



Ross Laurie  
Moonlight-Daylight







For my brother  
James

Painters have often talked about the moment of  
'letting go' being an integral part of picture making.

For me, this means to jettison all expectations and desires,  
and in the process of each picture's development, to allow  
the work to 'chart it's own course' (another common refrain).

It is in this area of greater risk that painting holds  
its own unique excitement, and without this level of  
engagement I do not feel that the picture lives to  
justify its own existence.

Ross Laurie  
April 2024  
Walcha

I would like to acknowledge the Dhanggati peoples of  
Walcha NSW, and the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin  
Nation of Naarm/Melbourne, on whose country these  
pictures were painted.





28 May–22 June 2024

Ross Laurie  
Moonlight-Daylight

King Street Gallery  
on William





*Portico* 2023, oil on canvas (diptych), 76.5x112.5cm



# Ross Laurie: Moonlight-Daylight

Over the past two decades, Ross Laurie's work has provided decisive proof that the trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW know nothing about landscape painting. Year after year, Laurie would feature in the Salon des Refusés, while the most woeful specimens cluttered the walls of the Wynne Prize. On every occasion, Laurie's painting would be a stand-out, making one wonder if the trustees ever visited the Salon and repented of their bad choices. Apparently not.

Laurie was in his mid-thirties when he embarked upon the abstracted landscapes that have become his trademark. They looked like nothing else in Australian art, and have retained their remarkable power over the following 30 years. The new works in this *Moonlight-Daylight* exhibition have the same rugged quality as many of his earlier pieces, inspired by the same landscape, of Walcha, New England, a rural community with a disproportionate number of good artists.

Although the abstract elements of Laurie's work are obvious, the artist says he doesn't see himself as an abstract painter. This is a feeling he shares with many Australian artists for whom categorisations seem unnecessarily restrictive. When one is working in the same place for an extended period, trying to capture the changes in light and atmosphere, it's no longer a self-conscious process of 'abstracting' from observation, it's *painting*, pure and simple.

Laurie has gone beyond that point where he has to make deliberate choices about how and what to paint. He is immersed in this environment, and responds instinctively to what he sees and feels. We don't need to read titles to know that *Heat* is a daytime painting, and *Passage (Nocturne)*, a nighttime one. Day and night are implicit in the selection of colours and the overall tonality.

What's unique about Laurie's approach, is the physicality of his compositions. He is as responsive to light as any Impressionist, but doesn't attempt to break it down into delicate, flickering particles. Laurie paints interlocking planes of colour with the brute force of a Philip Guston rather than the countless small touches of a Monet. His compositions are constructed with solid planes and lines that defy conventional perspective, advancing and receding in a baffling manner. Large works such as *White Light Wolka* or *Fish*, are vast patchworks, in which unevenly shaped slabs of colour bounce off each other in a perpetual dance across the canvas.

*Portico* is more concentrated in its collisions of multiple colours laid down in ragged, triangular forms. If the larger paintings convey a sense of the bright light of day, this work brings sun, shade and the colours of the landscape together in a wild jumble.

As a painter, one might see Laurie as an instinctive rule-breaker, but it would be more accurate to say he makes up his own rules as to the depth or shallowness of the picture plane, the way tones play off each other, and the looseness of his brushstrokes. His method remain broadly the same, but each picture has its own character. The power of these works lies in his ability to paint the landscape in such a strikingly original manner it takes a moment for us to realise we know exactly the kind of country he is describing. When the idea of abstraction has fallen away, we experience not the shock of the new, but the shock of familiarity.

