



John Bartley

"Well, how did
I get here?"

25 June – 20 July, 2024



King Street Gallery
on William

Image: Detail from
John Bartley, *Ron*, 2024,
acrylic on wood, 60x48cm



John Bartley

The Kiss

\$11,500, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 122x122cm, 2024

Enquire

John Bartley

In the Talking Heads song 'Once in a Lifetime', David Byrne wrote.

*And you may ask yourself,
well, how did I get here?*

(I'm at an age where reminiscing is a daily activity.)

So how did I get here? How did I become an artist?
What led me down this path?

As a young fella I won a few colouring-in contests at different department stores in Bankstown, probably because I stayed within the lines. I graduated from shopping centre prizes to television prizes. I remember the gorgeous Marilyn from The Super Flying Fun Show on Channel 9 showing a drawing of mine one morning of a frog in a speed boat on Sydney Harbour, but my crowning achievement was the weekly prize on Rex Mossop's Controversy Corner segment. I won some BVD underwear and assorted other rugby league related things for my drawing of the South Sydney winger Brian James.

I applied to be a window dresser for David Jones but didn't get the job. A TAFE course in Showcard and Ticket writing was my next best bet. That served me well in forging car parking passes for the Sydney Opera House when I worked there as an apprentice waiter from 1973 to 1976.

I travelled to Europe in 1981, not intending to look at art; it was just a rite of passage for an Australian to go to London back then. I became obsessed with going to art galleries. It was a passion I didn't know I had.

From 1986 to 1988 I attended East Sydney Tech enrolled in the art certificate course. Great times. Ron Lambert being the most enthusiastic and influential teacher during my time there. If art galleries of Europe opened my eyes to the great painters and the history of art, then so did the contemporary exhibitions of John Peart, Elisabeth Cummings, the purity of Richard Larter and the otherworldliness of James Gleeson for inspiration.

Here I am, 25 solos shows in and I still like pushing paint around. I feel very fortunate to have been nurtured at Legge Gallery. It was such a fantastic place to exhibit, with great camaraderie between the artists. We were all just learning our craft and were

encouraged to experiment. That led me to shows where I didn't use white, a show where I didn't use black, a monochromatic exhibition, works on paper that had to be finished within 120 minutes, shows about buildings, food, God, sex, life and death. I swapped from abstraction to representation and back again.

I don't sketch or sit in the countryside painting.

I stand in a windowless space. One black painting wall lit by a single LED floodlight. It's theatre. I tend to work on one picture at a time. I have this physical and mental dialogue with a shape until we come to an agreement that enough is enough.

The only preconceived decisions before starting are its dimensions and what colour should go down first. I don't know which way is up until near the end.

I am grasping for the untouchable, the indescribable, an elusive darkness.

I do not know what it is but I know when I'm close. The good ones have a mystery at their core that feels deeply satisfying to me.

The ones I love the most often remain unloved by others. This doesn't change my opinion.

What am I trying to achieve now? I'm just taking a painting out for a walk along a tightrope, trying not to fall off. Meanwhile, Florence Welch sings 'Free' through the speakers at the top of her lungs.



John Bartley

Bittersweet Symphony

Enquire

\$12,500, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 102x153cm, 2024



John Bartley

Garden of Earthly Delights

\$11,500, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 122x122cm, 2024

Enquire

How Did I Get Here?

India Bartley

There are times in our lives when we may ask ourselves, “how did I get here?”. The answer to this may be literal and in relation to time and place, or, as is explored in this collection of works, something much more abstruse. Considering each picture as an individual entity with its own story of creation, I ask you to contemplate: how did they get here? Exploring this question reveals the complexity and intimate nature of the works in this exhibition.

Being John’s daughter, I come to this task with intimate knowledge, which ought to mean that writing this piece should have come naturally to me. However, these words have not come easily. My dad’s works and the way in which they are created have been a significant part of my introduction into art, and thus I feel quite nervous in my ability to articulate that which I hold so closely to my heart.

From an early age, I would be invited into the studio to look and assess, with my opinions and suggestions always taken seriously. I still proudly tell people of times where I suggested a certain colour be added or a corner be filled, and my propositions would be put into action; the suggestions were not necessarily kept but always entertained. These exchanges encouraged a creative dialogue in which, although I initially felt profoundly out of my depth, I was honoured and excited to be a part of. Our perceptions did not always align. There were countless times where I would see a shape or figure and Dad would say, “oh no! I really don’t want that in my pictures”, or at times, a regretful agreement: “yes, I was hoping to steer away from that, but I do see it”. My dad’s openness to critique and change never compromised his artistic integrity, and he always stayed true to the visuals which resonated closest to him.

Johns’ work is done in a windowless room. There is no peering in or out; the only indication of work being done is the echo of emotive music reverberating through the closed door. In the studio, the paintings are both physically and metaphorically a stand-in for a boarded-up window. Each work is brought into being as an amalgamation of sound and movement that transcends a purely visual analysis. To experience a fuller sensory experience of each piece, one must imagine the accompanying soundtrack that fostered its creation.

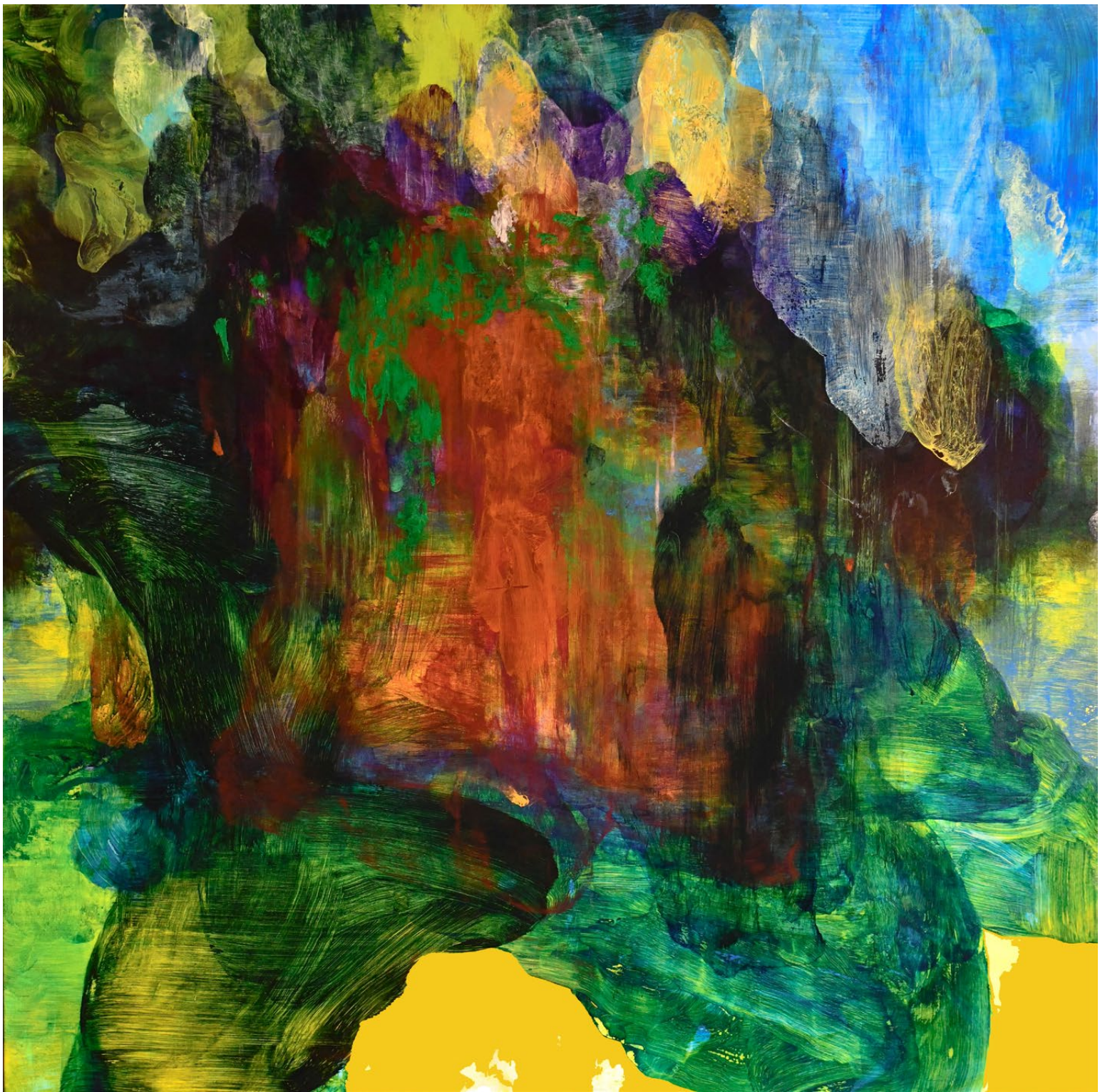
Take *Porcelain*; a work which, as its name suggests, evokes a sense of intense fragility; for me, it conjures up songs of a soft and temperate nature, the kind which you

