

# Landscape as Knowledge

25 February to 8 April 2017





It is with great pleasure that we present *Landscape as Knowledge*, an evocative series of works from the collection of Geoffrey Hassall. We are delighted that the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery is a venue that gives his private passion a public face.

Through this extraordinary collection Geoffrey reveals an understanding that art enriches and adds meaning to our lives. We acknowledge Geoffrey's philanthropic support of Australia's visual culture, and of artists and galleries.

Curator Adrian Gebers has selected the landscape as the thematic connection for the works in this show. Landscape resonates strongly with the rural nature of Geoffrey's business interests and perhaps reflects the knowledge and understanding of the places he visits and subsequently identifies in the works of the artists he collects.

We offer thanks to Geoffrey Hassall for this opportunity to spend time with these works.

Mary Faith,  
Director Grace Cossington Smith Gallery,  
February 2017

Front cover art works

**top:** Euan Macleod, Barrupu Yunupingu, Reg Mombassa

**bottom:** Freddie Timms, Paul Selwood



# Landscape as Knowledge

## 25 February to 8 April 2017

Sculpture and painting drawn from the private collection of Geoffrey Hassall.

Curated by Adrian Gebers this exhibition surveys Australian art through the lens of the collector.

### Works by:

Sharon Adamson

Maringka Baker

Goody Barret

Peter Booth

James Cant

Pepai Carroll

Rosalie Gascoigne

James Gleeson

Fiona Hall

Steve Harrison

Matt Huttleston

Gordon Ingkatji

Tjampawa Kawiny

Richard Larter

Euan Macleod

Djambawa Marawili

John Mawurndjul

Jon Molvig

Sally Mulda

Ivan Namirrkki

Sidney Nolan

Reg Mombassa

Paul Selwood

Freddie Timms

George Tjungurrayi

Peter Tyndall

Daniel Walbidi

Ken Whisson

Barrupu Yunupingu

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## FROM THE CURATOR

Painting serves both as a record of how the landscape has been viewed in the past as well as playing an active role in shaping how it is viewed in the present. It describes the relationships between a place and its people over time and indicates the knowledge of the land that is held by the artist.

The Hassall collection, on view here through a small collection of works, surveys the shifts and changes in relationships from early modernists to present day artists and includes both non-indigenous and indigenous painting, ceramics and sculpture. Together the works present a comprehensive perspective of Australian art over the past 50 years, creating a knowledge of Australia created through the eyes of its artists.

## MYTH AND LAND

The landscape is a mythological space. It is the arena for dreams and the background to memories. Painting, like dreaming, allows for the confusion of reality as disparate ideas and objects can be combined to form their own reality. We are shaped by the landscapes we inhabit, and this occurs both in reality and in our minds.

James Gleeson's surrealism is key here, introducing us to an unfamiliar landscape where the figures and forms of his imagination are combined to form a scene that has elements we recognise in a world that we don't. Human figures, initially prominent in his paintings, become a part of them. Surrealism reflected the attitudes of its practitioners, affected by the horrors of World War II and the changing face of the earth.

Peter Tyndall is focused on both how we see objects and how we see ourselves looking at those objects. Using his motif of the square canvas suspended by two strings, upturning it, using it as a stand in for houses, Tyndall shows us that the landscape exists just as much in our minds as in reality. The work *detail/A Person Looks at a Work of Art/Someone Looks at Something* (1984), suggests this capacity for us to both project onto the landscape, and for the landscape to affect us in return. We both impose our conditions onto the landscape, physically through our constructions and mentally through our imaginings. The landscape in return creeps into our imagination. We are both continually being shaped by, and shaping, our landscape.

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Euan Macleod builds on this, seeing his self as a part of the landscape. Macleod is an accomplished painter of landscapes, often including himself as a figure within it. This figure functions not only as his self, but as a stand in for humanity. He explores our relationship to the landscape, often with it as an overwhelming force. Including objects such as boats and water, or the figure as an artist with palette or easel, shows the figure navigating the landscape. The larger-than-life figure in *Seated Figure, Feet in Harbour* (2005) shows the figure negotiating the relationship, somewhat uncomfortable in how it is situated in it. Macleod, conscious of his position as a painter of the landscape, asks us how we are situated in the landscape.

