

IDRIS
MURPHY

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front cover
Reflections and shadows Fowlers Gap 2011
acrylic on aluminium
190 x 198cm

In 1999, Jacques Delaruelle wrote an introduction for a booklet published by MONOGENE, 'Idris Murphy Selected Works 1995-1999.' As this is now out of print, I am pleased to have his kind permission to reproduce it in the exhibition catalogue 'flags of convenience.' It seems as pertinent now as ever, and significant as both a piece of writing and another way for me to recognize my work.

Idris Murphy, August 2003

IDRIS MURPHY, PAINTER

Jacques Delaruelle

"Art imitates Nature," Aristotle wrote, and in so doing reveals her hidden intentions or the deepest secrets of Being ... Paradoxically, this antique definition became more relevant when, from Delacroix onwards, the most significant 19th century European artists sought to detach themselves from the rhetoric of the Renaissance atelier and the teaching of the Academy. Their ambition was to see the world without the veils of GrecoRoman myths, to act as the witness of a nascent modernity, but also to reach the invisible process which as natura naturans can be sensed in Cezanne's or Monet's paintings.

Today it is proving more difficult to believe that the doctrine of Mimesis, with its metaphysical intimation, can still inform the brush of painters. One reason for this skepticism is that the most corrosive doubt concerning art's purpose and power has become the dominant reference of the activity. Yet for more than two thousand years, the notion of imitatio naturae was endorsed and fought against, criticized and renewed by artists or philosophers wondering whether it was art which copied nature or nature, art. And numerous are those who now wonder if art is not dying from its broken connection with 'Nature' here understood as a creative process?

Can the artistic activity remain the manifestation of a higher truth -an expression of the universal in the particular, when so many of its products only lend themselves to be viewed as morbid caprices or idiosyncratic gestures performed before ever more indifferent audiences? Indeed the preference exhibited by art apparatchiks for soi-disant anti-aesthetic displays -the kind of artifacts or performances that leave absolutely no trace in their viewer's memory -makes their distaste clear for the utopian hopes and existential values upon which modernist art once rested. But if that much is plain, it remains strange that 'contemporary art' so often appears to require if not a physiological mutation on our part, at least a capacity to experience boredom as something exciting or a complete redefinition of our capacity for judgment? [...]

For do not trees, flowers, or the uniquely translucent quality of the early morning air speak to our senses in an immediate manner and one that seldom fails to suggest renewed possibilities of enjoyment? And with efficiency that technology can only dream of emulating, do they not provide those of us who still have eyes to see with the deeply reassuring evidence that many things around us are both incomprehensible and perfect? No such realization will ever be suggested by the image or the object that assumes that 'Nature' is a socially determined concept, a cultural construct, or a set of romantic platitudes for the tourist industry. But it is a desire for unity between self and the world, or at least a sign of accord between them, that I fathom in Idris Murphy's art. The work itself does not purport to describe external appearances on a conventional or an objective basis. It is not mimetic, yet it seeks as if in the dark for a point of contact with an all-encompassing living presence ... The shapes, the colours and the lines do not attempt to mirror a patch of bush, the physiognomy of a tree or, in other words, to translate a cluster of empirical visual data into the clear parlance of registered semblances. The images are not strictly 'abstract,' but 'speak' a mutilated language of verisimilitude where reality appears to be linked with certain forms and movements. In their unassuming manner, they seek to 'imitate nature' that is to grasp the process that make all things appear and disappear, come to be and cease to be. Less evidently, perhaps, it is a quest for 'Paradise' that can be if not seen at least inferred in the work, a longing for a re-union that can be produced neither by understagging alone nor in the absence of understanding.

Yet there comes a point when knowledge knows itself to be insufficient to the task of seeing. Then our eyes may open themselves again onto a world that has not yet been colonized by language, a world without definition where little children live for a very short time. Serious artists spend a sizeable part of their working life in the attempt of returning to it.

