

# time

**10 - 28 July 2012**

**Essay by Phe Luxford**

*The river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future. – Hermann Hesse\*1*

Our comprehension of time occurs in a slippage somewhere between the present and passing moment. Always moving forward, time perhaps is best felt when we are at our most still, when the moment is allowed to unfold in slow, palpable units before us. The opportunity to witness a momentary event with clarity, to observe and hold onto something of its essence, be that the changing quality of light or the fleeting movement of a cloud, is an almost sublime encounter. It is within this flow of duration and change that the truly ambiguous nature of time reveals itself. The intersection of the event and its recollection constitutes the seed of artistic enquiry.

The artist is capable of manipulating these temporal structures. By slowing down or speeding up the trajectory of time the moment can be viewed in a state of suspension or reverberation. From the utter stillness of Vermeer's domestic scenes to the haunting pre-dawn activities in Giorgio Di Chirico enigmatic landscapes, painters have a unique ability to manipulate the scenes they depict. The urban landscapes of **William Breen** reveal such a confidence, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. Having deliberately removed any trace of human life, traffic or debris from his scenes, Breen transforms the normally bustling streets of inner city Melbourne into dreamlike landscapes of uncanny quiet. Captured in what appears to be the near horizontal light of early morning, these uninhabited built environments take on an immobile quality. Breen succeeds in halting the moment, freeing it from the urgencies and anxieties of the everyday.

In contrast to Breen's suspension **Callum Arnold** presents a series of manifold images to explore the memory of a moment in time. Often formed through a composite of mental and photographic images – what is felt and what is documented – the lasting impression of an experience is never static. Arnold makes this convergent cognition explicit in his multi layered landscapes. Separate visions coalesce in a single scene, overlaid in a time sequence that appears more cinematic than painterly. The experience of looking becomes blurred, less concrete and more ephemeral. The fragmented memory of a moment repeats, hovers, and stretches within a single picture plane.

Within a vast field of sea and sky, split by a shimmering divisional line, the changing tones of daylight form the basis of **Ken Smith's** painting practice. Interested in the transient nature of light, Smith's canvases carefully document the subtle variations of tone and colour that unfold through the course of a day. As soft blues gradually slip to grey, these minimal landscapes demonstrate an acute awareness of the subjective condition of perception, and the relentless certainty of change. Often returning to the same site, Smith's paintings, when viewed as a series, offer a diaristic account of unfolding time and demonstrate how 'colours can be used pictorially to evoke such encounters'.\*2

Observations of light and the passage of time also play out in the work of **Naomi White**. Focusing on the quality of shadows from morning to late afternoon, White depicts rambling driveways, garden sheds and the kerbsides of suburbia to gauge the fleeting effects of light on the day. In many of these works the bleaching effect of summer plays off against the cool dark shade offered by trees and awnings. Dappled shadows intersect with the hyper-real rendering of tree trunks, pebbles and leaf litter. What at first appears to be the representation of a spontaneous, almost inconsequential lived moment, a simple observation on the way to the letterbox perhaps, begins to harbour a more intentional purpose. A poetry of the everyday unfolds; crisp and alert in a passing moment.

Since the early 18th century explorers and artists have earnestly attempted to annotate momentary encounters with the sublime – the sensation of awe and humility that commonly arises when the individual is faced with the grandeur of nature. **Caroline Rannersberger's** practice seeks to explore the transformative power of such direct engagements with nature. Working in the rugged landscapes of the Northern Territory and Tasmania, she states that her practice is not so much about recording a moment in time as being completely in that moment, of painting the unfolding event of 'being' as it happens. Combining subtle gradations of earth with ethereal motifs of wind and sky Rannersberger fuses the self within the landscape to capture 'the very element of a passage of life'.\*3

Objects of antiquity are also capable of conjuring up a sense of the sublime. Imbued with the residue of past achievements the artefact operates like a kind of time travelling device. Having collected the dust of centuries they become a vehicle by which to come closer to an epic experience of human endeavour. The installations and paintings of **Peter James Smith** exploit such readings by transforming the antique object into something once again living. Standing in the stream of time, his practice releases a 'meridian line back to the enlightenment' \*4 and deliberately reels objects into the contemporary moment. By subtly altering the surface or context of these found objects Smith distils the past with a new visual language and cultural meaning, rendering the present as potent as the past.