Freddie Timm's work *Major* (1999) also considers the figure situated within the landscape. Drawing on Nolan's motif of the Ned Kelly masked bush ranger, the figure holding a stick stands in an Aboriginal landscape. Using ochres and a dot painting technique the work encompasses both genres of landscape painting reaching into the mythology and canon that informs both.

Chris O'Doherty aka Reg Mombassa takes a more light-hearted approach to landscape that captures the spirit of the country. His landscapes with anthropomorphic objects, mixed mythological figures and archetypal landmarks form the hybrid of identities that inform Australia. The lone carcass of a burnt-out car in a burnt-out landscape is as much of our identity as is the barbecue-worshipping suburban dweller, fighting off flies in Sydney.

## THE PROJECTED LANDSCAPE

Landscape has played an important role for all Australians, helping to define how they see the land and themselves. Sidney Nolan's iconic Kelly series has had an enormous influence on the archetypes from which part of the Australian consciousness is founded. Landscape was co-opted and used to reflect the rapid changes in Australia over the 20th century, documenting the rapid progress of modernisation as the towns became cities of the global world.

Ken Whisson creates landscapes from the images that he sees in the media, reversing the flow somewhat to create a landscape informed by what is reported on. The works become a reflection of the events occurring around them. Instead

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of tranquil fields we must confront tanks, warships and cars. On one level this is unrealistic landscape, imagined rather than actually present, but it reflects more and more our present situation. This is the landscape we choose not to see.

Landscape is equally important in Aboriginal cultures, reclaiming and defining a space in which to exist. Painting acts to preserve and pass on knowledge. John Mawurndjul's 2008 bark painting of *Milmilngkan* depicts both a site and a story and, in turn, defines a relationship to the site and country. Near this site the Ngalyod (rainbow serpent) resides under the water. The rainbow serpent has an important position in the creation of all ancestral beings. Ngalyod is the first born of Yingarna, the 'first mother'. Ngalyod protects the sacred sites and is central to the Kulinjku's relationship to the landscape.

Sally Mulda's painting *No Trouble Here?* (2013) is a sadder reflection of the landscape, preserving a moment of history and telling a story about it. Mulda documents in quite simple terms the modern relationship that many communities now have. In simple terms, the painting describes simultaneously the problems within the community as well as the harassment it suffers.

George Tjungurrayi's *Untitled* painting, while quite literally depicting the claypan site of Kirmimalunya, north of Wilkinkarra, contains within it a greater story. The site's significance dates back to ancestral times and in that way is as much a depiction of the culture as it is of the landscape. Tjungurrayi's works also go one step further in creating the atmosphere of the landscape. The all-encompassing canvases transport the viewer somewhere else, and can only be experienced.

On the other hand the paintings of James Cant and Jon Molvig, as literal depictions of the landscape, become significant because of their reflection of the changing attitudes towards the landscape. They understand the significance that the landscape can hold and make efforts towards capturing it. These early paintings celebrate the rich colours of the land and the spiritual effect it can create.

## FULLNESS AND EMPTINESS

The landscape can be seen as harsh and empty, void of life and unforgiving just as easily as it can be seen as full and rich. These views are shaped by experiences of those who experience it and reflected in the works of those who depict it. Sidney


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Nolan's desert and drought paintings show the harsh landscape, void of colour, leaving only the carcasses of the animals that once moved across the area. However, Nolan also sees beauty in the landscape. At the same time that he was painting works of skeletons and carcasses he saw the beauty of the local flora, going on to paint several series of works on desert flowers. His Central Australia works, although focusing on the endless arid landscape reveal the beauty of the Australian outback. The untitled works on glass included in this exhibition focus on the little moments of beauty found in the desert both as portraits of individual flowers but also as abstract views of the landscape.