John McDonald  
March 2024



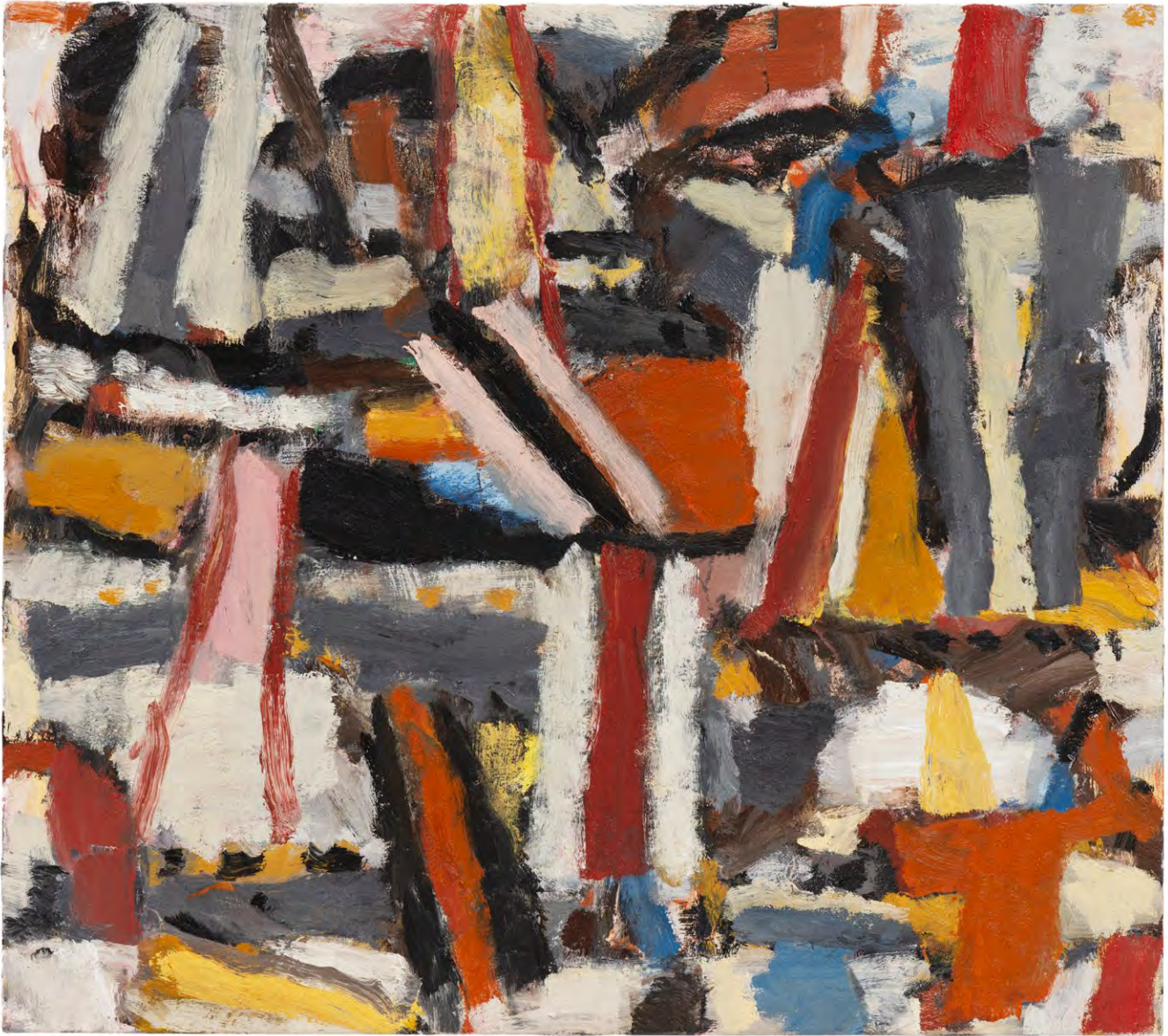
*Bangs St XX 2022, oil on paper, 67x51cm*





