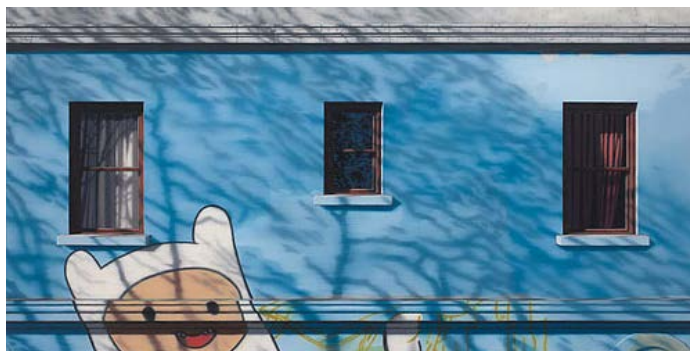


EXHIBITIONS William Breen *Delicious* 5th August 2014 - 23rd August 2014

The opening of this exhibition will be held on Saturday 9th August between 1-3pm.

The urban landscapes of William Breen transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. Having deliberately removed any trace of human life, traffic or debris from his scenes, Breen turns the normally bustling streets of inner city Melbourne into dreamlike landscapes of uncanny quiet. Their stillness and quietude express both moments of significance and the promise of possibility.



William Breen
Animated Afternoon 2014
oil on linen
76cm x 153cm

'For contemporary artist, William Breen, choosing somewhere to paint begins with scouring his archive of personal photographs. Each image, whether an urban or natural setting, captures a place enfolded within a specific moment in time: its mood affected by weather, human activity and history. In this way, Breen's subject matter—which shifts from the melancholic Victorian landscape to hyper-detailed city settings—pays homage to the intricacies of a halted world: "No matter where you are, you will find a space that becomes interesting to paint. It's about capturing somewhere in the moment, and my archive of photographs allows me to return to those moments."

Breen has worked in this way for almost 20 years, reflecting on the thousands of possible paintings that reside in his computer and print archives. From 2008 to 2011, his focus shifted from iconic Melbourne street scenes to landscapes found on drives out of town: "It was an intuitive decision, as it always is, when I choose to paint a particular space." These paintings were darkling, with low-set horizon lines, and brewing skies of cloud and rain. At times, these atmospheric forces began to consume any visual description of the scene, pushing Breen's landscapes toward abstraction.



These elemental works might seem vastly different to Breen's current exhibition at Flinders Lane Gallery. In a shift back to the urban environment, his attention to detail is meticulous, with every cranny and layer illuminated in a pale, comic light. Such subtleties



William Breen
Delicious 2014
oil on linen
82cm x 183cm



include graffiti, signage, aged facades, bicycles, grime, shine and remnants of human activity: it is clear that the artist has a penchant (not to mention, skill) for conjuring these spaces in every nuance. However, these inner-north neighbourhoods (think Fitzroy, Brunswick and Thornbury) contain not a single human soul.

This emptiness, where no one can be found, is especially unsettling in Breen's urban works. It might be natural for a bustling wilderness to be void of human trace, yet in the city, human activity etches itself on every available flank of concrete. In turn, the quiet of these paintings is uncanny. As Breen describes of one particular work of a fabric store, "It's important that a door stays open as if someone has just walked into the shop, or the rolls of fabric have been displayed for someone to buy, despite the fact that no one is actually there." People are replaced with their trace. What remains is a stilled landscape of habitual living, where the figure in the scene becomes the viewer.



It is a sublime atmosphere that connects Breen's oeuvre. In his landscapes, this is conjured through overwhelming natural forces—air, expansiveness, vacuous compositions and distance—while in his urban paintings the mood is built upon a sensitive attention to detail. What Breen conceives is not only the momentary impression found in a photograph, but also the passing of time so inherent to painting. In this slowed process, we see the ways each shop front or street corner has been reinvented time and again: a stratum of graffiti, old paint and peeling signage revealing a palimpsest of everyday existence.' Essay by Laura Skerjil, 2014



[WILLIAM BREEN PROFILE](#)
[DOWNLOAD BIO / CV \(PDF\)](#)

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William Breen
Love Bugs 2014
 oil on linen
 61cm x 122cm



William Breen
Lowlands 2014
 oil on linen
 92cm x 137cm



William Breen
Fabrics 2014
 oil on linen
 107cm x 153cm



William Breen
Snowdropper 2014
 oil on linen
 71cm x 107cm



William Breen
Waterwall 2014
oil on linen
76cm x 305cm



William Breen
New Day Rising 2014
oil on linen
76cm x 153cm



William Breen
Wild West 2014
oil on linen
92cm x 137cm



William Breen
Childplay 2014
oil on linen
66cm x 89cm