only listen to in seclusion. John’s application of paint, so delicate it appears almost sheer, creates the voyeuristic sensation of looking into something intensely personal, with only a lace curtain separating the two worlds. In *Porcelain*, we peer into a private world, whereas a work like *Web* evokes grandeur; it inspires us to look outwards as we might at a vast landscape. *Web* embodies so much movement and fervour, it is hard not to feel as though I am back in my bedroom opposite the studio, with the sound of a climatic orchestra echoing through the walls.

Being aware of the back-and-forth process of how John paints creates an appreciation for abstraction. In his work, every shape made and every colour chosen is part of a personal dialogue between artist and image. The driving force of each picture is not a predetermined visual, but something felt. Every sweep of paint is a momentary action which is driven by an internal desire for a certain shape. Looking back on my time watching John’s process, I recall the depth of every motion: beginning one way, and then, as though pushed by an outside force, sweeping or making an abrupt stop. In works such as *Away*, you can find yourself lost in the collisions between paint as they splinter in their transit across the canvas, every stroke following its own unique path. Each stroke comes together with related marks to convey a message to the observer. The orange sweeping across the foreground holds as much significance as the blue peeking through the background. In John’s works, colours and shapes intertwine to form narratives; each hue and form serves as a vital sentence essential to the story.

A huge part of our relationship was built through discussing the way things looked and what we liked and or didn’t like, whether this was looking at pictures or picking out dresses in magazines and shop windows, a cherished pastime of ours. We would guess each other’s favourites and talk through why we were drawn to one over the other. These small invitations to discuss what did and didn’t resonate with me were the beginnings of our conversations in the studio.

John created such an open dialogue around his works with me, and I implore you to adopt the same approach when contemplating this exhibition. His images are not created with the expectation that we might find a connection to one, nor is there the expectation to applaud them. When you do happen to find yourself engrossed in an image or overcome by its intimacy, ask yourself: “Why? What makes this image feel as though it was made just for me?”.



John Bartley

The Fallen

\$11,500, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 122x122cm, 2024

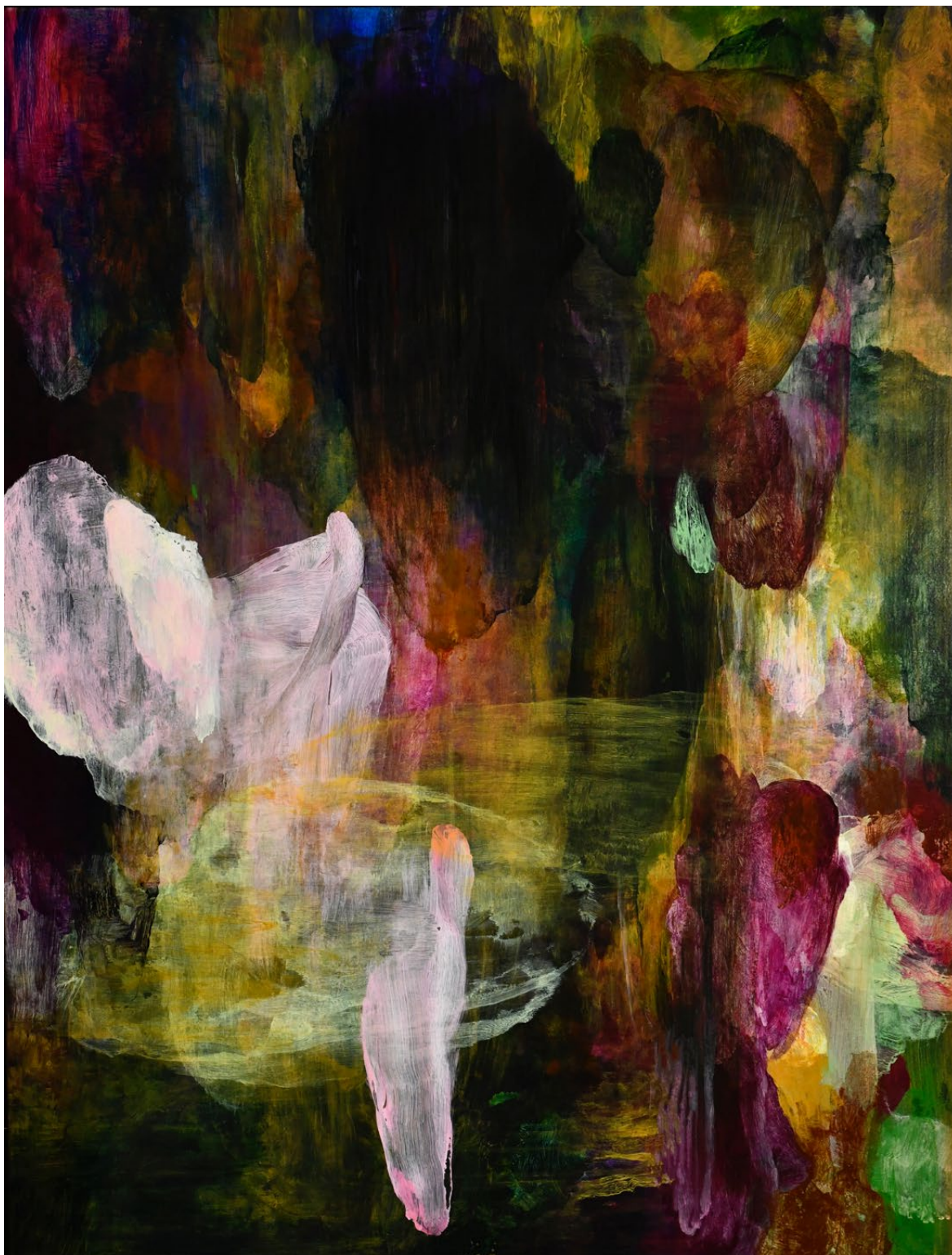
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John Bartley