*Moonlight 2023, oil on canvas, 122x183cm*





*Passage 2023, oil on canvas, 81.5x91.5cm*



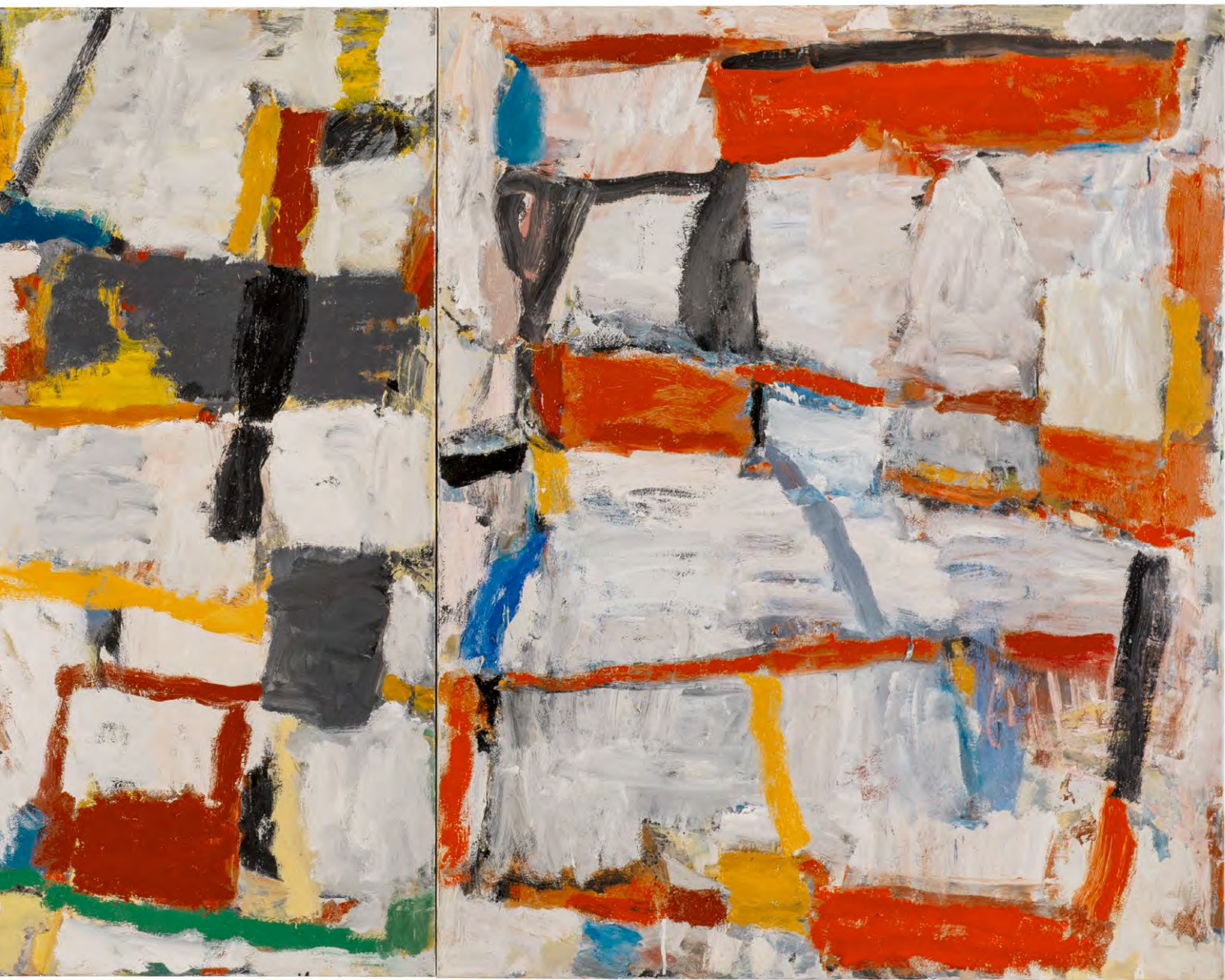


*Passage (Nocturne)* 2023, oil on canvas, 81.5x91.5cm









*White Light Wolka* 2023, oil on canvas (triptych), 153x382cm



*Bangs St III 2022, oil on paper, 67x51cm*



*Bangs St IV 2022, oil on paper, 67x51cm*





*Fulcrum* 2023, oil on canvas, 66x84cm



*Whisper* 2023, oil on canvas, 66x82cm





*Heat* 2023, oil on canvas, 137x152.5cm







*Soft Light 2023,*  
oil on canvas, 130x250cm



*Willesden 2023*, oil on canvas, 49x45cm





*To the Station* 2023, oil on canvas 66x84cm



*Ziggurat* 2023, oil on canvas, 81.5x91.5cm





*The Sea 2023*, oil on canvas, 81.5x91.5cm









*Paesaggio/Natura Morta 2023, oil on canvas (diptych), 77x184cm*



*Byzantine II* 2024, oil on canvas, 26x31cm





*Bologna* 2023, oil on canvas, 66x82cm



