



Idris Murphy

The Abundance

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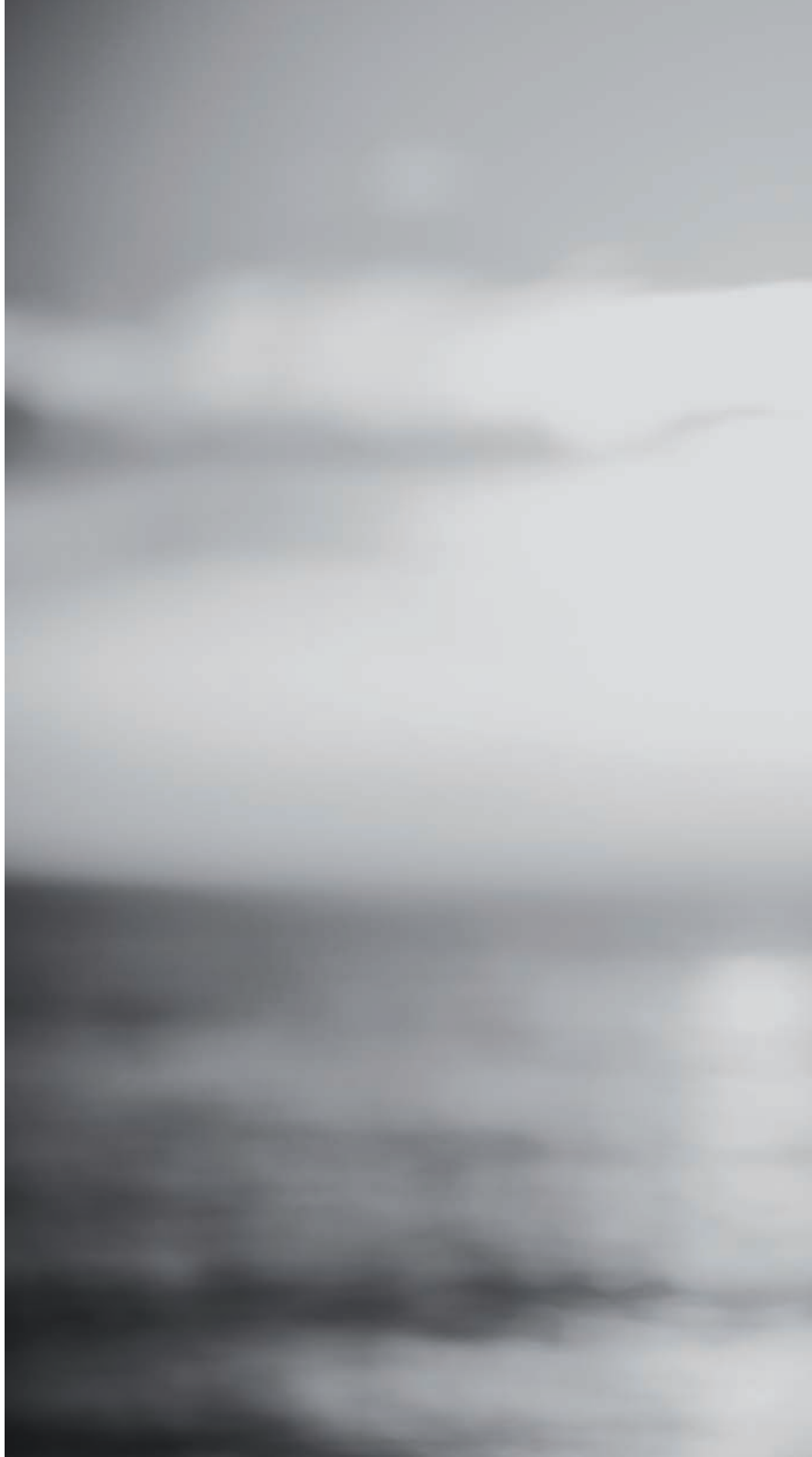
8 June – 3 July 2021

King Street Gallery 
on William 

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177-185 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
T: 61 2 9360 9727 E: art@kingstreetgallery.com
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au

Front cover: *The corner of the lake* 2020
acrylic & collage on aluminium 141 x 151cm

Opposite: Idris Murphy, Kurnell, NSW







Darkness aflame in full sunshine 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 151 x 141 cm