Gods and Monsters

sold
acrylic on canvas, 122x122cm, 2024

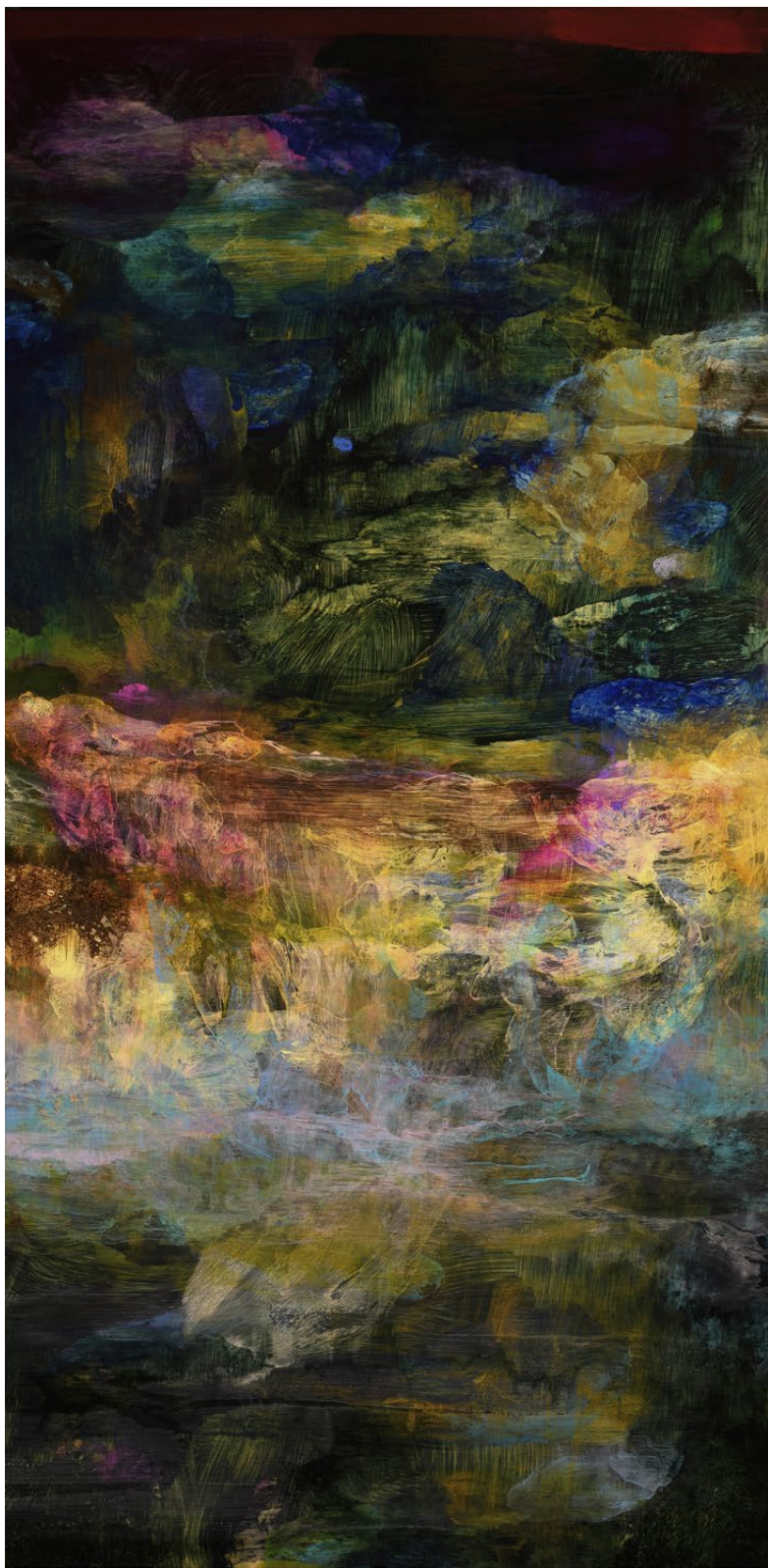


John Bartley

Francis

\$11,500, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 138x107cm, 2023

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John Bartley

Ophelia

sold
acrylic on wood, 120x60cm, 2023



John Bartley

Johnny

\$6,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x90cm, 2023

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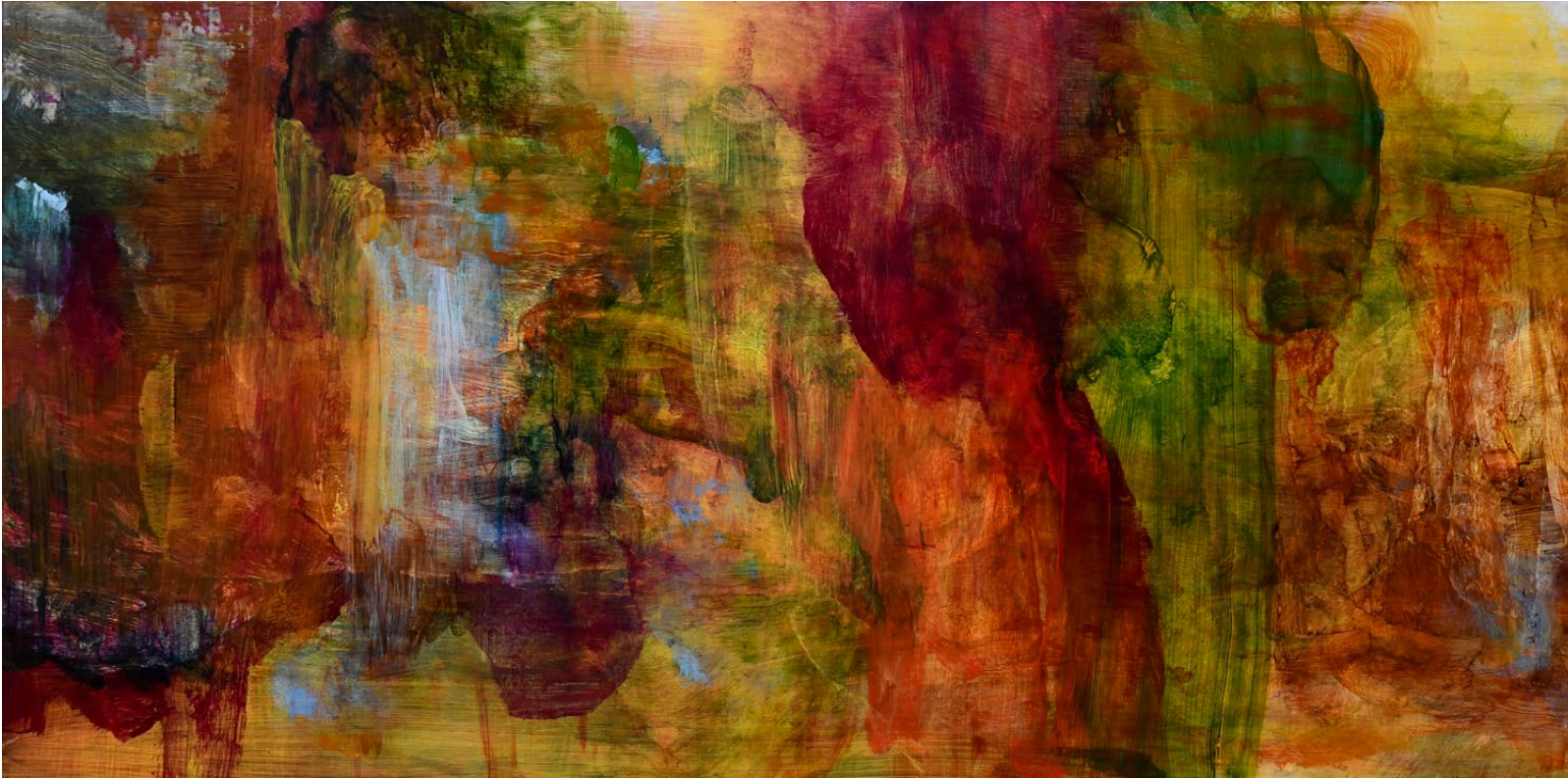


