

Peter Smith, Artist Statement

Too Different Books – Dove Lake and Bed of Roses

M16 Artspace, 16 Mildura Street, Fyshwick

I returned to painting around 10 years ago when I exhibited a series of work based on graffiti in Sydney. Since then my work has developed from a focus on the human figure to landscape.

One of the motivations for the current series of work was the National Gallery's 'Body of Light' exhibition of work by Sean Scully. This was partly because of the way he layers colour, but mainly due to the spiritual basis to his work.

A number of other artists have influenced my work as an artist, including Gerhard Richter, Bill Henson, Ian Fairweather, Tony Tuckson and Rosalie Gascoigne. But my main source of inspiration is the landscape itself and the extremes of human existence, things which touch all of our lives.

The Dove Lake Series

The Dove Lake Series is based on a sketchbook from a trip my partner and I did to Tasmania over five years ago now. Like most visitors to the island we hired a car and travelled in various directions, one of which ended at Dove Lake, where we spent the day wandering and taking in the spirit of the place. We were lucky in that it was one of those rare fine days when the sun glistened off the lake.

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, I took snapshots of the lake and surrounds that were later transformed and simplified to form the images you see in this Series.

Fragments of landscapes, glimpsed in passing, transitory, fleeting, different viewpoints, constantly changing, receding and returning . . .

The Bed of Roses Series

The Bed of Roses Series comes from a sketchbook that I used to work through a period of my life when everything went topsyturvy. It was only a couple of months ago that I decided to create this Series, as up until then the experience was too personal to share with others.

In October 2002 I was diagnosed with cancer which resulted in a major operation in November, followed by a month of hospitalisation, mainly because of a series of complications. I was finally discharged (for the second time) in December 2002. My partner Rob and I then relocated back to Canberra.

Canberra between Christmas and New Year 2003 proved to be – words can't describe how I felt. I ended up being admitted to a private mental health hospital at the end of December where I spent two weeks recovering from two major 'psychotic' episodes, which have since been described as 'Dark Nights of the Soul' experiences.

So this Series looks at the transformation from October through to the end of my hospitalisation in January of 2003. Thankfully the journey ended with a lot of hope.

Curriculum Vitae

Over my career as an artist I have actively exhibited as part of my professional development – both solo exhibitions as well as group shows – and have been collected by various individuals within Australia. My exhibitions have included:

Solo Exhibitions

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| August 2005 | <i>Too Different Book, Dove Lake and Bed of Roses</i> , M16 Artspace, Fyshwick, Canberra |
| March 2001
Sydney | <i>Glimpsed in Passing</i> , Newspace Gallery, Rozelle, |
| February 1998 | <i>Shadows</i> , Spiral Arm Gallery, Leichhardt Street Studios, Kingston, Canberra |
| October 1995 | <i>A Sense of Connectedness</i> , Jardine Street Gallery, Kingston, Canberra. |
| September 1994 | <i>Graffiti Works</i> , ARDT., Leichhardt Hotel, Leichhardt, Sydney. |

Group Exhibitions

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| May 2005 | <i>Drawings</i> , a M16 member group show |
| November 2004 | <i>Member Artists' Spring Group Show</i> , M16 Inc., Canberra |
| September 2003 | <i>Winter Exhibition</i> , M16 Inc., Canberra. |
| November 1996 | <i>The Good The Bad and The Ugly</i> , Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra. |
| March 1996 | <i>Inner Square</i> , Spiral Arm Gallery, Kingston, Canberra. |

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