

The Nock Art Foundation

Flying Goose Hill



Elisabeth Cummings

Luke Sciberras

with essay by

John McDonald

Flying Goose Hill

Elisabeth Cummings | Luke Sciberras

2015

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Cummings | Sciberras

The Nock Art Foundation
17th October - 13th November 2015

16/F A. Kwai Bo Industrial Bldg.
40 Wong Chuk Hang Road



The Nock Art Foundation

Founded in 2014 by Hong Kong based art collector and painter Michael Nock, The Nock Art Foundation aims to provide a platform from which a Hong Kong audience can be introduced to great works of art created by accomplished overseas and international artists. It is a “not for profit” institution designed to promote cultural dialogue and understanding through the production of art. The Foundation has its own art collection which is regularly being added to and is advised by a board of fellow artists who help in the process of identifying potential residency candidates. The selected artists are then invited to Hong Kong and China for a two or three week period and are provided with accommodation and work space. At the end of the residency the work is presented in a unique gallery space on the South Side of Hong Kong island by the (for profit) Nock Art Gallery where the artists are invited to meet with potential collectors and art lovers. Many of the works acquired by the Foundation are available for lease through a separate business called Art-Lease.com.

The Hare and the Tortoise

Something special happened when Lis Cummings and Luke Sciberras came to Hong Kong in February 2015 as part of the second Nock Art Foundation residency program. Soon after they nestled comfortably into their Wanchai apartment they began a process of creative exploration and artistic output that resulted in an extraordinary series of paintings that we have the honor of presenting in this exhibition at the Nock Art Gallery. The paintings give fresh insight and a new perspective into Hong Kong and its surroundings. A Hong Kong not seen before but perhaps never seen again without some sense of the artists vision affecting how we look at the city in the future.

Their first few days in the city incorporated sightseeing and visits to the streets and rooftops of Wanchai, Causeway Bay, Central and the South Side of Hong Kong where both artists sketched and painted "en plein air". Lis had visited the city before and had some initial ideas which she developed and worked up into new visions as we explored the city, while for Luke, who had recently completed a residency in a remote part of China, it was his first visit to the city and his enthusiasm and excitement incorporating the sights and energy of the city into his work was infectious.

Lis responded to the early evening traffic jams of Hennessy Rd., the rivers of headlights and the neon lights, the interplay of harbour and humanity seen from up high, the view of Aberdeen harbour from my apartment roof top, while Luke wanted to get down and dirty, close to the back alleys, highways, restaurant windows and shop fronts at street level. One looking down the other up.

Working side by side in my studio in Wong Chuk Hang their camaraderie and respect for each other made for a special working relationship that saw humor entwined with the serious process of art making.

Lis had once mentored Luke when the artists both lived in an artist community just outside Sydney called Wedderburn. This is a place where Lis still finds inspiration working in her "bush" studio. Much of Luke's time is now spent further west in another unique community in Hill End, an old mining town west of the blue mountains that over the years has been appropriated by artists.

Soon after their arrival we toyed with the idea of calling the show "the hare and the tortoise" as the "hare" attacked the large boards with gestural swipes and high energy scrapings dressed in his paint splattered workers overalls. These extraordinary explosions of activity were followed by an exhausted Luke finding refuge in the studio's mechanical massage chair. At the same time the "tortoise" quietly donned her apron and set to work on the under painting and exploration of a series of different sized stretched canvases. Both artists preferred oil paint.

As in the story, over the course of 2 weeks both the "hare" and the "tortoise" kept pace with each other, occasionally urging the other on, occasionally offering advice and critique, and all the time maintaining a playful revelry and co-operation.

On several occasions Lis and Luke visited "Flying Goose Hill", or "Fei Ngo Shan" as it is known locally where she found dynamic vistas of the city that she translated into larger works back home. For Luke it was the "geese" and "ducks" in the restaurant windows that were his inspiration.

