

# 'Souvenirs for the Future'

## Julia Champtaloup artist statement

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We have many souvenirs of the past, reminders of extinct species and disappearing forests on museum walls. We cherish postcards as tokens of lost landscapes and natural wonders. Yet we seem to have forgotten our role as chroniclers of nature and stewards of the land.

Wandering in wild and natural places, I think about sharing my visual observations as records that also tell stories. The visual record becomes a way of seeing, a mild contemplation that I am eager to share. Stories emerge that stir a deeper engagement with what lies beneath and near. Walking and photographing become forms of documenting our place in nature, our small findings that bring pleasure.

It takes time and is often a difficult journey to see a work of nature these days. Contemporary life mostly lacks connection with a past, which included extended walks in nature and immersions in the natural elements. We know there are ways of seeing nature without distractions that entail discipline and physically slowing down; we just need reminders. Perhaps going slow is a requirement for pleasure. My images are an encouragement to slow down, to wander and observe.

Walking in nature, I am reminded of how hopeful it is. Landscape is as encouraging as we are, regenerating and reviving. I am also hopeful that we can live in several landscapes at once, the landscape of hope and memory and one of immediate and intimate pleasure with nature.

As a young child in upstate New York, Julia Champtaloup started digging around in the garden with her grandmother Edith on land she inherited from her father, a Hudson Valley fruit-farming pioneer born in 1819. Her grandmother's care for the land was instructive and provided numerous opportunities for a budding artist and environmentalist. Observations abounded throughout the seasons, with days spent tending to border gardens, learning about plant cycles, weeding and adding to the compost heap.

Wandering in the nearby woods with a camera also became a favourite pastime. An old Leica introduced Julia to the basics of light and film photography. She graduated to a high school darkroom photography and later moved on to study photography at university and then worked as a photographic studio assistant in 1980s New York. She has been living in Sydney, Australia since 2000.

Since then Julia has never stopped observing with her camera – her images brought to everyday life through collage, prints, and via Instagram. She has been actively engaged in many environmental projects and movements and recently supported Art for The Wilderness art auction (2019) and the *2040* film and associated impact campaign. In 2018, she held her first solo exhibition at Superlocal Studio, Sydney. She is also an active beekeeper of both native bees (Australia) and European honey bees.