

Indigo O'Rourke
Every Ten Minutes

You didn't come into this world. You came out of it, like a wave from the ocean. You are not a stranger here — Alan Watts

Close to 65,000 Australians attempt suicide each year. That's more than one person every ten minutes. Suicide is the biggest killer of Australians up to the age of forty, making it the greatest public health risk of our time.

The five expansive waterscapes that comprise *Every Ten Minutes* by Indigo O'Rourke brood over the enormity of this public health epidemic. Each waterscape is from the vantage point of a bridge or cliff top where Indigo sat for a while to contemplate the last sight a person beholds before ending their life.

Indigo visited eight sites in South Eastern Australia to make sketches, photos and field notes. This pool of raw material inspired the *Every Ten Minutes* series. This series continues Indigo's earlier work on waterscape including the *Pale Blue Dot*.

From one million miles away our planet resembles a pale blue dot. Scientist Arthur C Clarke once said, "How inappropriate to call this planet Earth when it is quite clearly Ocean". Since time immemorial we have been drawn to the ocean. It captivates, it overpowers, it immerses.

Water is something that is deeply innate and familiar to us. We spend our first nine months immersed in a watery womb. When we are born, our body is about 78 per cent water. The mineral composition of the water in our cells is comparable to sea minerals. The human body is the same density of water, allowing bodies to float. "The moment water encloses me, I am gratefully alone," writes John Malone.

This body of work meditates on the lonely moment of passing. Indigo's art combines the concept of site, presence and vanishing. Human life is deliberately and startlingly absent in this artistic reflection on the human condition. The viewer is called to imagine what is lost.

Indigo's drawings touch on the realm of what is passing and momentary. Yet her chosen medium – ink – stubbornly refuses to be erased. Her form is enduring and pervasive, much like the legacy of a life lost. Indigo wants the viewer to consider the lasting ripple effects for those touched by suicide.

Oppositional forces and undercurrents are at play. *Every Ten Minutes* seeks to create a push/pull between the heart's desire for longevity and the desire to be at rest.

It was once thought that an open and public dialogue about suicide might embed suicidal thoughts into vulnerable individuals. Experts are now prepared to dispel this myth and test new and contrary approaches.

Acknowledging and talking about suicide may indeed help remove stigmas. The strong negative view around suicide is that a person who takes their life is selfish. Rather, suicide is brought on by great psychological pain, helplessness, and limited choices.

Psychologist and leading expert on suicide Thomas Joiner explains the desire to die by suicide in three parts: an overwhelming feeling that one is a burden on others; thwarted belongingness, meaning the desire to belong thwarted by a strong sense of disconnection; and the capability factor, which is a combination of a gradual desensitisation to pain and an exposure to suicide methods. These three factors, when triggered, are said to bring about the perfect storm.

“Suicide is still under the rock”, says psychiatrist and thought leader Patrick McGorry. He believes we need to be less fearful about talking about suicide in its most naked and honest form. Openly discussing suicide with vulnerable people could be part of the solution to turning around this health problem.

While suicide prevention requires a groundswell of support from the Australian public, starting the conversation can be difficult. *Every Ten Minutes* seeks to start a naked and honest conversation about the beauty of human life and the destructiveness of its taking for those left behind.

Text by Gabrielle Lauder. 2016.