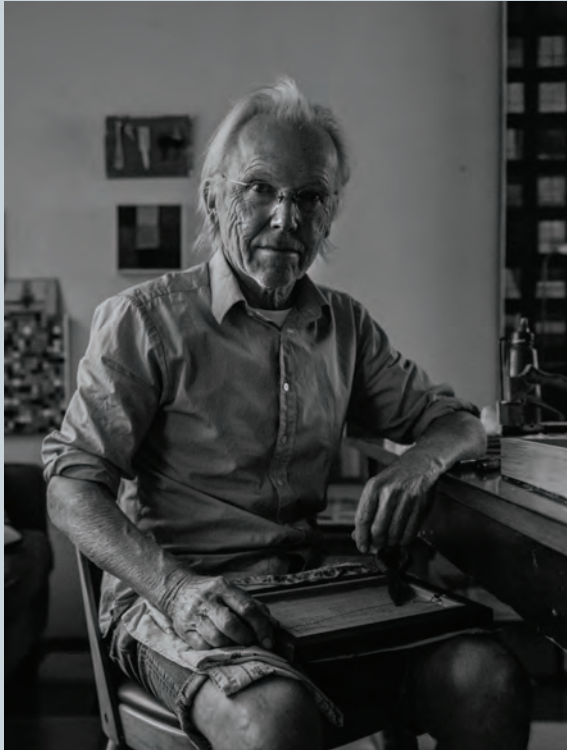


TOM CARMENT

Bathers, Bushland,  
Houses, Fruit & Veg





These paintings were done on Gadigal, Yuin, Jerringa, Dharug, Gundungarra, Wiradjiri, Wurundjeri, Adnyamathanha, Millewa Mallee and Whadjuk Noongar Country.

Tom would like to thank these people for their hospitality on his recent trips to Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Bacchus Marsh, Blue Mountains and South Coast NSW: Prue Black and Stephen Muecke, Tanya and Eloise Court, Helen Idle and Joan Leese, Jo Linsdell, Sue Paull, Julia Lehmann, Annie Carment, Robert Brain and Neal Blewett, Dominic Lefebvre and Michele Elliot, Rowan and Emma Conroy, Jenny Brown and Bernard Kerr.

For Jan.

LEFT  
Tom framing, 2024  
COVER  
Detail: *Winter Afternoon*  
*Tree Shadows*,  
*Stanmore* 2024  
oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm

Photos by Karl Schwerdtfeger



# TOM CARMENT

*Bathers, Bushland,  
Houses, Fruit & Veg*

*6 May - 31 May, 2025*



*Telegraph Poles and Winter Tree, Katoomba 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm*



LEFT  
*Green-roofed House  
in Warriga Street,  
Katoomba 2024*  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm

INSET  
Portrait sitting at  
James Scanlon's house,  
Katoomba 2024

### Bathers, Bushland, Houses, Fruit & Veg

THERE ARE ROOMS IN OUR HOUSE where I store tools, timber and pictures and where I look at what I've painted, but my real studio is in two backpacks - a green canvas one for my watercolours and a grey webbing one for my oils. A few months ago I considered calling my upcoming exhibition 'Opal Card Paintings' because so many of my painting destinations were reached carrying one of these backpacks on public transport. It focuses me, being in a neutral space, away from home, gliding through the landscape, past the houses, shops, backyards and factories, on a bus or train. I always take a book to read, and a notebook to write in, but often I just look out the window. In early 2024 I travelled regularly to Katoomba on the 8.48 am train from Central, to paint portraits of my friend James Scanlon who lives on the west side of town. I've been painting James regularly, with approximate five year gaps, since the 1980s. On these trips I took oil paints in the webbing backpack and a tartan shopping trolley for extra bits and pieces. Walking slowly to James's place from the station I



noticed streetscapes I wanted to paint, and, once the portrait sessions were finished, I turned my attention to them. I could leave wet pictures at James's house, where he left a key in the door. Painting from the footpath or verge is easier to do in Katoomba, with fewer interruptions, than in urban Sydney. A street where I painted quite a few times was once home to Katoomba's colourful mayor, Frank Walford. In the 1930s he'd written a novel called 'Twisted Clay'

about a teenage lesbian serial killer, which was banned in Australia. When bushwalkers got lost down in the valley, Frank would throw a rope over his shoulder and knock on some mates' doors, to form the search party, so James told me. >



