

Tom Carment

NEW PAINTINGS - OLD HABITS



COVER Afternoon harbour, from McKell Park 2017 watercolour on paper 15 x 29cm
 THIS PAGE Studio, August 2017 OPPOSITE Matilda 2017 oil on wood panel 24 x 18cm



Tom Carment / New Paintings - Old Habits

EXHIBITION DATES: 7 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2017

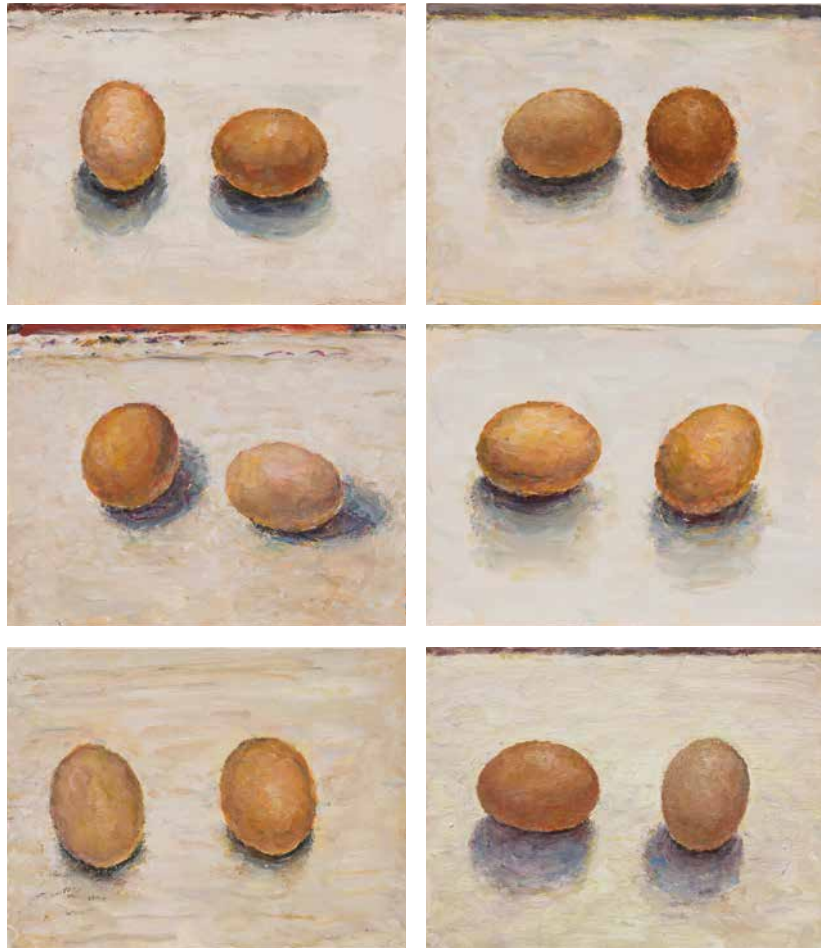
IN THE SPRING OF 2016, when our daughter Matilda came home from school to study for her HSC, I stayed home and began a new series of still lifes. The idea was to create an atmosphere of industry and also to keep her company. I'd sit down in the lightwell of our terrace house painting cut pumpkin while, upstairs, she'd be reading about Stalin's purges and methods of resuscitation. We would meet up for lunch, sometimes eating the fruit or vegetable I'd just finished painting.

After her exams were over, I returned to painting landscapes outside, but continued making pictures of food as well. I bought two 5kg bags of torn-up cotton rags from Supercheap Auto, selecting and washing the ones I liked - a palette of colours for my backgrounds.

