



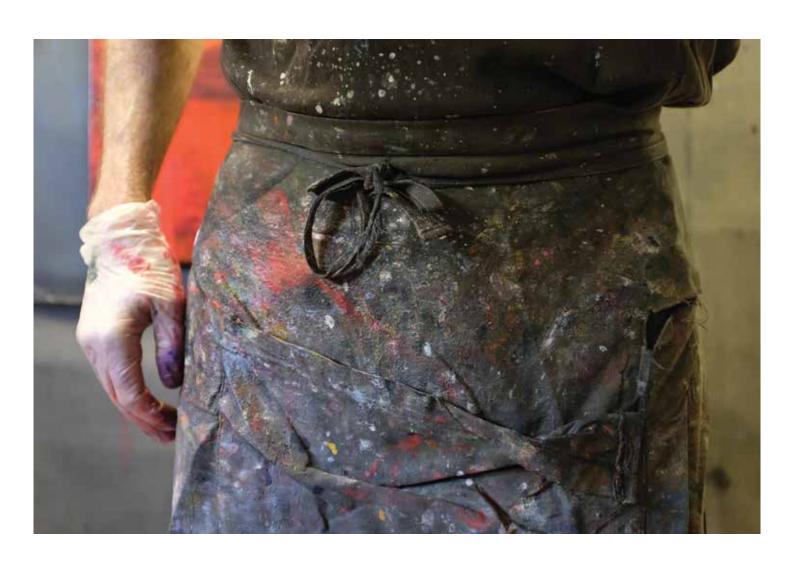
# John Bartley Dark beautiful

18 February – 14 March 2020



10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday 177-185 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia T: 61 2 9360 9727 E: art@kingstreetgallery.com www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

Front cover: Imperfection 2019 acrylic on canvas 72x72cm





Transverse 2019 acrylic on board 60 x 55 cm



Cinderellas guardian 2019 acrylic on canvas 72 x 72 cm

### Dark beautiful

This is a personal response to John Bartley's paintings and to a body of work that I know hasn't come easily to him. As it turns out, this short piece of writing hasn't come easily to me. The paintings, whose creation at times was a challenge for John, became for me an almost overwhelming pleasure that indeed overwhelmed me.

There are so many things I want to say. Apart from thinking that these paintings are utterly beautiful I am struck by how strongly they bring to mind ideas around darkness. Why do these paintings feel uplifting when they are at times so dark? Is it the light that seems to glow from behind the dark paint? And what is that light in darkness doing to the surrounding colours that takes us to the old masters? Because some passages in these works could be abstracted thoughts in paint

that flashed through the mind of Tiepolo, or El Greco, just before sleep. Dreamy, indefinite edges of colour; like clouds, these might shift the next time we turn to look at the canvas. If what John is painting seems like landscapes, then they are decidedly internal lands in which tiny vignettes reveal themselves like little moments of truth, making even the smallest paintings in the show feel strangely monumental.

But it is the tenor of each painting as a whole that reveals to us what I know to be true, that John's response centre is his heart, not his head. It is almost palpable: he reacts to the physicality of mark and colour through his feelings, rather than through his thoughts. We are looking across and through a memory, or a series of deeply felt impressions. The paintings in this exhibition were



hard-won in moments of personal darkness and enlightenment. They are dark and passionate: they are dark beautiful.

I suggest passion because these paintings are, well, steamy. Even those painted in cooler tones seem humid, languid. But Bartley's slow-reveal sensuousness is tempered by restraint: look closely, the paint on the canvas is really very thin, holding the contradiction of sheer smoothness, long depths of field and a nearly tactile but fast evaporating beauty.

The darkness in these paintings more than hints at intimacy. There is a darkness to intimacy, even just to the idea of intimacy: when we are intimate we are up close, enclosed, private. In these paintings there is something of the intimacy and ardour we

hear in certain voices: I'm thinking of Maria Callas and Nick Cave. They share with John Bartley a dark romance of the heart and a suggestion of the flesh yearning along with the heart for meaning.

We turn to art for visual pleasure, but also for clues as to how we might navigate this lived experience, accepting darkness at the same time as maintaining a connection with passion. This is because art opens up the space for us to discuss and consider very personal, meaningful things. Watching reality all the time is not necessarily a good way of seeing life clearly.