*Byzantine III 2024, oil on canvas, 31x36cm*



*Byzantine IV 2024, oil on canvas, 31x36cm*



*Byzantine V 2024, oil on canvas, 31x36cm*



*Byzantine VI 2024, oil on canvas, 31x36cm*





*Byzantine I* 2024, oil on canvas, 31x41cm



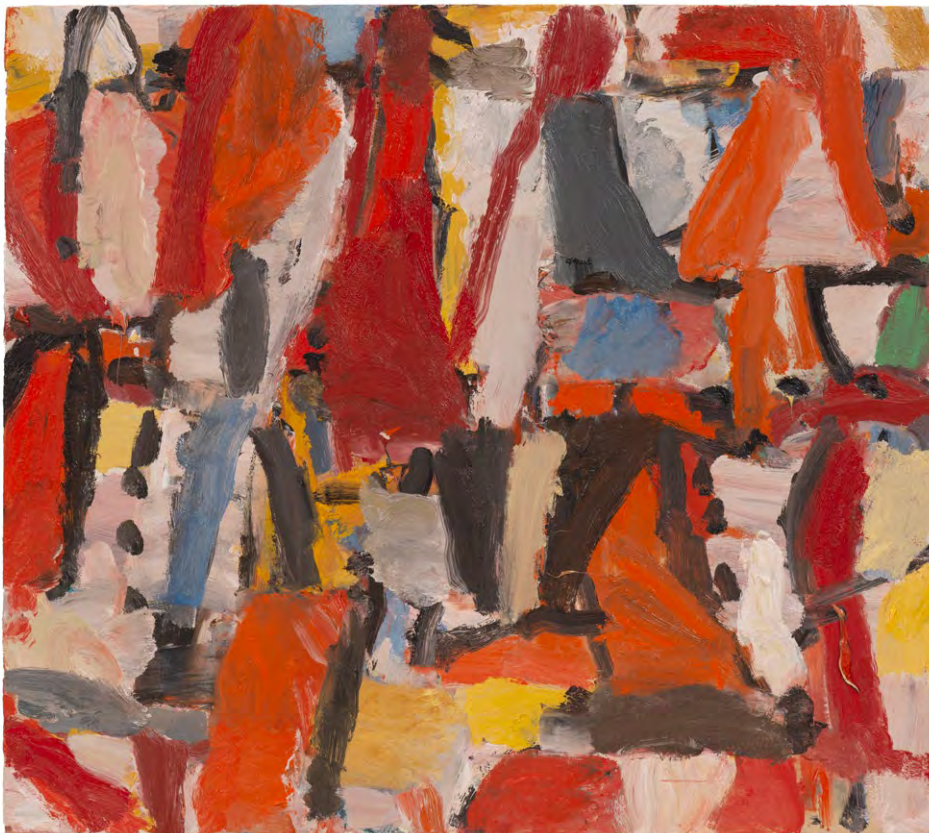
*Byzantine VII* 2024, oil on canvas, 31x41cm



*Byzantine VIII* 2024, oil on canvas, 31x41cm



*Byzantine IX* 2024, oil on canvas, 31x41cm



*Industry and Landscape 2023, oil on canvas, 81.5x91.5cm*





*Coltrane 2023*, oil on canvas, 106x122cm









*Fish 2023, oil on canvas (diptych), 77x184cm*

# Ross Laurie

## Select Biography

Lives and works in Walcha, NSW.

### Studies

1986	Painting: Victorian College Prahan, Melbourne
1985	Newcastle Polytechnic, UK (Now Northumbria University, London)
1984	Foundation Course, St Martins School of Arts, London
1983	Mitchell College, Bathurst, NSW
1982	Visual Art, Sydney College of the Arts