The works are quite different, different to each other and interestingly different from what we might expect looking at earlier works by each of the artists. Both artists have a deep affinity for the landscape, and in particular the Australian landscape with its browns, ochres, yellows and reds. The challenge for both artists was how to adapt to the different environment. Their palettes had to change and the shapes and forms of an urban metropolis demanded an approach that was outside their normal comfort zone. As experienced and accomplished artists they not only rose to the challenge but created a series of works that captured the essence of Hong Kong resulting in the paintings we proudly present to you in this exhibition.

Michael Nock
Chairman of the Nock Art Foundation



Stream of Consciousness Hong Kong:

Luke Sciberras & Elisabeth Cummings

By John McDonald

Hong Kong launches such an assault on the senses that the best way for an outsider to convey his or her impressions might be a simple list. The British writer, Jan Morris, obviously had the same idea, because she has provided a catalogue of sensations in her 1998 Hong Kong. In what must be the lengthiest sentence ever written in a popular travel book, Morris gives us her observations in a style that reproduces thoughts flashing quickly through the mind, a style literary critics call "stream of consciousness": The garish merry signs, the clamorous shop-fronts, the thickets of TV aerials, the banners, the rows of shiny, hanging ducks, the washing on the poles, the wavering bicycles, the potted plants massed on balconies, the canvas-canopied stalls selling herbs, or kitchenware, or antiques, or fruit, the bubbling cauldrons of crab-claw soup boiling at eating-stalls, the fantastic crimson-and-gold facades of restaurants, the flickering television screens in shop windows, the trays of sticky cakes in confectionery stores, the profusion of masts, poles and placards protruding from the fronts of buildings, the dragons carved or gilded, the huge elaborate posters, the tea-shops with their gleaming pots, the smells of cooking, spice, incense, oil, the racket of radio music and amplified voices, the half-shouted conversation that is peculiar to Chinese meeting one another in the street, the ceaseless clatter of spoons, coins, mah-jong counters, abaci, hammers and electric drills.

Seventeen years later, following Hong Kong's reunification with the mainland, it's intriguing to ask what might be added or subtracted from Morris's list. The restaurants

are just as gaudy, the markets no less hectic. One need not venture far from Central to find all the pot-plants, washing lines and other bric-a-brac of daily life. Chinese conversations, in Cantonese or Mandarin, still sound like furious shouting matches to Anglophone ears.

The aerials are now satellite dishes, which may be just as ugly, although they resemble an outbreak of electronic toadstools alongside the spikey outgrowths of old-fashioned antennae. The hammers and electric drills are still making a clamorous sound, but they have been overshadowed by the whirr of gigantic cranes, as an ever-growing collection of futuristic skyscrapers and apartment blocks reaches hungrily towards the sky.

Perhaps it's only my imagination, but I can feel all of this surging activity in the paintings produced by Elisabeth Cummings and Luke Sciberras during their recent residency in Hong Kong on behalf of the Nock Art Foundation.

Michael Nock began bringing well-known Australian artists to Hong Kong and China last year with a successful show of paintings by Peter Godwin and Euan Macleod. Both men responded enthusiastically to their surroundings, with Godwin finding an appropriate challenge in the mountainous scenery of the Li River, in Guilin, while Macleod turned - for the first time in his career - to the urban sprawl of Hong Kong.

Cummings and Sciberras, who are both known as landscape painters, decided to follow in Macleod's footsteps by taking the city as their subject. The results are startling. Cummings has produced an entirely new view of Hong Kong, with the concrete corridors of the CBD transformed into shimmering vistas of light in which the forms of tall buildings appear as tremulous as mirages. Sciberras has alternated distant views with forays into densely compacted streets.

Between these artists there is a significant difference in age and experience, with Cummings being a long-term friend and mentor of the younger painter. Among all the artists of his generation, Sciberras (b.1975) has been the most willing to learn

from an older generation of artists. He has studied their work up close, helped out in their studios, travelled and socialised with the painters he admires. Cummings (b. 1934) is the artist with whom he has the greatest affinities. Her influence is palpable in Sciberras's painting, which tends towards abstraction while clinging tenaciously to traditional genres such as landscape, still life and interiors. These subjects were good enough for the most famous Modernists, such as Cézanne, Bonnard, Matisse, Braque and Picasso, and they are equally sufficient to these two Australians.

