

AGNETA EKHOLM
Sojourn
29 April - 17 May 2025

Sojourn
Catalogue essay by Phe Luxford, 2025

There is an invitation embedded in the work of Agneta Ekholm – a beckoning to linger, to dispense with the relentless cadence of contemporary life and surrender to the quiet rhythm of her canvases. In her latest solo exhibition, *Sojourn*, Ekholm evokes a passage, both fleeting and profound, through shifting forms and immersive depths. The title itself suggests a temporary pause, an interlude rich with introspection. These new paintings are not simply to be seen; they are to be experienced.

In an age of relentless distraction, Ekholm's work champions the ethos of slow art – a movement that resists the accelerated consumption of imagery in favour of deeper engagement. To stand before these works is to abandon the imperative for instant comprehension. Instead, one must attune to their quiet pulse, allowing the eye to wander through shifting strata of colour and tone. These paintings possess a tempo of their own, a rhythm shaped by the deliberate, slow gestures of the artist's hand. Through the controlled yet organic flow of pigment, Ekholm crafts spaces that invite contemplation, asking us to inhabit the moment fully, without haste.

Her practice sits confidently within the century-long lineage of abstraction, yet it resists easy categorisation. While rooted in a visual language of crisp, almost hard-edged abstraction, her compositions soften that rigidity, harnessing movement without descending into chaos. There is no relinquishing of control here – each fluid sweep of pigment is measured, each form carefully considered.

This interplay between spontaneity and restraint echoes the works of the modernist masters of abstraction, where visual language is shaped not by direct representation but through attunement to the possible dynamic tension within form itself. The light refractions and shadows of László Moholy-Nagy's abstract film *Lightplay: Black-White-Gray* (1923) comes to mind, as does the influence of Georgia O'Keeffe – not in subject matter, but in approach. As O'Keeffe distilled the essence of an observed moment through a lens of abstraction, so too does Ekholm distil the sensation of a mediated state, creating images that are not of any 'thing' but speak of the flow state itself.

Similarities can also be found in the work of contemporary Australian artist Marion Borgelt, whose elliptic, harmonious and always active forms evoke feelings of universal contemplation. Like Borgelt's work, Ekholm employs abstraction not as a retreat from observation but as a means of distilling experience into something elemental.

Ekholm's surfaces unfold in layers, revealing a sense of interiority that oscillates between presence and absence, light and shadow. Deep, cavernous blues bleed into eggshell whites, punctuated by fleeting flashes of rich yellow, orange, or green – vibrant inclusions that charge her images with emotional intensity, creating momentary fissures in the otherwise calm transitions of tone.

These compositions suggest a world beyond their frames, an expansiveness that extends into unseen dimensions. They hover at the threshold of recognition, tempting the viewer to read a semblance of landscape – perhaps the unfathomable depths of the ocean or the cosmic vastness of space. Such literal interpretations, while incomplete, do not confine or limit the work's power but rather amplify its mystery, tethering it to something both tangible and ineffable.

To sojourn necessitates prior movement, but also involves a moment of intentional pause. Ekholm's paintings are way-points in that journey, spaces where time bends and deepens. They remind us that meaning is not found in speed or efficiency, but in the willingness to stay, to observe, to feel. In this stillness, we find the eternal reflected.