*Weatherboard House, Hinckler Park, Katoomba I* 2024 oil linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Chimney Shadow, Warriga Street, Katoomba* 2024 oil linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Winter Morning, Stanmore* 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Garage and Palm Tree, Stanmore* 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm

Looking out from the Katoomba train near Stanmore I noticed a gothic, towered Victorian house where our friend Kate once rented a downstairs apartment in 1988. Her landlords, a married couple, lived upstairs and had frequent, loud arguments. Kate gave birth to twins and shortly afterwards they evicted her - tough for a single mum. The sound of babies crying had annoyed them. Years later Kate read in the paper that one of them, the husband, had been murdered in a drug deal gone wrong. Karma perhaps, we thought. In memory of this incident, I made Stanmore my next destination and did paintings from quiet back lane footpaths: of the rear of houses, afternoon winter shadows going up walls, and spindly palm trees. During Jacaranda season in late October I took the train a bit further west to Strathfield and painted flowering trees from parks and from footpaths, usually near Bus Zones where I knew no one could park their car in front of me without breaking the law. >



*Winter Afternoon Tree Shadows, Stanmore* 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Yellow Guest House, Katoomba I* 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm



*Yellow Guest House, Katoomba III* 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm



*James in Red Shirt, Katoomba* 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm



*Guntawang Apples on Red* 2024 oil on linen 19.5 x 24.5cm



*Telegraph Poles and Autumn Tree, Katoomba* 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm

The major destination for my watercolours over the last thirteen months has been Clovelly Bay, which I reached by taking the 360 bus from Bondi Junction. I like Clovelly's mix of bathers, bodies, concrete, wet and dry, the moving sluice of seawater in between, always different in colour and texture according to tide and weather. A friend of mine used to joke that Clovelly, with its Depression-era concrete embankments, was a 'giant sheep dip for humans'. My routine there was to complete two or three watercolours before going into the water myself. Paddling around and looking at fish, especially the Blue and Green Groper, through my goggles was a lovely reward for hours of concentrated painting in the wind and sun. I also ventured south onto the rocks of Gordons Bay where European tourists baked on the rocks and dog owners swam out with their pets. To the north of Clovelly I did paintings of the marble angels in Waverley Cemetery, and further on, of bathers at Bronte Beach and its Bogey Hole. >



Clovelly, Grey Haze I 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



TOP  
Big Seas, Clovelly  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm  
MIDDLE  
Clovelly, Grey Haze II  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm  
BOTTOM  
Crowded Clovelly  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm





Tall Angel, Waverley Cemetery 2024 watercolour on paper 16 x 11.5cm



Clovelly 2025 set of 12 watercolours on paper frame size 84 x 80cm

While a lot of the pictures in this group were done using my Opal Card, another half were reached by car, on camping trips alone, and on journeys to visit family and friends in a variety of locations: Perth, Adelaide, Currarong, Bacchus Marsh, Mollymook, Orange, Milton, Carrieton, Hawker and Brunswick. For this reason I decided that a better exhibition title was just a sort of shopping list of things I've painted: 'Bathers, Bushland, Houses, Fruit and Veg'. 'People will know what they're getting,' I thought.

The still lifes of fruit and vegetables in this exhibition were mainly done on the floor in our kitchen, or in the lounge room of a flat in Perth, often when the weather was inclement, either rainy or too windy. Unlike Matisse, who, I'm told, never ate anything he'd painted, I consume nearly all my food subjects soon after I've finished with them. I call this 'No Waste Still Life'. During my recent pumpkin painting obsession there was a household protest: 'Do we really have to eat more pumpkin?' We'd already made it into soup, baked it and curried it with chick peas. The only fruit or vegetable I didn't eat after painting it was a sprouting onion that had been found, abandoned at the back of a dark cupboard.

