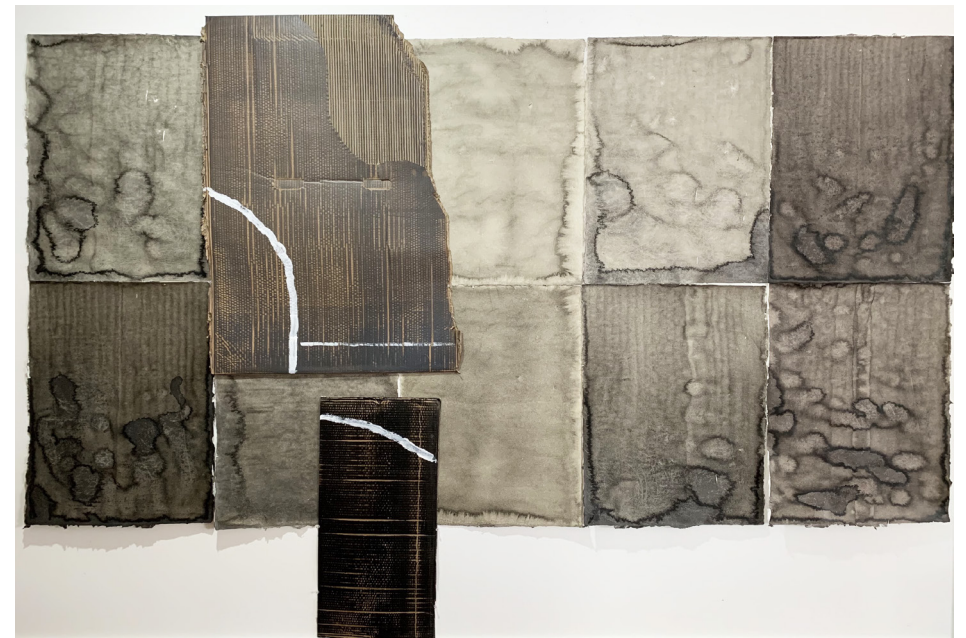
Gary Shinfield *Folding 2* 2023, courtesy of the artist



Gary Shinfield *Porous 1* 2025, courtesy of the artist

Shinfield enjoys building an artwork out of smaller elements so that we enjoy both a monumental sensation of a whole, as well as the minutia of the individual elements. In some ways, this may also be seen as a metaphor for the Australian landscape, where the overall impression may appear monotonous and lacking in picturesque aspects that we associate with European landscape art, but when examined in detail, in the Australian landscape there is a richness and preciousness. When encountering a monumental panel, such as *Porous 1*, 2025, measuring about one-and-a-half metres by over three metres, we simultaneously experience something that is huge and awe-inspiring, yet, on closer inspection, it breaks down into small closely observed composite elements. In some ways it echoes the viewing experience in nature itself, where we can enjoy a monumental beauty and yet be aware of the preciousness of its many component elements. In *Porous 3*, 2025, textured panels add to the overall symphony of elements. These works may have had their origins in the landscapes of Woy Woy Bay but have grown into a much more universal statement concerning flux, where that which is solid seems to melt into fluid masses, while the flowing masses of water gain a monumentality and materiality.

The mood and appearance of the *Shelter* series, 2024, that was inspired by the Grampians (Gariwerd) and its ancient rock art, is quite different. Shinfield, on visiting a sacred site with ancient rock art, on the spot, while the impressions were fresh, painted on his woodblocks and scraped into the lino-blocks covered with wax. These were later etched and carved in the studio. The designs were printed on to tapa cloth and at times manipulated with wax crayon. Again, these are monumental composite works that suggest a certain palimpsest with layers hinting at antiquity and the veils of mystery. It is a characteristic of this artist's working method to take the initial impressions on the spot, like a witness to the primary experience, and then these are subsequently interpreted and reinforced in the studio. The finished work rarely loses the sense of excitement of the original encounter.



Gary Shinfield *Porous 3* 2025, courtesy of the artist

For the *Remnants* series, 2024, Shinfield visited Hill End, a mining village from the 1870s gold rushes in inland New South Wales near Bathurst, a site that was subsequently rediscovered as an artists' retreat in the early 20th century. What fascinated him here was the layering of history. On discovering, in the bush, a dumped chest of drawers, he reappropriated some of the wooden panels that he carved on the spot and that served as woodblocks that became a foundation for this series of work. Shinfield not infrequently appears in the role of artist as bricoleur, and his process of improvisation seems to confirm a certain authenticity to the work, as if elements of the local environment are creating something of a self-portrait. The Remnants artwork resembles the layering of impressions of the mining equipment with sombre geometric shapes that are at times eroded with organic elements.

In the *Origin* and *Folding* series, 2023, the artist was drawn to the optical qualities of water – as he stared into the water from the edge of jetties. Sea water has the remarkable quality of concealing, revealing and reflecting realities and Shinfield was drawn to all of these properties, all at the same time, to create busy, kinetic compositions that seem to create their own mystical calligraphy. Shinfield constantly surrenders to the surrounding sense of place, and it is this that finds expression in his art.

Water, the bush and the layering of impressions are also a key to the *Accretion* and *Abrasion* series, 2022, where there is a collage-like surface with an overlapping tapestry of observations, thoughts and musing. These are very much visual diaries made by an artist who walks on a favourite bush track close to where he lives and where he observes angophora trees, sandstone escarpments and glimpses of water through a screen of trees. He sometimes provides written notes to guide the viewer on his process of work and the techniques with which he engages, but the ultimate alchemy of the work and the aspect of enchantment, creates a new reality that each viewer will decode within their own frame of reference. It appears that frequently, Shinfield embraces chance in his art making with a certain randomness in the selection of sequence of woodblocks or colours within a given composition. When art is caught unawares, it possesses the quality of authenticity.

He recently noted concerning the work included in the *Porous* exhibition: “With the making of these images, I move towards being present with the work, and explore the unknown potential of each moment, rather than relying on planned directions. By giving into the moment, themes reveal themselves in unexpected ways. Using multiple sheets of paper to build a composite image has also been part of working methods – it recreates an experience of immersion in nature, in visual form.”

Shinfield is a veteran artist printmaker who studied art and design in Sydney, Tokyo and Canberra; taught for many years; has been the recipient of numerous awards and residencies and has exhibited widely nationally and internationally over the past four decades. He is represented in scores of public art collections, including the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

‘Porous’ draws on Shinfield’s work from the past four years and demonstrates a richness, diversity and a fecundity of artistic strategies and unexpected inventions. It is a memorable show that asserts the artist’s standing as a nationally significant contemporary artist.

**Emeritus Professor Sasha Grishin AM,
FAHA,**
Australian National University
January 2026



Gary Shinfield *Shelter 2* 2024,
courtesy of the artist



Gary Shinfield *Remnants Variation 1* 2024, courtesy of the artist