With a similar antiquarian concern **Christine Willcocks** invokes the work of the curator within her practice. Calling on museological methods of collecting, her objects and installations assume the guise of the historical and replicate the archiving techniques of natural history. Her sculptural forms sit beside found objects and annotated drawings. Together they serve to create a fictitious collection of fossilised finds. While they hold the physical appearance of the aged and worn, their true meaning as a collection remains elusive. To encounter her cabinets of curiosity is to critique the very nature of preservation, to question what makes some things meaningful and therefore of value, and others not. Subverting of the notion of preciousness allows the slightest and most decayed of objects to become a coveted memento, embedded with significant personal meaning.

The enduring and sacred traditions of Australia's Aboriginal culture are ancient. Unlike Western notions of time, in which the desire for change and progress are driving motivations, Aboriginal artists find the logic of their practice in a grounded ability to place the self within a continuous story deeply linked to past ancestral customs and beliefs. Charged with the task of preserving oral and visual storytelling, the work of artists **Judy Watson Napangardi** and **Alma Nungurrayi Granites** both speak of the importance of timelessness. Granites' paintings depict the creation story associated with the Seven Sisters Dreaming. Within these stories the movement of the Pleiades star system serves as a link to the creation stories of the Warlpiri women. Watson's complex and brightly coloured works depict the Napangardi and Napanangka women's creation story of digging sticks and the subsequent dreaming into being of her ancestral lands. For both women their visual practice directly links them to the lives of those who have gone before them.

# William Breen

"I am interested in the impermanence of street culture, shops and signage." WILLIAM BREEN 2012



Records 2012  
oil on canvas  
122 x 71cm



In-situ on 3.7m wall



# Callum Arnold

"...an intuitive recognition of a form or structure but as with history or memory it is condensed and reorganized" CALLUM ARNOLD



Avenue 2012  
oil on canvas  
91 x 151cm



In-situ on 3.7m wall



Boulevard 2012  
oil on canvas  
101 x 151cm



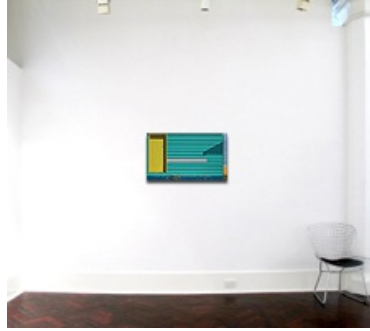
In-situ on 3.7m wall

# Ken Smith

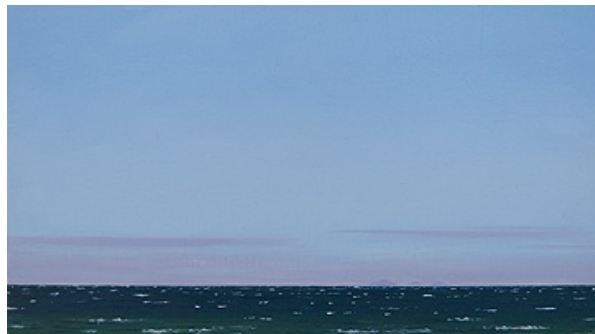
"...the fugitive character of colour in the outdoors can be seen as a metaphor for the transience of time." KEN SMITH 2012



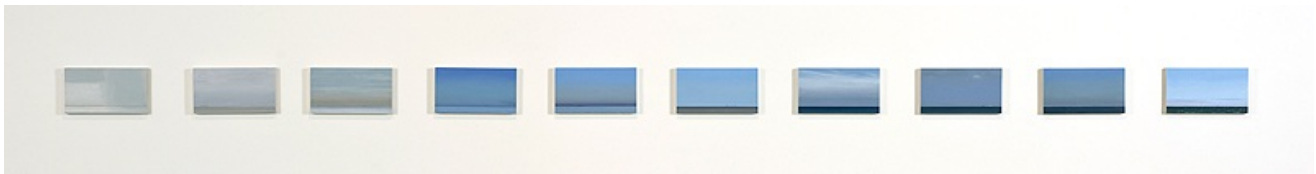
*Pink Plank* 2011  
oil on canvas  
51 x 91cm



*10 days, 10 Horizons* 2012 #1  
oil on panel  
16.7 x 30 each total length 300cm



*10 days, 10 Horizons* 2012 #10  
oil on panel  
16.7 x 30cm



# Naomi White

"Shadows have been telling us the time of day for thousands of years." NAOMI WHITE 2012



