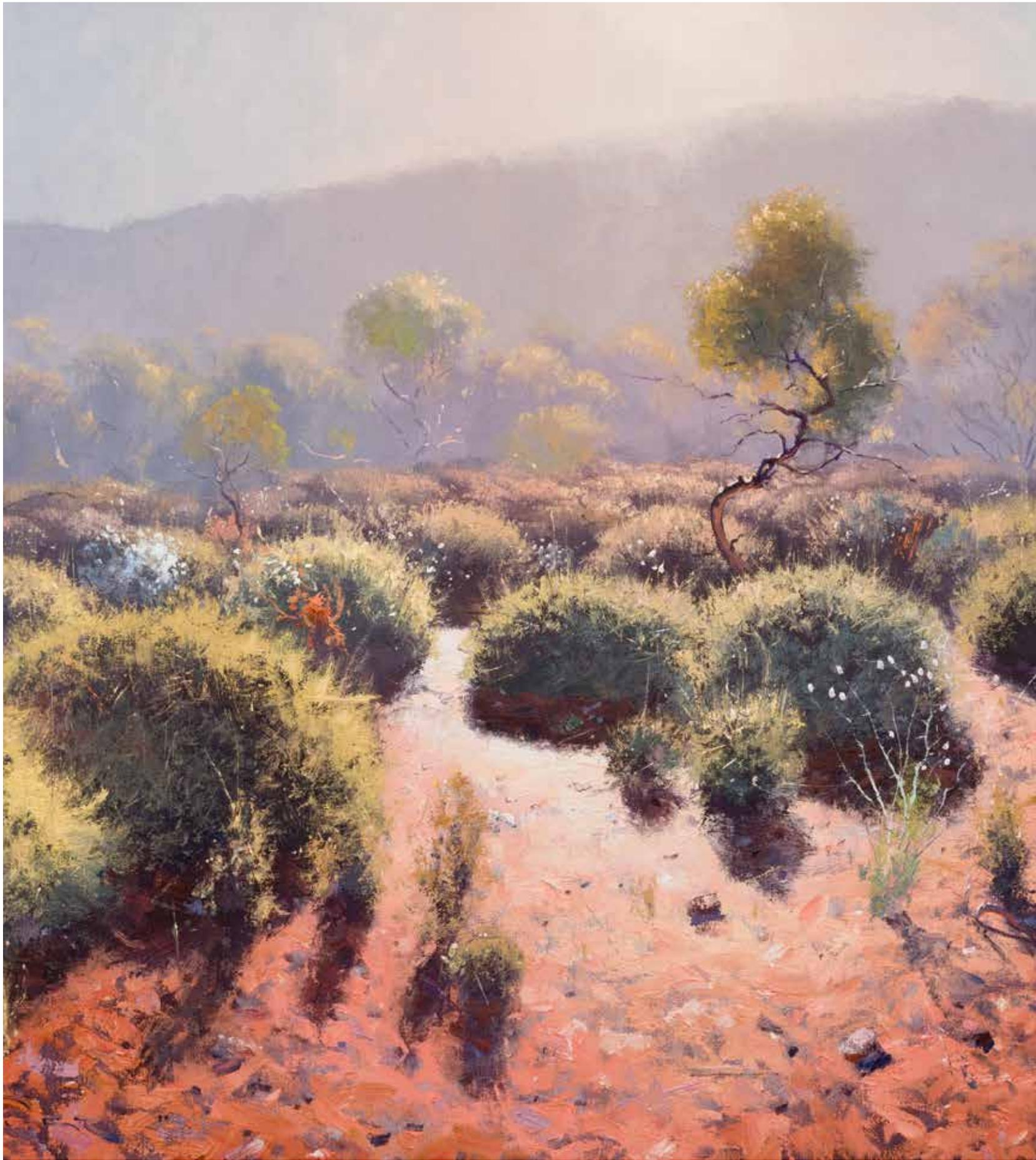


## WARWICK FULLER 'CHASING THE LIGHT'

**FOR A HIGH PROFILE ARTIST** with a large following of admirers and collectors (including HRH The Prince of Wales who holds fourteen works), it is surprising that Kanimbla-based artist Warwick Fuller's next scheduled exhibition will be his first in a public regional gallery.

This particular gallery is very important to Fuller, who fought hard with many other Western Sydney artists and supporters of the arts to fulfil the dream of Margo Lewers to turn the Lewers family home at Emu Plains into a public art

Above: Dance of Light, Lake Lyell 2015, oil on canvas 90 x 120cm.  
Private Collection, copyright the artist, photo Silversalt





gallery. This year is the fortieth anniversary of their hard won success and very appropriately Warwick Fuller's light-filled works were chosen to feature in the main gallery.

