

AIARTS - Australian & International Arts

EXHIBITION

Geoff Wilson • Winnie Pelz • Jason Cordero

LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Diverse responses to landscape

24 November 2019 to 22 December 2019



Geoff Wilson

*Palettes contemplating blue hills
like Heysen once painted*



Winnie Pelz

The walls are disappearing



Jason Cordero

Now I know where



New plantings Hindmarsh Island farm 2019 61 cm x 40 cm oil on canvas



A landscape of scattered whites 2016 102 cm x 40 oil on linen



Water tank and side rake 1990 91 cm x 45.5 cm oil on linen

GEOFF WILSON

Rubbing eyes and shoulders by John Neylon

A white cloud rested on a single light pole.
Ten minutes later it was claimed by the third pine tree on the right.
Such unstable things – clouds.
Can't stand still.
Can't hold their shape.
Change their affiliations.
Better to stick with solid things like rocks, roads and roofs.
But sometimes even they misbehave.
They get tired and lean or slump.
And get curious and look over each other's shoulders.
Or gang up to threaten some terrified outdoor dunny.
In Geoff Wilson's landscapes the world's a stage with a full cast of characters. The skinny ones, like fence posts and poles, anchor the action like spear carriers in a sword and sandal epic. Fat slabs like fences and walls look like outsized Sao biscuits pressed into service. They act like wings, sets and backdrops for smaller units to hide behind or peer over and around. Gaps and intervals invite the eye to travel from near to far and back again. Diagonals flick the eye from one pin-ball point of contact to the next. Verticals are the messengers of the gods, transporting the imagination from the depths to the heavens.
Or are they foc'sle tubes by which up gets to speak to down? Horizontals are the compositional banana lounges or storm water pipes that offer rest or flow. There are no people to be seen – no actors to concentrate the mind on human thoughts and feelings. Such things are surplus to requirements. The viewer supplies these things every time he or she wanders into one of the artist's landscapes and looks around. Like slipping into a parallel universe which looks almost like real life, the landscape experience Wilson offers requires the viewer to actively engage in the looking process. In doing so, the realisation may dawn that the orderly and the scattered, the odds and sods, the new pop ups and the abandoned elements, that characterise his farmscapes and new estates constitutes the vocabulary and grammar of a secret conversation between things.

It is Wilson's exceptional imagination and observant eye that allow us to listen in on it – to step back into these worlds that one one hand look so familiar – yet so strange.
The imprint of decisions made by people, recently or in the past, about where to run a fence or a road, park a silo, string a

wire, or plant a tree, set this conversation in motion.

So, while people are absent, humanity is always there, whispering away.
And what might it be saying?
'I was once young, and now old'; 'In my construction I prefigure my ruination';
'Oh brave new world – where do I belong within it?'; 'Don't tell me how to declutter my dump'; 'Don't stand too close to me.'
Or simply - 'Let's dance.'

So persistent is this whispering that it might almost be possible to imagine that it comes from the very mouths of dumb, inanimate things, like a stack of Heysen-inspired palettes, roof trusses, washing on a line, a dump, a rusting truck or a nearly symmetrical shed.

Or is this just fanciful? Are Geoff Wilson's landscapes simply about the act of looking at ordinary things with fresh eyes? It is tempting to say 'yes' if only for the fact that the artist resists interpretations of his work as reflections on social change or as surrealised dreamscapes. As he has said in as many words, it all comes down to eyeballing the subject and making an image that 'works'.

But, the mock-heroic gestures of small moments and everyday objects acting above their stations in life are close in spirit and strategies to Brechtian drama in which artifice and realism rub shoulders. In moments like these Australian landscape becomes a stage on which commonplace objects and events get to play humanity – con brio.

John Neylon - October 2019

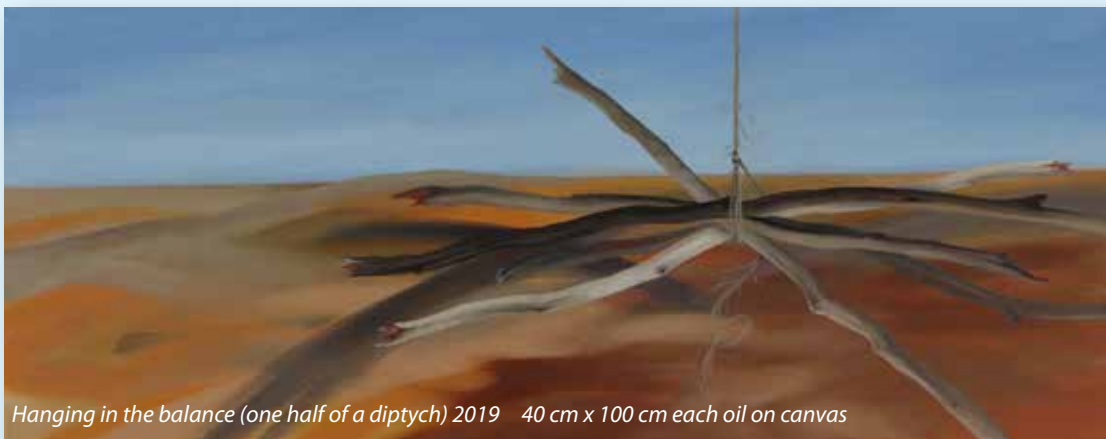
John Neylon is an Adelaide-based writer, curator and artist. He has written several books on South Australian artists and writes regularly for The Adelaide Review.



