

April 2019

Denis Clarke - *Previously Unseen*

Artist Statement

Painting for me is a bodily thing. It involves the relationship between one's self and making contact with the tactile. Why tactile? Because I am touching materials and feeling out my experience of looking at a subject such as landscapes, people and buildings.

Drawing is the whole key. Not drawing for its own sake but drawing to explore ideas for connecting with the world. Finish is irrelevant. These drawings serve the purpose of the painting and illuminate my imagination to the possibilities of new compositions. I am interested in the physicality and directness of drawing which often finds its way into my works on paper as well as my paintings.

The work for this exhibition comprises a combination of oil on canvas and board as well as works on paper. Some larger paintings are done inside the studio, others in the deserted laneways of Marrickville. Conventionally, there is nothing particularly aesthetic about these alley ways.

Previously Unseen is grounded in drawing and painting directly from a subject: factories and urban streets, to explore structure and space. The challenge is one of interpreting the human built environment that we live amongst and experience our lives within. It strikes me that our cities are our emotional landscape and my work is a meditation on what the visual outcomes of that are. In beginning a painting, I am at first apprehensive; I proceed with a mix of drawing and painting and an element of indecision. I need something to observe so as to scan and take hold of shapes from buildings, spaces near and far, inspiration for colour and figures which inform the space.

My interest is what I would call creating a process of informed experiment. I allow myself to risk and play with media while aligning my senses with the observed. It is the otherness or feel of a subject which provides the impetus to experiment and find new solutions with mark.

For me working before a subject is deeply complex and a chance to explore visual language. The test is to find graphic statements and abstractions which truthfully parallel perceptions and travel towards a resolved image.

Previously Unseen explores my reactions and connection with the urban which has been an important aspect of my painting for many years. It is a reference to my wish to try and see the world anew.

The New Work – Essay by Michael Snape, 2019

Still painting. Paints *plein air*. Paints shards, compiled until an unbroken summary emerges of the scene observed.

Paints despite the stockpiled evidence that proves the folly of such an effort.

Clarke paints out of an 'exhausted' genre of semi-abstract expressionism.

But wait! The empty well of 'nerve' is suddenly full.

It is the viewer's pleasure of employing the dustpan and brush to resurrect an otherwise fatuous unity.

Clarke brings new light and life and mends a broken world.

Just when it seemed the world had moved on Clarke shows us a life yet undefined.

By virtue of the arrows embedded there, old means are new means. It's only a lifetime after all, that these visual languages were formed.

Clarke in his maturity, shows the benefit of a slow emerging language.

Have we forgotten already what we had not yet learned?

Still painting. Just started!

Biography

After completing a Diploma in Art Education at the National Art School and Alexander Mackie College in Sydney in 1975, Denis Clarke was awarded the NSW Travelling Art Scholarship and Moya Dyring residency at the Cite International des Arts in Paris. He was invited to participate in the 90th Birthday Exhibition for Desiderius Orban at The Bondi Pavilion Gallery and was also included in The Macquarie Galleries annual Young Painters exhibitions 1973/74. Clarke progressed to postgraduate studies in London at the St Martins School of Art, Byam Shaw and Morley College and set up a studio in north London. From 1975 to 1998, he lived and exhibited in London and Switzerland, teaching at the Camden School of Art and the Hamptead School of Art, London and exhibiting most notably in London at Gillian Jason Gallery, Boundary Gallery and three one-man shows at James Colman Gallery, Knightsbridge.

In 1986 Clarke exhibited in '50 years of British Drawing' at Gillian Jason Gallery 1986, The Boundary Gallery, 1988/94, London, James Colman Fine Art, 95/2000 London and Gallerie Ursula Wiedenkeller, Zurich as well as creating set designs and costumes for the experimental Opera Factory, in Zurich and London.

In 1998 Denis returned to live and paint in Sydney and exhibited regularly at the Harris Courtin Gallery and in 2003 was awarded the Blackfriars Drawing Acquisitive. He has collaborated with several premier arts organizations such as Opera Factory in London and Switzerland, Warwickshire Arts Festival in the UK, and most recently as the artist in residence at Wollombi Valley Arts Council. Denis has been a sessional lecturer at the National Art School, Sydney, from 1999-2010 and tutored the Dobell School at the NAS from 2011 ongoing. He runs master classes and schools at the Mitchell School of Art, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, the McGregor School, University of Southern Queensland, Cooe Bay Artists Camp, Yagoon, Queensland. He is represented in private and public collections in Europe and Australia, including The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Fitzwilliam College Cambridge and Lloyds of London. Since returning to Sydney in 1998 Denis has been an active exhibitor with the Australian Watercolour Institute at The Gosford Regional Gallery and Juniper Hall, Sydney.