Some days it takes a while to warm up to my painting. I feel like a cranky old engine, and changing genre can help turn things around. I recall one day sitting up against the railway fence at Hurlstone Park, labouring for hours on a view of fencing and houses opposite. There were old food wrappers pressed against the wire mesh and a strong smell of nearby dog shit. After two hours I carefully taped my wet painting into a box and took it home on the train, but soon after, realising it was a dull picture, I rubbed it out with solvent and a rag. Then I fetched half a pumpkin from the kitchen fridge, put it on the floor, and painted it on the same panel, over the ghost of the railway scene I'd just erased.

I can't clearly say why I paint the things I do, but often there's a personal association or story linked to the motif or place I choose, or some quality about the light that I feel a need to get down, to interpret. The books I've been reading, the art I've seen and absorbed in the past, the films I've viewed; all are contributing factors to how and what I paint. I like to return to favourite places, get to know them better and see how they've changed or remained the same over the years. For better or worse, the way I paint them also changes, as I age. I read somewhere that the goal of a landscape painter is to make the viewer feel what you felt when you were there. >



*The Onion That Got Away II* 2024 oil on linen 19 x 24cm



Still life on kitchen floor, 2024



*Beurre Bosc Pear* 2023 oil on linen 15 x 20cm



*Avocado on New Yorker Contents Page* 2024 oil on linen 15 x 20cm



*Pumpkin from Farmer Jack's* 2024 oil on linen 19 x 24cm

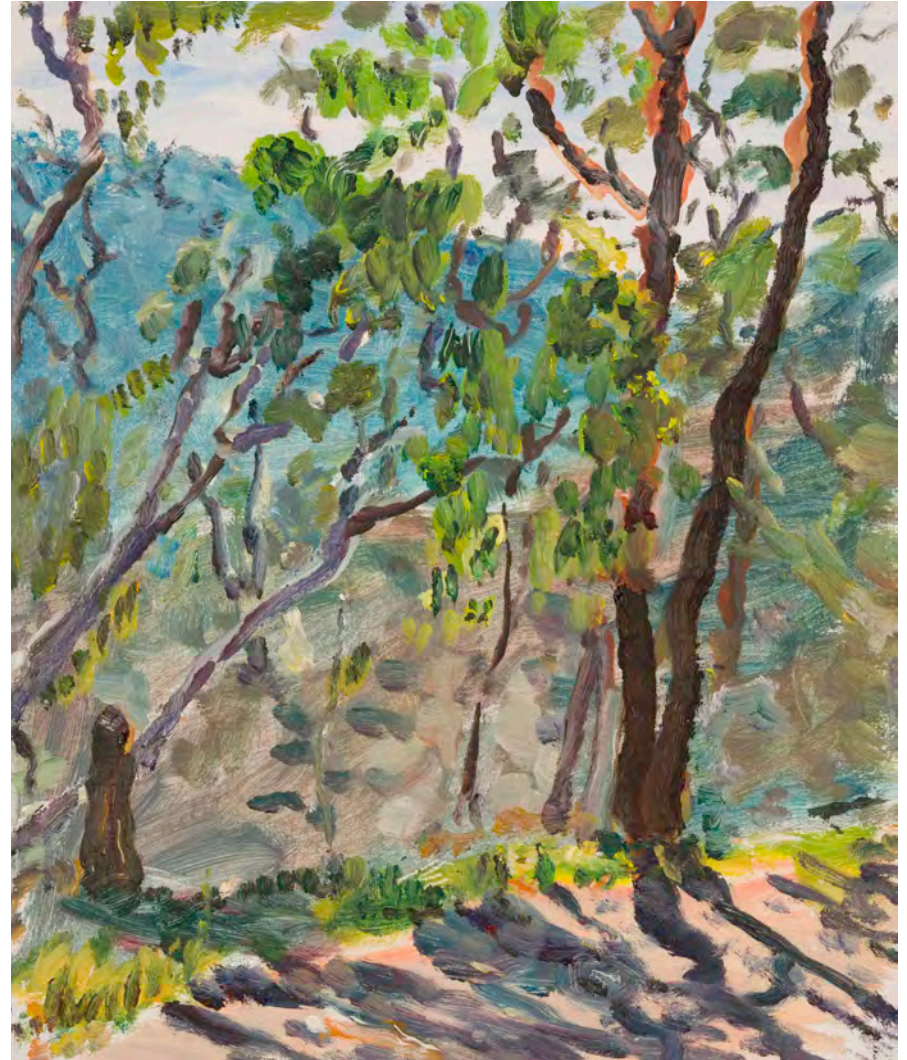


*Pink Lady Apple on Striped Towel* 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 21cm



*Valley View from Gang Gang Street, Katoomba II* 2024 oil on marine ply 19 x 30cm

On my 70th birthday last September, I took the train to Cowan with Jan and our middle son, Fenn. We packed cheese and tomato sandwiches and carrot sticks and walked from the station along the bush track towards Berowra Waters. We stopped after four kilometres and sat on a rock for our picnic, surrounded by purple and white wildflowers, gem-like in their random sparseness. For me, it was a perfect birthday. As we walked back to the station in the afternoon, I noticed some long tree shadows snaking across grey rocks and the sandy track. Three days later, by myself, I took the 2 pm train back to Cowan and painted them.



*Afternoon, Cowan* 2024 oil on linen 31 x 26.5cm