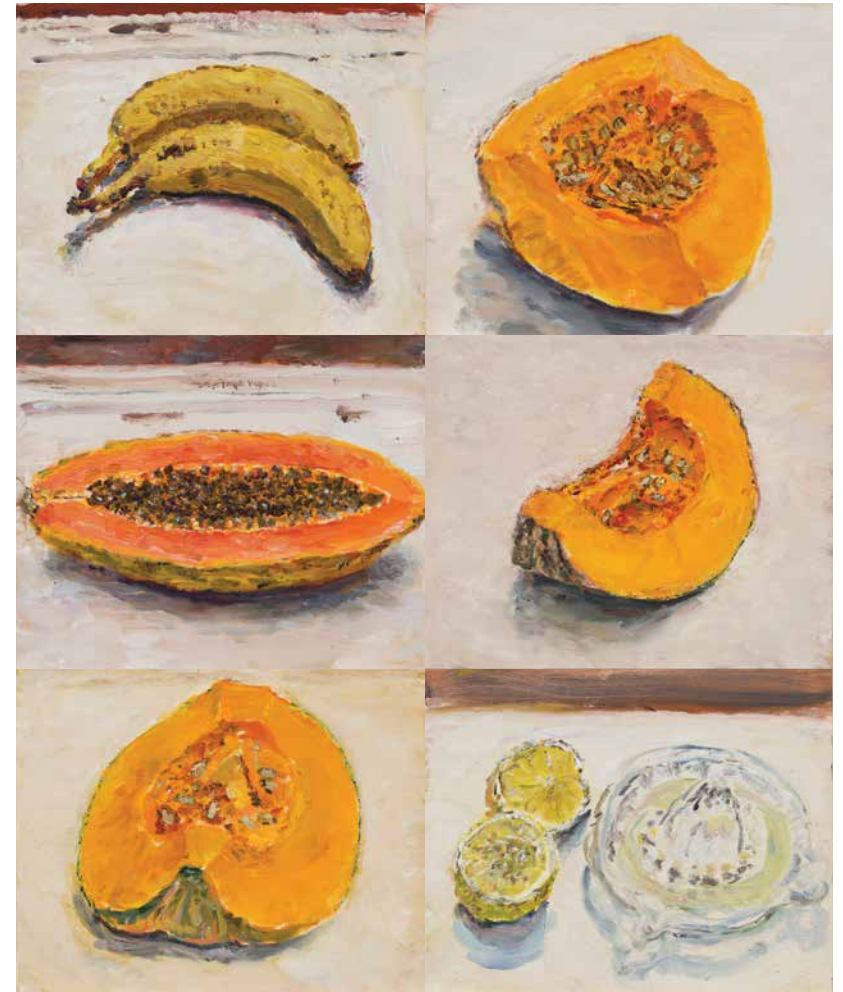
My partner Jan would suggest things to me, bringing home tamarillos one day from the shop, and a few weeks later, asking the question: 'What about eggs?'

I ended up doing seven paintings of eggs, in different lights with different eggs, including my neighbour's ones, from hens who had eaten our kitchen scraps.

I said to Jan, that you can't really paint eggs in an expressionist way; they require care. One morning I forgot a medical appointment in Bondi Junction, so exclusive was my concentration on the pale browns of the two eggs sitting in front of me. By way of inadequate apology I sent a postcard, made from a photo of the finished painting, and titled it, 'the missed appointment'.



TOP ROW Two eggs II, Two eggs IV
MIDDLE ROW Two eggs V, Two eggs III
BOTTOM ROW Two eggs VII, Two eggs I
ALL 2017 oil on linen 15 x 20.5cm



TOP ROW Two bananas 2017, Cut pumpkin I 2016
MIDDLE ROW Halved paw paw 2017, Cut pumpkin II 2016
BOTTOM ROW Cut pumpkin III 2016, Squeezed lemons 2017
ALL oil on linen 19.5 x 24cm



Painting two eggs in the lightwell



Two eggs VI 2017
oil on linen 15 x 20.5cm



North Head, five days II 2017 detail: oil on wood panel 11.5 x 25.5cm



Morning, Old Harrietville Road 2017
gouache on paper 29 x 35cm



Casuarinas, West Head 2017
gouache on paper 38 x 51cm



Through the mangroves, Mooney Mooney 2017
gouache on paper 38 x 51cm



Gordons Bay 2017 gouache on paper 23 x 30cm



TOP Typewriters in the kitchen
RIGHT Painting Alex's Olivetti Lettera



Alex's Olivetti Lettera 2017 oil on linen 41 x 51cm

MY TYPEWRITER is a large office model, bought in 1982 from a secondhand office supplies shop near Central Station. I nearly broke my arms carrying it home on the train. It was a step up from my tinny portable with maladjusted type; a V8 of a machine with a lovely action. I wrote my first book 'Days & Nights in Africa' on it, in many drafts. Since the advent of word processing, this machine has languished beneath my desk. I use it now and then to weigh things down, glueing primed linen to plywood boards.