Denis has exhibited widely both in Australia and internationally and has been represented in numerous Art Fairs including 'Line Art, Ghent', The Brussels Art Fair, The 20th Century British Art Fair, Royal College of Art, and The Islington Art Fair. Collections include: The Art Gallery of NSW, Lloyds of London, The Fitzwilliam College Cambridge, UK.

CV

Solo Exhibitions

- 2015 Force of Nature - Stanley Street Gallery, Sydney
- 2011 Wollombi Valley Arts Council, residency and exhibition 'City Full Stop Bush'
- 2008 Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
- 2004 Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
- 2002 Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
- 2000 James Colman Fine Art, 'In Colour', London.
- 1997 James Colman Fine Art, 'New Work', London.
- 1995 James Colman Fine Art, 'Old Lands New Visions', London.
- 1991 The Tan Galerie, Zurich, Switzerland.
- 1989 Galerie Ursula Wiedenkeller, Zurich, Switzerland.
- 1986 DM Gallery, Dover Street, London.
- 1984 Mini Galerie, Schaffhausen, Switzerland.
- 1983 The New South Wales House Gallery, London.
The Klein Theatre, 'Stage and Costume Drawings', Lucerne, Switzerland.
- 1981 The Holdsworth Galleries, Sydney.
- 1978 The New South Wales House Gallery, London.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2017/18 The AWI, Juniper Hall, Sydney
- 2016 'In the Field', Drawings and Field Notes, Macquarie University Art Gallery.
- 2016/18 92nd Exhibition of The AWI, Gosford Regional Gallery, NSW.
- 2015 'Paint Out' Norwich, U.K.
- 2015 91st Exhibition of The AWI, Juniper Hall, Paddington Sydney.
- 2014 'Works on Paper', Stanley Street Gallery
- 2013 NSW AWI 90th Anniversary Exhibition, The Gosford Regional Gallery.
- 2013 Christmas Exhibition, Gallery Artists, Stanley Street Gallery.
- 2013 Salon Christmas Exhibition, Artsite Gallery,.
- 2013 'Works on Paper' Stanley Street Gallery 3 Artists
- 2012 'Stilled Life' Artsite Gallery, Sydney.
'Sydney Mix' Artsite Gallery, Sydney.
Australian Watercolour Exchange Exhibition Taiwan Academy of Art,
Australian Watercolour Institute Anniversary Exhibition , Gosford Regional Gallery
- 2011 Australian Watercolour Institute, 88th Anniversary Exhibition Mosman Art Gallery,
- 2010 Australian Watercolour Institute, Wollongong Regional Art Gallery
- 2009 Australian Watercolour Institute, Gosford Regional Art Gallery,
Eastgate and Holst, Gallery Artists, Melbourne.
- 2008 Australian Watercolour Institute, 85th Anniversary Exhibition, Mosman Art Gallery

- 2007 'Spirit of The Times', The Salthouse, Norfolk, UK.
- 2006 Charles Sturt University, Visiting Tutors Summer School Exhibition.
Group Eight, James Colman Gallery, Norwich, UK.
- 2005 'Gallery Artists', Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
'Walking the Line', National Art School, National Art School Academic Staff.
- 2004 Melbourne Art Fair by Dagmar Art Consultants.
- 2003 2003 Blackfriars Acquisitive Drawing Award touring exhibition.
- 2002 'Gallery Artists', Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
- 2001 'Gallery Artists', Harris Courtin Gallery, Sydney.
- 2000 National Art School, Exhibition of Lecturers, Sydney.
- 1999 Brussels Art Fair, James Colman Fine Art.
- 1998 'Along the Line: A Drawing Inquiry', James Colman Fine Art, London.
- 1995-8 Line Art, Ghent, James Colman Fine Art, Belgium.
- 1995-7 Art 95, Art 96, Art 97, James Colman Fine Art, Islington, London.
- 1995 20th Century British Art Fair, James Colman Fine Art, London.
- 1994 Alexandra Palace, Exhibition of Judges Work, London.
- 1993 Boundary Gallery, 'Winter Exhibition - Four Painters', London.
Art 93, Boundary Gallery, London.
- 1992 'Three Australian Painters', Gallery Savah, Sydney.
- 1990 'Gallery Artists', Boundary Gallery, London.
International Contemporary Art Fair, Olympia, London.
- 1989 'Gallery Artists', Boundary Gallery, London.
International Contemporary Art Fair, Olympia, London.
- 1988 'Australia Observed' Three person show The Boundary Gallery, London.
- 1986 '50 Years of British Drawing', Gillian Jason Gallery, London.
- 1980 'Australian Artists of Fame and Promise', New South Wales House Gallery, London.
- 1979 9th International Exhibition, Art Actuel, Belgium.
- 1978 Annual Exhibition, Morley Gallery, London.
- 1974 'Young Painters', Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
Bondi Pavillion Gallery, Desiderius Orban: Commemorative Exhibition.
- 1973 'Young Painters', Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.

Selected Bibliography

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- Harding, L. Walking The Line, The National Art School, Sydney, 2005.
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