

## ***The landscape in contemporary art***

I was very interested in the reaction to my *Lake George* exhibition at the ANCA Gallery in Canberra. The work in the exhibition was received very well by the general public, but there was a suggestion by one critic that landscape did not have a place in contemporary art.

For me this is quite perplexing, particularly when I live in Australia, a large and old landscape that has captivated both Indigenous and white Australians. This is also pertinent given my studio practice is based in Canberra which is essentially a country town.

So why shouldn't landscape have a lot to say about how we live our lives today?

If you look internationally there is a lot happening in this genre – different perspectives which reflect on the evolving perception and place of the landscape in contemporary culture.<sup>1</sup> And these perspectives are explored and examined in different media – from painting and works on paper, to wall installations and video.

An exhibition at the *Towner Gallery*, Eastbourne in the United Kingdom<sup>2</sup>, reflected on the contemporary artistic connection with the environment and challenged the very concept of landscape. Through a range of media artists responded to the duality of fragility and monumentality that has pre-occupied bygone masters such as Constable.

The Australian experience of landscape is different but no less relevant to a contemporary context. Certainly in my own work I seek to respond to the landscape in a way that captures the immediacy and relativity of everyday visual experience.

When I am sketching 'en plein air' I let the landscape come to me rather than imposing my own reality on it.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the recent exhibition "*Other Worlds: The Landscape in Contemporary Art*" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, USA. 26 January to 8 April 2007.

<sup>2</sup> "*Landscape? New Definitions through the Contemporary Art Society*". 23 November 2003 to 12 January 2003.