

The square appears to float off the canvas and becomes a three-dimensional canvas on a canvas. It is the type of image that, no matter how simple, it intrigues and the viewer enters and contemplates the blue void or abyss.

In his *Studio Series*, Hickey rearranges and repaints scenes of his studio as if he were painting a still life. He defines, refines, and abstracts key elements in the composition. Objects such as the easel, canvases, extension lead, auto-tray, materials, and equipment are arranged within compositions that are flat and theatrical. The studio is a stage, a metaphor of the artist's life. The canvas and the studio window are constant motifs that interconnect and ambiguously play with dimensions. The canvas becomes a window, the window a canvas. The cross is another motif consistently used.

In *Untitled (Easel)* (1986) a side profile view of a stretcher is shown on an easel, while another canvas is shown front on, both as works in progress. The color palette is restrained and cold, mostly black and grey. The horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines of the easels and canvases dominate the composition, and apart from various indecipherable painters' objects the rest of the room is a black square. There is a poetic selection of forms, lines and the abstraction of them.

In his more recent works such as *Untitled (Studio)* (2005) the forms of canvases and/or windows within the black box of the studio take on varying meanings and philosophical overtones. The studio becomes like Plato's cave and a cup glows on the table, appearing almost radioactive. A canvas on the easel looks like a view of the sky outside. The scene is lit dramatically like a theater set and the studio a still life. Hard-edged forms, the flat application of paint, and the analytical compositions are controlled in Hickey's works, but they are far from static or bland. Another recurring motif is the extension cord, often portrayed in various states, used, unused, or maybe being used. Objects become metaphors for possible narratives.

The studio as subject is a key constraint through which Hickey's art and pictorial language has evolved, resulting in works that are strangely alluring and imaginative.

Sandy Caldwell

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## Sydney

### Jumaadi at Legge Gallery

With back-to-back shows at Sydney's Legge Gallery, East Java artist Jumaadi encourages viewers to enter his world of nostalgic storytelling and loss. One can easily mistake these consecutive exhibitions as offering a new direction within Jumaadi's *oeuvre*. An artist known for shifting between mediums with lyric sensitivity and dexterity, his work is described as possessing a Chagall-like naivety and intelligence. Rather, what sets these exhibitions apart is their tone. They are a poignant ode of lament, of a young man's loss of his father.

Made within the gallery space during a 40-day period of mourning, his first exhibition consisted of two enormous drawings on mulberry paper. The dream-like images float across countless sheets of paper tiled together with no formal arrangement and moving between light, sketchy narrations, seemingly vapors of memory, and heavily worked figures whose blackness brings

weight and rhythm to its tale. It is not surprising, looking at this horizontal epic, to learn that Jumaadi grew up on the Mahabharata.

Walking into the gallery one is quite unaware of Jumaadi's personal mourning; however, there is a sincerity, fragility, and rawness in this work that is immediately felt. Like the obscure narratives of Aboriginal painting, beyond our understanding but holding a deep connection with the land and a spiritual world, Jumaadi's drawings exist within the realm of the unconscious.

The individual pages are abutted, randomly swapping between horizontal and vertical format. This chaos intuitively connects their surreal content: a lonely Buffalo breathing life from a tree, a half-man, half-angel figure and the repeated text "*and he said little... but no longer...*," they are the only hints of the artist's flight of spirit and journey back to his father. It is an extremely poignant exhibition.

Jumaadi's second show, *Story from Sky, Cloud and Rain*, expands on his drawings with 18 multi-panel paintings on board, canvas board, and paper, but these feel contrived by comparison. The strength of this latter exhibition lies in the works on paper. Their decaled paper edge has a sympathy with the medium and they tend to be more fluidly intuitive when compared with the canvas boards that seem to pop with a formulaic naivety.

As an Australian viewing this latter show, I struggled to

see beyond a description of a landscape and of imaging of a religious psyche that Colin MacCahon achieved with his quintessential landscape and text paintings but perhaps this problem simply points to the startling clarity and originality of Jumaadi's drawings?

While we may connect visually with MacCahon, it must be said Jumaadi's compulsion to make this work comes from a sincere position. Their cathartic repetition, perhaps best captured in the work *Lalahula Mama... Lalahula...*, the first panel-piece that Jumaadi made and obviously still in the logic of drawing, collects 30 small pages from a sketchbook. Its singsong title could be mistaken as Bahasa or Javanese, but it is in fact a nonsensical phrase, a kind of lament for his newly alone mother with the comfort of a lullaby.

Icons familiar to Jumaadi continue to emerge in these new works—a tree, a cloud, a road—their subconscious, non-linear manuscript connecting with oral histories and his cultural roots are navigational aids across this period of great personal expression. What is more interesting in this suite of works is that Jumaadi moves from the colorful frenzy of figuration to a calm resolve and uncharacteristic minimalism found in the horizon.

