

inferno

recent work by pete smith

M16 Artspace, 8-19 November

artist's statement

I first started to think about Dante's *Inferno* as a source of inspiration for an exhibition about three years ago, after completing a painting workshop at the Canberra School of Art.

At that time I was still recovering from a cancer diagnosis, subsequent surgery and a 'dark night of the soul' experience. So it's probably not surprising that at this point in my life I would be attracted to *Inferno*.

Since that time I have had another exhibition, *Too Different Books*, at the M16 Artspace. One part of *Too Books* was a *Bed of Roses Series*, which explored my cancer experience, and which I consider to be some of my best work so far in my artistic experience.

Interestingly the work you see in *inferno* feels like the last chapter in a book, which brings to a close the first half of my life, and expresses a spiritual maturity which I don't think I would have developed without the range of physical and emotional experiences I have had in the past few years. For whatever reason, the *inferno* series also brings together the full range of images I have used in my work so far in my career.

And there is no doubt that *Inferno* is a classic literary work. Not only did it unify the Italian language when it was written in the early fourteenth century, using vernacular language rather than Latin, but its poetic expression has inspired artists throughout the centuries – William Blake and Salvador Dali to name a couple.

For me as an artist, the richness of the text of Dante's *Inferno* provided the undercurrent that maintained the process of mark making. And individually, each of the works in this exhibition are based on one of the cantos in Dante's work.

pete smith

studio, workshop

& gallery (by appointment)

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