

'Fault', 1998, etching, lift ground and aquatint printed from one copper plate with chine colle, 60 x 60 cm



'Geodesy', 1999, etching, lift ground aquatint printed from two copper plates in two colours with chine colle, 90 x 90 cm

Profiles in Print – MARTIN KING

AT exactly the same time that Martin King was born in Melbourne in 1957, Fred Williams had moved from Melbourne to Mittagong and embarked on his radical reinterpretation of the Australian landscape and his first series of landscape etchings.

Coincidences and chance occurrences punctuate Martin King's life and art. One night while camping at Uluru, he shared dinner with the Chamberlains, the following day their baby Azaria disappeared. On another occasion when being driven past an exposed section of the 350 million year old Devonian reef in the Kimberley, he witnessed massive blasting for a zinc mine that dramatically altered the profile of a landscape which had taken millennia to evolve. The car moved on and the newly created

landscape vanished from view, but the memory of this accidental encounter left a lingering impression. The intersection of chance, memory and personal experience are a key to his art making process.

Martin King studied at the Caulfield Technical College, where as chance would have it, the master printmaker John Neeson taught. Neeson became a guide and mentor and King became a printmaker. He later studied lithography at the Sydney College of the Arts under Fred Genis and Chris Croft and then went on to the Graphic Investigation Workshop at the ANU School of Art in Canberra, where under Petr Herel's guidance, he was drawn into the making of the artists book. By the time he was 30, he was one of the best trained printmakers in the country



'Dry Season', 2004, etching, lift ground aquatint, drypoint, printed from two copper plates with encaustic and watercolour, 90 x 180 cm



'Across the Range II', 2004, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite printed from two copper plates in two colours, 45 x 45 cm

and a highly sought after printer of other artists' work. He subsequently worked as the longest serving Master Printer at the Australian Print Workshop in Melbourne.

Martin King as a printmaker has been chiefly preoccupied with the Australian landscape, but not as a celebration of a green and gold Arcadia, nor even of the peculiar landscape vision of Fred Williams with those precious silhouetted trees, but as a unique vision which stems from his total emersion within the landscape itself. He is both a keen bushwalker and bird watcher. As a student he walked through the Tasmanian landscape with a fellow Caulfield Tech student, the printmaker Ray Arnold, and became an itinerant traveller working as artist-in-residence with the Teenage Roadshow Company, living and teaching in out-back schools and communities in NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Constant travel has remained his way of life, now frequently working with Aboriginal artists in remote communities.

While King developed an early commitment to the landscape, finding an appropriate formal language was a more challenging task. When he was studying in Australia, anyone interested in landscape art was influenced by Fred Williams, but to be cloned by another's vision was to stunt one's own development. It was while travelling in Europe, Russia and the US in 1983–84 that he felt the need for a serious reassessment in his art and was drawn to the work of Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich. In both artists he found something magical in their sense of mark making, an intense visual experience distilled in an art object.

Back in Australia, using Mondrian and Malevich as points of departure, and increasingly experiencing the Kimberley landscape, King's majestic images of the Australian landscape began to emerge. The skin of the landscape, its topography and underlying geological structure, like the bones of a skeleton, are combined, superimposed and arranged against a loose geometric structure. In addition to their strong formal structure, his etchings and lithographs are also intuitive renditions where memory, experience and the printmaking process, all play an expressive role.

In most of his etchings, including *Geodesy*, *Rain Shadow: Even Song*, *Rain Shadow: Small Storm* and *Across the Range*, by using multiple plates while working on a single print, dif-

