The Intuitive Landscape
The Intuitive Landscape
Richard Lane

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery
27 March - 10 May 2015
Organised by

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Acrylic on canvas, 92 x 122 cm

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Foreword
Landscape, as a visual art subject matter, has stood the test of time. Breathtaking natural vistas around the world have inspired artists for centuries and, assuming our impact on the environment doesn't destroy them, it can be safely assumed that nature will remain an inexhaustible muse.

North Queenslanders are very fortunate to be surrounded by a multitude of stunning environs, from the reef to the rainforest, to the winding rivers and mountain ranges in between. This fact is not lost on our own artists, and the Townsville region has been celebrated in all mediums and styles.

Richard Lane, in his exhibition *The Intuitive Landscape*, continues this tradition by taking us into the world of Abstract Expressionism. His works are studies more in light and colour than form, but are still unmistakably Townsville.

Richard is an accomplished artist who, over many years, has fine-tuned his technique of manipulating vibrant acrylic washes on canvas. In this same period, he has immersed himself in Townsville and its surrounds. These explorations have resulted in a mental bank of colours and images which inform the works.

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery is proud to continue to support the region's artists in the display of major exhibitions. As part of a diverse and balanced exhibition schedule, exhibitions such as *The Intuitive Landscape* highlight the talent to be found in our own backyard.

My congratulations and thanks to the artist, Richard Lane, for his fine body of works and assistance in the organisation of this exhibition.

Shane Fitzgerald
Manager, Gallery Services
The Intuitive Landscape
Paul Klee once wrote in a Bauhaus prospectus that, "there is plenty of room for exact research in art, but there is no substitute for intuition." 1

Richard Lane acts purely on intuition when committing paint to canvas to create his abstract landscapes — delicate, vibrant and lyrical veils of colour that effortlessly form mountainous landscapes, forests, and ocean vistas. While it is true for Lane that there is no substitute for intuition, it is important to note that his instinct for capturing the region has grown from over 30 years of experience and a profound appreciation of the north Queensland landscape, its shapes, its light and its colours.

The genesis for the works displayed within The Intuitive Landscape could be argued to have taken place as far back as May 1977, when Lane ventured to Townsville for the first time from Sydney. Visiting friends, Lane recalls that they realised, "it was my first trip to Townsville [and] naturally drove straight to the top of Castle Hill. It was approximately 10am. First thing I noticed was the change in light from Sydney! Second, I was immediately captivated by the turquoise water of Cleveland Bay and the shapes and shadows of the hills on Magnetic Island with their light and shadows and shapes of the distant Islands of the Palm Group and misty Hinchinbrook in the far distance. I was hooked!" 2

Hooked is an understatement, with Townsville making such an impact on the artist that he has made the city his home, and continued to study it and celebrate it through his paintings.

Lane’s practice draws on a variety of learning experiences. These include studying in California in 1982 under Christopher Schink, an internationally regarded artist, author and instructor. Schink’s works tend to the figurative, however the luminous use of colour in his Jazz and Café series hint at the lasting impact Schink has had on Lane’s own practice.

In 1985, Lane studied in Sydney under the late Peter Laverty, the former Head of the National Art School and Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 1971 to 1977. Laverty was known to have a fondness for the light and space of the Australian countryside, and his works have been described as, 'sweeping, abstract, impressionist landscapes... fiddled with that light.' 3 Again, parallels can be drawn with Lane’s own exploration of the light and colour in the north Queensland region.

In Townsville, Lane also spent some time completing various units of the Diploma of Art at Townsville TAFE, and participating in workshops and life drawing classes as they became available.

From this base, Lane launched an impressive exhibition history throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including solo shows at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Martin Gallery, Holdsworth Art Galleries in Sydney, and even the Australian Embassy in Washington DC. His major exhibition at Perc Tucker in 1985 included several works, such as Mysteries Beyond and Fantasy Phoenix Rising, which pointed to the direction he would take in this new body of work some thirty years later.

Richard Lane

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Despite this period of success, family life and the demands of his accounting profession meant that his last solo show took place in 1995. While he has continued practicing in a reduced capacity and has participated in various group exhibitions since, *The Intuitive Landscape* marks a long overdue return for such an accomplished local artist.