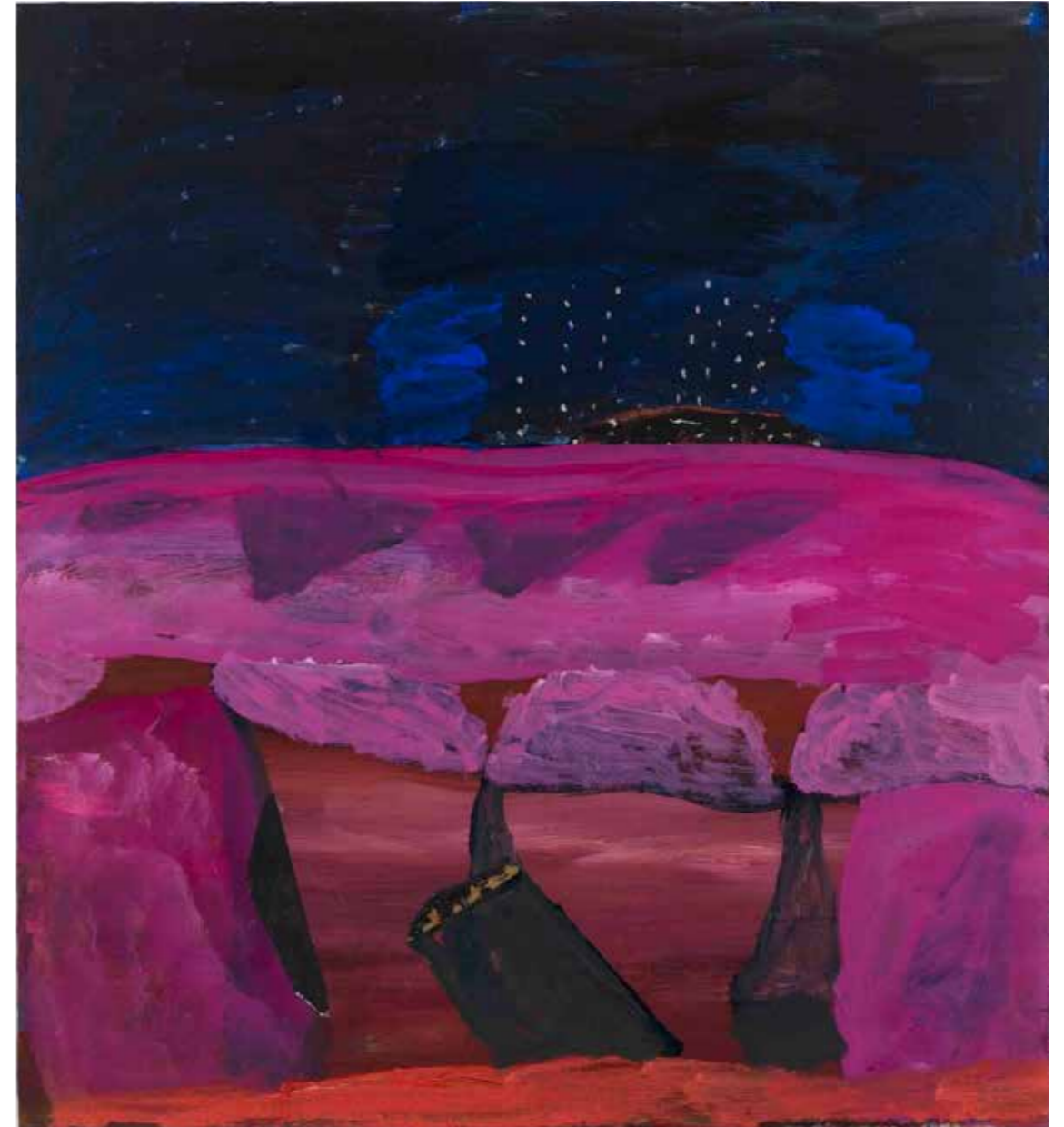
March 1999



Weipa Harbour storm 2005
acrylic & collage on board
120 x 120cm



Strange light Broken Hill 2009