### Solo Exhibitions

2024	<i>Moonlight-Daylight</i> King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
2023	<i>Ross Laurie: Mountains to Sea</i> MAGMA Galleries, Melbourne
2022	<i>After Storms And Rain</i> King Street Gallery on William
2020	<i>Dry at Walcha</i> King Street Gallery on William
2018	<i>New Paintings and Works on Paper</i> King Street Gallery on William
2016	<i>New Paintings and Works on Paper</i> King Street Gallery on William
2014	<i>New Paintings</i> King Street Gallery on William
2011	<i>Paintings and Works on Paper</i> Scott Livesey Gallery, Melbourne <i>Paintings</i> Damien Minton Gallery, Sydney
2010	<i>Paintings and Works on Paper</i> Damien Minton Gallery
2009	Damien Minton Gallery Moree Plains Regional Gallery
2008	Damien Minton Gallery
2007	Damien Minton Gallery
2006	Damien Minton Gallery
2005	Damien Minton Gallery <i>Wrestles with Landscape</i> New England Regional Art Museum (NERAM), Armidale, NSW
2002	Damien Minton Gallery, Newcastle, NSW
1999	Coventry Gallery, Sydney
1998	Old School Gallery, Walcha, NSW
1997	Coventry Gallery
1996	Coventry Gallery
1995	Coventry Gallery
1994	Coventry Gallery
1993	William Mora Galleries, Melbourne
1992	New England Regional Art Museum
1991	Tamworth Regional Gallery, Tamworth, NSW William Mora Galleries, Melbourne Ben Grady Gallery, Canberra
1990	Linden Gallery, Melbourne
1988	Girgis and Klym Gallery, Melbourne
1981	Tamworth Regional Gallery

### Selected Group Exhibitions

2021	<i>The Big Picture Show</i> King Street Gallery on William <i>Gorge Country</i> NERAM
2019	<i>Inside/Outside</i> King Street Gallery on William <i>Abstract 19'</i> King Street Gallery on William
2018	<i>Salient</i> Australia Club Melbourne, Melbourne <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2018-19	<i>Salient – the Western Front centennial commemoration</i> NERAM; Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, NSW; Anzac Memorial Art Gallery, Sydney; Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Muswellbrook, NSW; Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah, NSW
2017	<i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2016	<i>Wynne Prize Exhibition</i> Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery; Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, Vic <i>Paint my Place</i> Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, Coffs Harbour, NSW
2015	<i>WINNER Paddington Art Prize</i> Sydney <i>The Piano has been Drinking [Not Me]</i> Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Maitland, NSW <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery
2014	<i>Drawing out: Dobell Prize for Drawing</i> AGNSW
2013	<i>Walcha: City of Art</i> Walcha Gallery of Art, Walcha, NSW <i>Last but not Least</i> King Street Gallery on William <i>NSW Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize</i> Parliament House, Sydney <i>Packsaddle</i> NERAM <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery
2012-14	<i>In Two Art</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery, travelling
2012	<i>Not the Way Home: 13 Artists Paint the Desert</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery and touring <i>Melbourne Art Fair</i> Damien Minton Gallery and Artist Profile <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery <i>Big Picture Show</i> King Street Gallery on William <i>Landscape Show</i> Defiance Gallery, Sydney <i>Five Bells</i> Damien Minton Gallery <i>Dobell Prize for Drawing</i> AGNSW
2011	<i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery <i>Ross Laurie and David McBride Recent Works</i> Tamworth Regional Gallery; Dubbo Regional Gallery, Dubbo, NSW; NERAM <i>Works on Paper Award</i> Hazelhurst Arts Centre, Sydney
2010	<i>Dobell Prize for Drawing</i> AGNSW <i>Melbourne Art Fair 2010</i> Damien Minton Gallery
2009	<i>Works on Paper Award</i> Hazelhurst Arts Centre <i>New England Views</i> NERAM <i>Same Place, Many Views</i> Defiance Gallery <i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery
2008	<i>Melbourne Art Fair</i> Damien Minton Gallery <i>Paddington Art Prize (winner of the COFA Print Award)</i> <i>North South East West</i> Damien Minton Gallery
2007	<i>Salon des Refusés</i> S.H. Ervin Gallery



2006 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery  
*Regional Encounters* Tamworth Regional Gallery  
*Walcha—City of Art* Gallery Karlovy Vary, Ostrov, Czech Republic  
*Same Place Different Views* Defiance Gallery

2005 *The Year in Art* S.H. Ervin Gallery  
*(Going) Out There* Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, UNSW  
*Country Energy Art Prize* Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery; NSW Parliament House

2004 *England Picture* NERAM  
*Hazelhurst Work on Paper Award*  
Hazelhurst Arts Centre, Sydney