*Morning Whispers* 2012  
oil on canvas  
46 x 183cm





In-situ on 3.7m wall



In-situ on 3.7m wall



*Afternoon Secrets* 2012  
oil on canvas  
46 x 183cm

# Caroline Rannersberger

"...the task of painting sensation stands as a testament to time beyond memory and location" CAROLINE RANNERSBERGER 2012



*Unveiling Hartz* 2012  
oil and pigment on paper  
4 panels x 120 x 40cm (framed)



In-situ on 3.7m wall

# Peter James Smith

"Other objects from the past also bring with them the emotional tenor of their prior lives..." PETER JAMES SMITH 2012



Title: *Carried*, 2012  
Medium: oil, enamel and collage on breakfast/drinks trays  
(approximately 60 individual trays)  
Sizes variable 38 x 48cm

# Christine Willcocks

"Time, forever on the move leaving remnants of the past in its wake." CHRISTINE WILLCOCKS 2012



*Pteridomania* 2012  
Drypoint etching from cardboard  
edition of 4  
40 x 60cm



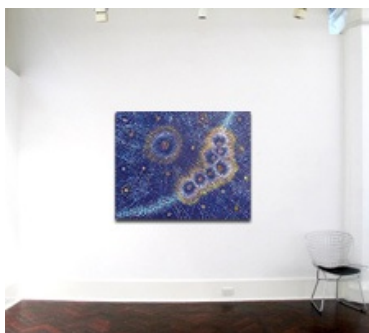
*Cutting Through the Past* 2012  
Drypoint etching from cardboard  
edition of 4  
48 x 60cm



# Alma Hungurrayi Granites



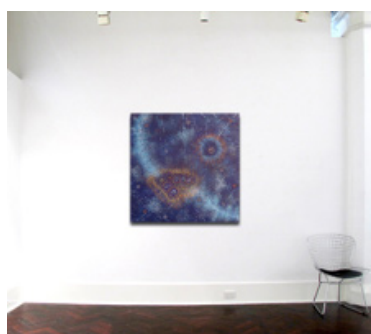
*Seven Sisters Dreaming 2012*  
Code 785-12  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 152cm



in-situ on 3.7m wall



*Seven Sisters Dreaming 2012*  
Code 712-12  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 122cm

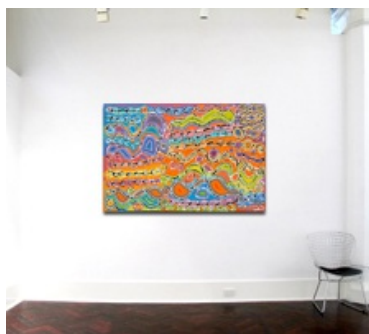


in-situ on 3.7m wall

# Judy Napangardi Watson



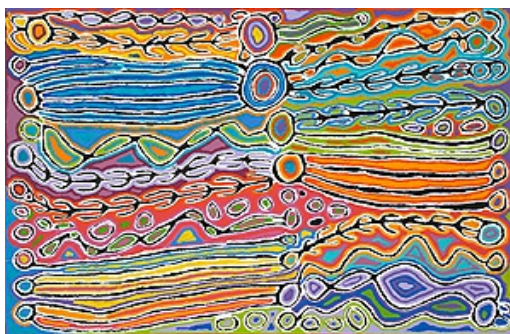
*Mina Mina 2012*  
Code 00124  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 183cm



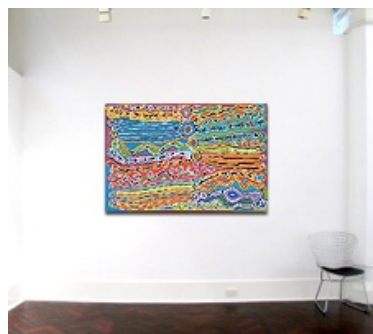
in-situ on 3.7m wall



install images



*Mina Mina 2012*  
Code 00125  
acrylic on linen  
122 x 183cm



in-situ on 3.7m wall



*Mina Mina* 2012  
Code 00123  
acrylic on linen  
150 x 209cm



in-situ on 3.7m wall

#### FOOTNOTES

\*1. Hesse, H., *Siddhartha*, 1922

\*2 Smith, K., *The enigma of the offering: the representation of light and colour in sea and sky*, Monash University, 2011

\*3 Zourabichvili F., in Patton, P., ed. *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p.196

\*4 Smith, P. J., 'Rediscovering lines of longitude', *Visual Animals*, (ed. I North), Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, 2007