This is the essence of an Australian landscape and what he had dreamed of sharing with his father. The last piece made, *Horizon and Rain*, for this writer, encapsulates the



Jumaadi, *Horizon and Rain*, 2007, gouache on paper, 55 x 121 cm, 27 panels each 18 x 12.5 cm. Image: Courtesy the Artist and Legge Gallery, Sydney.

resolve arrived at through this exhibition. While the horizontal line shifts vertically across the work with the meter of music, this painting offers space for contemplation. The individual tiles that make up this work are not dissimilar to the luminous, soft-edge abstractions of Mark Rothko. Jumaadi dares to divert from his signature figuration to a timeless abstract. Is it the spiritual passage of mourning, the diffused definition between place or the calm clarity of new futures?

Gina Fairley

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## ENGLAND

### London

#### From Russia at the Royal Academy of Arts

As an art history student in New York more than 50 years ago, I clearly remember reading articles about the lives and cultural activities of Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov, two extraordinary Russian collectors, who pioneered the display of modernist painting and sculpture to audiences in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the beginning of the 20th century. This pair of visionaries, who

made their fortunes as textile merchants, was not only daring in the choices of works purchased and commissioned, but were legendary patrons who, among others, assisted painters like Matisse and Picasso at a time when their careers were enjoying only a minimum of success. In 1918 both collections were appropriated by the state and in 1922 housed in the Museum of New Western Art. After Stalin decreed the museum a "breeding ground of formalist views and obsequiousness before decadent bourgeois culture" and liquidated the collections the works found their way to the A.M. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, where they are housed today.

The four imposing Russian museums—the Hermitage, Tretyakov, Pushkin, and the State Russian Museum—agreed to assemble an exhibition of late-19th and early-20th century French and Russian masterpieces for Dusseldorf's Museum Kunst Palast and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. The result, *From Russia*, is divided into four sections: selected works from the Shchukin and Morozov collections that form the core, and the most revealing segment, of the displays with many paintings never seen before in the West; Russian

realists of the late-19th century influenced by the French naturalist painting and the Barbizon school; the meeting of French and Russian cultures in the first decades of the 20th century, and the experimental schools of Constructivism, Suprematism, and Futurism that includes several popular women, Lyubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, and Alexandra Exter from the post-revolution period.

Matisse's *The Dance*, a masterpiece of modernist art, commissioned by Shchukin in 1910, is positioned adjacent to another of his great works; *The Red Room* (sometimes referred to as *Harmony in Red*), painted in 1908 and purchased by Shchukin for 4,000 francs. Set among several masterful Gauguin's from the Morosov holdings painted in Tahiti between 1892 and 1899 and a bewitching portrait of Dr. Felix Rey by van Gogh, also from Morosov, are a pair of important, yet classic views of Mont Sainte-Victoire by Cézanne, one of which, as seen from Les Lauves, projects a near abstract play of geometric forms and was painted in 1906, the year of his death.

Although Morosov and Shchukin both maintained an ongoing contact with Picasso his works in this exhibition, with the exception of a stun-

ning analytical cubist work, *Violin and Guitar* (1912–1913), do not carry the full weight of the master's creative *oeuvre*. A vibrant Bonnard, *Summer, Dance* and another by Derain, 1912 and 1905 respectively, are countered by academically brushed portraits by Kees van Dongen and Felix Vallotton.

Moving past excellent oils by Monet, Pissaro, Corot, Daubigny, Braque, and several other French masters the viewer enters the Russian pavilion to view an anthology of paintings ranging from 19th-century realists to a breakthrough incorporating an impressionist mode and finally to the influential symbolists of the mid-1920s. Not part of the Shchukin and Morosov legacy but acquired by collectors like I.M. Tretyakov (and later housed in the gallery that carries his name,) paintings by Isaac Levitan and Ilya Repin display a passionate and perceptive understanding for academic style, especially in the former's 1889 composition *After the Rain, Plyos*, an impressionist-oriented river scene imbued with patches of shifting light and the latter's portrait, *Leo Tolstoy Barefoot*, a lively pose and simple gesture of hands in his waistband, reflecting the author's spiritual yearnings.

The first couple of decades of the 20th century do not signify any fertile or truly inventive production in the personality of Russian art. Derivative and rather banal it took artists like Wassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, Ivan Puni, Liubov Popova, and Vladimir Tatlin to react robustly against the prevailing artistic currents and move Russian art into the modern age.

*From Russia* closes with an archetypal Chagallian figure, *The Red Jew* (1914) and *Composition VII* (1913), a wildly colorful and zealous composition by Kandinsky that is countered by a trio of representative Suprematist canvases, Malevich's *Black Cross*, *Black Circle*, and *Black Square* (all 1923) and given to the Russian Museum in 1977 by the USSR Ministry of Culture.

Gil Goldfine

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**Far left:** Ilya Repin, *Leo Tolstoy Barefoot*, 1901, oil on canvas, 207 x 73 cm.  
**Left:** Paul Gauguin, *Her Name is Vairaumati*, 1892, oil on canvas, 91 x 68 cm.