Last year I carried it up to the kitchen table, to write a letter, and enjoyed the way it clarified my thoughts, the physicality of pounding the keys; an old memory. My son Felix reckoned it was very 'steampunk'. After that, I lugged it down to the lightwell and started a painting, using a larger canvas than my food pictures. A month later, I borrowed my friend Alex's Olivetti Lettera, and then a Remington portable that I saw in the 'Grand Days' shop on William Street. Fiona, who works at the gallery, lent me her beige Optima. I painted them all.



Remington portable 2017 oil on linen 41 x 51cm



Grapes on a Russian art book 2017 oil on linen 31 x 38cm



Tamarillos 2017 oil on linen 21 x 41cm



THIS PAGE
North Head,
five days I 2017
 oil on wood panels,
 various sizes

OPPOSITE TOP
Stephen Ralph 2017
 oil on wood panel
 23 x 18cm

OPPOSITE BOTTOM
Overhanging
branches,
Chowder Head 2017
 oil on linen
 31 x 38cm



MY FRIEND THE SCULPTOR Stephen Ralph rang one day to say that he'd found some old cedar doors, dismantled them, and put aside their inner panels for me. Having trained as a cabinetmaker Stephen can spot old furniture by the roadside and, beneath the layers of paint, see what sort of wood it's made from. My supply of wooden painting panels was nearly exhausted when he rang, having, in previous weeks, painted thirty panels of the harbour and clouds, from McKell Park, and Bottle and Glass Point. So I quickly drove out to his workshop and fetched them. At home, I cut the old wood into rectangles of differing shapes, stripped off decades of enamel paint and re-primed them; six coats each, sanding in between.

It felt appropriate that the first painting I did on one of these panels was a portrait of Stephen. On a grey drizzly day I returned to his outdoor sculpture workshop, which is directly under the flight path in east Sydenham. The planes pass so close overhead that you can see the rivets on their fuselages. Stephen was just emerging from a bad year, filled with death and illness, and it was good to talk to him again, in the intense way that a portrait session engenders. I finished the picture in one session and, later, framed it in some hundred-year-old silky oak that Stephen had also found for me, ten years earlier.

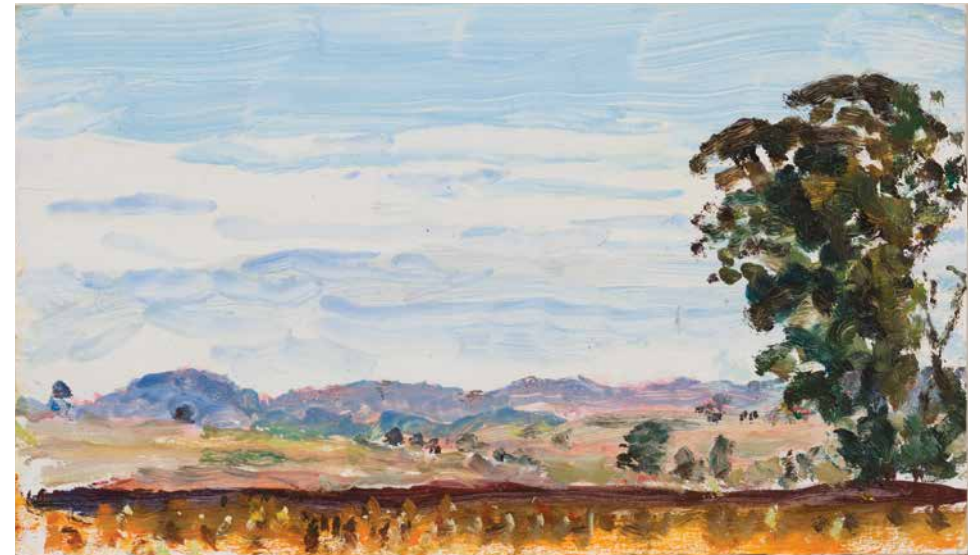
It was the end of winter and I took my bag of new white-faced panels out to a rock shelf on Chowder Head and started a series of paintings of North Head. I painted not just the light on the water and cliffs, but the maritime activity, the Manly Ferry passing back and forth, marking out the half hours. In the late afternoon light I could see where a great chunk of headland had recently fallen off, into the sea. It had happened at 4am and no one was fishing from the rocks underneath.