*Clovelly, from Above* 2024 watercolour on paper 17 x 21.5cm



*Low Tide, Gordons Bay* 2024 watercolour on paper 17.5 x 22cm



*Bathers, Gordons Bay* 2024 watercolour on paper 17 x 20cm



*Mother and Daughter, Gordons Bay* 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



TOP  
*Ocean Pool, Bronte,  
 Big Seas*  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

MIDDLE  
*Man and Child,  
 Bronte Bogey Hole*  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

BOTTOM  
*Bronte Beach,  
 Looking North I*  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm



*Bronte Bogey Hole, January 2024* watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm

WHEN I'M PAINTING OUTSIDE IN CROWDED PLACES there are often things going on, peripheral to the cone of vision between myself and the subject. I hear them more than see them and try not to turn round or make eye contact: broken snatches of conversation from passers-by, arguments, people behind me making comments, and other small dramas. At the Bronte Bogey Hole one morning I was painting on the edge of the sand, with my back against the concrete wall of the promenade, when I heard a loud ruckus to my left. A small boy was throwing a massive tantrum. His parents wanted to leave the beach and he didn't. Finally, they relented, gave him five more minutes, and the boy walked away from them until he stood against the wall just to my right, dripping salt water and panting after his exertions. Soon, without looking, I could tell he'd calmed down and was taking interest in my watercolour painting process. I said nothing and kept painting, mixing washes on my white enamel plate near his skinny feet. For about ten minutes he stood there, silent and watchful. Then his parents came over to deliver the final ultimatum, 'That's enough, stop annoying the man. It's time to go now. Right now!' 'He's fine,' I said, 'not bothering me at all.' The boy looked up at them, away from my painting, and howled, 'Nooooo! I can't come now! I'm watching the man paint!' He stomped on the sand, sending grit onto my plate.



*Weekend at Bronte Bogey Hole* 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



*December Afternoon, Bronte Beach* 2023 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



TOP  
*Kids Surfing,*  
 South Mollmook  
 2023  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

MIDDLE  
*Mollmook Beach*  
 2023  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

BOTTOM  
*Family, Narrawallee*  
 Lagoon  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm





