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CHRISTOPHE STIBIO

THE FORM THESE landscape paintings take is a synthesis of the cultures I have come from—my place of origin, France, and the places I have traveled to. After I completed my Master of Visual Arts in France, I decided to study in China a traditional form of landscape painting. Chinese painting refuses the Western traditions of landscape painting. Its lines and conventions are different in terms of the organization of space. This organization of space is really attractive to me because, in my mind, I have never been able to reduce what I see to a single point of perspective.

Coming to Australia, following this additional study in China, the ideas behind my practice expanded even further. When I came to Australia, what I really loved was my ability to go and travel. Travelling and meeting with the landscape cannot be replaced. When you're faced with a landscape and its complexity, its vastness, its richness and wealth, it really influences your practice.

My interest in landscape painting, which has been with me since I was very young, took me to Lake Mungo [a dry lake in south-western New South Wales]. This is where my work has been focused on for the past four years. While representing this landscape, I have adopted the means and tools of expression from Chinese culture and practice—rice paper, traditional brushes made out of bamboo, sheep and wolf hair, and natural pigments for paints.

My works are based on dozens of drawings. I draw while in the landscape, I don't paint. Painting with the natural pigments would be very difficult—impossible. Working in paint would also defeat the purpose of trying to engage with the landscape as the materials would dominate. Sometimes I go into the landscape with watercolours and paper but it's mostly charcoal or pencil and I take these back to my studio as references. The drawings then allow me to enhance scale in the final works, as they are

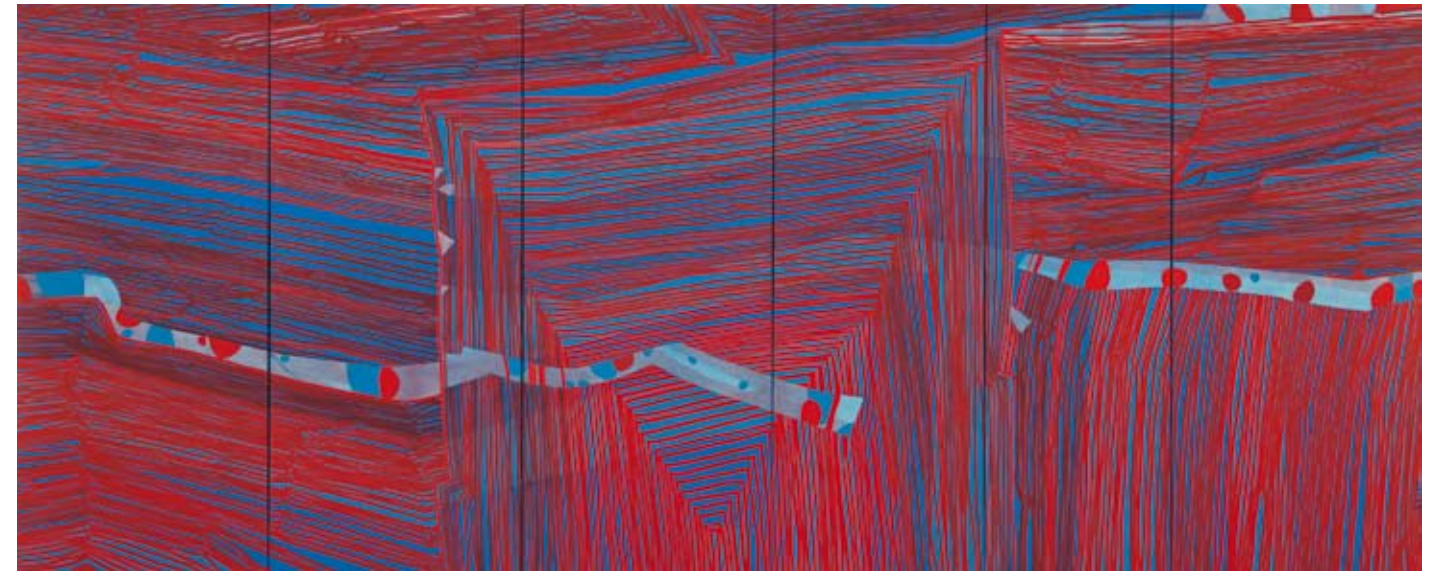
made to mimic the size of the landscape. One of the works in my upcoming exhibition is 5.5 meters wide by 2.5 meters high. The reason for its size is really to achieve the same impact on the audience's perception as the landscape itself had on me when I was there.

This impact has also influenced the colours used for my latest body of works. When I went to China, I studied only in inks. In coming to back to Australia after being nurtured in shades of grey, I really noticed the shades and tonalities of the colours in the time of day I was trying to capture, which was the sunset around Lake Mungo National Park. I decided that painting the Australian landscape without colour would defeat the purpose of the impact I was trying to achieve but I wanted to keep a restrained palette because I think too much can dilute what I am trying to represent. I made the decision to capture that very ephemeral time of the day by using a particular blue and a particular red. The rest of the colours are simply shadal variations of those colours. ■

EXHIBITION
Lakes Mungo - Arumpo Series 4
27 Jul - 14 Aug 2010
Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
www.fig.com.au

- 01 **Sunset with Belinda #14**, 2010, natural pigments on paper mounted on cotton duck, 130 x 130cm
- 02 **Where were you when it happened #16**, 2010, natural pigments on paper mounted on cotton duck, 230 x 530cm
- 03 **Where were you when it happened #07**, 2009, natural pigments on paper mounted on cotton duck, 40 x 51cm

Courtesy the artist and Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne



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03