

ARTIST PROFILE



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A Botanical World



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Ian Grant

MY EXHIBITION WITH Tim Olsen Gallery develops the imaging of land and sky that has been a focus for me for the past 15 years. The broad source for this imagery comes from my experiences in central New South Wales, to where I often travel and where I am always an outsider, a visitor. It is my encounter there with distance, stillness and silence that I find memorable, and the imaging of this experience has propelled much of my recent painting.

The works in the exhibition follow related themes, each concerned with this imaging of experience through sky and land patterning and illusionary space. One theme involves low-horizon earth-sky viewpoints, another employs land-dominant patterning with higher horizons, and a series of works on paper shows soft-focus images of single trees and foliage. In all these works I have manipulated colour a bit, but not too much. Colours are still readily associated with land and sky in the understood sense, although they also exist as components within these artworks that I hope will be responded to as almost abstractions, as well as through association with what they represent.

In some ways, what I try to achieve in my works has more parallels with minimalist-oriented abstraction than with traditional landscape made from a single observation point. The problem for any artist is how to translate multi-sensory experience into visual form – in my case into a painting.

The practice of painting has had many deaths and rebirths as newer technologies present their possibilities, particularly as we move away from a paradigm of linear history through Postmodernism to a kind of Neo Baroque, and it still seems in good health. So I use painting in full acknowledgment of its baggage, its diversity and its potential.

Many years ago I found myself in denial of my response to works by the likes of Vermeer, Friedrich or even Gerhard Richter's landscapes. I told myself I shouldn't respond so positively to what was not seen as cutting edge, but I have long been happy to move across chronology, media and culture for what I seek to experience and work with.

For some time I have chosen to work with a form of representation which is precise, but which makes reference to movement, transience and photographic imaging in its soft focusing and in its sense of almost ambient snapshot composition. This compositional ambience is, of course, very carefully constructed from a combination of direct observation and considered distillation of record and memory.

'Ambient' has sometimes been used in describing my works although I have tended to use the term with caution because of its connection with music and the perception of ambient music as sometimes the equivalent of elevator music. But music from the likes of French composer Eric Satie, American composer Philip Glass or Britain's Brian Eno is not intended just for elevators – or even airports in Eno's case. Satie, an aspiring Dadaist and an influence for Eno's earliest ambient works, often expressed the intention that his music should provide reward for a tuning in on the part of the listener as well as positioning itself as an almost off-hand background presence. His pieces were composed to work as – but to be more than – a pleasant backgrounding.

This notion of layering has parallels with what I hope may be experienced in my paintings. I try to make works that can offer layers of experience – from an immediate sense of familiarity and broad recognition, through to a more abstracted

and contemplative experience. They must be convincing enough to be accepted as a reality, often a constructed reality, and yet not be subservient to demands for particular site recognition. I have never been concerned with the accurate depiction of specific sites, either in my own works or in the works of others. I have always assumed that the sensory experiencing of a site, its scrutiny, or its notation for memory-based manipulation was enough to inform and generate an artwork – and that the artwork then became an autonomous reality. Almost all of the landscape paintings that have had most impact on me have been those of sites that I have never visited, of sites that I have never directly experienced.

Although we have come through a prolonged period of questioning and radical change in both the nature of art itself and in its social context, much of my most satisfying and memorable experience with artworks has come from an almost silent, slow form of engagement. Although I'm sometimes amused, I'm no longer shocked, challenged or confronted by artworks and I don't seek these qualities in my paintings. I try to make paintings which are impactful enough to attract and engage, then seductive enough to explore. ■

Ian Grant is represented by **Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney**.
www.timolsengallery.com

EXHIBITION
New Paintings
8 to 26 Aug
Tim Olsen Gallery Annex

01 **Dark Escarpment**, 2010–11, acrylic on linen, 137 x 137cm
02 **Three Trees**, 2011–12, acrylic on linen, 91 x 167cm
03 **Untitled**, 2012, acrylic on linen, 91 x 91cm
04 **Untitled**, 2012, acrylic on linen, 91 x 91cm
Courtesy the artist and Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney
Photography: Michel Brouet



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