Mollymook 2024 set of 12 watercolours on paper frame size 84 x 80cm

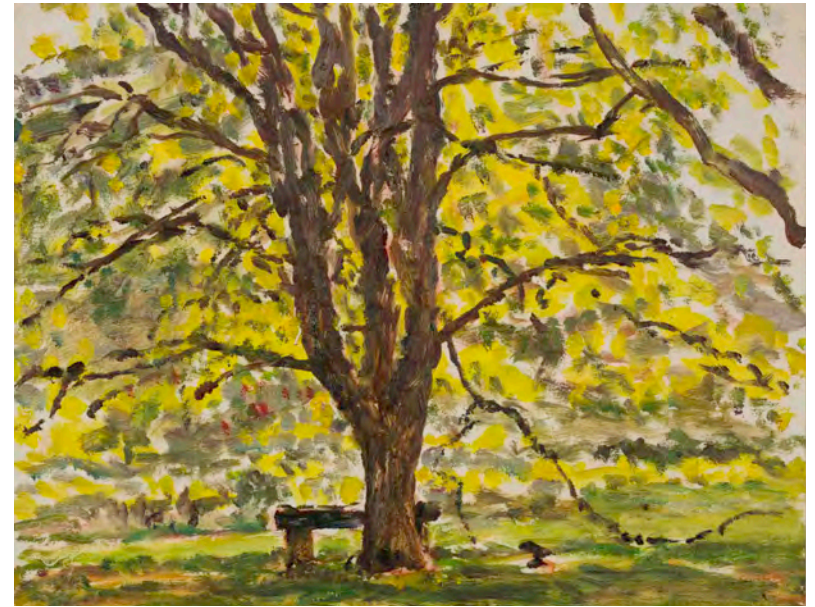


Narrawallee Headland and Cloud 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 21cm



*The Orchardist's Toolboard, Bacchus Marsh 2024 watercolour on paper 22.5 x 30cm*

OUR FRIEND JO LINSDELL had been looking after her elderly mother in what remained of the family fruit orchard at Bacchus Marsh: a 1950s brick house, two big sheds, a low-ceilinged workshop, and, beyond them, her late father's extensive arboretum. After Mrs Linsdell died, the property was sold, and Jo had to pack up her ceramic studio from the biggest shed (built by her father 60 years ago). She made ceramic casts of some of his neatly-hung tools in the workshop, before their removal, giant spanners and hammers. The arboretum had reached its maturity and so I stayed there a few days and attempted to paint it, before the property changed hands to the new owners. While Jo worked in the shed, I painted amongst all the different trees. The understorey was full of birds and a few rabbits too - a lost domain, slightly abandoned. Pegged near each tree trunk was a hand-painted wooden sign, black writing on white: Sunburst Gleditsia, Ghost Maple, Silver Princess. I could hear the random blasts of a bird scare gun from the nearby market gardens, where the Linsdell peaches used to grow.



*Sunburst Gleditsia, Bacchus Marsh 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm*



*Afternoon Ghost Maple, Bacchus Marsh 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 21cm*



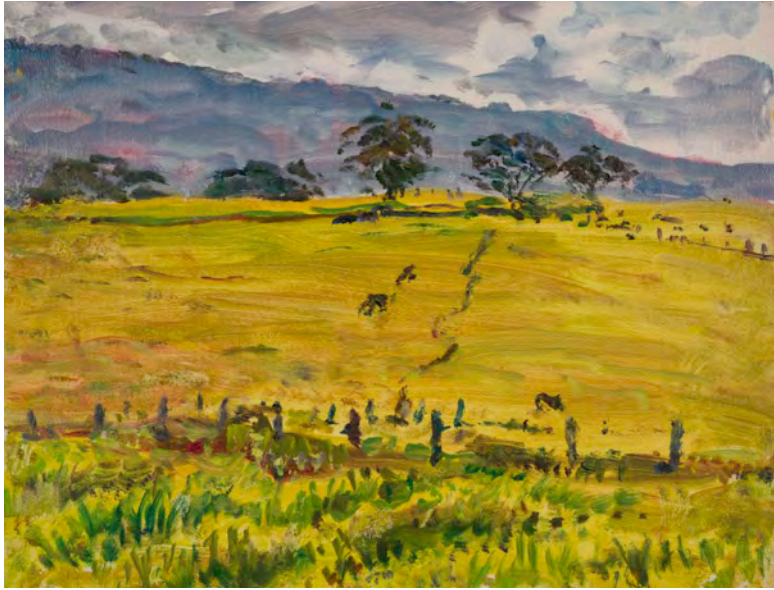
*Wisteria Tunnel, Bacchus Marsh 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm*