Wetlands 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 151 x 141 cm



Shadowed reflection 2020 acrylic on aluminium 141 x 151 cm



Lake & wattle 2020 acrylic on aluminium 90 x 90 cm



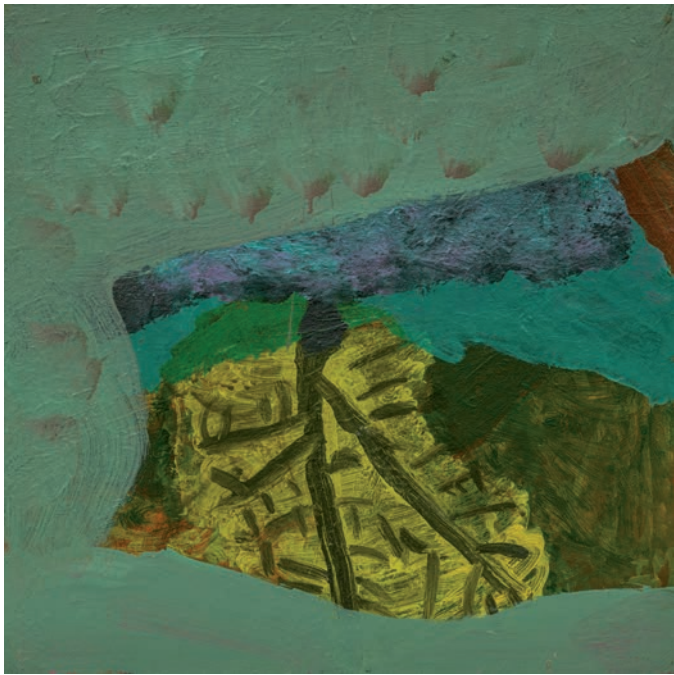
Evening tide 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 141 x 151 cm



Homage to Sally Gabori 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Land recapitulation 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Perception 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Confabulations 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm

THE ABUNDANCE, IDRIS MURPHY

Anna Johnson, 2021

“How utterly we have forsaken the Earth, in the sense of excluding it from our thoughts. There are but few who consider its physical hugeness, its rough enormity. It is still a disparate monstrosity, full of solitudes & barrens & wilds. It still dwarfs & terrifies & crushes. The rivers still roar, the mountains still crash, the winds still shatter. Man is an affair of cities. His gardens & orchards & fields are mere scrapings. Somehow, however, he has managed to shut out the face of the giant from his windows. But the giant is there, nevertheless.”

Wallace Stevens

What is the moment we enter the landscape? And more importantly, when we arrive, are we truly there? The experience of apprehending and gradually absorbing a sense of place is not easy to pinpoint. It can be a stark moment of change or it can be very subtle. Like the precipice where rain stops or the light shifts. People speak of going to the country and getting back to nature. As if venturing to another planet, they buy equipment and bring cameras to document the spectacle of the wilderness. Absurdly and poignantly they miss the point. We *are* nature. And somewhere beneath processed customs

and material needs we are still instinctual. Another animal of the earth. Refusal of nature is what divides humans from every other living thing. Spiritually it is our fall, and creatively, our loss.

Seen in this way, the role of the traditional landscape artist is something like a Western antique, objectifying and harvesting the primal while failing to really touch it. It takes a different kind of perception in painting to make nature matter. And it takes time. Idris Murphy has invested both.

Over decades, his imagery has evinced the literal to become more replete, drilling down into a language of wild geometry, fugitive colour and the poetic oddity of the tree. This tree, so broadly replicated by other artists, is the painter's very own. Murphy's trees are swollen, scrubby and anti-heroic. Leaping from a tiny footnote to looming sentinels, they place you in a mythic, deeply interior terrain. “Trees” he notes “are not prominent in the desert landscape, in a treeless environment they become a focus”. Visually the trees also lend bearings, grounding the eye in works that make such experimental use of space. The trees also serve as an apt metaphor for the artist's process. “Making paintings” he concedes “is

kindred to the very slow process of seeding and tilling. For great things to grow' he asserts 'you have to wait and trust. Germination is invisible. A complete article of faith."