*Nolan accompanied mail delivery planes across the outback and experienced the landscape from above. Here he becomes a bridge between the tradition of landscape painting from a standard human perspective to one which is more commonly found in Aboriginal painting, the aerial view. No longer is the landscape merely the structures surrounding one but an organised network of trails and cattle tracks, riverbeds and water paths all existing around the features of the landscape. Haven't quite got over the plane trip yet. It seems to me one of the best possible means for seeing and understanding the landscape! Only one aspect it is true but what an aspect. Mountains folding onto plains, the bottoms of dams and rivers, cattle tracks, variations in earth and grass colours, I did not take my nose away from the window the whole journey. Sidney Nolan, 1947*

This approach can be compared with the 2012 work by Daniel Walbidi, Kirriwirri, which describes the landscape around a jila near the Canning Stock route. The work reflects the complex landscape, with saltlakes and sandhills described in the forms of the painting. This aerial cartography is made more remarkable by the fact that Walbidi had never been to this place. The aerial view of the landscape gives everything equal significance. There is no difference between the water hole and the salt lake, all the features are of equal prominence. This also points to a key role of painting in its transference of knowledge. Kirriwirri is the birthplace of Walbidi's father's family and as a natural spring holds significance amongst his and other clan groups.

Tjampawa Katie Kawiny's painting *Kapi tjukula (Rock Hole)* reinforces this point, acting as a map of rock holes where water pools after rains - vital when in the dry season the creeks dry up.



Richard Larter is interesting for his shared focus on portraiture and landscape. His landscapes are explosions of colour, vibrant, with every surface teeming with energy. *City Drive* (1999), turns a potentially dull city view into a wild trip, going through an exercise in colour and form as the brush strokes abstract the landscape into a geometric pattern. The regular repeated shapes of houses lend themselves to the composition.

Fiona Hall's *Burning Bright* series of etchings embodies this idea, seeing all of the life in the landscape. Captured at the cusp between a fire and new life the works go further into giving an insight into the relationship between a land and its people. The works function beyond artworks too, marking the link between nature, culture and tradition.

The ceramic works of Pepai Carroll and Steve Harrison are reflections of the landscape in another way. While Carroll's maintain visual elements that depict landmarks and sites, the works through their medium become reflections of the landscape because of the materials used in their manufacture. The mineral make-up of the clay and glaze that forms their very essence is made manifest in their firing. Harrison goes to lengths to collect local materials and celebrates them through the differences that are achieved in their use as a glaze. There is a beauty in the circularity of using the landscape to describe itself. Carroll gives an insight into the secrets held by the land in the marks painted onto the surface, while Harrison lets the elements of the landscape reveal their own secrets through their firing.

Barrupu Yunupingu's paintings sit between Yolngu sacred painting and Western painting. Until the 2000s, figurative elements were used to disguise the more sacred elements contained within a painting but increasingly these paintings expose the viewer to the vessels that contain the ancestral forces. This work, dealing with fire, not only imagines the flame as a tongue, cutting through artifice with the truth but, in itself, acts as a flame, presenting a truth that links past generations with the present.

Viewed individually these works transport the viewer across the country, from its inner heart to its very edges, depicting all forms of the landscape in all media. However, it is together that these works should be viewed to get a better knowledge of Australia, a country made up of extremes and contradictions that we are only just coming to terms with.

Adrian Gebers, February 2017





# List of Works

## **SHARON ADAMSON**

*Ngayuku - My Country*, 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
198 x 152 cm

## **MARINGKA BAKER**

*Wati kutjara Tjukurpa*, 2009  
acrylic on canvas  
145 x 196 cm

## **GOODY BARRET**

*Nanjariwin (McKenna Springs)*, 1997  
natural earth pigments with acrylic binder on canvas  
91 x 121 cm

## **PETER BOOTH**

*Fabric Man Walking on Hands*, 1980-81  
gouache, charcoal and pastel on paper  
62 x 100 cm