*Jacaranda, Cooper Street, Strathfield I 2023 watercolour on paper 16 x 11.5cm*



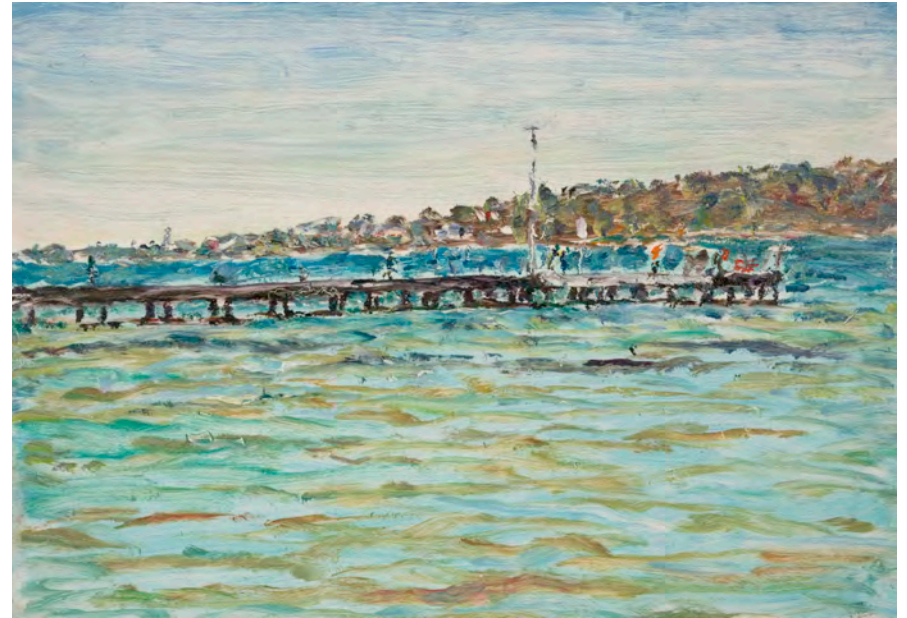
*Jacaranda, Cooper Street, Strathfield II 2024 watercolour on paper 16 x 11.5cm*



*Afternoon Cow Paddock, Milton* 2024 oil on linen 23 x 30cm



*Afternoon Tree Shadows, Cowan* 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 21cm



*Claremont Jetty, Mid-afternoon* 2024 oil on marine ply 21 x 30cm



Claremont Jetty, from the Third Floor Window 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm



Claremont Jetty, Windy Morning 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



Claremont Jetty, Calm Morning 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



*Gravel Road and Saltbush, Yappala* 2024 oil on marine ply 19 x 39cm

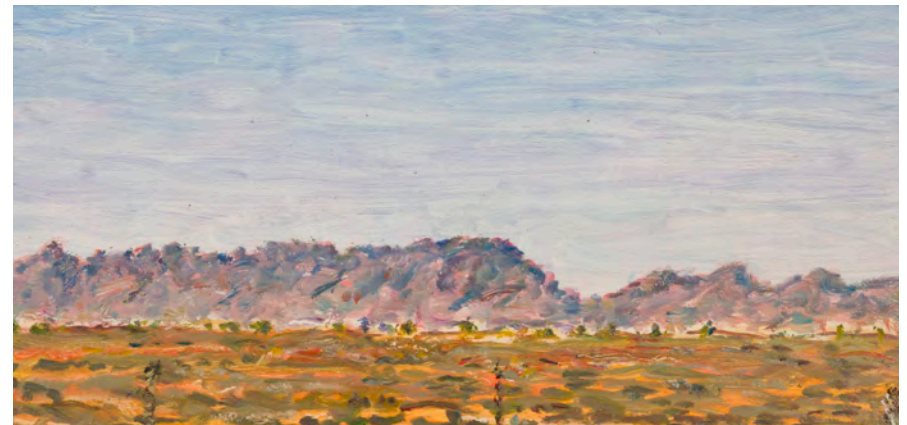
I DROVE ALL DAY AFTER LEAVING JO'S PLACE at Bacchus Marsh until I reached Ouyen in north-west Victoria, Mallee country, 'home of the vanilla slice' I've heard. Next to the greenest thing in town, the Aussie Rules oval, lies the caravan park, so I pulled in there to enquire about an unpowered camping spot. The interior of the office was dark and a fragrant smell of cumin wafted out of the back room when a young woman came out. She said it was \$20 to camp, 'anywhere out the back', and waved her arm towards the footie field.