Sonia Legge, 2019



Shark fin blues 2019 acrylic on canvas 140 x 106 cm



Dark beautiful 2019 acrylic on canvas 90 x 60 cm



Rising tide 2019 acrylic on canvas 90 x 60 cm



Flesh 2019 acrylic on wood panel 60 x 55 cm



Kneeling 2019 acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 cm



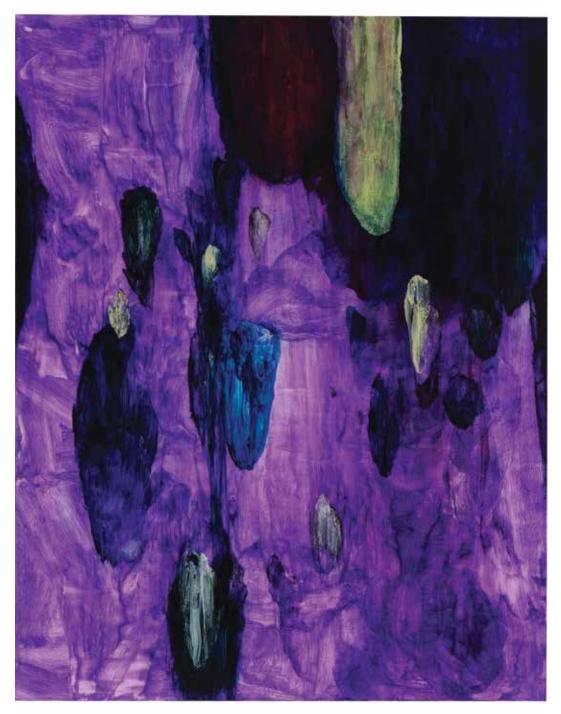
Phone box 2019 acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 cm



Cameo 2019 acrylic on wood panel 40 x 40 cm



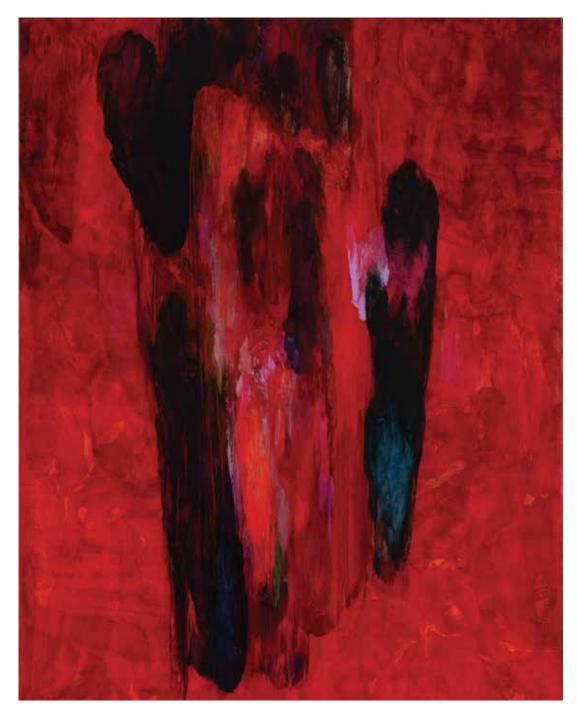
Tight squeeze 2019 acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 cm



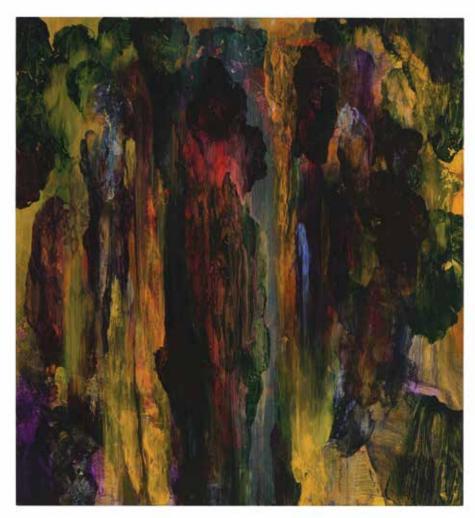
Immaculate conception 2019 acrylic on canvas 140 x 106 cm



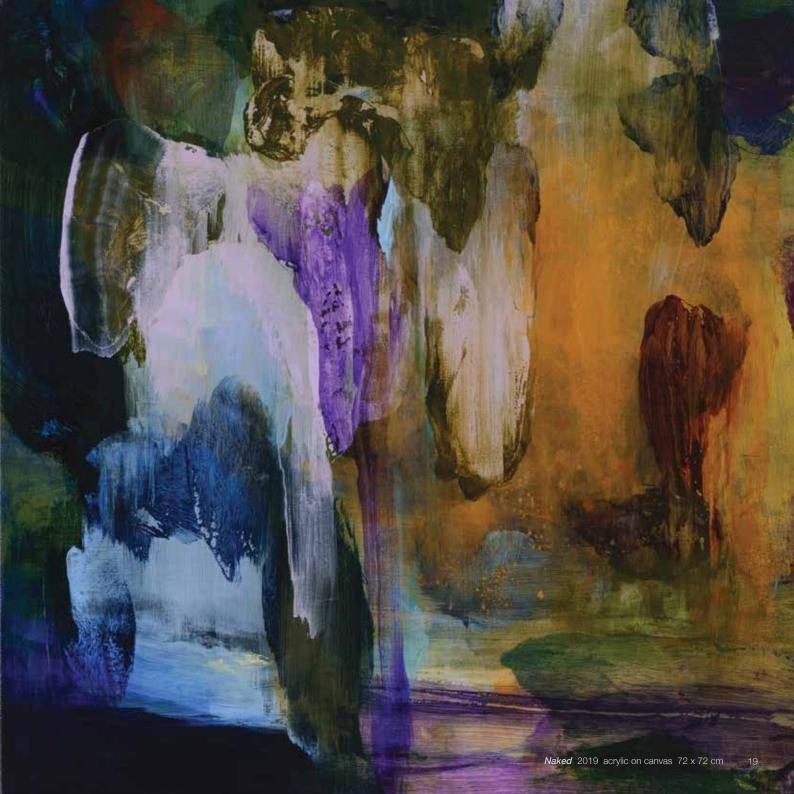
Lost souls 2019 acrylic on canvas 58 x 95 cm



