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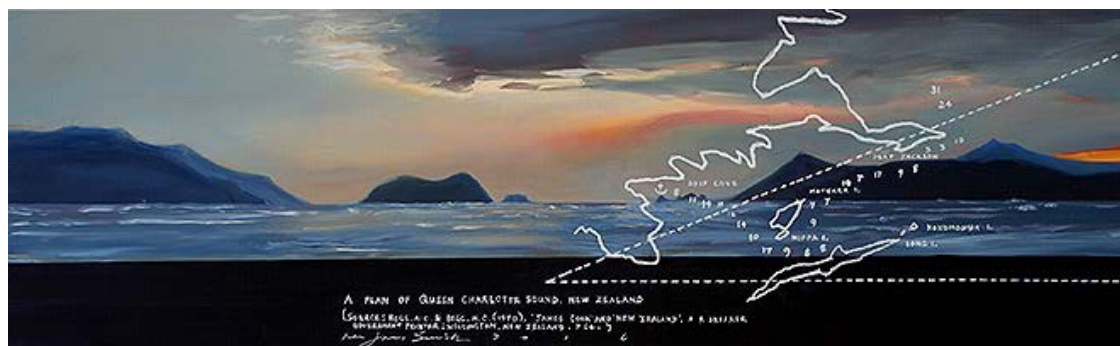
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EXHIBITIONS Peter James Smith *Line of Sight* 1st March 2016 - 19th March 2016

In this series of paintings, *Line of Sight* is an examination of landscape and its relation to history—a relationship, a line, like a bridge between time and place. The works attempt to construct meaning at that nexus using scientific and poetic texts and cultural constructs. The artist's realignment of a north/south track produces images that are at times austere, dark, maudlin, but remain cogently romantic.

Until his retirement to fulltime painting at the end of 2010, Peter James Smith was Professor of Mathematics and Art and Head of the School of Creative Media at RMIT University. He was awarded a residency at Scott Base, Antarctica, in January 2010 as an Antarctic New Zealand Artist Fellow. His paintings are held in many public, private and corporate collections in New Zealand, Australia and internationally, including The University of Melbourne, RMIT University, La Trobe University, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Gippsland Regional Gallery, Victoria, and the BHP Billiton Collection.

The current ongoing series of paintings, *Line of Sight*, is an examination of landscape, place and its relation to the history of that place—this relationship arcs like the tracery of a dotted line—forming a bridge that stretches from where we stand looking in a landscape towards the horizon of history, of scientific and cultural



Peter James Smith

A Plan of Queen Charlotte Sound, New Zealand 2016

oil on linen

36cm x 122cm

knowledge. The works in this series are an attempt to construct meaning at that time/place nexus using texts in white oil paint overlaid on the painted surface of both paintings and sculptures.

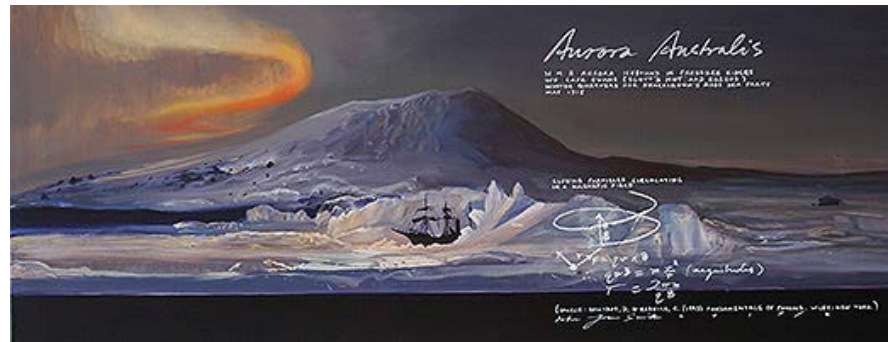
The texts are reprised from diverse sources in a post-modernist tradition. They draw on my time as a professional mathematician writing descriptive formulae on blackboards; they draw on a love of poetry and historical moment; and in this exhibition, they draw on aboriginal history through footprint trackways at Lake Mungo near the Victoria/NSW border. So the texts are cultural constructs of meaning. Then clearly (as Lake Mungo has been mentioned) there is the specificity of the general notion of 'landscape'. It is the landscape that watches over a specific place. It endures. It unfolds the past. It hides past events and lost causes. It slowly covers over tracks like the murderer cleaning up the scene of the perfect crime.

In this exhibition, there are many specific landscapes referenced: Macquarie Island in the Australian Antarctic Territory; Lake Mungo and Lord Howe Island, New South Wales; The Ross Sea and Mt Erebus, Antarctica; Campbell Island and the Marlborough Sounds, New Zealand; Greenwich, United Kingdom; Port Campbell, Victoria; Mare Tranquillitatis, at the Apollo Mission landing site in the Moon.