Faith and doubt form the core tension in the paintings of Idris Murphy. Some works quietly ache. But the melancholy he may feel for the earth is buoyed by an unpredictable rebellious streak. The palette of the new paintings are joyous and vulnerable, aqueous and molten. Scumbled layers of paint that look like freshly turned river clay and electric bird feathers are immediate but not simple. Knowing full well that most of us will never venture to Mutawintji or Fowlers Gap he summons presence through play. Mountains slide. Heavens swoop. Disorientation forms its own map. Looking deep into the guts of an Idris Murphy painting is like being in the river and the blood stream at the same time. It is both spatial and visceral. Liberated from the arbitrary periphery of a frame or the jaded expectation of a 'view', finally, it doesn't matter where we are. The geographic specifics of landscape are gone. In their place are puzzles. A flattened use of perspective make these paintings aerial and subterranean at the same time. Structurally his loose gestures and raw swathes of colour dance on the hard

ground of tightly conceived composition. As in a still life by Braque the fruit might be falling, but the table is sound.

You can't talk about the innovation of these paintings without noting their formal strength. They are well built yet untethered by everything stale in landscape painting: including colour. Murphy is a colourist who makes a fine and richly ambiguous use of black. His suffusion of warm and cool hues blur the line between day and night or the seasons. "For me" he states "there is no such thing as local colour, because colour is both emotive and descriptive, my paintings engage that contradiction." And what a relief to enter country without a predictable ribbon of blue sky and bleached earth. Replacing those exhausted tropes, these paintings take reflection and shadow and put them hard to work in ragged junctions. "When I use shadows they are not a light source event. They point not to one time of day but to every time of day everywhere. It is every-when." Every. When. The juncture of these words really breaks the compass navigating time and space. It also reveals the primal power of an uncharted landscape. Humans, of all animals, have a terror of being lost.



The corner of the lake 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 141 x 151 cm



Willy Willy 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Carrying songs 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Berry mountain late reflections 2020 acrylic on aluminium 141 x 151 cm



Light in the tree for A.D. 2020 acrylic on aluminium 90 x 90 cm



Night sky The Kimberley 2020 acrylic on board 32 x 45 cm
Corroboree Rock 2020 acrylic on board 32 x 45 cm
The beach, the coast, the movement 2020 acrylic & collage on board 32 x 45 cm



View over the dam wall 2020 acrylic on aluminium 116 x 116 cm



Pathways 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Studio, Kurnell, NSW





Pink river stains 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 90 x 90 cm



Lightning 2020 acrylic on aluminium 90 x 90 cm



Water falling 2020 acrylic & collage on board 30.5 x 30.5 cm



Flashiness 2020 acrylic on board 30.5 x 30.5 cm



The wharf 2020 acrylic & collage on aluminium 141 x 151 cm



Inscape 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Innate order 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Lost clouds 2020 acrylic on canvas 40 x 40 cm



Exuberance blithens 2020 acrylic on board 38 x 38 cm



Pink water green tree 2020 acrylic on board 38 x 38 cm



Boab 2020 acrylic on board 40 x 40 cm



Forest edge 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm



Idris Murphy

Born

1949 Sydney, NSW, Australia

Studies & Work

1988-2007 Lecturer, College of Fine Art, University of New South Wales, Sydney
1997 Head of Drawing, National Art School, Sydney
1994 Doctorate of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, NSW

Solo Exhibitions [selected]

2021 *The Abundance* King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2019 *Empyrean: scattering of stars* King Street Gallery on William
2017 *Real Presence* King Street Gallery on William
New Work Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne
2016 *Drawing Breath [works on paper & heliographs]* King Street Gallery on William
2015 *Tide-Lands* King Street Gallery on William
2014 *Landscapes Inscapes* King Street Gallery on William
Edgelands Idris Murphy & Paul Martin, Warburton Art Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
2013 *Everywhen* King Street Gallery on William
2011 *Interrogating Appearances* King Street Gallery on William
2010 *I & Thou: Survey Exhibition 1986-2008* Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, NSW
Idris Murphy at Bett Gallery Hobart, Tas

Group Exhibitions [selected]

2021 *Tree of Life: A testament to endurance* S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2020-21 *Earth Canvas* [Touring Exhibition] Albury Library Museum, NSW
2019 *Conversations with Alice* Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios, Sydney
Inside/outside King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2018-20 *Salient - Contemporary Artists at the Western Front* New England Regional Art Museum, NSW;
ANZAC Memorial, Sydney; Bank Art Museum Moree, NSW; Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW;
Tweed Regional Gallery, NSW
2018 *100 years on* King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
Salient Melbourne Australia Club Melbourne, Vic
National Art, Part one National Art School, Sydney
Gallipoli Drawings Newcastle University Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
Hadley's Art Prize Hadley's Orient Hotel, Hobart, Tas
A Painted Landscape Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney
The Art of Friendship Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios, Sydney
2017 *Artist Profile Australasian Painters* Orange Regional Gallery, NSW
Hadley's Art Prize Hadley's Orient Hotel, Hobart, Tas
2016 *Paint my Place* Coffs Harbour Regional Art Gallery
2015-17 *Country & Western: landscape re-imagined* [curated by Gavin Wilson],
launching at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Qld-travelling Qld, NSW, Vic, NT
Hazelhurst Works on Paper Award Hazelhurst Regional Gallery