I drove slowly round, past swallows flitting in and out of the open-sided camp kitchen. Two other groups of campers had already claimed the small area of watered grass nearby so I moved onto rougher ground, closer to the back fence. Fifteen minutes later my tent was up, but when I laid the palm of one hand on the ground to unzip the doorway, I withdrew it quickly, in pain. I had

some three-cornered jack burrs embedded in my palm. I realised then that these sharp burrs were everywhere and would not only pierce the underside of my tent but also deflate my blow-up sleeping mat. I went to the back of the car where I had a box of white primed marine ply panels, ready for my painting trip to Hawker. I took these over to the tent and slid them all, white side up, like tiles, under the tent, carefully pushing them together until every centimetre was protected. A week later, most of these panels had oil paintings on them, landscapes done around Hawker. They'd served a double purpose: slept on, then painted on.



*Looking West from Wonoka Creek I* 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Bunbinyunna Range, Afternoon* 2024 oil on marine ply 19 x 39cm



*Afternoon Clouds, Wonoka* 2024 oil on linen 26.5 x 31cm



*Morning Bush, Wonoka* 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 24cm



*Windmill, Merna Mora Station* 2024 oil on marine ply 16 x 21cm



*Mallee Highway, West of Murrayville* 2024 oil on marine ply 21 x 33.5cm



TOP  
*Morning, Hawker,  
Carrieton Road*  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm

MIDDLE  
*Wonoka Hill, Hawker,  
from Dairy Flat Road*  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm

BOTTOM  
*Passing Clouds, Wonoka*  
2024  
watercolour on paper  
11.5 x 16cm





*Figa Boo Pears on a Karen Cloth* 2024 oil on linen 23 x 30cm



*Pomegranates on Aqua Cloth* 2024 oil on linen 19 x 24cm



*Pumpkin, Rainy Afternoon* 2024 oil on linen 19 x 24cm



*Gala Apple on a Mexican Cloth* 2024 oil on linen 15 x 20cm



*Holiday House Clothesline, Currarong 2025 watercolour on paper 15 x 21cm*



*Canoeists, Currarong 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm*



*Afternoon Bathers, Abrahams Bosom Beach 2025 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm*



TOP  
*Family Reflected,*  
*Abrahams Bosom Beach*  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

MIDDLE  
*Beach Gathering,*  
*Currarong*  
 2025  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm

BOTTOM  
*Jan Reading at*  
*One Mile Beach*  
 2024  
 watercolour on paper  
 11.5 x 16cm



*West Beach, Adelaide 5pm* 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



*Legs, West Beach, Adelaide 5.30pm* 2024 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



*Back Lane, Brunswick* 2023 watercolour on paper 11.5 x 16cm



Tom painting  
at Mollymook, 2024

TOM CARMENT was born in Sydney in 1954 and has been painting landscapes, portraits and still lifes since the early 1970s. His work has been shown in numerous exhibitions and at King Street Gallery since 1992. He has been selected twelve times for the Archibald Prize, eight times for the Wynne Prize and four times for the Sulman Prize. He is also a writer and his latest book, *Womerah Lane: Lives and Landscapes*, was short-listed for the non-fiction section of the 2021 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

For Tom's full CV go to [kingstreetgallery.com.au/artists/tom-carment](http://kingstreetgallery.com.au/artists/tom-carment)

This catalogue is a selection of the paintings in *Bathers, Bushland, Houses, Fruit & Veg* at King Street Gallery, 2025. All the works can be viewed on the King Street Gallery website.

Photo Jan Idle



*Moonrise, Edgecliff* 2024 oil on wood panel 13 x 18.5cm

K S  
G W

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