

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Glimpsed in Passing

collage gouaches by Peter Smith

A move from the human figure to the landscape as the primary source of my images. An exploration of different forms and media. An awakening to new ways of looking at the world around me. . . .

In the autumn of 1998 my partner and I travelled in our old car from Melbourne up the Victorian coastline and on to Batemans Bay. It was a pleasant, uneventful journey on backroads at a quiet time of year. Retired couples hauled their caravans leisurely from one small seaside town to the next, in no hurry to move on. Contentment was in the air, and maybe resignation or even sadness too - about more adventurous journeys that would now never be embarked on.

As always with journeys, I carried the artist's burden of somehow having to capture the experience and distil or transform it. At the very least I wanted to extract particular images to use in my work. Like everyone, we take snapshots on our travels. This time we loaded the camera with black and white film, and whoever was in the passenger seat got to snap whatever took their fancy, the only proviso being that the photo had to be taken from the moving vehicle. From this 'game' I got dozens of images that comprise the raw material for this series.

I was at the time working on an artist's book project at the Australian National University School of Art. The form attracted me because of its intimacy and tactility, and I wanted to explore some production techniques that I had not tried before. The travel photos generated xerox copies and then turps release prints. These were all fragmented and then recombined via collage with gouached papers to form an artist's book based on the journey. I was pleased with the book, and wanted to push the work further. Each of the images from the book in turn became the subject of the larger pictures that comprise this exhibition.

Fragments of landscapes, glimpsed in passing, transitory, fleeting different viewpoints, constantly changing, receding and returning, roads not taken, paths not travelled, unknown places, never to be known

*The great void, the cool sky is calm
Crystal brilliance, the white sun is autumn
The round light contains all things
And its broken image enters the quiet stream
Far up and uniting with the blue depths
Away and down floating with the river plain
The shades at noon make all the trees distinct*

.....

from a poem by Wang Wei.