The difference is they are painting in an era that has seen the rise and fall of abstract art as a movement and ideology. Today it is not possible for a sophisticated painter to ignore the breakthroughs made by artists such as Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich and Pollock. We have seen art distill itself into a Minimalist moment, and disappear into pure light. Nowadays all tendencies co-exist, like neighbours in an overcrowded apartment block, each one suspicious and curious about what's going on next door. (This may be an appropriate metaphor for a show in Hong Kong, one of the most densely populated cities on the planet.)

Emerging from the brief, tumultuous heyday of Abstract Expressionism – she was 22 when Pollock died in a car crash – Cummings understood the language of abstraction but did not feel the need to be part of an avant-garde. Painting for her has always been a natural process, closely bound up with everyday life. This doesn't mean that each piece arrives in a free, spontaneous manner. One only has to look at the surfaces of Cummings's pictures to see what fierce battles have been fought. A typical canvas may take weeks or months to complete, including long periods when it lies dormant in the studio, as the artist gathers her courage for another assault.

To say Cummings is a "natural" painter is merely to emphasise the personal, intimate nature of her work. This is one of the reasons she has always loved Bonnard, who painted incandescent pictures from the seclusion of his domestic idyll in Le Cannet, where he lived for the last 37 years of his life.

Like Bonnard, Cummings is an artist who draws inspiration from her immediate

environment. She lives in relative seclusion in Wedderburn, a bushland suburb on the outskirts of Sydney, where she has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of motifs at her doorstep. Inside her home/studio, there is an equally voluminous set of still life subjects. Yet Cummings is very far from being a hermit – she has taken the opportunity to travel and work all around the world, by herself or with groups of artists.

A veteran of many trips to the Outback and other remote locations in Australia, she enjoys finding herself in front of an entirely new landscape that forces her to rethink her approach to painting. This is exactly how she has responded to her time in Hong Kong. To those familiar with her oeuvre, the Hong Kong paintings are among the most dynamic she has ever created. There is a tremendous sense of freedom in these pictures, a willingness to plunge into a fresh visual experience with an almost reckless disregard of everything but the here and now.

What remains, of course, is the artist's own style of painting, as instinctive as handwriting, but there is a different feeling about the colour, energy and complexity of these works. They represent a significant addition to Cummings's achievements of the past two decades, which have seen her evolve from being a solid painter with a small, devoted coterie of fans, to her current standing as one of the country's most acclaimed landscapists.

