

# Resonating colour like a bell

*Peter Smith: Shadows: Recent Paintings.* Spiral Arm Gallery, 71 Leichhardt Street, Kingston; closes March 1; 12-5pm, Wednesday-Sunday.

**T**HE TERM "Wandjina" refers to a group of ancestral beings in the Kimberley who have control over the past, the present and the future of the land, climate and fertility.

When you actually encounter a rock painting such as the Marnyangarri's *Cuckoo Wandjinas at Donkey Creek*, there is an overwhelming sense of presence. The overlapping layers of drawing create a rich fabric of vision, where

forms seem to emerge from the surface of the living rock.

Peter Smith's new exhibition plays with a similar notion of surfaces, the layers of paint creating a palimpsest through which forms emerge and seem to be held within the tension of the surface. Limiting this painterly experience through disciplined design filtered through vibrant colours and surface textures, makes for a stark simplicity.

For me the strongest part of the exhibition is the group of three yellow paintings, titled *Family One*, *Family Two* and *Family Three*. Smith's use of yellow for

its formal, expressive and associative qualities, is reminiscent of the work of George Foxhill, a significant expressionist painter with a profound mastery of the colour. Smith creates wonderful rich glowing images, united within a simple compositional structure, yet he also gives them a quality of an "unworldly presence".

Kandinsky, writing on the properties of the colour lemon-yellow, once noted that it was a piercing colour like the sound of a church bell. It is this resonating quality which Peter Smith achieves in some of his best work. — SASHA GRISHIN