

steve tyerman

A World Within A World

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The imagery in Steve Tyerman's current body of work again expresses his multi-faceted response to the coastal regions of Southern Queensland and Northern NSW. He understands the appeal of being at a seaside locale has, for not only most 'Aussies', but humankind in general. "A feeling of connection and sense of release occurs when sitting at the ocean's edge," he muses. "There is a calming effect in the ocean's constant movement, it's the great vastness and the thought of what lies beyond, and within, that is mesmerizing."

Rather than site-specific seascape renditions, Tyerman's paintings aspire to give an immersive experience of place. "I titled the exhibition, *A World Within a World*, because that's how it is for me when observing nature. You can see the big picture, the overall scene laid out before you but when looking closer, there is a whole world of life and activity happening within. I want my pictures to reflect this in some way, whether it is through the birds, insects, flower buds or simply the life that the trowelled paint itself creates upon the canvas. I think my works end up the way they do - colourful and energetic - because I'm combining my awe and fascination of the subject matter with the passion I have for paint."



"The show's title also alludes to the very basis of art – observing!" Tyerman continues. "There is a recognised difference between looking and seeing, or more specifically, observing. Observation suggests looking with the intent to discover and learn. My art is a way of interpreting and manifesting what I discern. For me, it's not a matter of trying to put order to the chaos, I'm not attempting to solve the world's problems, paint quandaries are enough for me. I'm just a curious observer."

Tyerman tells that very few of his paintings now portray actual scenes. Instead, they increasingly amalgamate the various vistas he has sketched, photographed and remembered. "A lot of spatial invention goes on when composing a seascape," he reveals. "Unusual perspectives, multiple viewpoints and changes in scale are often melded into a single image." Alive with radial energy, the painting *To a Wilder Place* exemplifies this. Tyerman imparts that here he is challenging traditional landscape notions. The nonconformist scale of the elements within the image is an attempt to create a simultaneous presentation of "the near and far". Incongruous, both in size and habitat, colourful frangipani and hibiscus flowers compound this intention as they garland the point of descent into the 'wilder place' of a gorge where waves crash and swirl.

Banksias have long been a favourite subject for Tyerman. "If you're by the ocean on the east coast they are difficult to avoid," he states. "I've become very fond of painting them, not only for the strong colour contrasts of yellow and orange against the blue sky or ocean, but the strong, structured shapes are a joy to paint with the palette knife. In terms of providing a food source for native birds, I love how the Banksia plant is an all-rounder." A late afternoon at the ocean's edge was the inspiration for the *In the Arms of the Ocean* painting. "I was struck by the warm glow of Banksias against a soft fading sky and took some photos of them." The work's resultant Banksia forms were necessarily modified by the tactility of his oil medium and for compositional factors. "Also," Tyerman adds "you would never see two Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in the wild posing so nicely for the camera. I took it upon myself to invent them."

Birds of a Feather is a most intriguing painting. It beckons the viewer into a riot of vivid colours and masterful palette knife markings to discover what may be within. Rainbow and scaly-breasted lorikeets! Living on a hinterland property where he has grown many native plants, Tyerman has had ample opportunity to experience the behaviour of these birds from his treetop abode. "Despite the lorikeets' brilliant hues they can camouflage into the flowers and foliage remarkably well," he tells. "So even though you'll know they are feeding amidst the branches by the raucous noise, you really have to look for them. I wanted the same effect in this work."

The fusion of descriptive and impasto nuances gives an aesthetic potency to each of Tyerman's paintings. "I am always trying to create a legible, evocative image by the most abstract means," he reflects. "I want to make pictures that bring all the elements together, to make my visual and emotional encounters palpable on the canvas surface – to show a world within a world."

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