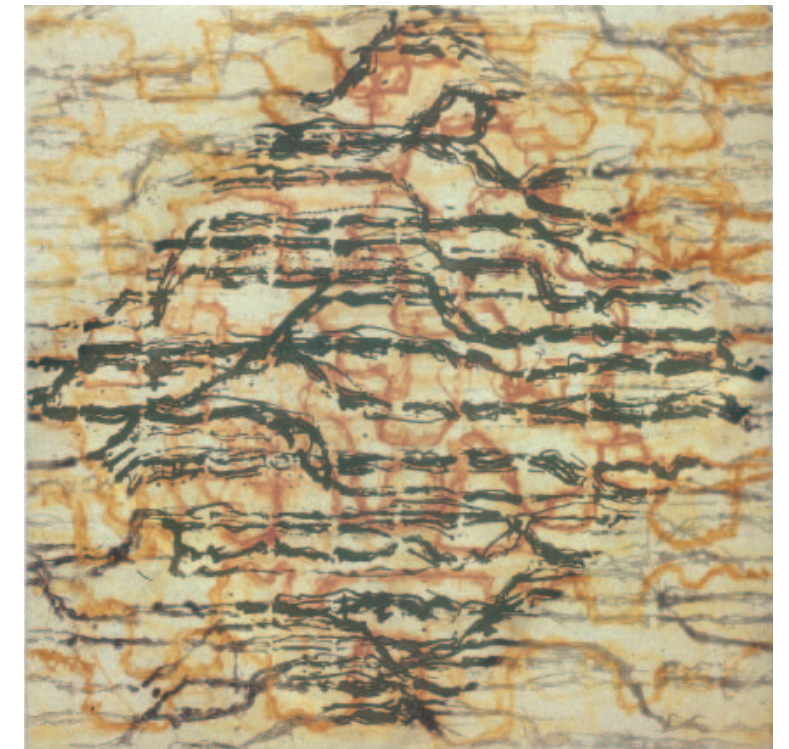
'Across the Range III', 2004, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite printed from two plates in three colours with chine colle, 45 x 45 cm

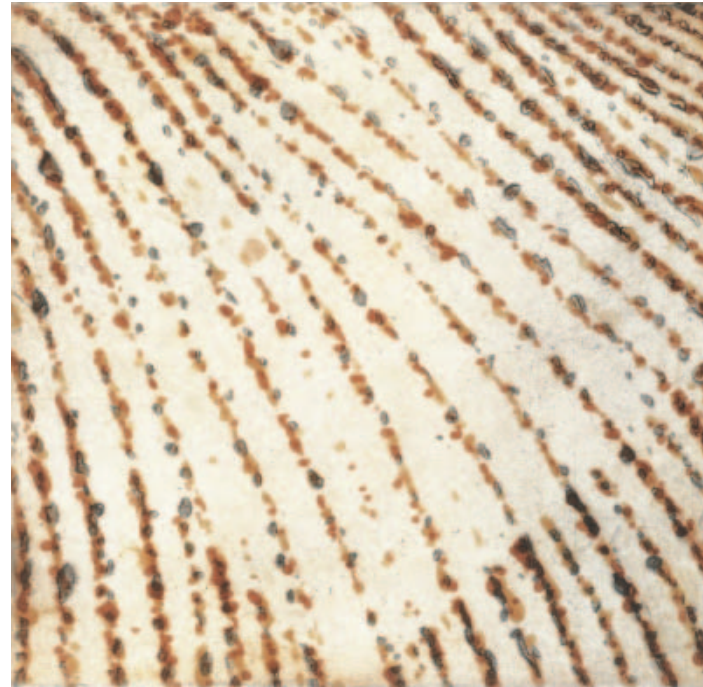


'Across the Range', 2004, etching, lift ground aquatint, drypoint, printed from two copper plates with encaustic and watercolour, 90 x 180 cm



