

Lake George, Pete Smith

ANCA Gallery, Dickson

21 March – 8 April 2007

Artist Statement

Like many before me, my journey as an artist brings me back time and again to the landscape. It's vast timelessness against our own small, fleeting lives. It's silent endurance. The tangible power of spirit of place.

My first body of works based on landscape culminated in an exhibition entitled *Glimpsed in Passing* in Sydney in 2001. My work has never been directly figurative, and these pictures were what I would call abstract landscapes. They were based on fleeting photographic images captured while travelling through landscape - fragments from a journey. The technique collaged black and white photocopy detail and colour wash gouaches to build up the layers of these fleeting, fragmentary images.

A subsequent journey in the Tasmanian wilderness inspired my series of *Dove Lake* paintings in 2005. Again the pictures were based on photographic records, which were then worked up into an artist's book of collaged sketches. But here the oils allowed me to layer greater depth into the pictures, compared with the earlier gouache series, and the expressive brushwork helped me to transfer more of the spiritual sense of place into the images.

Building on the success of the *Dove Lake* series, and drawn to *Lake George* like so many other artistic spirits, I embarked on the current series of oil paintings. These were an adventure and a challenge for me. I commissioned beautiful raw linen canvasses worthy of the subject matter. I worked on a larger scale than ever before, requiring more physicality in the mark making. The studies were done 'en plein air', allowing the light and space to permeate the paintings more directly. Some of the pictures include pigments from the site applied directly to the surface of the image. The resulting depth, scale and grandeur of these paintings is deeply satisfying for me, and I hope you as well.

To the extent that one needs a convenient label, I consider myself to be an abstract expressionist. It is interesting, therefore, that the *Lake George* series has brought me closer to impressionism and even figurative landscape painting than I have ever been before. It has been both a difficult and joyful journey. I feel that I am closer to God in the landscape than anywhere else, and I hope that these paintings convey some of this sense to the viewer.

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