Walking back each day I looked down through angophora branches overhanging the water, near a rock platform popular with fishers - my next subject.





Whale Point, Currarong 2017 oil on wood panel 13 x 23cm



Harvested wheat paddock, near Parkes 2017 oil on wood panel 14 x 24cm



North Maroubra 2017 (triptych)
oil on wood panels various sizes, top panel 18 x 24cm

MOST SUNDAY MORNINGS in summer Jan and I meet up with our friends, between the flags on Maroubra Beach: sisters Pru and Libby, and our friend, another Jan. After an hour of gossip, reminiscence, and political discussion, we enter the sea. The ladies bob about, five metres from the sand, and continue their conversation, while I try (but rarely succeed) to catch waves further out. I never last as long in the water as they do.

'Remember when you put the apple down the toilet Pru?'
'Oh, that was an early lesson in plumbing. I always hated fruit, unless it was in a cake.... But you scratched your name, LIBBY in the top of Dad's new stereo ... mmm... maybe I did that to get you into trouble.'

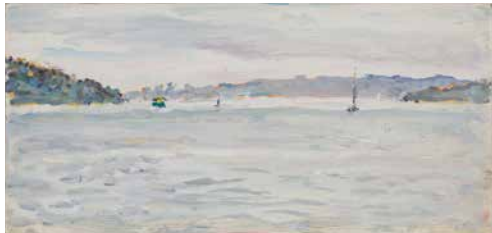
And the sisters laugh; no hard feelings for things done fifty years ago. On Mondays I go back there to paint, sitting under the concrete sea wall: the waves, the surfers, the wet sand.



Hot afternoon, North Coogee 2016 watercolour on paper 22 x 31cm



Cloudwatch, McKell Park V 2017
oil on wood panel 19 x 33cm
(detail)



Cloudwatch, McKell Park 2017 oil on 15 wood panels various sizes



Jacaranda and green shed, Lewisham 2016
oil on linen 25 x 21.5cm

IN NOVEMBER I WENT OUT in search of flowering jacarandas, looking for places where I could sit and paint them with a bit of privacy, without impeding the passers by. I found a low wall where I could lay out my gear, in front of a nursing home in Summer Hill, with a huge purple tree opposite. Most pedestrians left me alone, but a friendly lady with a small dog stopped to chat: 'Painting are you? It's a great hobby. So relaxing ... What are you painting?' I pointed across the road with my brush. She squinted at my canvas, watched me for a while and then asked, 'Where is the church?' Not 'a church' but 'the church'. I was tempted to reply, 'Everywhere.' But I just told her, sorry, I wasn't from Summer Hill and didn't know of a church nearby.



Jacaranda, Leichhardt 2016 oil on linen 21.5 x 25cm



Jacaranda, Lang Road 2016 oil on linen 21.5 x 25cm



Jacarandas, Daceyville 2016 (two pages of triptych)
watercolour and pigment ink on paper each 11.5 x 16cm



Mary's back door, Marmion WA 2017 gouache on paper 26 x 36cm



TOP ROW Avocado 2016, Heritage tomato I 2016
MIDDLE ROW Pear I 2016, Three Swiss brown mushrooms 2016
BOTTOM ROW Cut lemon 2017, Beetroot 2016

