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EXHIBITIONS Garry Pumfrey *The Born Again* 10th May 2016 - 28th May 2016

Garry Pumfrey's first solo at FLG was a bleak portrayal of Melbourne's Port Melbourne and heavily urbanized areas and was a critical and commercial success. His most recent solo at FLG in 2012 *Obres Noves* sold out as did his suite of paintings of Barcelona at the 2014 Melbourne Art Fair. He has continued to be immersed in the Barcelona art scene, the resulting body of works enticing us to join him in exploring the heart of the old city, *Barris Gòtic, Born & Raval*. United in darkness, we find Pumfrey drawn to capture these history laden yet clearly contemporary lanes.

Pumfrey has won the Town of Vincent Art Award, Peoples Choice Award at the City of Joondalup Invitational Art Award, and has taken out first prize twice at the Gascoyne Biennale and once at the Kalgoorlie Boulder Art Exhibition. He was awarded ArtsWA funding for his Melbourne and Sydney exhibitions, and has work in several public collections, including Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University and the Town of Vincent. Recently his work was acquired for the Parliament House Collection.



Garry Pumfrey
Flassanders 2016
oil on linen
142cm x 65cm



Garry Pumfrey
Corretger 2016
oil on linen
126cm x 60cm

'When thinking of adjectives to describe the streets of Barcelona's vibrant metropolis, the words quiet and still don't generally spring to mind. Yet both could aptly describe the finely painted realist works by Garry Pumfrey that form his latest exhibition *The Born Again*.

In this series Pumfrey reveals an unexpected side of Barcelona, a city famous for its night-life and party-scene. Not too far from the tourist crowds of Las Ramblas with its street performers and endless bars, is the ancient quarter known as *El Born*. Pumfrey wandered into it when on holiday from Perth in 2011. He spent hours walking the streets and laneways of this antique barrio, marveling at its densely inhabited gothic



Garry Pumfrey
Cugat 2016
oil on linen
126cm x 60cm



Garry Pumfrey
Volta 2015
oil on linen
92cm x 65cm

Catalan architecture. For an artist whose work has long expressed a fascination with the built environment, the buildings and narrow streets of El Born proved too rich a subject for just a passing engagement, and Pumfrey decided to settle in Barcelona for the next four years.

This exhibition reveals the output of an intimate and prolonged creative engagement with a particular place. Much like the compositions of these vertical paintings, Pumfrey's vision is focused and contained, honing in on the lanes and streets of El Born most often at night, and always empty of people and vehicles. Drawn to paint certain compositions that have captured his attention while moving through the area, Pumfrey meticulously describes the various textured surfaces that define these enclosed passages. The paved walkways and austere stone-walls are illuminated by artificial lights that lead the eye deep into the receding space within his compositions.

These works reflect a very different concept of urban space and architecture to that which we are accustomed in Australia. The notion of high-density living has evolved organically in European cities such as Barcelona over centuries, and for an artist coming from Perth where natural and urban space is abundant, El Born's winding streets heaving with ancient buildings provided an arresting contrast.

The already confined streetscapes of this precinct become even more enclosed in Pumfrey's nocturnal scenes, as the darkness of the sky weighs down from above and the view becomes tunnel-like. By contrast his daytime paintings feature a sliver of blue sky that lightens the mood and directs the aesthetic focus of the works, as the top half of the buildings are vividly illuminated and described in greater detail. Yet regardless of the hour portrayed, a sense of ordered harmony prevails – that of a community that knows how to exist together in close quarters. Even the rubbish left out on the street is placed with consideration neatly to the side, in tidy tied-up bags.

Painting the streets of a bustling metropolis closed up for the night and devoid of people creates a stage-like ambiance, and there is an almost cinematic expression of mise-en-scène in these works. This is particularly notable in the night scenes that are illuminated by dramatic artificial lighting. It is as if the artist recalls a suspended moment before or after some dramatic event, as the mystery of the night infuses the familiar with a sense of otherness – maybe even danger.

Behind the sheer walls of El Born, amongst the layers of history that are built into the fabric of the city, thousands of human stories continue to unfold. Pumfrey's work successfully transports the viewer into these Spanish streets, navigating empty lanes that are rich with patina of time and the echoes of lived human experience.'

Marguerite Brown, MA ArtCur 2016

[GARRY PUMFREY PROFILE](#)
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Garry Pumfrey
Cierra 2016
oil on linen
92cm x 65cm



Garry Pumfrey
Number 6 2016
oil on linen
90cm x 60cm



Garry Pumfrey
Bodega 2016
oil on linen
92cm x 65cm



Garry Pumfrey
La Peluqueria 2016
oil on linen
92cm x 65cm



Garry Pumfrey
Pere Mes Baix 2016
oil on linen
92cm x 65cm



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