## **JAMES CANT (1911-1982)**

*Landscape, Kurrajong*, 1947  
oil on board  
50 x 72 cm

## **PEPAI CARROLL**

*Inintingka Ila*, 2013  
terracotta  
29 cm dia: 13 cm



**PEPAI CARROLL**

*From Kintore to Papunya, 2013 (above)*

stoneware

33 x 14 x 14 cm

Courtesy the artist and Raft Art Space

**PEPAI CARROLL**

*Ilpili, 2011*

terracotta with slip, sgraffito and

clear glaze

38 x 29 cm

**PEPAI CARROLL**

*Kungkarrangkalpa, 2013*

stoneware

53 x 16 x 16 cm

**ROSALIE GASCOIGNE (1917-1999)**

*Herb Garden*, 1983

mixed media

80 x 100 cm

**JAMES GLEESON (1915-2008)**

*The Cone (Opus 96)*, 1987

oil on canvas

183 x 274 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery Sydney



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## **FIONA HALL**

*Cycads – Ngathu*

*Brachychiton – Nanungguwa*

*Pandanus – Gunga*

*Fan Palm – Dhalpi*

*Casuarina – Mawurraki*

*Mangrove – Wälmu*

2010

etching on paper

plate: 50 x 66 cm

edition: 18/41

suite: Burning Bright Folio

editioned at Basil Hall Editions, Darwin

## **STEVE HARRISON**

*Desire, 2013*

glazed ceramic

9 x 14 x 12.5 cm

## **STEVE HARRISON**

*Romancing This Stone II, 2010*

ceramic

6.4 x 14 x 13.8 cm

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## MATT HUTTLESTONE

Noon, 2009 (below)

acrylic on canvas

100 x 84 cm

Courtesy the artist and Raft Art Space



## GORDON INGKATJI

Wanampi mankur mankurpa kutjara kutjara

Stoneware

43.9 cm dia 14.3 cm

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**TJAMPAWA KAWINY (c1921-2013)**

*Kapi tjukula*

2010

acrylic on canvas

121 x 152 cm

**RICHARD LARTER (1929-2014)**

*City Drive, 1999*

acrylic, gesso and enamel on polycanvas

72 x 58.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery Sydney





**EUAN MACLEOD**

*Seated Figure, Feet in Harbour*, 2005

oil on polycotton

150 x 180 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery Sydney



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## **DJAMBAWA MARAWILI**

*Metamorphosis/Garranjali, 2009*

natural earth pigments with synthetic binder on bark

200 x 74 cm

## **JOHN MAWURNDJUL**

*Milmilngkan Site, 2008*

natural earth pigments on bark

176 x 56 cm

## **JON MOLVIG (1923-1970)**

*Desert Landscape*

acrylic on board

95 x 69.5 cm

## **SALLY MULDA**

*No Trouble Here? Intervention Stories, 2013*

acrylic on linen

150 x 200 cm

## **IVAN NAMIRRKKI**

*Honey Bees, 2002*

natural earth pigments on eucalyptus bark

207.5 x 38 cm

## **IVAN NAMIRRKKI**

*Kudjaldorrd Creek, 2011*

ochres and natural earth pigments with synthetic binder on bark

Overall: 150 x 50 cm

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**SIDNEY NOLAN (1917-1992)**

*Untitled, Desert Flowers, 1949 (four works)*

ink and enamel on glass

42.4 x 37.5 cm (framed)

**SIDNEY NOLAN (1917-1992)**

*The Olgas, Central Australian Landscape, c1950*

watercolour on paper

20.5 x 25.5 cm

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**CHRIS O'DOHERTY aka REG MOMBASSA**

*Barbeque, 2007*

charcoal and coloured pencil on paper

25 x 19.5 cm (paper)

Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery Sydney



**CHRIS O'DOHERTY aka REG MOMBASSA**

*Carbone and Trunks After Fire*, 2009

charcoal and coloured pencil on paper

68 x 51 cm (sheet)