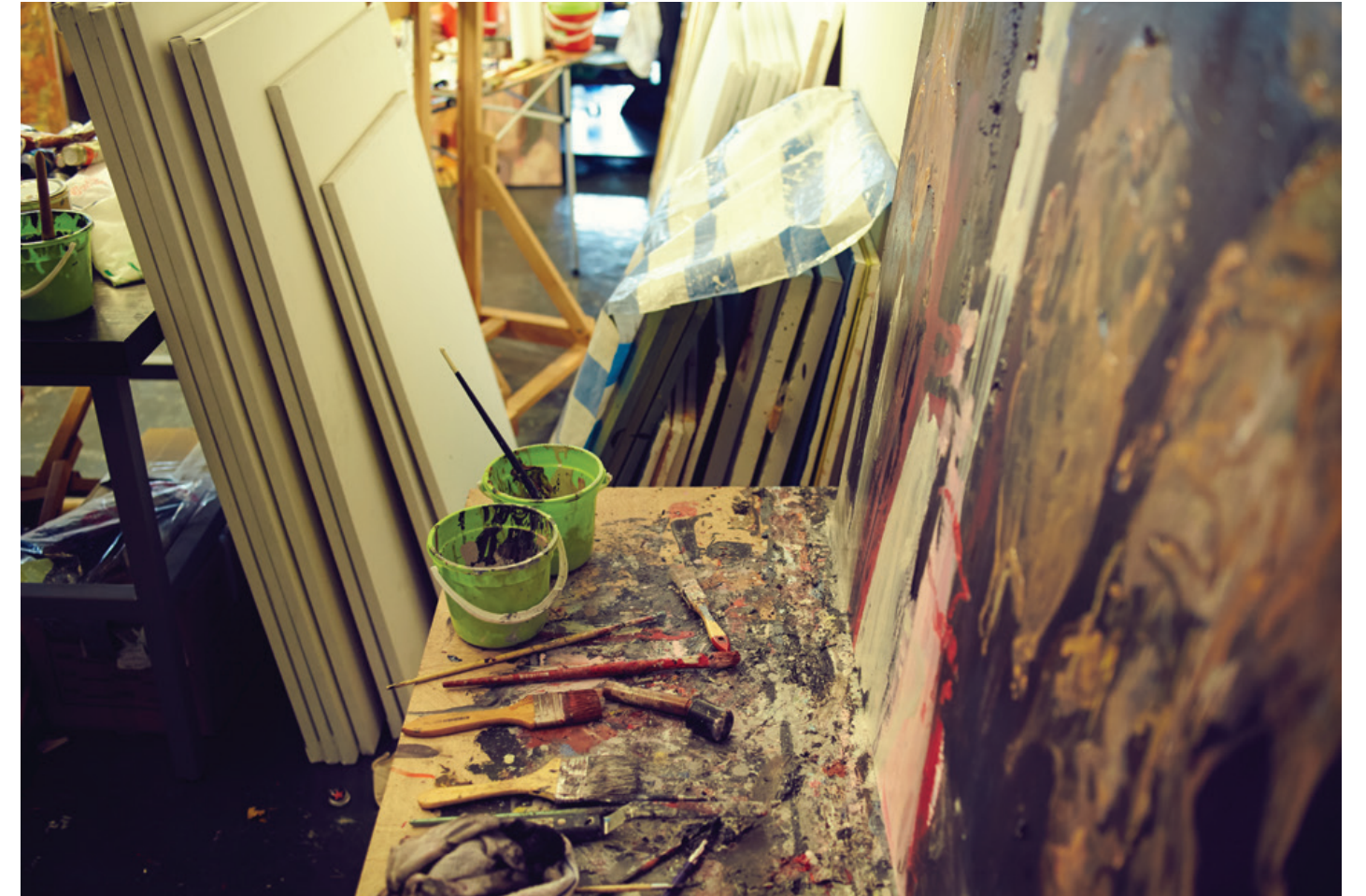
Sciberras has not had to wait so long for recognition. His works have always found admirers, drawn by the restless bravura of his technique, which hints at a family relationship with acknowledged Australian masters such as Sidney Nolan and John Olsen.

He has been more dramatic than Cummings in his approach to Hong Kong. Whereas the older artist has stood back and created light-filled views of the urban landscape, Sciberras has dragged us through dark alleyways in which daylight is parceled out in glimpses. The "shiny hanging ducks" that caught Jan Morris's attention float through the air like cherubs in a Renaissance altarpiece – although they are more like flayed martyrs, sacrificed to the island's ravenous appetites.

It takes a little time to decode Sciberras's images - to disentangle the awnings, signs, pipes, windows and other detritus of the streets from the bold, sweeping gestures with which the paint has been applied. In these pictures Sciberras narrows the response time between eye, mind and hand, trying to capture his impressions before self-consciousness interposes an idea about what things should look like. When that first frenzy has diminished, Sciberras will return to the composition, adding the layers and details that keep a work anchored in the observable world.

This does not mean that he follows a course of tidy, conventional revisions: a patch of paint representing the background may push forward into the picture plane, reminding us we are not, after all, looking through a window onto the world. Sciberras insists on the painter's right to rearrange space to suit the demands of a personal vision. He has absorbed a huge amount of voltage from the streets of Hong Kong, and is happy to return the charge. Each painting is a contest between what the artist sees, and his need to pummel those observations into a more dynamic shape.