acrylic on board
80 x 90cm



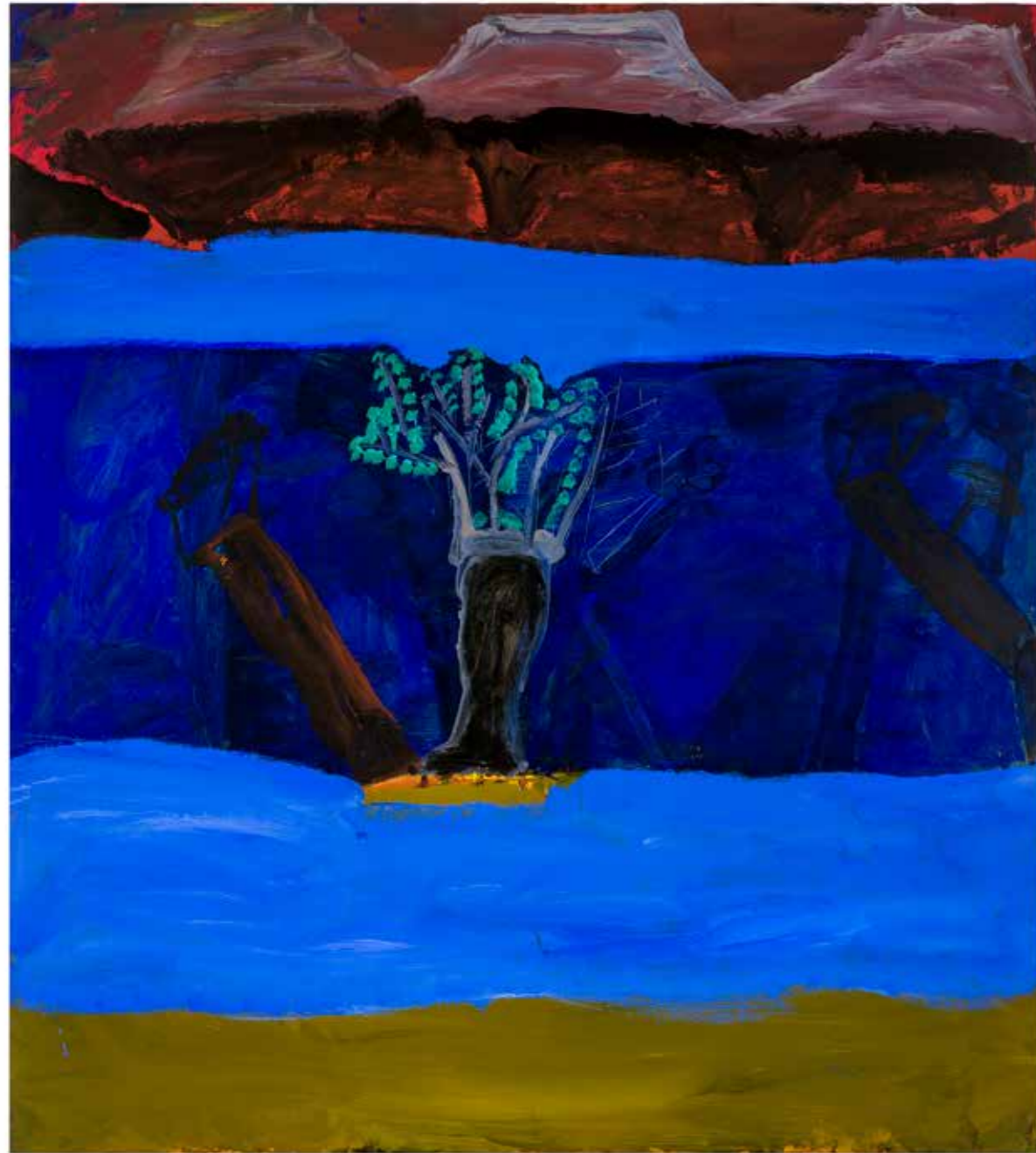
Afternoon to evening Fowlers Gap 2009
acrylic & collage on board
120 x 110cm