John Bartley

Web

\$6,800, GST n/a
acrylic on polyester, 60x90cm, 2023

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John Bartley

Bridge

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x90cm, 2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Streamline

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x60cm, 2024

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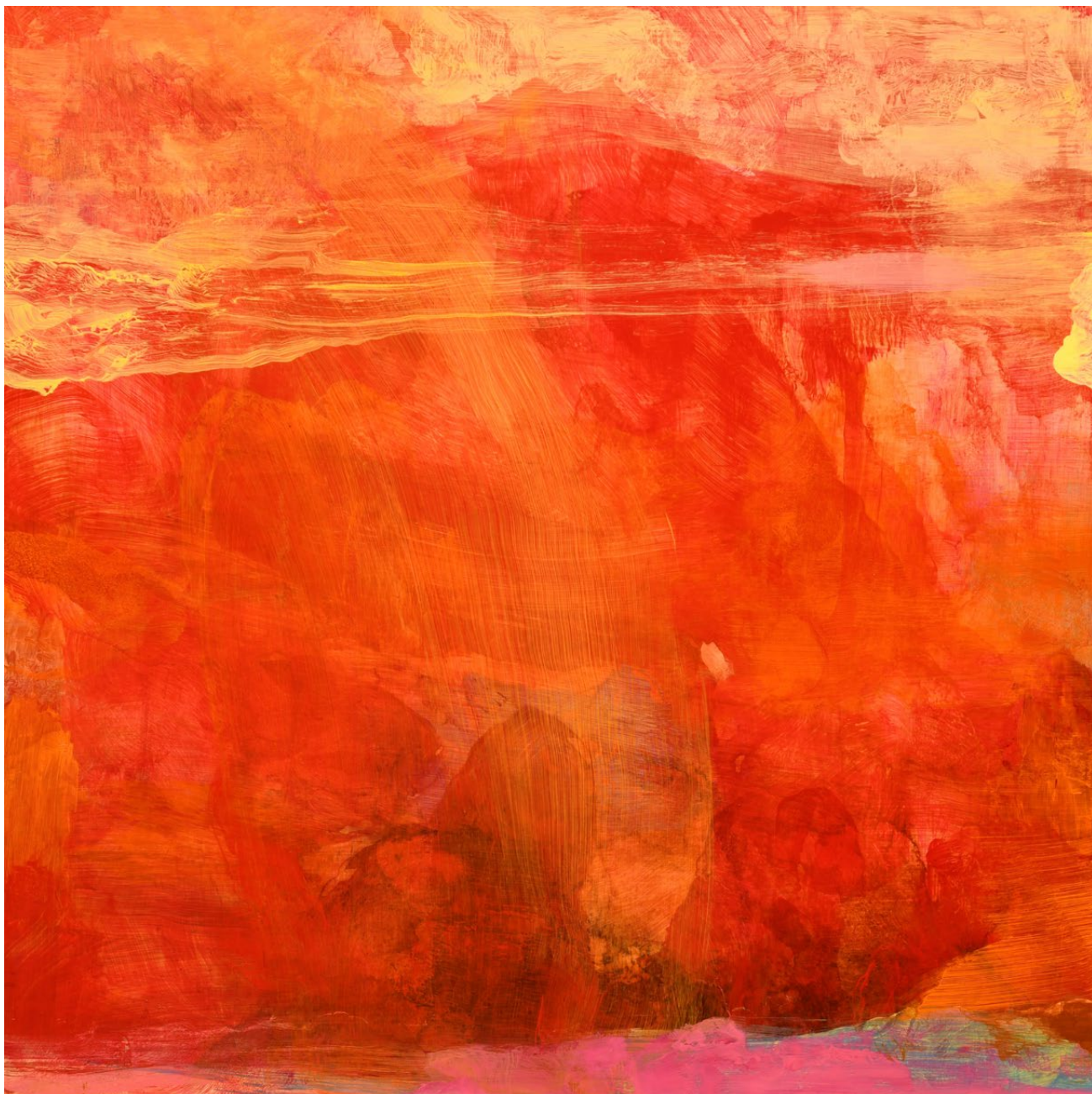


John Bartley

Porcelain

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x60cm, 2023

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John Bartley

Wisp

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x60cm, 2023

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John Bartley

Howard

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x60cm, 2023

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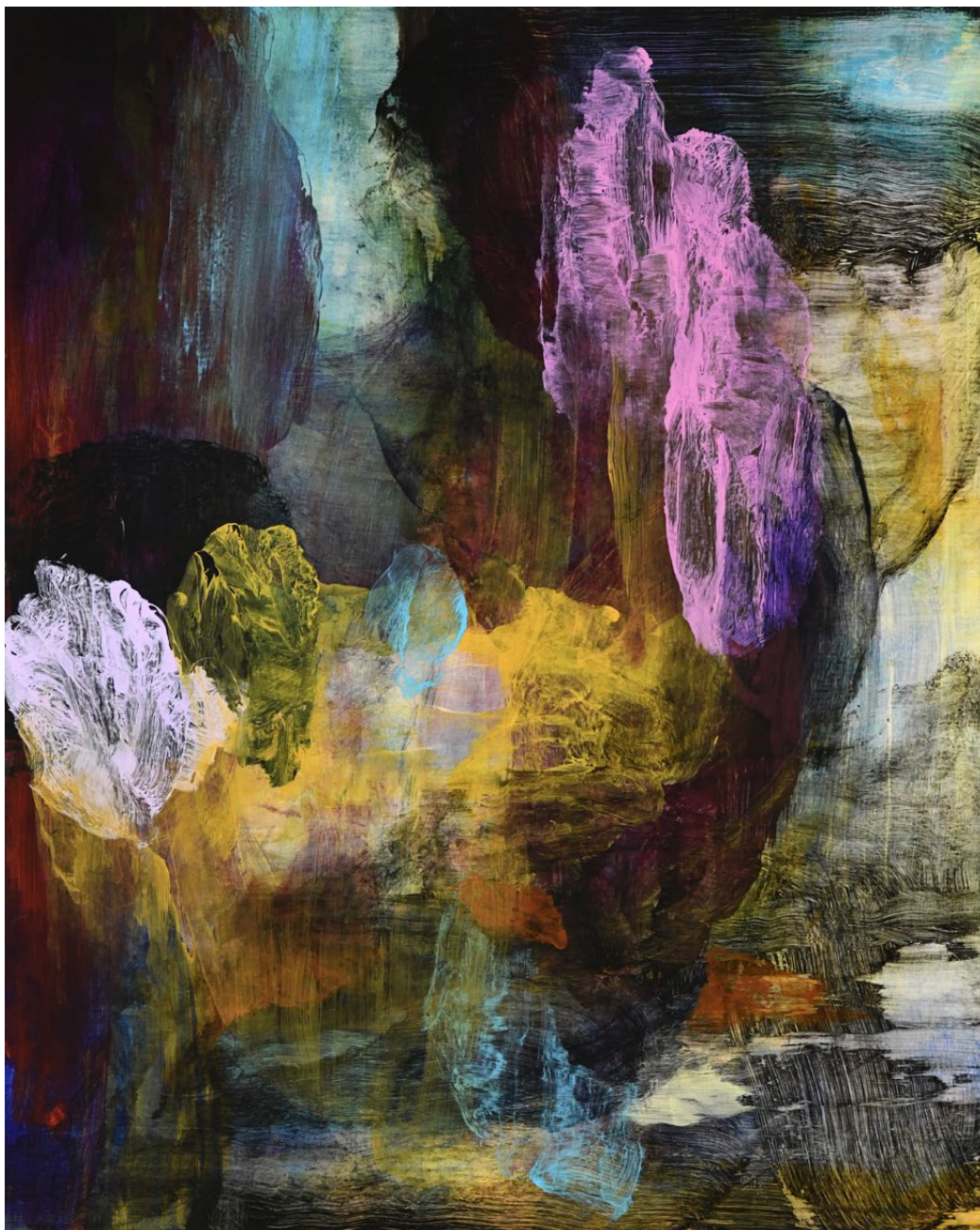