Writing in *The Weekend Australian* about Lane's 1987 Holdsworth solo exhibition, Elwyn Lynn observed that Lane's, "organic, drifting works... flow like a submarine Frankenthaler or a Morris Louis but more like a Richard Lane. Lyrical and unstrained they are for those who need no angst."  

The reference to Frankenthaler and Louis is apt, with Lane acknowledging them as strong influences on his work in the early 1980s. He also acknowledges the influence of Mark Rothko, that giant of the Abstract Impressionist movement. Lane explains, "Colour field paintings are usually very large which encourages the viewer to experience the colour as an enormous, engulfing expanse: a field of colour. I experienced that very engulfing expanse when standing in front of an extremely large Mark Rothko canvas at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra."  

Paul Jenkins is another accepted influence, and probably the one with which viewers could draw the most direct comparison with the works in *The Intuitive Landscape*. Just as Richard Lane carefully works his colour washes and manipulates the liquid's movement across the canvas, Dr. Louis A. Zona, Director of The Butler Institute of American Art observed that, 'Jenkins' fame is as much identified with the process of controlled paint-pouring and canvas manipulation as with the gem-like veils of transparent and translucent colour which have characterized his work since the late 1950s.' Unsurprisingly, it is the fluidity of [Jenkins'] work," that resonates with Lane so strongly.

Jenkins' acrylic on canvas paintings, more so than his oil and enamel works, share both the vibrancy and translucence that makes Lane's works so enticing. Just as in Rorschach's ink blots, we can find in Jenkins' organic shapes what we desire, and works such as *Phenomena Day of Zagorsk* (1966) and *Phenomena Urana Burns* (1966) evoke similar comparisons to mountainous landscapes and the forest as Lane's works do. For each artist, the overlapping of misty blues and greens with rich reds, purple and yellow peaks is particularly well handled, with each colour retaining its vibrancy, never muddying.

A comparison to the Australian artist Dale Frank and his abstract, poured works is also warranted; however Frank's highly glossed surfaces resemble more an oil spill in water than a mountain range, with colours and shapes reacting against each other, rather than delicately passing over and intermingling with each other.

Lane has developed his technique over time to ensure he is able to retain such an intensity and purity of colour, even when the washes have been overlaid. Working from his home studio, he locks himself away from interruptions with only some quiet country music for company, and lays the canvases flat onto tables. His colour palette for this body of work has largely included a red orange, a blue turquoise, and a magenta. He carefully builds his washes in a bowl by squeezing the desired colour onto the bowl's edge, and adding water to the bottom of the bowl. Taking his brush, he slowly works the colour from the edge of the bowl to the water, adding more water as required to achieve the desired strength of the wash and the quantity needed for the canvas. The wash is put through a strainer into a pouring jug to ensure there are no lumps of pigment which would punctuate the work. From here, he pours the wash onto the canvas and, using a plastic spatula (taped to a dowel rod if working at a distance), he 'spends time guiding the wash, drawing with it.'  

The wash slowly drains from the canvas, something the artist carefully monitors. He can pause its draining to intensify the colour by positioning brushes underneath the canvas, and over time drawing them away from the fat end of the brush.

Lane explains that when the work is finished, "it tells me it's finished. When I look at it, if a landscape has emerged and I think adding anything more would ruin it, I stop. The landscape emerges during the process of painting, and I build up areas to strengthen it. The final veil of colour is always the darker or stronger colour which helps to pull the whole composition together."
This inclination to finish the work with a more intense colour is a recent development, stemming from a master course in oil painting he undertook in 2013. Lane identifies that the lasting lesson he took from this course was, "to think more about introducing darker values, and to ensure there are value changes in the colours across the work in order to be able to draw out different parts of the landscape." 10

The Intuitive Landscape has been painted over the course of two years, but draws on 30 years of living in north Queensland and the influence of this diverse range of artists.

The exhibition is separated into six distinct series, each depicting a different area of Townsville. The six series explore the banks of the Ross River from the artist’s backyard; Lake Ross; Magnetic Island; Hervey Range and Piper’s Lookout; Paluma and the Coastal Ranges; and Pullerenda through to Cleveland Bay.

