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***Inscape:* Idris Murphy and Paul Martin**

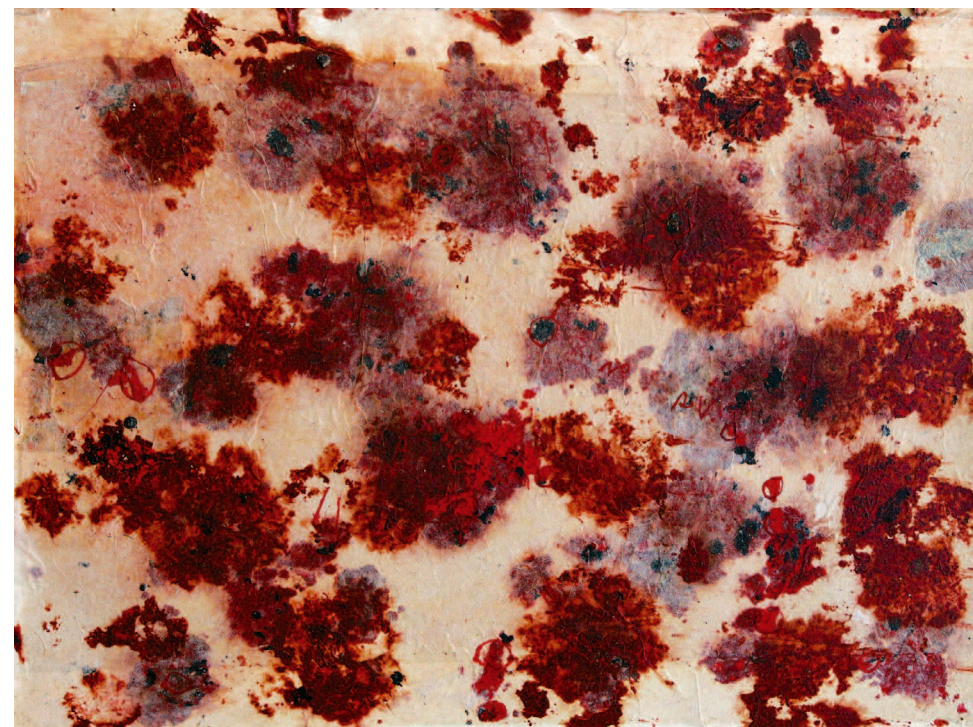
by Steve Lopes

This new joint exhibition by Idris Murphy and Paul Martin comes from a deep friendship and artistic kinship between these two thoughtful practitioners. One lives in Edinburgh, Scotland and the other in suburban Sydney but despite the vast geographical and visual barriers there is a coherent and symbiotic affinity in these surprising works. Murphy says “we both met in London 40 years ago, as young ‘know it all’ artists. This is our first collaboration in those 40 years. In that time, Paul Martin and I have continued this madness of continually making paintings, works on paper, drawings and after meeting up again several years ago in Edinburgh we found that visually we were running on parallel paths. These paths have been intersected by responses to other artists and their work, with similar interests visually. For us it’s

always about being immersed in and making paintings. However what we also found we had in common were responses to the landscape and in this case, making works on paper about landscape.”

The works deal with the notion of the artists’ responses to the world and landscape. Martin and Murphy both portray much more than a representation of landscape and its encumbering visual connotations. Their works are concerned with what lies beneath the surface. The natural elements are subverted by both these artists’ clever use of colour and space; Martin’s decorative intricacies and Murphy’s wisened use of space and composition are particular standout features in the current collection of work – these are evocations of land.

Both artists have a problem with language – spending the majority of their lives devoted to their visual languages, for them words and



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descriptions are not enough when it comes to defining art and what we can get out of experiencing an image. Murphy says “the title of George Steiner’s book ‘Real Presence’ elicits for me something which paintings can have, a ‘presence’ and introduces the problem for language, to describe the way we access and describe, ‘presence’ – to know it when it arrives.”

Poetry is a particularly important influence for Murphy and he points us to the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins who wrote, using the term ‘instress’ to give insight to this response: ‘I saw the inscape though freshly, as if my eye were still growing, though with a companion the eye and the ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come.’ and ‘I thought how sadly beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it and it could be called out everywhere again’.

Don’t worry – these works have presence. Both artists are looking for something more than the literal and want to illicit in the viewer a very personal response that’s not normally considered relevant in our everyday looking at the world. It is an internal and unexplainable feeling of ‘knowing’ and in these works we are able to see the territories that emotionally affect these two highly individual artists.

King Street Gallery on William
15 April to 10 May 2014
Sydney

- 1 Idris Murphy, *Land Badge 5 Kakadu*, 2013-14, monotype, inks & acrylic on paper, 56 x 76cm
- 2 Idris Murphy, *Landscape Flags Kimberley 1*, 2013-14, monotype, inks & acrylic on paper, 56 x 76cm
- 3 Paul Martin, *Petrified Roses*, 2013, pigments, varnishes on Japanese paper on paper, 62 x 72cm

Courtesy the artists and King Street Gallery on William, Sydney