John Bartley

Francois

\$4,800, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x55cm, 2024

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John Bartley

Ron

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x48cm, 2024

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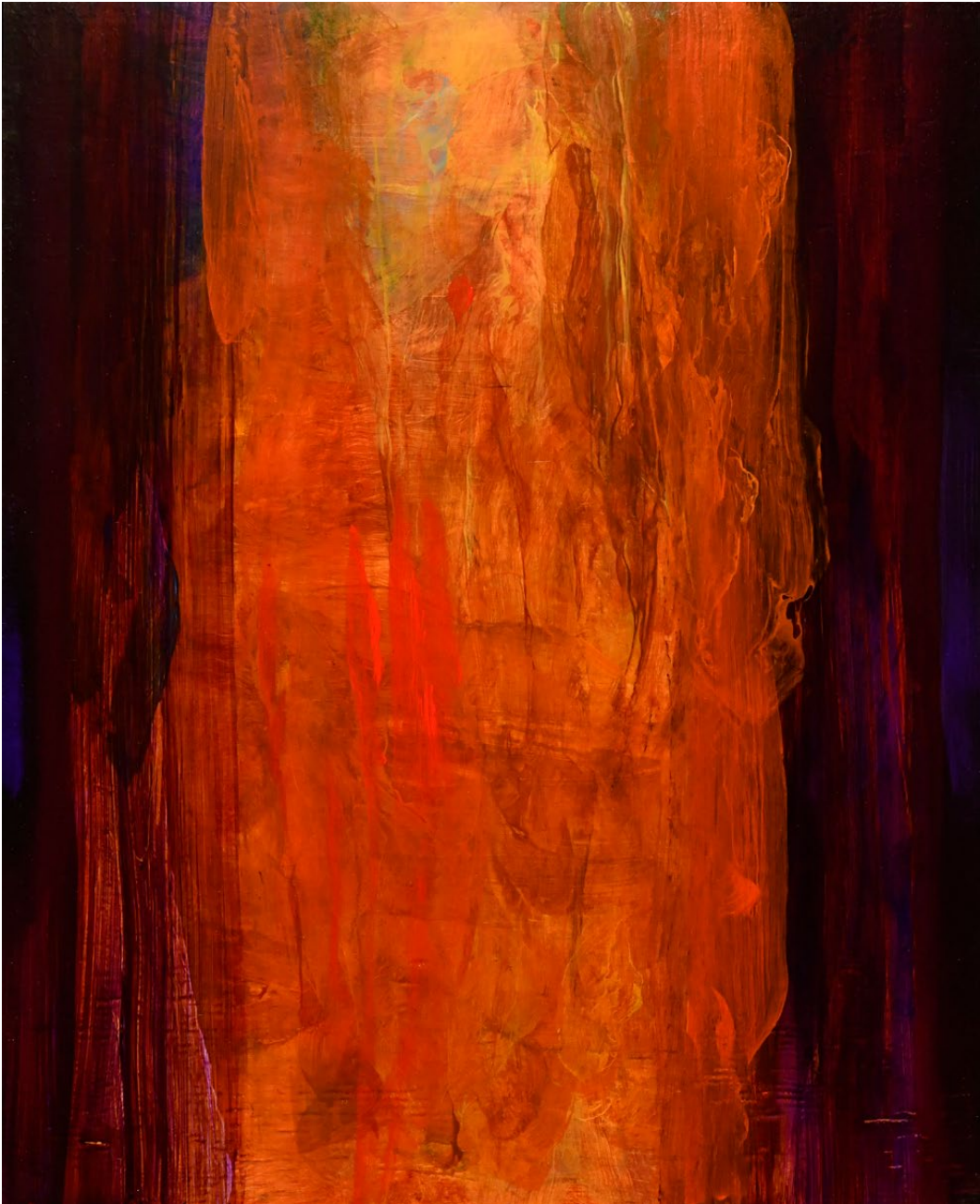