ALL oil on linen 15 x 20.5cm



TOP
 Artichoke I 2017
 oil on linen
 19.5 x 24cm

MIDDLE
 Artichoke II 2017
 oil on linen
 19.5 x 24cm

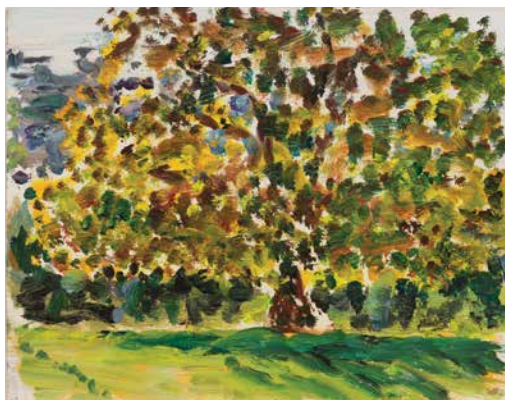
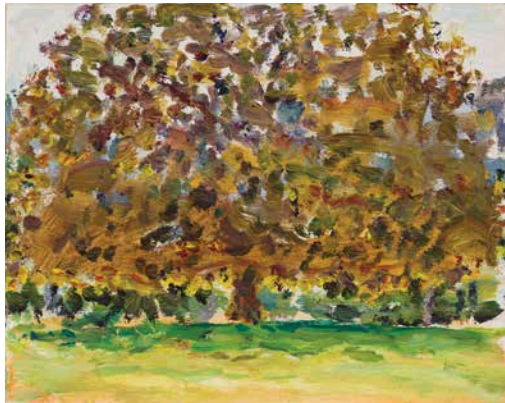
BOTTOM
 Artichoke III 2017
 oil on linen
 19.5 x 24cm



By the Old Highway, Mount White 2017 oil on linen 31 x 38cm



Cliff base, Peats Ridge 2017 oil on linen 31 x 38cm



THIS PAGE
Autumn,
Rushcutters Bay Park
 2017 (triptych)
 oil on wood panels
 each 14 x 16.5 cm

OPPOSITE
Behind Macleay
Street 2017
 watercolour and
 pigment ink on paper
 16 x 11.5cm



I USED TO KICK balls in Rushcutters Bay Park with my children, after school and on weekends. Now that they're grown up, I mainly go there just to paint. With my gear to one side, I sit almost level with the grass on a small stool, and try to make a tunnel of concentration between the subject I've chosen, and my panel or canvas. Peripherally, I feel the park life swirling around me as I paint. The sun warms my legs. A dog sometimes tries to steal a brush, or I sense someone standing behind me, watching. Last month a magpie jumped onto my palette and did a quick Jackson Pollock before jumping off with blue and cadmium yellow in its claws.

I trudge home with my wet painting in a cardboard box, the afternoon breeze from the harbour coming up through the figs and plane trees, pushing me up the hill.



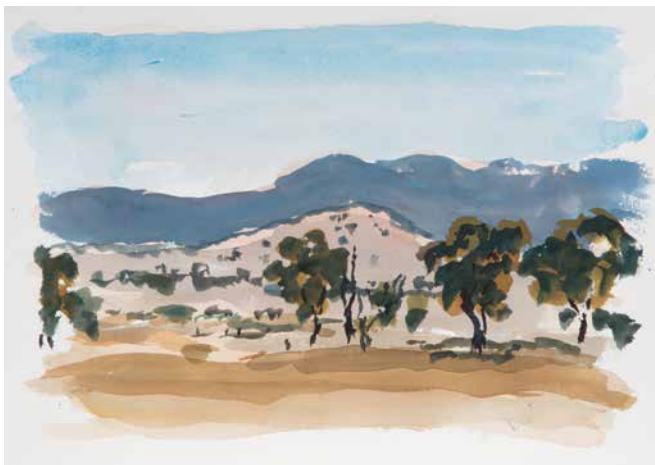
TOP
Boarding house,
Cleveland Street 2017
 watercolour and
 pigment ink on paper
 11.5 x 16cm

MIDDLE
Maroubra ocean pool
 2017 gouache on paper
 23 x 30cm

BOTTOM
Bathers, Honeymoon Bay
 (first page of triptych)
 watercolour and
 pigment ink on paper
 11.5 x 16cm