Each of the themes is experiential, with the exhibition being, "the manifestation of emotional experiences over more than three decades observing the colours, shapes, and most of all, light, of the city of Townsville and its environs. None of the works depicts a moment in time when I consciously set out to paint a particular scene, but rather each painting is an amalgam of the 30 years of experiencing the atmosphere and changes in the landscape due to the influences of the elements previously mentioned." 11

In each series, a different element steps forward. For instance, the works Ground Cover 1 and Ground Cover 2 in the My Backyard series utilise lyrical, layered shapes to capture the fallen leaves. The gentle shift from blues to purples, oranges to yellow allude not only to the changing of season, but also to the changing colours of each layer of leaf litter as it decays over time. In the large landscape works From Piper’s Lookout and Hervey Range Lookout 1 the artist uses their scale to capture the stunning panorama, sweeping between the mountain peaks and the ocean.

Perhaps the most stunning work in the exhibition is Paluma Range Tree Line, which, through design or good fortune, features an exquisite row of trees lining the distant mountain range. This, the most representational element in any of the works within The Intuitive Landscape, does not however jar with the largely abstract composition. Rather, it is hard to fathom that this work has been achieved with acrylics; the intensely saturated landscape could easily have been the work of a skilled digital artist.

The Intuitive Landscape is a strong selection of new work by Richard Lane. His welcome return to the exhibition fold underlines his keen intuition and sensibility as an abstract artist, and also his deep love of Townsville’s natural beauty, a view surely shared by all who have experienced it.

Eric Nash
Curator, Gallery Services

References
2 Passage by the artist, Richard Lane, January 2015
3 Cairncross, L 2013,‘An artist driven by his passions’, The Sydney Morning Herald 14 September
4 Lynas, E. 1987, The Walidcard Australian
5 Passage by the artist, Richard Lane, January 2015
7 Interview with the artist, Friday 13 February 2015
8 Interview with the artist, Friday 13 February 2015
9 Interview with the artist, Friday 13 February 2015
10 Passage by the artist, Richard Lane, January 2015
11 Passage by the artist, Richard Lane, January 2015
Lake Ross

"Formerly known as Ross River Dam and Ross Dam, Lake Ross is one of the most picturesque areas in tropical North Queensland. As we live about 2 kilometres from the spillway, an hour spent walking along the wall of the Lake is a frequent occurrence and the multitudinous landscape scenes provide lasting memories.

Some of the many attractions include the quarry, which was carved out of the side of a hill to provide rocks for the dam wall construction. The interesting shapes include the surrounding hills, Round Mountain, the very large mango farm, the Pinnacles, and the quarry at the bottom of the Pinnacles.

Every year there are bushfires in the distant mountains and, from a different direction, smoke from the cane firing in the Burdekin. The resultant smoke haze from both of these events creates dramatic changes in the whole view of the landscape. The changes of light, and thus values, depending on time of day and weather conditions, were a constant delightful variable for affecting personal emotional reactions. The sunsets viewed from Lake Ross wall are magnificent."

- Richard Lane
# Richard Lane Curriculum Vitae

## Solo Exhibitions

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<th>Location</th>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1993</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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## Selected Group Exhibitions

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<td><em>Techniques of Drawing</em></td>
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Public Collections
City of Townsville Art Collection
Prime Minister and Cabinet Selection, Canberra
Australian Embassy, Washington DC, USA
James Cook University Collection

Private Collections
Throughout Australia, USA, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Singapore, Brazil, Italy, Sweden, Holland, Japan and Germany.

Selected Corporate Collections
Qantas Airways Limited
BHP Billiton Ltd
Craft Arts Australia Ltd.
St. George Bank, Head Office Sydney
C.C.H. Australia Ltd
Townsville International Hotel
Ramada Reef Resort, Cairns
John Flynn College, James Cook University, Townsville
Coral Princess Cruises Pty Ltd
Radio 4TO, Townsville
Radio 4RR, Townsville
McDonalds Restaurants, Townsville
IPEC Transport Group, Townsville
The Intuitive Landscape
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Richard Lane