Not less than Jan Morris, Cummings and Sciberras have felt the need to soak up the sights and sensations of Hong Kong and send them back out into the world in the 'stream of consciousness' manner. They have given us an inventory of experiences, filtered through the eyes of outsiders who have had to jettison much that is familiar, and lay themselves open to a new level of awareness. The life of the streets is a constant presence in these views of the city - a buzzing, swarming metropolis so immersed in the art of living that it has only recently found time for the immortal ambitions of artists. •





Elisabeth Cummings

For many years, Elisabeth Cummings was the best-kept secret in Australian art. Although her style incorporates elements of abstract expressionism, she is essentially a painter of landscapes, still lifes and interiors. Over the past two decades Cummings has become recognised as an accomplished and original landscapist. Her work has been acquired by leading public museums, and a growing band of private collectors. She is widely viewed as the most important female painter at work in Australia today.





Busy Night View, Hong Kong, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 130 x 111cm



Building Site, Hong Kong
Oil on Canvas, 122 x 91cm



Looking towards to Kowloon, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 122 x 91cm



Aberdeen Typhoon Harbour, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 91 x 142cm



Low Rise, High Tide Aberdeen, H.K., 2015
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 107cm



First Light, Hong Kong, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 107 x 76cm



River of Light, Hong Kong, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 167 x 108cm



From on High, Hong Kong, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 91 x 86cm



Hong Kong Music Night, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 91 x 91cm



Night Harbor Hong Kong, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 90 x 75cm



Hong Kong Harbour Chinese New Year, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 66 x 56cm



Hong Kong Harbor at Dusk, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 56cm



From Flying goose Hill, on a windy day, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 56cm



Off to Lunch, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 56cm



On the way to Discovery Bay, 2015
Oil on Canvas, 76 x 56cm



Affairs of State 2015
Oil on Canvas, 51 x 38cm



Early Evening, H.K.harbour, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 29.5 x 42cm



From Michael's office, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 29.5 x 42cm



Night Harbour from Woolloomooloo, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 29.5 x 42cm



Reflection I window from rooftop of spanish café, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 42 x 29.5cm



From Michael's Top Terrace at Dusk, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 42x 29.5cm



From Michael's Top Terrace, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 42x 29.5cm



From Michael's Top Terrace Last Light, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 42x 29.5cm



From Michael's Top Terrace at Dusk, 2015
Watercolor on Paper, 42x 29.5cm



Flying Goose Mountain (Fei Ngo Shan) New Territories, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 130 x 111cm



Busy Night View, Hong Kong, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 130 x 111cm



Luke Sciberras

Luke Sciberras is one of Australia's most acclaimed younger landscapists. Throughout his career Sciberras has taken every opportunity to learn from more experienced artists, with Elisabeth Cummings being a long-term mentor. His paintings are characterised by an inexhaustible energy and virtuoso brushwork. In recent years Sciberras has worked in many different parts of the world, his pictures evolving dynamically in response to each new environment.





Street Life HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Silver Sunday Discovery Bay, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Duck Warriors 2015
Oil on Board, 200 x 240cm



HK Harbour, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Country Club, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Woolloomooloo, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



High Rise Bamboo HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Tug on HK Harbour, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Bird Cages HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Pipes and Barbs HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Soho Lane, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Lucky Ducks, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Mother Mountain HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Hollywood Road, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Wan Chai HK, 2015
Oil on Board, 120 x 120cm



Photography by Jason Capobianco

Elisabeth Cummings CV

Born

1934 Brisbane Queensland

Lives and works in Wedderburn, NSW

1975-87 Part-time teaching, City Art Institute, Sydney

1975 Part-time teaching, various colleges

1969-2001 Part-time teaching, National Art School, Sydney

1958-68 Lived and studied in Italy & France

1960 School of Vision, Salzburg, with Oskar Kokoschka

1953-57 National Art School [East Sydney Tech College], Sydney

Solo Exhibitions

2014 A Still Life King Street Gallery on William, Sydney

2013 Elisabeth Cummings [a selection of works 1982-2013], King Street Gallery on William

2012 Luminous: Survey Exhibition Landscapes of Elisabeth Cummings [curated by Jane Watters],
SH Ervin, Observatory Hill, Sydney