The walls are disappearing 2019 (diptych) 61.5 cm x 123 cm oil on canvas



Polda Rock II 2019 100 cm x 120 cm oil on canvas



Hanging in the balance (one half of a diptych) 2019 40 cm x 100 cm each oil on canvas

WINNIE PELZ

by Winnie Pelz

Stones have fascinated me as long as I can remember. Smooth, water-worn pebbles, boulders shaped by the erosion of ages, stone walls, and standing stones - those enigmatic relics of ritual and spiritual beliefs. They carry the ghosts of voices that haunt old places; they tell of pilgrimage, of toil and pain. Their textures carry a surface that tells of time deep in the mists of long ago.

The works in this group of paintings relate to places where stones form marks on the landscape, or where their presence is an integral part of the landform.

I am drawn to remote and isolated landscapes that have been shaped by time and the elements, and which, by their nature, have shaped the people who have chosen to live in those remote and challenging places.

Polda Rock is an extraordinary rock formation with eroded rock pools on its surface. It rises from a flat landscape on the edge of marginal farming country north of Wudinna in the Gawler Ranges. The colours of the earth, the vestiges of pioneer settlement and the amazing skies that only a vast outback spectrum can provide, make this part of the continent truly extraordinary.

By contrast, but also relating to a remote and challenging margin of the land, the painting of Cape Jervis captures a place that is on the very edge of the land mass, on an isolated hill overlooking the sea.

My love for the Irish landscape and its stone walls and monoliths began over forty years ago: the grey misty weather and the miles of dry-stone walls created a patchwork landscape that spoke to me of folklore, legends and the tragedy of the Great Famine. The words of English writer, walker and environmentalist Nan Walker resonate when she speaks of "The substance of landscape so influencing the mind...that the place and the mind interpenetrate 'till the nature of both is altered."

There are places that live on in memory that we recall with greater depth of emotion when we are most remote from them.

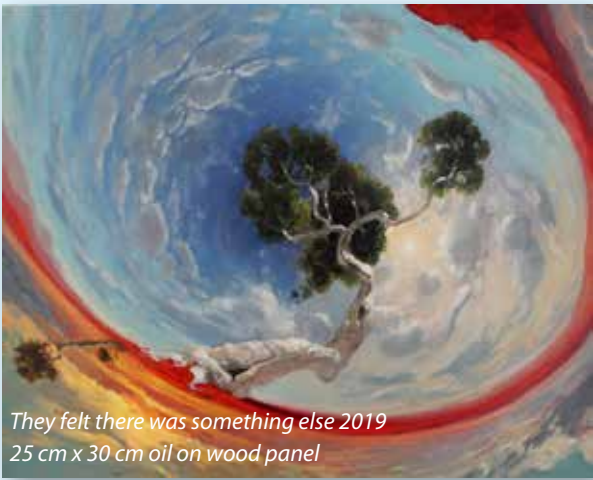
When I returned recently to the west coast of Ireland, I was dismayed that many of the stone walls are neglected, falling down and disappearing. "Progress" is making its mark on the landscape.

And so to the sticks. The diptych is a comment on our changing world and environment. Our future and the landscape of the future is uncertain, precarious and fragile. In time, even the stones will disappear and in the meanwhile, it's all hanging in the balance.

Winnie Pelz has a long career in art teaching, art practice and arts administration, including Director of the Jam Factory and Chief Executive of the SA Department for the Arts. Originally working in woven textiles, her textile work is held in numerous public collections, including the Art Gallery of SA and Artbank. Since 2004, she resumed her practice in painting and drawing and has been a prize winner in the Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize and a finalist in the Fleurieu Biennale Art Prize



It became apparent the guide was in error 2019 102 cm x 152 cm oil on linen



*They felt there was something else 2019
25 cm x 30 cm oil on wood panel*



Another Day 2019 25 cm x 30 cm oil on wood panel



She took to the hills 25 cm x 40 cm oil on wood panel

JASON CORDERO

by Angelika Tyrone

As a professional artist, Jason Cordero has had an active exhibition record of over 30 exhibitions around Australia to date; in Hobart, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

Since 2000 he has entered his work in numerous art competitions and won many awards including the Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize, Glover Prize for Tasmanian Landscape, Fleurieu Biennale Art Prize and was the top prize winner of 12 awards including the Heysen Prize for Australian Landscape 2006.