Gaining the light East Macdonnell Ranges 2020 acrylic on board 45 x 45 cm

- NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize Parliament House, Sydney
Your Friend the Enemy, 100 Years On, Gallipoli The Drill Hall Gallery
Your Friend the Enemy, 100 Years On, Gallipoli Travelling: S.H. Ervin Gallery,
 Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
A Salute: Drawing Show Goulbourn Regional Gallery, NSW
 2014 *Oz to Waiheke* Waiheke Community Art Gallery, NZ
Gallipoli Art Prize Gallipoli Club Sydney
 2012-2013 *Not the Way Home [curated by Owen Craven]* S.H. Ervin, Sydney & traveling
 2012 *KIAF/12 Korean International Art Fair*, COEX Building, Seoul
Virtual Reality: Interpreting the Landscape [King Street Gallery @ Newcastle University Gallery]
 Newcastle, NSW

Residencies & Awards

- 2019 State Library of New South Wales, Sydney
 2017 The Western Front, France
 2016 Moonee Beach Artist in Residence, Coffs Harbour Regional Art Gallery, NSW
 2014 Gallipoli Art Prize [winner], Gallipoli Club Sydney
 Gallipoli 'En plein air' project conceived by Robert Linnegar- in association with Artist Profile Magazine
 Waiheke Island Residency in association with Waiheke Community Arts Centre, New Zealand
 2013 Gallipoli 'En plein air' project conceived by Robert Linnegar- preliminary visit
 2011 Working tour of Fowlers Gap & Broken Hill, NSW by invitation of Artist Profile Magazine
 2009 Working tour of New Zealand's North Island by invitation of Artist Profile Magazine

Collections

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Allens Arthur Robinson | Kedumba Drawing Collection, NSW |
| Art Gallery of New South Wales | Long Gallery & Art Collection, University of Wollongong, NSW |
| Artbank, Australia | National Gallery of Australia, Canberra |
| Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra | National Library of Australia, Canberra |
| Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, NSW | Northern Rivers CAE, NSW |
| Cowra Regional Art Gallery, NSW | Orange Regional Gallery, NSW |
| Gallipoli Memorial Club | Parliament House, Canberra |
| Australian Graduate School of Management | Rockhampton Regional Art Gallery, Qld |
| Australian Library of Art, State Library of Queensland, Qld | State Library of New South Wales |
| Bendigo Regional Art Gallery, NSW | Telecom Collection, Melbourne |
| Bibliothèque National de Paris | Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Ireland |
| Brisbane Grammar School, Qld | UBS Warburg, Sydney |
| Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, NSW | University of New South Wales |
| Charles Sturt University, NSW | Westpac Collection, Australia |
| Clot/Bramsen et Georges Studio, Paris | |

Full CV available on
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au
www.idrismurphy.com



Ross River tree shadow 2020 acrylic on board 32 x 45 cm



Angel tree 2020 acrylic on board 32 x 45 cm



Falling tree 2020 acrylic & collage on board 32 x 45 cm



Hillside shadows pathway 2020 acrylic on board 32 x 45 cm

"The secret of seeing is, then, the pearl of great price. If I thought he could teach me to find it and keep it forever I would stagger barefoot across a hundred deserts after any lunatic at all. But while the pearl may be found, it may not be sought. The literature of illumination reveals this above all: Although it comes to those who wait for it, it is always, even to the most practiced and adept, a gift and a total surprise. I return from one walk knowing where killdeer nests in the field by the creek and the hour the laurel blooms. I return from the same walk a day later scarcely knowing my own name. Litanies hum in my ears; my tongue flaps in my mouth Ailino, alleluia! I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam. It is possible, in deep space, to sail on solar wind. Light, be it particle or wave, has force: You rig a giant sail and go. The secret of seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail, whetted, translucent, broadside to the merest puff."

Annie Dillard, *The Abundance*, Seeing, P170-171





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