

ALANNAH ROBINS



The shipwreck has long since been the subject of fascination for artists. In spite of their tragedy, they are resonant of stories of pirate ships and journeys undertaken with expectations, started but never completed, over too soon. That which lies beneath the surface of the water is in the realms of the unknown and unseen, romantic.

For me, some of that fascination has been in that this supposed vessel no longer rises and falls with the incoming and ebbing tide. Having lost its capacity to float, it sits static, either at the bottom of the ocean or on the shoreline, being daily filled and daily emptied. That barrier, which keeps the water out, has become porous, dysfunctional. Gradually and eventually, the shipwreck becomes part of the ocean floor or seascape.

Today the image of the shipwreck has taken on whole new meaning, as has even the clearest, cleanest image of a calm water surface. In their thousands, people are undertaking the perilous journeys of the sea crossing. Some are fleeing war, famine or persecution, others are simply seeking a better life. For too many, this journey ends in a watery grave. The calm surface of the Mediterranean only belies the gruesome death of those victims of drowning.

So in a world where social media has softened cultural barriers and invites mobility, our hardened borders and boundaries leave many stranded, isolated. In these paintings, I have explored notions of porosity. I imagine the waters flooding in through the holes in the sides of the ship, and filling the entire vessel.

Shipwreck I
Oil on canvas
50 x 50 cm