



Idris Murphy



Idris Murphy considers Fowlers Gap his home away from home, having made many trips to this outback destination during the past two decades. Murphy's deep connection with the place is chronicled by his paintings over this time span. His paintings do not endeavor to depict the place or landscape but, rather, his emotional connection with the space. His mode of landscape painting has been inspired by indigenous painting and storytelling, which he feels is informing new paradigms of painting in an Australian and contemporary context.

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FOWLERS GAP IS a hugely significant place for you, having travelled there regularly for the past 20-odd years. What is it that lures you there, year after year? There is something freeing, contemplative and confronting about desert country. Being alone, you pay attention to the world, confronted with who you are, without trappings, without the distractions of the man-made. Fowlers Gap is one of the parts of outback NSW, as is Mutawintji, which has been important to me. Like a great painting, it is both familiar and replenishing.

What impact do you see this relationship with the Australian desert has had on your painting over this time?

The Australian desert is and has been the catalyst for rethinking the paradigms and canons of Western landscape traditions.

Specifically, what is it about the landscape of Fowlers Gap you've investigated that continues to influence your work?

About 20 years ago, [artist and teacher] Terry O'Donnell and I set out to take art students to the outback to introduce them to their own country, for many had never ventured further than the Blue Mountains. It was not our intention to make landscape artists out of our students but to have them reassess their relationship with nature through the intellectual and emotive act of drawing and painting.

After 20 years of leading student expeditions to Fowlers Gap, how did you find the experience of leading your peers?

The artists on this trip didn't need any encouragement to make work, or to deal with different subject matter or work with new materials.

Your paintings do not conform to conventional representations of colour – metallic purples, greens, pinks and cobalts are features of your palette. Can you give me an insight into how and why you use these colours?

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because there is no such thing; colour is both emotive and descriptive. I make paintings that are a response to that apparent contradiction.

And what was the most enjoyable part of the tour?

To be able to listen to the stories of other artists (especially those senior to me), and the input from Badger Bates and his wife Sarah on the lives of indigenous people of this region over the last 150 years, was enlightening. ■

Idris Murphy is represented by King Street Gallery on William, Sydney, and Bett Gallery, Hobart.

www.kingstreetgallery.com.au
www.bettgallery.com.au

EXHIBITION
The Big Picture
King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
23 Aug to 17 Sep, 2012

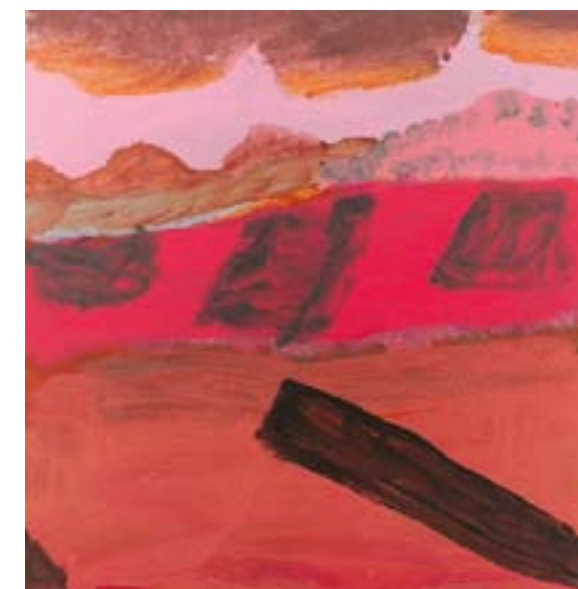
01 Weeping gums, fowlers gap, 2011, oil on board, 45.5 x 45.5cm
02 Moving shadows, 2011, oil on board, 45.5 x 45.5cm
03 Moving shadows, 2011, oil on board, 45.5 x 45.5cm
Images courtesy the artist and King Street Gallery on William, Sydney



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