Vision 2019 acrylic on canvas 140 x 106 cm



Dark velvet 2019 acrylic on wood panel 60 x 55 cm





Little landscape 2019 acrylic on canvas 30 x 30 cm



Gathering 2019 acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 cm



Lost 2019 acrylic on wood panel 40 x 40 cm



Perfect 2019 acrylic on wood panel 40 x 40 cm



Lighthouse 2019 acrylic on wood panel 55 x 60 cm



Drift 2019 acrylic on canvas 40 x 90 cm

## John Bartley

Born

1956 Sydney, Australia

Education

1986-88 Art Certificate & Higher Art Certificate East Sydney Technical College

Solo exhibitions

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2020	Dark beautiful King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2018	Tweed, Hill End, Home Watters Gallery, Sydney
2016	Outside Watters Gallery
2014	On a Clear Day Watters Gallery
2012	Songs to the Siren Watters Gallery
2010	Air Watters Gallery
2009	Coming Up for Air Legge Gallery, Sydney
2007	Treading Water Legge Gallery
2006	Voyages Legge Gallery
2003	Saints Legge Gallery
2002	5 and 7 Legge Gallery
2001	High-key Holes Legge Gallery
1999	Devils In The Backseat Legge Gallery
1998	On The Wing Legge Gallery
1997	Belly Songs Legge Gallery
1996	Actually I've Always Wanted To Be A Singer! (a reprise) Legge Gallery
1995	Buildings, Food, God, Sex, Life, Death Legge Gallery
1994	Upstairs Legge Gallery
1993	Dark Cars With Maps Legge Gallery
1992	Progression Through Loss Legge Gallery
1991	Actually I've Always Wanted To Be A Singer Legge Gallery
1990	Drawings Legge Gallery

Looking For Jack Legge Gallery

#### Group exhibitions [selected]

2019	Inside/Outside King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
	Abstract '19 King Street Gallery on William
2018	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2016	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery & Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
2014	Watters Gallery 50th Anniversary Exhibition Watters Gallery
2013	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
2012	Mosman Art Prize Mosman Council
	Stand Up Close: Remembering Ron Lambert Wollongong City Gallery
	Melbourne Art Fair 2012 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
	Gallipoli Art Prize Gallipoli Club, Sydney
2011	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery and Tweed River Regional Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, NSW
	Frank's Flat Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW
2010	Melbourne Art Fair 2010 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

2009 2008	John Bartley, Vivienne Ferguson & Derek O'Connor Legge Gallery. Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery and Tweed River Art Gallery Murwillumbah Melbourne Art Fair 2008 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
2007	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery  Art Sydney 2007 Royal Hall of Industries, Moore Park, Sydney
2006	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery Melbourne Art Fair 2006 Royal Exhibition Building John Bartley and Vivienne Ferguson at Silvershot Melbourne The Year in Art S.H. Ervin Gallery
2005	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
2004	Depth of Field – Anamorphosis Utopia Art Sydney
	Mosman Art Prize Mosman Council
	Melbourne Art Fair 2004 Royal Exhibition Building
2003	The Year in Art S.H. Ervin Gallery
2002	Melbourne Art Fair 2002 Royal Exhibition Building
2000	Seventh Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, Vic
1999	University & Schools Club Art Prize Sydney
1998	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
	Sixth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building
	The Bryan Niland Collection Penrith Regional Gallery, NSW
1996	Fifth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building
1994	Fourth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building
1992	Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
1991	Common Sense Curated by Jacques Delaruelle, University of South Australia, SA
1990	Mosman Art Prize Mosman Council Common Sense Curated by Jacques Delaruelle, King Street Gallery on Burton
1989	Inside the Greenhouse Tin Sheds Gallery
1988	Faber-Castell Drawing Prize Rex Irwin Gallery
	Graduating Show East Sydney Technical College, Cell Block Theatre

#### Awards & residencies

2019	Police Point, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
2017	Hill End, Haefligers Cottage, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
2016	Tweed Regional Gallery, AIR
2015	Tweed Regional Gallery, AIR
2012	Henry Bucks - Commendation Prize Mosman Art Prize
1990	Mosman Art Prize, Sydney

#### Collections

Allens Collection Faber-Castell

Artbank Federal Law Court of Australia

Baker and McKenzie Laverty Collection

BHP Billiton Mosman Council Collection
Clayton Utz Collection University & Schools Club





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