

Island home sparks inspiration



GALLERY WATCH

Clyde Selby

Dreamscapes

By Melanie McCollin-Walker

Peter Barraclough Studio, Wooby's Lane, Salamanca

Until August 5

Price range: \$450 - \$7500

BARBADOS is a prosperous island in the eastern Caribbean that has some cultural similarities to this island state with its British heritage and attachment to the Queen as its titular head.

However there are many more marked differences as it is only about the size of King Island and yet the spectrum of mixed ethnicity causes its population to be larger than that of Hobart.

From this balmy tropical speck that nearly misses out on all the tropical storms that beset neighbouring nations comes Melanie McCollin-Walker. She has journeyed to our island by the circuitous route of Britain before settling in Singapore where she now lives with her Tasmanian partner.

As the mysterious, brooding qualities and unusual light perennially inspired admiration as far back as the time of the early explorers, so too is she drawn to paint the rugged shores of Tasmania.

Almost entirely self-taught, she has taken up the opportunity of a six-week residency funded by Salamanca Arts Centre.

Her process is to trowel impasto on white Belgian linen canvas so as to give the surface the desired organic quality and then to build up a landscape with the application of high quality American acrylics.

Various pictures are identified as actual locations by visitors looking at the displayed works.

In actuality, not only does she dispense with the use of photographs but her scenery is imagined and pivotal upon emotional responses to many places with none specifically in mind.

Really, when it is considered, wherever



one goes in the world there are the same basic elements of earth, air and water that manifest in the form of mountains and valleys, clouds and oceans, rives and lakes. It is size, terrain and climate that provide the variations.

Melanie is one of innumerable landscape artists who look at the natural areas devoid of all human occupation or intrusion and consign it into an image to suit their own individual way of expression.

This artist primarily has an expressive and gestural style of mixed media. Her thoughts and feelings result in light and natural elements married to an effective combination of earth tones and grey that contrast with a range of blues.

One can see the abstraction of William Turner in *Drifting* with its light-filled swirls or maybe suggestions in *Awakening* of Australia's Heidelberg School of Impression at the other end of the 19th century.

In truth however the artist is only beginning to be able to recognise the great and the good



BROODING: *Awakening*, above, and *Wandering*, left, are part of Melanie McCollin-Walker's *Dreamscapes* exhibition at Peter Barraclough Studio.

practitioners in the tradition of Western art. Her education has been that of the comparatively free spirit but she happily has been acquiring artistic skills as she proceeds through life.

Although not of a particular place, most of her paintings can be seen as colour-filled views of land and sea with accompanying dramatic clouds.

Wandering has a green-tinged sky and is less proscriptive with greater scope for the imagination. Are all the barely-perceived vertical shapes a mist-shrouded

forest or can they be the masts of ships? Could indeed it be a port such as Bristol or Lisbon in the 17th and 18th centuries bound for Barbados with a cargo of hapless humanity from West Africa who have been ensnared or even sold into slavery by their own chiefs?

Whether it is Barbados, Britain, Singapore or Tasmania, her pursuit is to encapsulate the essence of an island. Once confusing the name with the country in Africa, she now loves and appreciates the difference between here and Tanzania.

SCHOOLHOUSE GALLERY & ROSNY BARN

CLARENCE OPEN ART EXHIBITION

26 OCTOBER-16 NOVEMBER 2014

CALL FOR ENTRIES The exhibition is open to any artists who are resident in Tasmania and includes prizes totalling \$3000

ENTRY FORMS Available on the Clarence City Council website www.ccc.tas.gov.au or call the Schoolhouse Gallery on 6245 8740 or schoolhouse@ccc.tas.gov.au **ENTRIES CLOSE** 10 October 2014

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