John Bartley

Away

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 60x45cm, 2024

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John Bartley

Between

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 55x45cm, 2024

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John Bartley

Forge

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 42x60cm, 2024

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John Bartley

Tightrope

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x60cm, 2023

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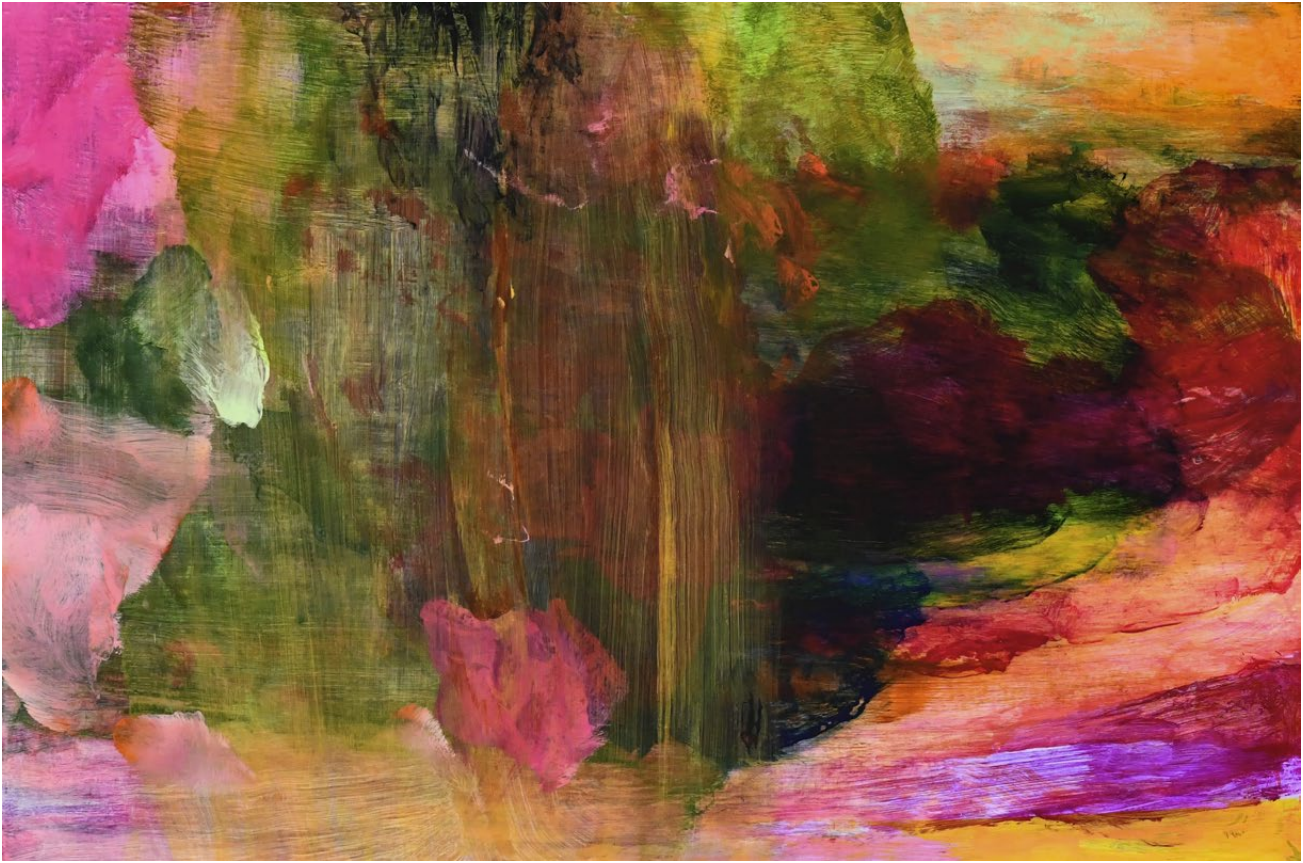


John Bartley

Icarus

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x60cm, 2024

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John Bartley

Mayfair

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x60cm, 2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Montgomery

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x60cm, 2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Touch

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x60cm, 2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Fleeting

\$4,000, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 45x55cm, 2023

Enquire



John Bartley

Talk to Me

\$3,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x40cm,
2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Bill

\$3,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x40cm,
2023

Enquire



John Bartley

Harbour

\$3,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 40x40cm,
2023

[Enquire](#)



John Bartley

Den

\$2,750, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 38x35cm, 2023

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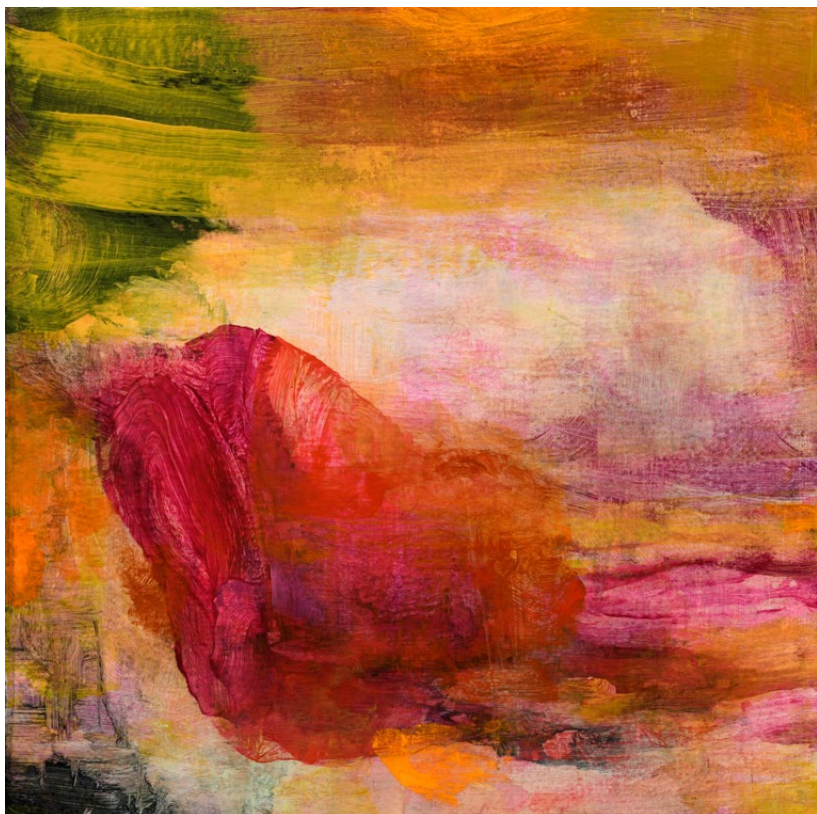


John Bartley

Flow

\$2,200, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm,
2023

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John Bartley

Sideways

\$2,200, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm,
2023

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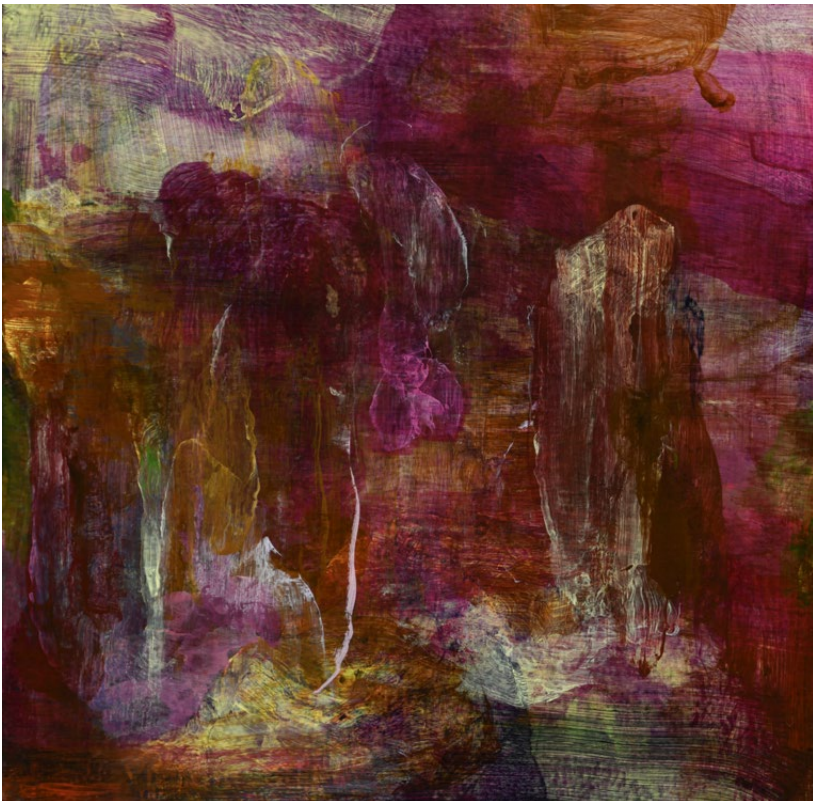