Monotypes: Interiors, King Street Gallery on William

2011 Elisabeth Cummings, New Paintings, King Street Gallery on William

2010 Paper Trail: 30 Years, King Street Gallery on William

2008 New Paintings, King Street Gallery on William

2007 monotypes, king street gallery on burton, sydney

2006 new paintings, king street gallery on burton

2005 Chapman Gallery, Canberra ACT

2004 painting, king street gallery on burton, sydney

2003 painting, king street gallery at Span Galleries, Melbourne

paintings, Pandanus Art, Currumbin Beach, Qld

2002 new paintings, king street gallery on burton, sydney

elisabeth cummings & clara hali, Orange Regional Gallery, NSW

2001 Paintings and Prints, Chapman Gallery, ACT

Collaborative Pots, (Barbara Romalis & Elisabeth Cummings), Chapman Gallery

2000 recent work, king street gallery on burton

Works on Paper, Sturt Gallery, Mittagong, NSW

1998 recent work, king street gallery on burton

1997 Survey Show (1965-1995), Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Qld

Chapman Gallery, Canberra

1996 Survey Show (1965-1995), Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, NSW

recent paintings, king street gallery on burton

Sturt Gallery, Mittagong, NSW

1994 new work, king street gallery on burton

1992 paintings, king street gallery on burton

Schubert Art Gallery, Queensland

1991 Budds Beach Gallery, Gold Coast, Queensland

1990 Victor Mace Fine Art Gallery, Brisbane

1989 Painters Gallery, Sydney

1988 Victor Mace Fine Art Gallery

Luke Sciberras CV

Born

1975 Sydney NSW Australia

Lives and works in Hill End NSW Australia

1995 - 97 Fine Arts, National Art School

1995 - 98 Regular Studio Assistant to Aida Tomescu, John Peart, Ann Thomson, Guy Warren, Martin
Sharp, Garry Shead, Suzanne Archer, Elisabeth Cummings and Greg Weight

Solo Exhibitions

2015 Human Condition, Olsen Irwin, Sydney
Human Condition, Port Macquarie Regional Gallery, NSW

2014 From My Travels, Olsen Irwin Works of Paper, Sydney

On Country, Scott Livesey Gallery, Melbourne

2013 Tu-Whit! Tu-Whoo!, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW

Tu-Whit! Tu-Whoo!, Olsen Irwin, Sydney

2012 Signs of Life, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

Road Show (with Guy Maestri), Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2011 Highways and Other Recipes, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2010 Under a High Desert Wind, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

2009 More than the Desert Reveals, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Fugues and Furrows, Moree Regional Gallery, NSW

2008 Flipside, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Plum Blossom Time, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

2007 Persimmon Season, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Windswept and Picked Clean, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

2006 When the Sun Comes Out, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Art Sydney06, Royal Hall of Industries, Sydney

Plucked and Gutted, Port Jackson Press, Melbourne

Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

2005 A Painter's Progress, Bathurst Regional Gallery, Bathurst, NSW

Dogdays and Deluges, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

Art Sydney05, Royal Hall of Industries, Sydney

2003 Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Luke Sciberras & Tristan Lanceley, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2002 Monaro Country, Ben Grady Gallery, Canberra

2001 Back up the Monkey, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2000 An Uncertain Something, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

Exhibited as finalist in Brett Whitely Scholarship, Surry Hills

Exhibited as finalist in Kings School Art Prize, Parramatta

Meet 2x2, Tim Olsen Gallery

1999 Solo Exhibition at ABC Centre, Ultimo, Sydney

1999 Exhibited as finalist, Brett Whiteley Scholarship, Surry Hills

His works are held in many of Australia's private, corporate and public collections.

Artist's Acknowledgements

This exhibition is a testament to the vision and generosity of Michael Nock to whom we give our warmest thanks. His devotion to art and artists has fostered the creation of many exemplary artworks and friendships. We would also like to thank Lamia Mahjoub, Jason Capobianco, Dylan DeRose and the staff at the Nock Art Foundation, and of course we would like to express our enduring appreciation of the support we have always received from all at King Street on William Gallery, Sydney; Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney; and Scott Livesey Galleries in Melbourne.

*Scan in the QR code
to watch Lis and Luke
working in the studio

The Nock Art Foundation

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www.michaelnock.com