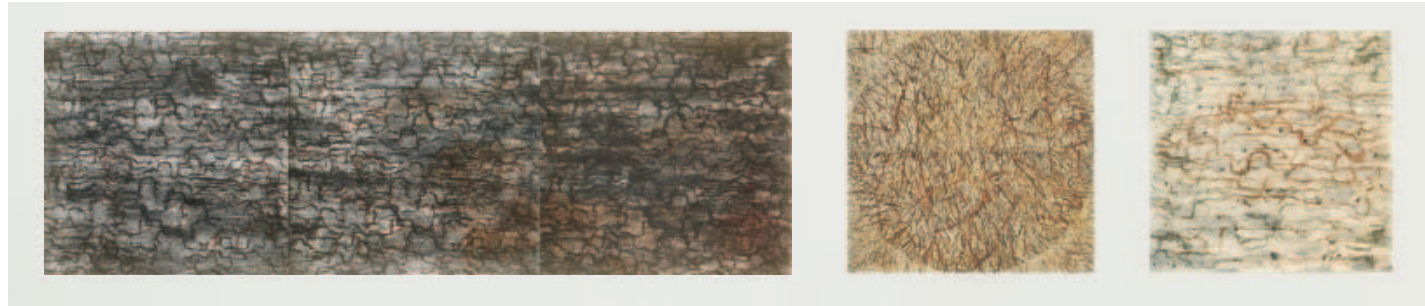
'Rain Shadow: Even Song', 2001, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite printed from two copper plates in three colours with chine colle, 90 x 90 cm



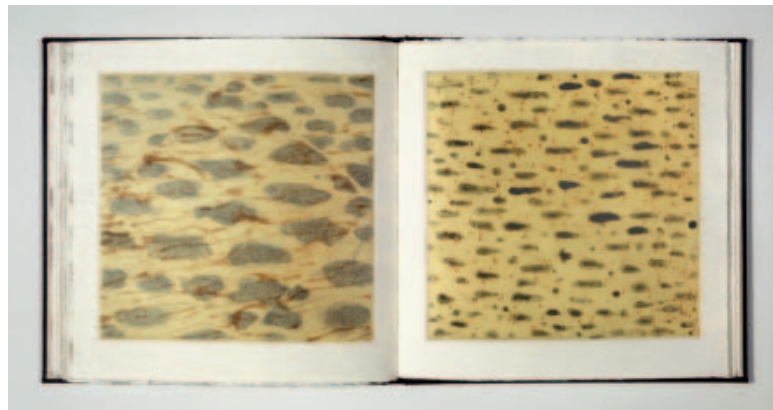


'First Rain', 2003, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite printed from two copper plates in two colours, 45 x 45 cm

'First Rrain II', 2003, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite, drypoint, printed from three copper plates in three colours, 30 x 30cm



'Drawing Dust Installation', 2004, etching, lift ground aquatint, drypoint, printed from six plates, chine colle, encaustic and watercolour, 90 x 450 cm



'Book of Shadow', 1999, etching, lift ground aquatint, spit bite, drypoint, printed from two copper plates in two colours with chine colle, each etching 18x 18 cm



'Book of Land', 1997, etching, drypoint, roulette, aquatint, printed from two copper plates in two colours with chine colle, each etching 23 x 23 cm

ferent images are superimposed creating the impression of multiple viewpoints, where marks combine and collide in a random yet deliberate manner, like coincidences that punctuate life, art and nature. There's also a loose tilted grid-like structure which 'is used to articulate and describe the receding topographic features.' The prints have an enormous sense of presence and a quiet spirituality that seems to radiate from their surfaces.

The artists books, which have been a feature of his work for a couple of decades, such as *Book of Land*, 1997 and *Book of Shadow*, 1999, in a more intimate manner combine the prints into a loose personal narrative. On one level, *Book of Land*, deals with the artist's journey from central Melbourne, where he was living at the time, to the Kimberley, and sets up a certain dialogue concerning travel and chance encounters between these different centres of interest. On another level it deals with the Kimberley during the dry season. In contrast, *Book of Shadow* explores the onset of the monsoon rains and the wet season, with the different seasons setting up a chain of coincidences in the artist's life and travels. The artists books invite you to an intense and personal encounter with a whole philosophy of travelling within, above and beyond the landscape.

As a printmaker, Martin King has given a new interpretation to the Australian landscape which is both lyrical and dramatic. Although challenging and unusual, it advances a new sense of order which after a little while appears to us as a natural order, one which the artist has discovered rather than invented and imposed.

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