John Bartley

Mountain

\$2,200, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm,
2023

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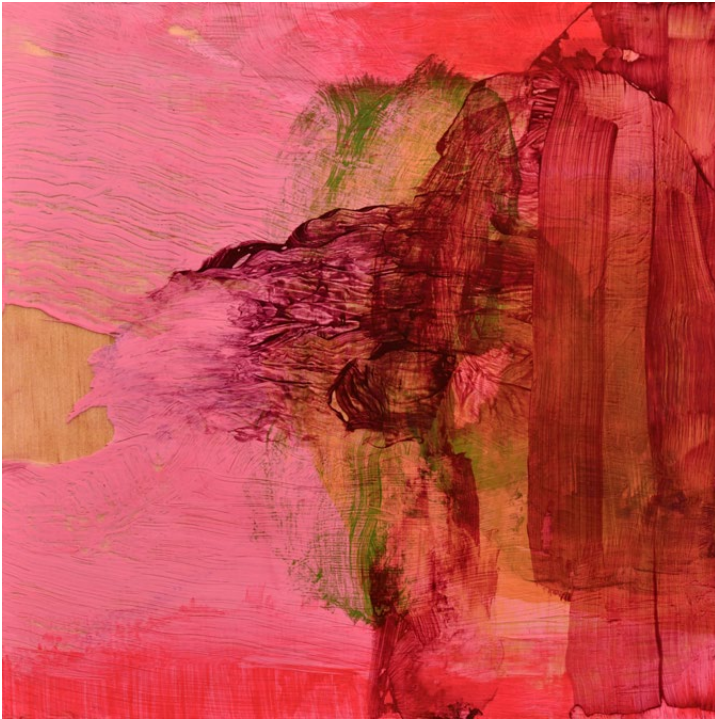


John Bartley

Kyoto

\$2,200, GST n/a
acrylic on canvas, 30x30cm,
2023

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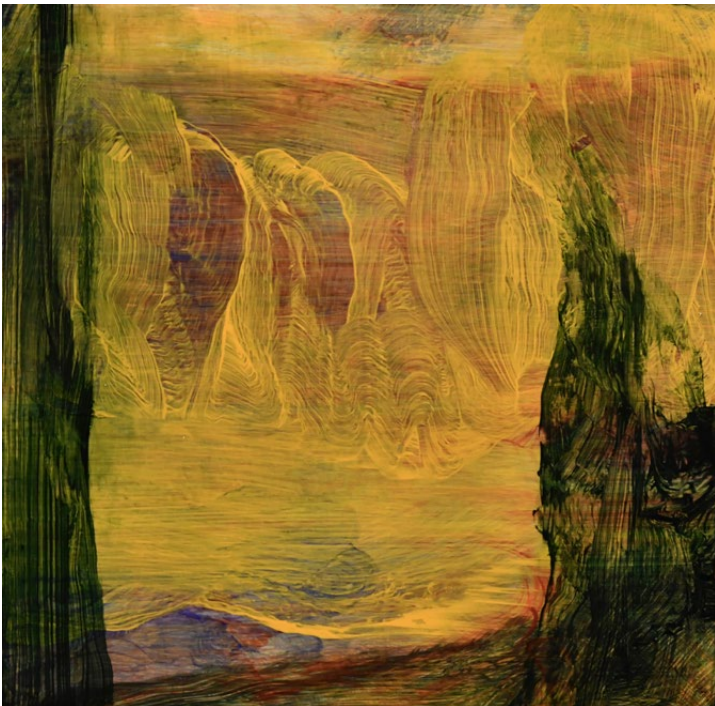


John Bartley

Corvette

\$1,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 21x21cm,
2024

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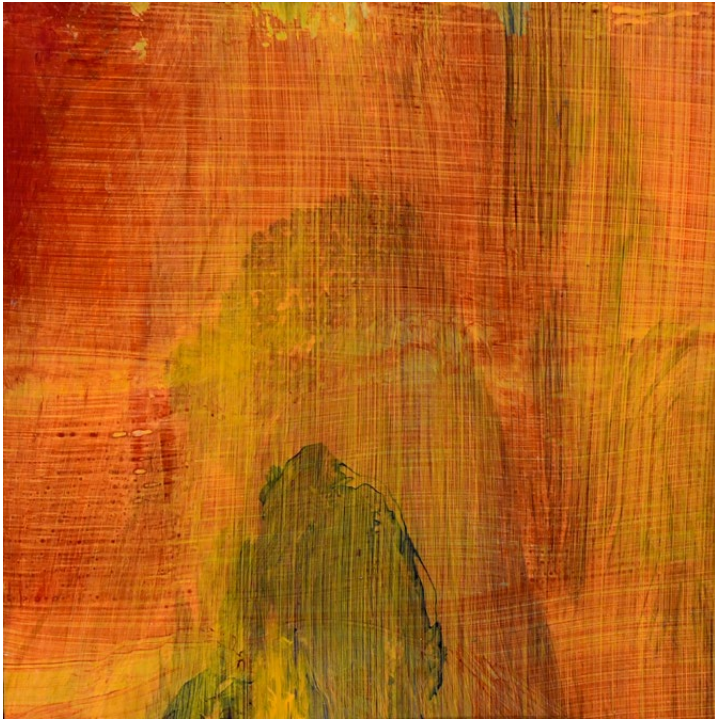


John Bartley

Caspar

\$1,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 22x22cm,
2024

Enquire



John Bartley

Echo

\$1,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 22x22cm,
2023

Enquire



John Bartley

Karijini

\$1,500, GST n/a
acrylic on wood, 22x22cm,
2023

Enquire

John Bartley

Select Biography

Lives and works in Scotts Head, NSW

Born 1956 Sydney, NSW

Education

1986-88 Art Certificate & Higher Art Certificate East
Sydney Technical College, Sydney

Solo Exhibitions

2024 "Well, How did I get here?" King Street
Gallery on William, Sydney

2022 *Something but Nothing* King Street Gallery on William

2020 *Dark beautiful* King Street Gallery on William

2018 *Tweed, Hill End, Home* Watters Gallery, Sydney

2016 *Outside* Watters Gallery

2014 *On a Clear Day* Watters Gallery

2012 *Songs to the Siren* Watters Gallery

2010 *Air* Watters Gallery

2009 *Coming Up for Air* Legge Gallery, Sydney

2007 *Treading Water* Legge Gallery

2006 *Voyages* Legge Gallery

2003 *Saint* Legge Gallery

2002 *5 and 7* Legge Gallery

2001 *High-key Holes* Legge Gallery

1999 *Devils In The Backseat* Legge Gallery

1998 *On The Wing* Legge Gallery

1997 *Belly Songs* Legge Gallery

1996 *Actually I've Always Wanted To Be A
Singer! (a reprise)* Legge Gallery

1995 *Buildings, Food, God, Sex, Life, Death* Legge Gallery

1994 *Upstairs* Legge Gallery

1993 *Dark Cars With Maps* Legge Gallery

1992 *Progression Through Loss* Legge Gallery

1991 *Actually I've Always Wanted To Be A Singer* Legge Gallery

1990 *Drawings* Legge Gallery
Looking For Jack Legge Gallery

Group Exhibitions [selected]