Jason Cordero describes his relationship to art as originated in childhood where he was always drawing; on becoming an artist;

It was natural for me. It wasn't a conscious decision. In primary school and high school, I was always drawing.

Jason Cordero studied for a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia in the 1990's where he was given the freedom to develop his own direction.

His early influences were the technical aspects of Neoclassical artists like Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Auguste Ingres and Victorian artists, especially Lawrence Alma Tadema, J. W. Waterhouse and Lord Leighton whose works he studied in order to attain the technical skill which he required for the works he wanted to paint. He achieved this through tenacity and is largely self-taught.

In 1998 he traveled to Paris and London where he was able to study the works and techniques of artists whose paintings interested him in the Louvre and other museums; art of the Neoclassical and late Victorian periods.

Jason Cordero returned from this trip with renewed vigour, incorporating his studies into further developing his own style. Of travel he says: Travel is important. Travel is transformative.

His next journey took him to Beijing from December 2015 to February 2016 through the Red Gate residency.

After Beijing there was a change in my work... Pre Beijing, I was grounded in realism, did monochrome work, subdued... After [Beijing] I added colour.

This caused a major developmental shift in his work. He subsequently focused on the study of colour from several perspectives, ie the scientific objective and traditional cultural perspectives. The resulting works, use highly keyed up colour, often combining complimentary colours eg a sunlit orange mountain, against a strong violet shadow and background.

Jason Cordero's interest in art is in the fundamentals of perception and observation. How people,
move into the landscape and attach themselves to it, develop ownership, make a story about a place, then change it . . . Each person and culture will have a different view of the same thing and interpret it differently. Put their stories to it.

Jason Cordero's landscapes reflect a respect for the environment and the power of nature. They are strong statements with a key feature of his landscapes being dramatic depictions of mountains with reflections and colour working diagonally which should not make sense to the eye and are unsettling, intense, yet appealing.

Jason Cordero's larger works are highly dramatic. His smaller works are deeply absorbing gems of paintings at times with multiple landscape scenes at different angles in the one painting, eg Another day. They are real, yet unreal.

His paintings at present are largely without human presence. Where there is a figure, it is small in proportion to the nature which overpowers it. Then there is the work, She heads for the hills which shows a bright red tree, the tree trunk and limbs are personified into a reclining being, to the right of which is a serene, softly coloured landscape with a gentle waterfall painted in exquisite detail that could be a painting from the Golden Age of Dutch painting.

Jason Cordero's works are in a number of collections including private collections in Australia, China, UAE and USA.

by Angelika Tyrone

based on an interview with Jason Cordero, 15 October 2019

Introduction to the exhibition by Angelika Tyrone

Depicting the world around us has been important for humans since early times, with depictions of landscape holding a special place in some countries and cultures. The land and landscape painting has had a powerful role in Australian art in the past and continues to do so.

The selection of the three artists Geoff Wilson, Winnie Pelz and Jason Cordero for the exhibition was deliberate. They are three artists whose work has a power and strength on their own terms. They represent a range of paintings that have been placed near each other so they could be viewed together and interact with one another to some extent; to be thought provoking.

The three artists have diverse approaches to the landscape, in their conception and in the resulting paintings that are visually diverse, though all three continue to reference the visual objective tradition, depicting actual things that exist in a landscape. They represent three generations of artists that are part of a continuum of landscape painting in Australia spanning over a century. Interestingly, Geoff Wilson refers to Hans Heysen in the title of one of his paintings, Palettes contemplating blue hills like Heysen once painted, though Geoff Wilson paints in his own way.

Though the works are diverse, there are things that unite them. The landscapes of all three artists are largely devoid of human beings, though as noted by John Neylon in his writing on Geoff Wilson, "...the evidence of people are there". For each artist, that human presence has a different relationship in their landscape paintings.

Geoff Wilson's landscapes span the rural, semi rural and suburban. They include paintings where people have lived on the land. He paints working farms where machinery, sheds and implements often take centre stage, with surfaces that have started to rust. He shows beauty in that rust.

In the work of Winnie Pelz, the focus is on the impact made onto the land; the disappearing walls of previous people and their culture, where one half of a diptych fades away so that the landscape is barely visible. It is a physical, visual and cultural loss. The diptych work, Hanging in the balance, expressing life and nature as hanging in the balance. The work poses questions.

Jason Cordero's engagement with landscape seem more cerebral, or ethereal, even subconscious in origin and appear out of this world yet show very real details of this world. His work depicts the awesome power of nature.

The combination of the three artists' paintings is intended as a treat for viewers, possibly to pose questions, for example, to what extent is landscape painting a call to look at the world and reflect upon our relationship with it?

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