

23 Degrees



Peter Hudson
6 days at Mornington Peninsula #3 2016
Oil on board, 25.5 x 30.5 cm

Considerations of place and belonging; Australia and the idea of ‘landscape’

Perceptions of the Australian landscape have evolved and changed over time. The genre of landscape has continued to offer a site where attitudes can be pulled out, processed, and examined. The roles of landscape representation are various and include its capacity to offer a reflection on the beauty of nature, as a manifestation of an ideal, and as a tool to record an experience of a time and a place. Even more importantly, it is also an arena where identities are forged and emotional undercurrents and spiritual connections are explored. This aspect is especially relevant in terms of the depiction of landscapes within Australia.



David Jones

Old Horse Glory (CTP 1) 2016

A la poupee, intaglio zinc plate etching on Hahnemuhle 300gsm Off-white rag paper, in Charbonnel and Grahic Chemicals & Ink Co. Ink, 81 x 98cm

The first images of this land through European eyes, although intended as faithfully accurate recordings of time and place, are inevitably imbued with both the personalities of the artist and the societal attitudes and circumstances that led to their production. The works of Australia's early colonial painters bear witness to the grappling of old world sensibilities with a land that is strange and fascinating; their peopled landscapes reinforce the settler's position as an outsider in a foreign land. Many of these works reflect a recurring trope in the history of Australian art that lingers to this day - the suggestion of a great unknown emptiness into which one can either disappear, or perhaps survive and emerge from, worn and transformed.

Later in the 1800s the focus shifted to depictions of the settled, and to some degree, 'tamed' landscape. The effects of this were evident in damaged and eroded creek banks as trees were cleared and livestock introduced – a landscape where feral animals disturbed the delicate balance that had long been maintained through the careful land management of the original custodians. In such works palettes of straw yellows and dusty oranges reflect the dry and desiccated landscape that resulted



Euan Macleod

Haasts Bluff (diptych) 2013

Oil on canvas, 56 x 76cm (each-panel)



Ross Booker

Tempe Downs (Diptych) 2016, Ink and sand on drafting film, 35 x 140cm each



Stephen Nothing

View from the Artist's Studio with lost cockatiel 2016

Oil on board, 40 x 40cm

from the great droughts at the end of that century, the severity of which deeply shocked immigrants from more temperate climes. Many pieces from this period also exhibit a growing ability to capture the intensely bright light typical of Australia.

For much of the twentieth century the Australian landscape was romanticized as a new nation sought emblems on which to fix its newly forged sense of identity, in this role it was used as a staging place for working out internal dramas and creating new mythologies. Although our attitudes and understandings have changed significantly, the history of Australian landscape representation continues to inform both artists and their audiences.

Each of the artists in this group exhibition bring very personal interpretations and responses to the landscape. As national debates continue to reassess the parameters of our position in time, space and history, direct responses like these will continue to inform our ongoing dialogue about our relationship to place. Sally Molloy writes about the yearning for a sense of belonging and connection with the land that is so often also involved with an acute sense of dislocation. The works of Wayne Talbot and Ron McBurnie echo this sentiment: their search for connections and understanding through immersion and experience is also a key aspect of Ross Booker's methodology. Through these wordless exchanges, in images that consciously bypass the naming rituals that separate and distinguish us from the landscape, these artists unravel the structures that hold us at arm's length from direct experiences with country.



James Watts, *The Warner Estate 1 & 2* 2016

Oil on board, 130 x 108cm



A different perspective on relationships to the land is offered by Henry Noordenburg's works. These are studies of a Dutch landscape, one that has been reclaimed from the sea by human hands. His investigations into a traumatic history indicate the complexities of our interactions with the landscape as we play our dramas out upon it. The submerging and uncovering of the land by floodwaters during World War Two provide a metaphor for the obfuscating influences of unspoken histories that, over time, expose traces of both the real and the imagined. Although these stories relate to a European landscape, they are carried within migrant hearts and minds and in turn are overlaid onto the Australian landscape.



Clare Purser
The Way to Maleny 2015
Oil & mixed media on canvas, 91 x 91cm

Kym Barrett, quoting fellow landscape artist John Wolsley, reminds us of how the constancy of nature's 'great rhythms and flows' remain, despite the momentous physical and psychological shifts wrought by post-colonial reconsiderations of the landscape on our personal points of view.

Tensions between the primeval constancy of life and the altered, humanised landscape are reflected in the shared dialogue that runs through this exhibition. These are evident in the way Nick Drake's neon-soaked city scene contrasts with the elemental interactions of stone and water in the works of Jonathan McBurnie and Peter Hudson. Likewise, Stephen Nothling's static, carefully composed suburban streetscapes are interrupted by flashes of birdlife that refuse to conform to order. Even in this media-saturated contemporary world, landscape continues to offer a powerful medium through which we articulate both the emotional depths of our lives and the countless, changing rhythms that continue to play out across its surface.

Alicia Lane 2016

ISBN: 978-0-9752158-7-6

The '23 Degrees' exhibition exhibition dates are 26th July ~ 27th August 2016

Thank you to the following representative galleries:
Heiser Gallery (Ian Smith), grahame galleries + editions (Ron McBurnie)
and Victor Mace Fine Art Gallery (Euan Mcleod)

Woolloongabba Art Gallery

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