Courtesy the artist and Watters Gallery Sydney



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**PAUL SELWOOD**

*Waterhole*, 2015

painted steel

28 x 50 x 20 cm



**PAUL SELWOOD**

*Road to Hermannsburg*, 2015 (below)

painted steel

14.5 x 123 x 13.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters

Gallery Sydney

**PAUL SELWOOD**

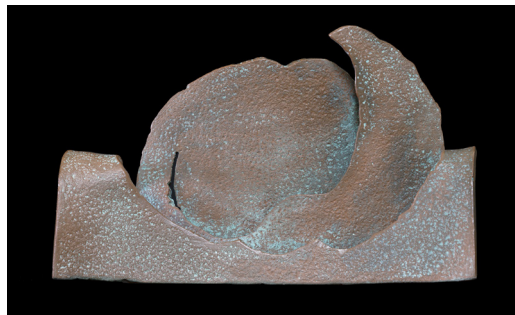
*Spinifex*, 2015

painted steel

15 x 25.5 x 8.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters

Gallery Sydney



**PAUL SELWOOD**

*Ochre Pitts*, 2015

patinated steel

26.5 x 35 x 12 cm

Courtesy the artist and Watters

Gallery Sydney





## **FREDDIE TIMMS**

*Lissadal Homestead (Old Property)*, 1998

natural earth pigments and acrylic binder on

Belgian linen

150 x 150 cm

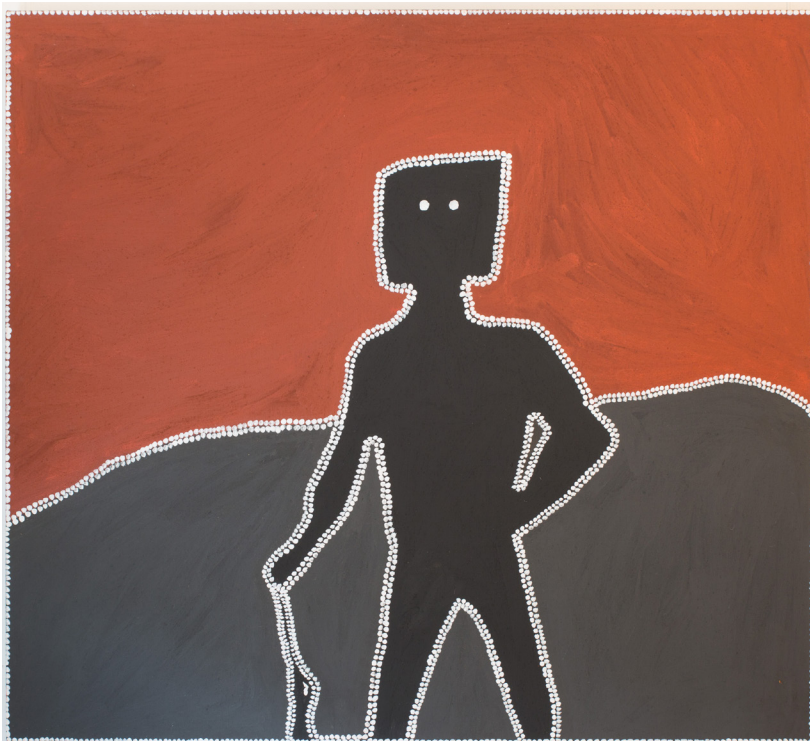
## **FREDDIE TIMMS**

*Major*, 1999

ochres with synthetic binder on canvas

Canvas: 122 x 135 cm

Courtesy the artist and Warmun Arts



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## **GEORGE TJUNGURRAYI**

*Untitled, 2009*

synthetic polymer paint on linen

183 x 244 cm

## **PETER TYNDALL**

*Title: detail/A Person Looks at a Work of Art/Someone*

*Looks at Something, 1984*

Medium: acrylic on canvas

Size: 112 x 122 cm

## **DANIEL WALBIDI**

*Kirriwirri, 2012*

acrylic on linen

150 x 180 cm

## **KEN WHISSON**

*From the newspapers*

*No 5 Toyland, 1998-2003*

oil on Belgian linen

94.5 x 120 cm

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**BARRUPU YUNUPINGU (1948-2012)**

*Untitled (Ancestral Fire), 2010*

natural earth pigments with synthetic binder on bark

140 x 75 cm

Courtesy the artist and Raft Art Space





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Gallery hours Monday to Friday 10 am-5 pm, Saturday 9 am-4 pm FREE ENTRY | Gate 7, 1666 Pacific Highway, Wahroonga  
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