

Clarice Beckett and Idris Murphy. Review.

‘ By chance, this is the final day of Idris Murphy’s exhibition of landscapes at King Street Gallery on Burton (Sydney) though his works on paper show begins at the gallery’s King Street, Newtown venue on may 13. Anyone who savours Beckett will find resonances of her work in these lyrical evocations of place—called “ landskips” by the artist in honour of Constable. To my knowledge Murphy doesn’t cart his equipment around in a trolley, but his paintings have the force of talismans brought back from the site of their creation. Jacques Delaruelle put it better by saying that Murphy “ shows the grounding of thought in perception” and in doing this “makes it clear that the spirit hides neither inside nor outside the body, but is very much mingled with things” His paintings are an almost literal enactment of this Delaruellian mingling, with loose slurries and promiscuous slippages of pigment wonderfully administered by pictorial intelligence.

Another of Murphy’s interpreters. John McDonald. Once referred to the painter’s ability to capture “ the feelings of looking into a landscape at dusk or dawn. or perhaps as a storm is brewing”, inadvertently but happily aligning him with Beckett’s preferred times of day and climatic conditions. With Pink Sand, Riverbed; The Bank, Mootwingee; Waterhole, Reflections and Contemplating eveing, Murphy certainly stakes a claim in a comparable geographic demesne. I’m not saying he’s a Beckett clone, indeed, Murphy is independent to the point of outright renegadism in terms of his painterly practice. But I do hold that Beckett can be seen to have carved out a conceptual place in Australian art for the quietness and reflection of painters of his calibre.

The Sydney Morning Herald Saturday, May I 1999 Bruce James.

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