2023 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney

2022 *Mosman Art Prize*, Mosman, Sydney

2020 *The Watters Gift*, online exhibition,
University of Technology Sydney Gallery, Sydney

2019 *Inside/Outside* King Street Gallery on William
Abstract '19 King Street Gallery on William

2018 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery

2016 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery and Mornington
Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, VIC

2015 *Big and Little* Watters Gallery
Brian Hartigan Paintings & John Bartley
Works on paper Watters Gallery

2014 *Watters Gallery 50th Anniversary*
Exhibition Watters Gallery

2013 *Watters Gallery 27th Summer*
Exhibition Watters Gallery
Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery

2012 *Mosman Art Prize* Mosman Council
Packsaddle New England Regional
Art Museum, Armidale, NSW
Stand Up Close: Remembering Ron Lambert
Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong, NSW
Melbourne Art Fair 2012 Royal
Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Gallipoli Art Prize Gallipoli Club, Sydney

2011 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery and Tweed
River Regional Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, NSW
Frank's Flat Maitland Regional Art
Gallery, Maitland, NSW
Packsaddle New England Regional Art Museum

2010 *Art Month Sydney* Watters Gallery
Melbourne Art Fair 2010 Royal
Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Watters Gallery Summer Exhibition
Watters Gallery

2009 *Works on Paper* Legge Gallery
*John Bartley, Vivienne Ferguson &
Derek O'Connor* Legge Gallery

2008 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery
and Tweed River Art Gallery
Melbourne Art Fair 2008 Royal
Exhibition Building, Melbourne

2007 *Works on Paper* Legge Gallery
Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
Art Sydney 2007 Royal Hall of
Industries Moore Park, Sydney
Summer Exhibition Legge Gallery

2006 *Group Show* Legge Gallery
Who cares? Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney
Salon des Refusés S.H. Ervin Gallery
Melbourne Art Fair 2006 Royal
Exhibition Building, Melbourne
John Bartley and Vivienne Ferguson
Silvershot, Melbourne
The Year in Art S.H. Ervin Gallery
Summer Show Legge Gallery

2005 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery
*Overland and Underworld: new paintings by
John Bartley & Tony McDonald* Legge Gallery
Redlands Westpac Art Prize
Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
Summer Show Legge Gallery

2004 *Depth of Field – Anamorphosis* Utopia Art, Sydney
Untitled Legge Gallery
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Council
Stock Show Legge Gallery
Melbourne Art Fair 2004 Royal
Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Packsaddle New England Regional Art Museum

2003 *Fishers Ghost Art Prize* Campbelltown City
Bicentennial Art Gallery, Campbelltown, NSW
The Year in Art S.H. Ervin Gallery
Packsaddle New England Region Art Museum
Summer Show Legge Gallery

2002 *Packsaddle* New England Regional Art Museum
Waverley Art Prize Bondi, Sydney
Melbourne Art Fair 2002 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Group Show Legge Gallery
Legge Gallery Summer Show Legge Gallery

2001 *Packsaddle* New England Regional Art Museum
Legge Gallery Painters Use Atelier
Artists' Acrylics Legge Gallery

2000 *Ten Years* Legge Gallery
Seventh Australian Contemporary Art Fair
 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Fleurieu Art Prize South Australia

1999 *Evolution* Legge Gallery
University & Schools Club Art Prize Sydney

1998 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery
Sixth Australian Contemporary Art Fair
 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
The Bryan Niland Collection Penrith Regional Gallery, Emu Plains, NSW

1997 *Group Exhibition* Legge Gallery

1996 *View 5 Artists* Legge Gallery
Fifth Australian Contemporary Art Fair
 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Mellow Down Easy Legge Gallery

1995 *Summer Exhibition* Legge Gallery

1994 *Fourth Australian Contemporary Art Fair*
 Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Artists Don't Believe In Sanity Clause Legge Gallery

1993 *Tempest* Legge Gallery

1992 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery
Works From Stock & Studio Legge Gallery
Thisness Legge Gallery

1991 *Common Sense Curated by Jacques Delaruelle*
 University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA
Works On Paper Legge Gallery

1990 *Legge Gallery Preview* Watters Gallery
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Council
Common Sense Curated by Jacques Delaruelle
 King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney
The Jacaranda Art Society Drawing Prize
 Grafton Regional Art Gallery, Grafton, NSW,
Cow Show Legge Gallery

1989 *Inside the Greenhouse* Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
Heritage Painting Prize Blaxland Gallery, Sydney

1988 *Faber-Castell Drawing Prize* Rex Irwin Gallery, Sydney
Graduating Show East Sydney Technical College Cell Block Theatre, Sydney

Awards & Residencies

2019 *Police Point*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery

2017 *Hill End*, Haefligers Cottage, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

2016 *Tweed Regional Gallery*, Artist in residence

2015 *Tweed Regional Gallery*, Artist in residence

2012 *Mosman Art Prize*, Commendation

1990 *Mosman Art Prize*, First Prize

Collections
 Allens Collection, Sydney
 Artbank
 Baker and McKenzie, Sydney
 BHP Billiton
 Clayton Utz Collection, Melbourne
 Faber-Castell
 Federal Law Court of Australia, ACT
 Lavery Collection
 Mosman Council Collection, Sydney
 University & Schools Club, Sydney
 UTS, Sydney

Bibliography

2022 Sebastian Smee 'Something but nothing' catalogue essay, King Street Gallery on William

2020 McDonald, John, 'It's difficult not to view John Bartley's works in relation to the bushfires', The Sydney Morning Herald, 28 Feb, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/it-s-difficult-not-to-view-john-bartley-s-works-in-relation-to-the-bushfires-20200213-p53nmb.html>

Legge, Sonia, 'Dark beautiful', catalogue essay, King Street Gallery on William, Jan

2016 McDonald, John, 'Stars of the Salon des Refusés', The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 Aug, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/salon-des-refuses-20160802-gqj466.html>

2007 Smee, Sebastian, 'The best of the rest actually the best', The Australian, 8 Mar

2005 Downer, Stella, Redlands Westpac Art Prize, catalogue introduction, Oct

2003 'Search for the Soul', Wentworth Courier, 9 Jul
 Low, Lenny Ann, 'Disparate Visions', Metropolitan, Sydney Morning Herald, 12-13 Jul

1999 Smee, Sebastian, 'A fine line', the galleries, The Sydney Morning Herald, 13 Jul

1996 Smee, Sebastian, 'Brush Notes', The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 Nov

1995 Delaruelle, Jaques, 'Queering reason's pitch', The Sydney Review, Aug
 Fenner, Felicity, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 Jul

1994 McDonald, John, 'Save us from perfection', Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Sep

1993 Delaruelle, Jacques, 'Chalk and Cheese', The Sydney Review, 24 Sep
 Fenner, Felicity, The Sydney Morning Herald, 3 Dec
 Watson, Bronwyn, The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Mar

1991 Osborne, Margot, 'Pleasure justifies public-purse expense' The Adelaide Advertiser, 20 Mar

1990 Allen, Christopher, 'An intuitive voyage into the unknown', The Sydney Morning Herald
 Delaruelle, Jacques, 'Common Sense', catalogue essay, University of South Australia Art Museum
 Palmer, Tony, 'Huntley's Australian Art Investor', 11 Feb

Artwork photographs courtesy
John Bartley

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G on William

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