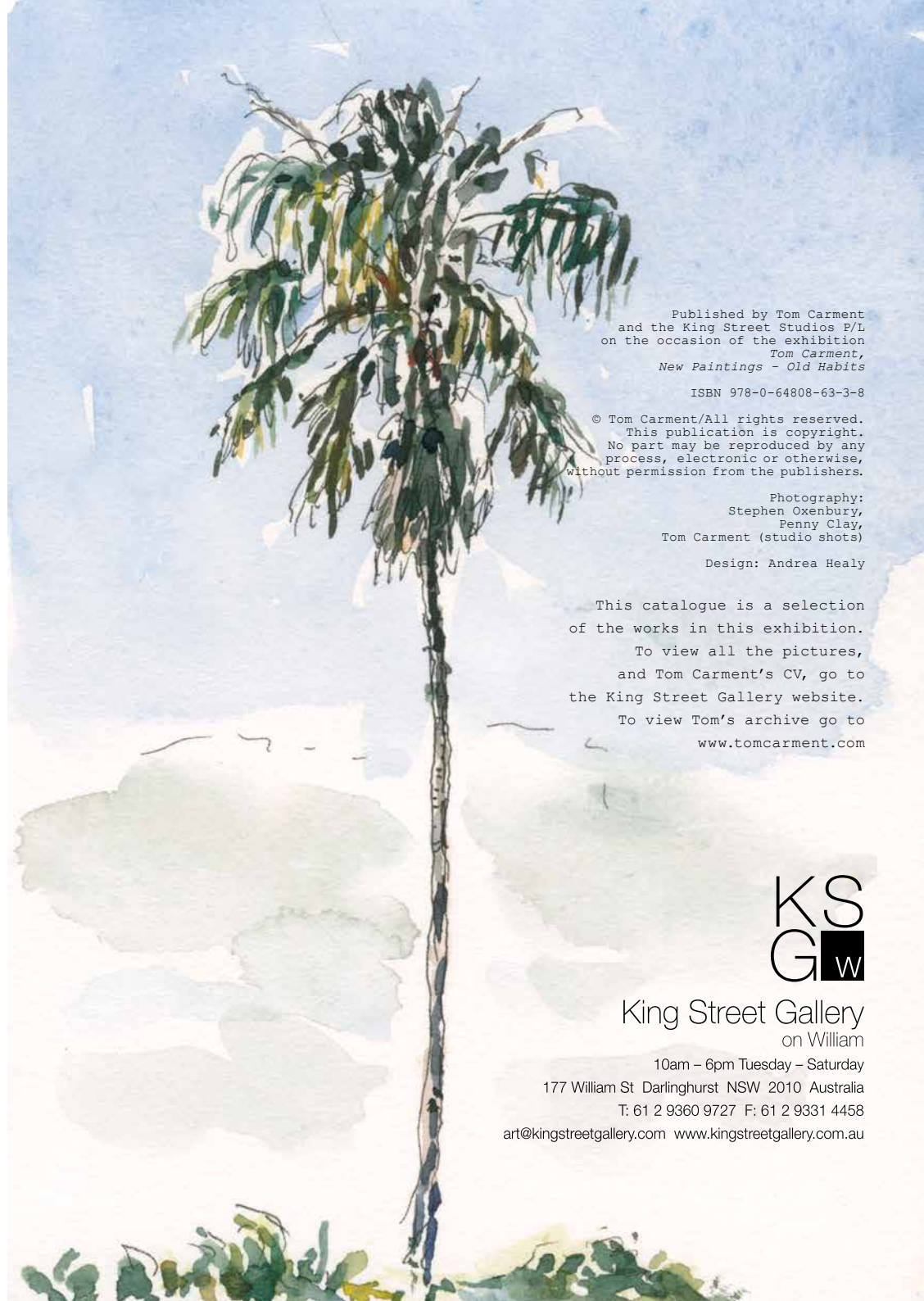
Sally's Underwood 2017 oil on linen 41 x 51 cm



TOP *Self-portrait in Don's shed* 2017
gouache on paper 37 x 55cm

MIDDLE *Back Creek Road, Yackandandah* 2017
gouache on paper 26 x 37cm

OPPOSITE *Palm, Botanic Gardens* 2017
watercolour and pigment ink on paper 16 x 11.5cm



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This catalogue is a selection
of the works in this exhibition.
To view all the pictures,
and Tom Carment's CV, go to
the King Street Gallery website.
To view Tom's archive go to
www.tomcarment.com

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