2003 *Surface Memories* Tamworth Regional Gallery  
*Country Energy Art Prize*, NERAM  
*Walcha—City of Art* New Contemporaries Gallery, Sydney

2000 *Melbourne Art Fair* Bryan Hooper Gallery, Sydney

1999 *Coventry Diary* Coventry Gallery, Sydney

1998 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery

1995 *Salon des Refusés* S.H. Ervin Gallery

1991 Syme Dodson Gallery, Sydney

1989 *Drawings* William Mora Galleries, Melbourne

1988 *New Artists: Melbourne* Ivan Dougherty Gallery  
*Gallery Artists* Girgis and Klym Gallery, Melbourne

1987-88 *Moet and Chandon Touring Exhibition*

1982 *New England Artists* Tamworth City Gallery  
*Water Project* Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, NZ  
*He Manawa Whenua: He Puna Wai WaterWay - Thirteen contemporary artists explore the rivers and lakes of Aotearoa*  
Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, Masterton, NZ

#### Commissions

2004 Walcha Central School, Walcha

2001 Walcha Preschool Inc, Walcha

1998 Public Space Walcha Shire Council, Walcha

#### Awards and Residencies

2017 The Western Front, France and Belgium

2016 Moonee Beach Residency, Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery

2015 Winner, Paddington Art Prize

2010 Winner, Kings School Art Prize

2008 Paddington Art Prize (COFA Print Award)

1999 Winner, Norvill Prize for Landscape Painting, Murrurundi

#### Collections

Artbank, Australia

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Benalla Art Gallery, Benalla, Victoria

Yarilla Arts and Museum, Coffs Harbour, NSW

La Trobe University, Melbourne

Macquarie Bank, Australia

Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Maitland, NSW

Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW

New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale, NSW

Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, Muswellbrook, NSW

NRMA, Sydney

State Bank of Victoria, Victoria

Tamworth Regional Gallery, Tamworth, NSW

#### Bibliography

2024 McDonald, John, *Moonlight-Daylight*, Catalogue essay

2022 Johnson, Anna, *After Storms and Rain*, Catalogue essay

2020 Frost, Dr Andrew, *Dry at Walcha*, Catalogue Essay

2018 Allen, Christopher, 'The Great War Reimagined', *The Australian Inquirer*, 12 April, p11.  
Manera, Brad, 'Fields of sacrifice', *Australian Financial Review*, 24 March p39  
Fuller, Nicholas, 'Walcha-based landscape painter Ross Laurie's WWI paintings, showing at NERAM', *Armidale Express*, 2 Apr, [www.armidaleexpress.com.au/story/5317972/new-england-artist-ross-laurie-goes-to-the-western-front/](http://www.armidaleexpress.com.au/story/5317972/new-england-artist-ross-laurie-goes-to-the-western-front/)

2016 Frost, Joe, 'Ross Laurie', *Artists Profile Magazine*, September

Ryan, Ann, 'Curator and Coordinator Reports', *Art Gallery of NSW Publication*, *Foundation newsletter* 27, January, p7

2014 McDonald, John, 'Drawing Out', *Sydney Morning Herald Spectrum*, 14 November  
Ryan, Ann, 'Drawing Out', *Look Magazine*, November, pp24-28  
Ryan, Ann, 'Drawing Out', catalogue, *Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial*

2012 McDonald, John, 'Outback Inspiration', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June  
'Ross Laurie', *Artist Profile Magazine*, Issue 18, February  
McDonald, John, 'Uncertain Moments', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April

2010 'Ross Laurie & David McBride: recent work', catalogue, Tamworth Regional Gallery

2005 McDonald, John, 'Current Affairs' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June

1996 'New England Picture', catalogue for *Surfaces Memories*, NERAM

1993 Heathcote, C., 'Paintings that peer behind the shadows of reality', *The Age*, 19 May

1988 New Melbourne, catalogue

1987 Moet and Chandon, exhibition catalogue essay

Published by King Street Studios P/L  
Artwork photographs courtesy  
Michael Bradfield  
ISBN 978-0-6455394-6-2

Cover:  
Detail from *Passage 2023*, oil on canvas,  
81.5x91.5cm, page 10

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