

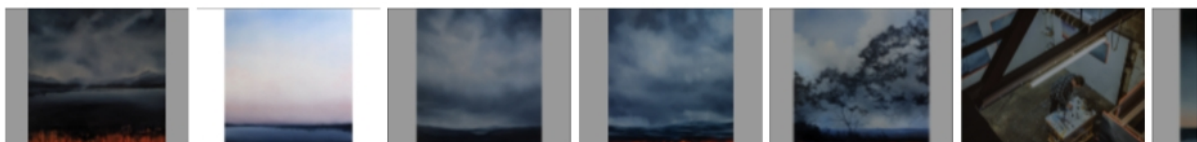
ARTIST PROFILE

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Joshua Andree

By Imogen Charge

Emerging Tasmanian artist Joshua Andree's practice revolves around painting the coastal regions of the west coast and his home in nipaluna (Hobart). Delicate, yet deep landscapes illustrate Andree's *Personal Geography*, the title of his show at Moonah Arts Centre.



Congratulations on winning the Packing Room Prize in the Hadley's Art Prize. Can you tell me more about your work and the significance of its title, *Once Still Water (Requiem for a Lake)*?

The west coast of Tasmania is a contested environment, it's got 250 years of industry that's degraded the land and the history of Aboriginal extermination dating back to that period, but also the continued presence of that community. Being there is isolating, lonely and quiet, you really feel these bodies of water that are crucibles for darker histories. The reflective, still waters of those lakes counteract the monumental geology of the hills and the mountains that hold them. It's a stark and visual experience to have as an artist, and it's alluring to be there. There's a disconnection and an otherness to the West Coast, which fascinates me as a painter.

Once Still Water (Requiem for a Lake) refers specifically to the pursuits of the Mount Lyell company, who mined copper on the west coast and formed and scarred the landscape with these practices. A lot of the lakes on the west coast are man-made for the hydro scheme to power these pursuits; being in those environments is kind of jarring, to know these vast bodies of water aren't real. It's an interesting tension between the vastness of the landscape and the depth of time that's taken to create that landscape versus the man-made incisions into the landscape. These are the drivers of *Once Still Water (Requiem for a Lake)*, and they direct my practice more broadly. The painting itself isn't necessarily a picture of the place, it speaks more to being there, and the multiplicity of experience that comes with being in these places, travelling through and to them.

Looking at the painting you can feel that tension between the eery stillness of the lake, and the sky on the verge of breaking open.

It rains 360 days of the year on the west coast, it's a pretty unforgiving landscape. To be there is to be in the weather. I think on the coast you have a sense of the *Tasmanian noir*, or the *Tasmanian gothic* that is creeping

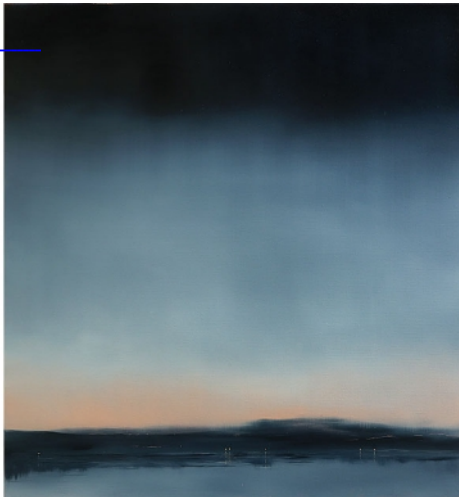
its way into the vernacular of art and film, here lends itself to using the weather as a characterisation of the landscape. The use of the grim, dull rainy elements of the landscape lean into capturing that gothic sense, the darkness of the histories of those places.

The frame of *Once Still Water (Requiem for a Lake)* is King Billy Pine, one of the oldest woods in the world that's found in Tasmania, what was the reason behind this choice?

It came about through a conversation with a friend of mine; we spoke about the painting, and the subject matter of mining pursuits and how the landscape changed, and he said, 'I've got the thing for you!' We went back to his workshop, and he had a couple of the original pipe staves from the Lake Margaret power station, which powered the Mount Lyell mining company from its inception. Also thinking about it as a pre-colonial relic, it was in the ground at least 200 years before white people came here, a representation of the depth of time. Whilst it speaks to contemporary issues, but it also speaks to a deeper time and multiple histories and how they are layered within the painting. I don't think *Once Still Water (Requiem for a Lake)* would have the presence it has without that frame; it's a really important element of the painting so I was lucky to be able to include it.

You were also one of the judges' honourable mentions.

To be alongside some of Australia's best painters, and particularly artists that I've looked up to since I was at school, Michaye Boulter, Philip Wolfhagen, Raymond Arnold, Megan Walch, was a bit of a blow out for me, it's great.



Joshua Andree in the studio. Photographed by Andrew Wilson

You currently have a show at Moonah Arts Centre, *Personal Geography*, what can we expect from this exhibition?

I recently had a body of work on show at Despard Gallery in Hobart, and the paintings in that show spoke about similar landscapes to the one I entered in the Hadley's Prize. The paintings for *Personal Geography* at Moonah are more immediate responses from my home in Hobart's northern suburbs: and they fed into the construction of other paintings. I wake up and I see a different sunrise every day, we get a perfect vista of different atmospheric conditions that grace the south of Tasmania. It's necessary for me to bring in the influences of the sky that I live under everyday into the studio, so the show at Moonah is essentially a collection of studies of those small hours of the day that have fed into major works that are direct responses to my lived experience, my home environment. I think it's important to take different angles on things, but also to remember you don't need to be the wilderness explorer archetype to be a genuine and humble landscape painter. *Personal Geography* is that exactly, it's the landscape that orientates my painting practice.

Your practice focusses on painting Tasmania's coastal regions, is there a location that you are always drawn back to?

I guess that has come and gone over the years, I take a bit of a scattered approach to the landscapes that I choose to paint. But one place that captivates me and captivates the imagination of many Tasmanian landscape painters is Ocean Beach on the west coast, which stretches from Strahan in the south to Trial Harbour in the north. It's a body of land that sweeps across 30 kilometres and you look out 17,000 kilometres to the next body of land, Argentina, it's like the end of the world. The great Tasmanian painter Geoff Dyer, who passed a few years ago, returned to that place repeatedly, and as a young painter growing up in his shadow, I felt captivated, so whenever I get that chance to go to the West Coast, that's where I go. That's where I find the power in the landscape, and the true meaning of what is it to be present in something that's a lot bigger than you. To make good landscape paintings, you need to feel small at some point, and being on Ocean Beach does that for me.



Do you tend to paint from photographs or from your memory?

I take a lot of photos; to take a photo is to observe the landscape in a particular way. I work from these photos loosely, and whilst I'm not an abstract painter my paintings are abstractions of the landscape. So, the photos for me are more colour palettes, and influences for basic line drawings of the geologic forms observed. Other painters will spend a lot of time in the environment, but I tend to spend a lot of time in my studio. For me it's important to be able to bring these experiences into the studio, but also to keep the studio to be its own thing and for my paintings to reflect the landscape and a reflection of studio practice.

Can you give us some insight into what a typical day in the studio looks like for you?

I ride my bike down here most days, these 30 minutes gives me a chance to get some fresh air and be present in the landscape before I get to the studio. I try to get here around 8:30, if I'm starting a painting I have usually stretched and primed the canvas the day before, then will start mixing my colours . . . If I haven't started painting by 10:30 then the day is practically over. My practice is really one thin veil of paint that needs to go on in one hit, if I leave it overnight then it's too tacky to work with the next day. Then about 4:00 p.m. we tend to go to the pub.