It now seems extraordinary that it required such a fight to achieve this gallery. And it is hard to imagine that it was a time when there was no public art gallery in Western Sydney or the Blue Mountains and it really was a battle to persuade council and state government that they should give such a generous gift their support, including financial support. It would not have happened without Fuller and the multitude of community voices demanding the right to culture in their local area. It was a huge victory and yes it should be described as a battle and this as a victory for local artists and activists and it completely changed the culture of Western Sydney.

Warwick Fuller had studied painting with Kevin Oxley and was just gaining success as an artist and in 1978 he headed the Friends of the Lewers in the campaign for the gallery. Before her death in 1978 Margo Lewers had offered her property, buildings, heritage garden and artworks to Penrith City Council – simply as a gift, with no grandiose scheme for a regional public gallery.

Initially it was turned down. It was only later when the offer was renewed by Margo and Gerald's daughters, Darani Lewers and Tanya Crothers that it was finally accepted and the financial resources were raised.

Present events have upset the gallery's planned schedule although they may go ahead in the future. It has been the intention of the gallery to celebrate with a suite of exhibitions recalling the fight for its establishment. Warwick Fuller was founding President of the Friends of Penrith Regional Gallery, which was then called simply The Lewers and an exhibition, 'Chasing the Light', has been planned for the main gallery.

'Art Lives Here' is planned to run in Ancher House, showing works from the gallery's permanent Collection which illustrate the creative partnership between Margo and Gerald Lewers and the influence this had on other artists, including Frank Hinder and Sonia Farley.

In Lewers House, an exhibition entitled 'Circle of Friends' is planned of works purchased by the Friends, among them works of those who were friends and visitors to the Lewers property, including Lyndon Dadswell, Elwyn Lynn, Henry Salkauskas, Bim Hilder, Stanislaus Rapotec and Robert Klippel.

Spinifex in Morning Light, Tom Price 2011, oil on canvas, Courtesy the Rosemary and Andrew Penman Collection, copyright the artist, photo Silversalt

To return to 'Chasing the Light', Warwick Fuller has three times been invited by HRH The Prince of Wales to be his official Australian tour artist, an intriguing role which was initiated by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on his Australian tours.

Fuller has had over sixty solo exhibitions in Australia and internationally (a London show is scheduled for the near future) and regularly shows at the Lost Bear Gallery in Katoomba. He is a Fellow of the Royal Art Society of NSW. He takes workshops occasionally and features in three instructional DVDs as well as a documentary entitled 'Fuller's Earth' which follows the artist on a four-day painting trip along The Bridle Trail near Hill End, and includes campfire discussions about his art, family and influences. The ABC's 'Landline' program recently broadcast a profile.

While researching, I was entertained by the notion that fuller's earth, as one online supplier explains, 'is used by professionals in the film industry to make costumes look dusty and realistic..... Nothing else works like fuller's earth for getting into the cracks and seams of your garment for that authentic beat-to-hell, desert-aged look.' Working, Fuller wears the distinctive wide-brimmed high-crowned hat of the outdoors man. He's likely to have a cattle dog as

his companion and he is well-dressed and goodlooking—his hair when long is smoothly tied back or, as at present, well cropped and showing an earring. There's not a trace of fuller's earth to be found here, and certainly no beat-to-hell desert aging! Warwick Fuller's earth is altogether something else and it is more likely to be an occasional insect that adds authenticity to the work of this plein air painter:

Fuller is the quintessential Australian landscape painter and his majestic subjects on large canvases complete this image. He has a dedicated following for whom his distinctive portrayal of our wide brown land is evocative and uplifting. For this work he needs to experience the landscape physically and to this end he travels regularly. His mantra - 'chasing the light'- is also the title of the proposed Lewers exhibition, and he finds inspiration and renewal in experimenting with different techniques and resolving challenges.

**Carolynne Skinner**

**For information on the rescheduling of Warwick Fuller's 'Chasing the Light' exhibition, contact Penrith Regional Gallery and The Lewers Bequest, Emu Plains, 80 paintings spanning over 40 years. Fuller exhibits regularly at Lost Bear Gallery, Katoomba.**

The Lewers story was told in two major articles by Julian Leatherdale in issues 3 and 4 of Oz Arts magazine, entitled Living on the Frontier – Four Generations of the Lewers Family.

Enduring Gum, Silvertown 2019, oil on canvas 100 x 120cm, Private Collection, copyright the artist, photo Silversalt