Beyond place and text, there is the actual application of paint. My current practice embraces the traditional painting approaches of oil on linen in a realist style that is at once traditional and contemporary: traditional, in the sense of my fertile interest in the 19th Century High German Romantic paintings of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) or the American *Luminists* such as Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900); contemporary, in my embrace of *contemporaneity*—the linking of images and texts from different times, cultures, knowledge systems, histories and geographic locations—to a painted constellation in the present. (See, for example, the juxtaposition of Aboriginal footprints at Lake Mungo



Peter James Smith
Arrival at Macquarie Island 2013
 oil on linen
 61cm x 122cm



Peter James Smith
Aurora Australis 2016
 oil on linen
 46cm x 122cm

with Neil Armstrong's footprints on the moon; or the insertion of a rock fragment from the Berlin Wall into an English nineteenth century black writing case.) The notion of *constellation* may be enhanced through the traditional salon hang, where works feed off each other and jostle for the eye of the viewer while maintaining an individual essence.

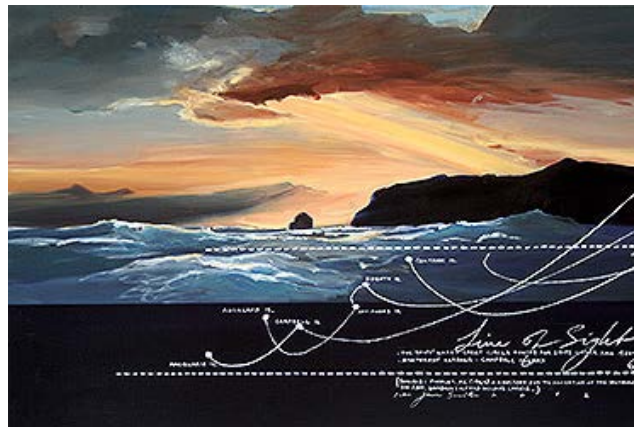
These works, including the sculptural works, continue with the presentation of black formats, margins and *facia*. These clearly relate to the 'blackboard' context, but also notion of the projection of knowledge into a darkened room. This has been a characteristic of past painting practice. According to McCulloch's *Encyclopaedia of Australian Art*:

'His super-real paintings set against dark grounds have been accurately described as 'cinematic' in their use of sequential images in which their text and imagery is illuminated as if projected in a darkened room'[i].

Continuing a resolve of the last twenty years, many of the works appear as white text in oil over blackened grounds. The texts in *Fallen Cross*, 2016, show the symbols deployed at MONA in Tasmania for assisting museum visitors locate themselves within the gallery 'X' and then add information in relation to nearby artworks '+'. The painting acknowledges the change in meaning for these symbols from their mathematical origins as multiplication and addition, to a cut-and-paste context with a sense of almost spiritual loss. There is a powerful fluidity to mathematics: as new technologies require new mathematical insights, old methods are forgotten. Continued fractions, fractions or even handwriting itself are finding few teachers and fewer students. Taken together, *Fallen Cross*, 2016 and *Greenwich Meridian*, 2015, set up a tension between science and religion. The man-made crossing at Greenwich becomes a spiritual nexus overpowering the visual image of the 'X' marks the spot landscape.'



Peter James Smith
Reflected Light 2015
oil on linen
61cm x 91cm



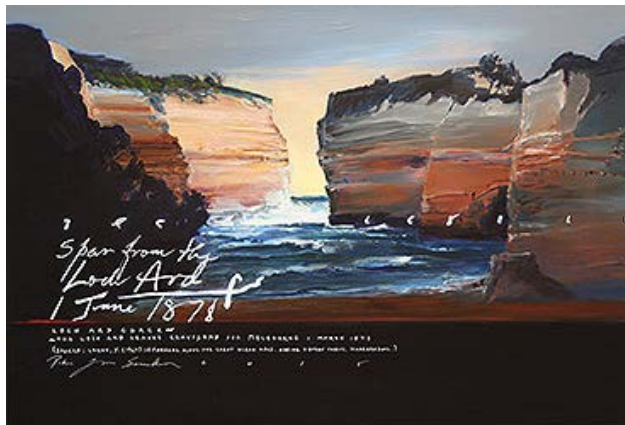
Peter James Smith
Line of Sight 2016
oil on linen
61cm x 91cm

Essay by Peter James Smith, 2016

[1] 'McCulloch, A., McCulloch, S., and McCulloch Childs, E. (2006) *The New McCulloch's Encyclopaedia of Australian Art*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, p.897

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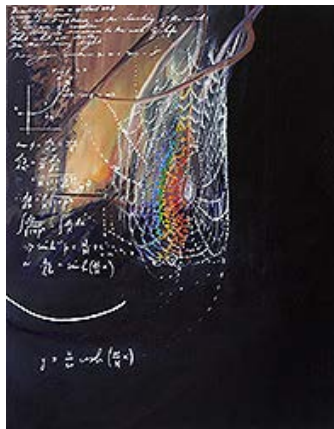
Peter James Smith
Spar from the Loch Ard 2015
oil on linen
61cm x 91cm