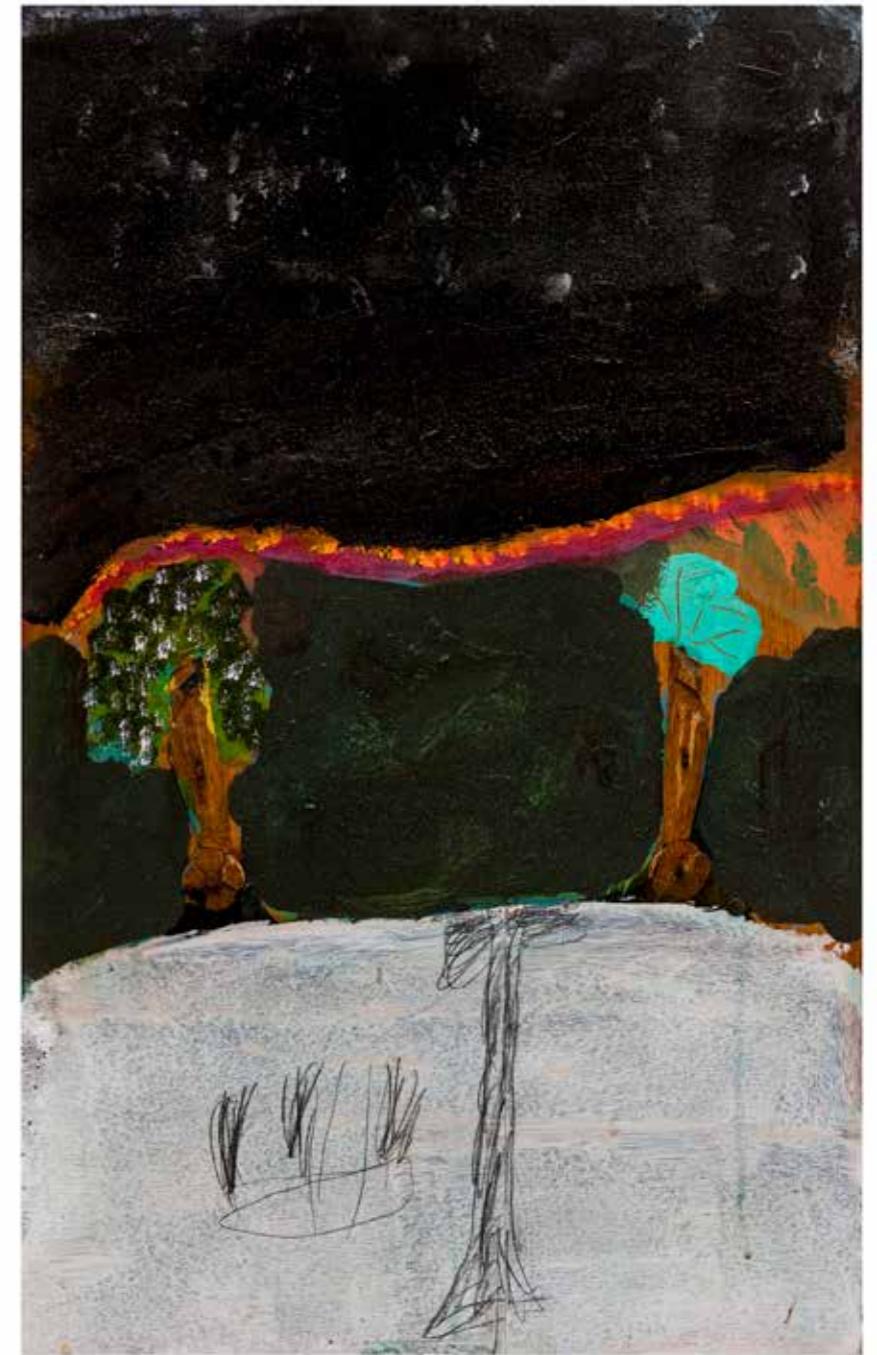
Warnum 2011
acrylic & collage on board
180 x 180cm

Helicopter view with dry waterfall, The Kimberley 2012
acrylic on aluminium
190 x 198cm





Kimberley Coast 2012/13
acrylic & collage on board
121 x 110cm



Ridge lights 2013
acrylic on board, relief collage
54 x 33.3cm



Evening with fast cloud 2013
acrylic on board
130 x 120cm



Flood tide reflections, Jervis Bay 2015
acrylic & collage on board
130 x 140cm



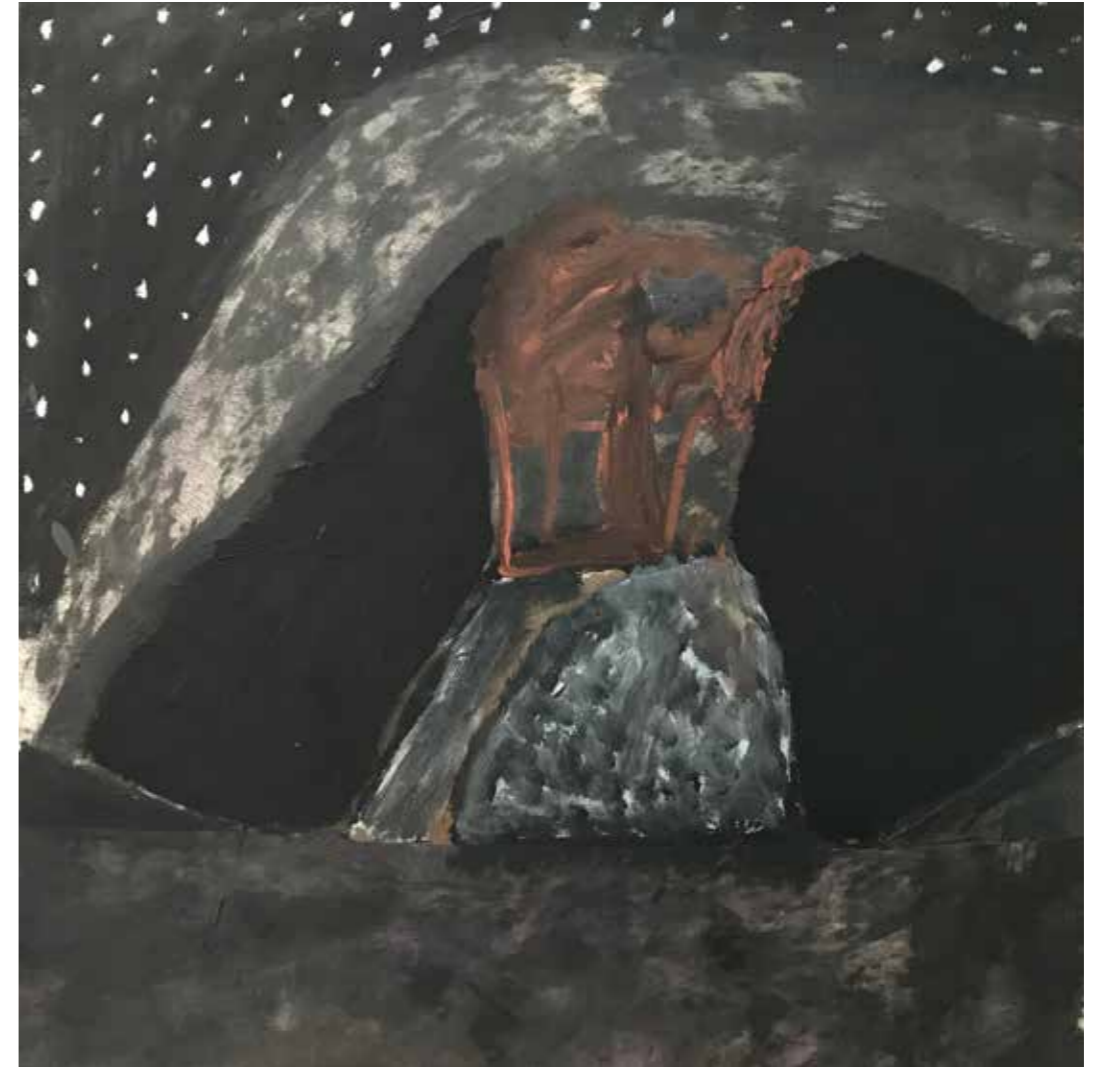
Memorial Anzac Cove 2015
acrylic & collage on board
100 x 100cm



Half moon at the Nek 2015
acrylic on aluminium
153 x 153cm



Desert rock forms, Ndhala Gorge 2019
acrylic & collage on board
59.5 x 59.5cm



Black emu evening and hill side, Mutawintji 2018
acrylic & collage on board
65 x 65cm



The East MacDonnells 2019
acrylic on aluminium
120 x 130cm



Artunga Road, Alice Springs 2019
acrylic & collage on aluminium
141 x 151cm



Green waterhole with black reflections 2019
acrylic on board
55 x 60cm



Black waterhole 2019
acrylic & collage on aluminium
141 x 151cm



Gap, Alice Springs 2019
acrylic & collage on aluminium
141 x 151cm



Evening reflections black waterhole 2019
acrylic on aluminium
141 x 151cm

Green tree waterhole 2019
acrylic & collage on aluminium
141 x 151cm





Ross River, falling trees 2019
acrylic on board
45 x 45cm



Sunset Artunga Road, East MacDonnell Ranges 2019
acrylic & collage on aluminium
120 x 130cm