Peter James Smith
Endurance Crushed 2015
oil on linen
61cm x 76cm



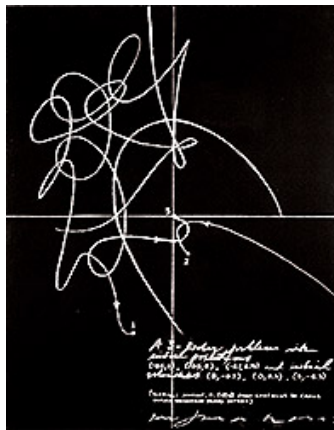
Peter James Smith
Lake Mungo 2016
 oil on linen
 91cm x 122cm



Peter James Smith
Dewdrops on a Spiders Web 2016
 oil on linen
 76cm x 61cm



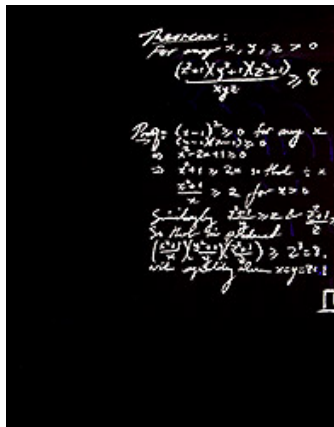
Peter James Smith
The Cloths of Heaven 2015
 oil on linen
 61cm x 46cm



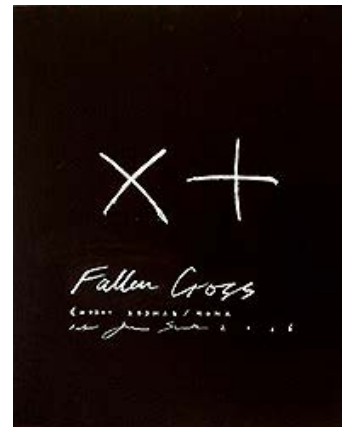
Peter James Smith
Turbulence 2016
 oil on linen
 76cm x 61cm



Peter James Smith
Hereafter When They Come to Model Heaven 2016
 oil on linen
 91cm x 61cm



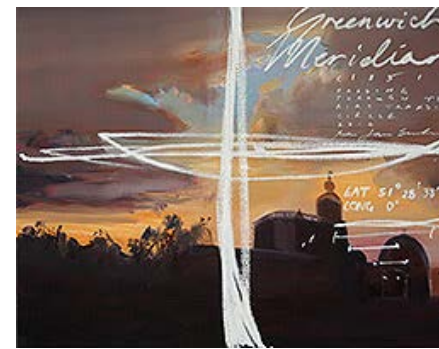
Peter James Smith
Theorem 2015
 oil on linen
 76cm x 61cm



Peter James Smith
Fallen Cross 2016
 oil on linen
 76cm x 61cm



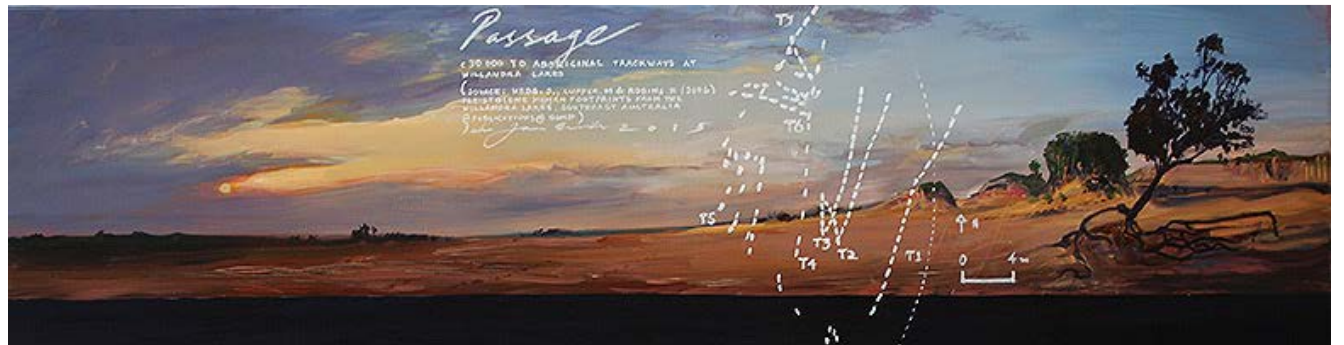
Peter James Smith
Footprint 2016
oil on linen
61cm x 46cm



Peter James Smith
Greenwich Meridian 2016
oil on linen
40cm x 50cm



Peter James Smith
The Collapse of London Bridge Port Campbell, Victoria 2016
oil on linen
61cm x 167cm



Peter James Smith
Passage 2016
oil on linen
31cm x 122cm



Peter James Smith
Enlightenment Meteorite 2016
Berlin wall fragment and 19th century writing case
17cm x 30cm x 24cm



Peter James Smith
The Forgotten Country 2016
timber and collage
47cm x 42cm x 51

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