

Melitta Perry

Echoes September 23 – October 7, 2023

Melitta Perry's current paintings manifest the reverberation of bygone experiences, their nebulous quality buttressed by the imagination. "Every telling of a story is an echo," she imparts. "We are all the sum of our capricious memories and this new body of work explores the way memory distorts and enhances the past, informs the present and projects a way of seeing the world into the future." Perry relays that her imagery is layered in meaning much like a collage or palimpsest. "Snippets of literature, folklore music and art are torn from their context and relocated into surreal landscapes. The resulting works have a *waking-dream* quality where extraordinary images and objects emerge from the backdrop of the Australian, bush which is a sort of anchor that tethers us to a more familiar present."



The *Echo in the Half-light* painting is a wonderful example of Perry's depiction of interlacing worlds. "This work captures the momentary space between sleep and waking. The mist of the subconscious evaporates, exposing echo fragments of a vivid dream now stranded in consciousness," she informs. A vacant antique bed draped with diaphanous canopy stands before a hazy forest setting. Barely discernible in the background are the shadowy forms of horse and rider returning from their nocturnal journey. Further visual intrigue is generated by the presence of a great number of objects that are imbued with allegorical context. Perry elaborates, "A fob watch keeps tenuous track of time while a dingo sleeps nearby, perhaps guarding the space. Symbolising intuition and wisdom, an owl hovers above. Its image is reflected in the mirror of an open jewel box from which pearls, also symbols of wisdom and purity, escape their containment. Representing balance between imagination and reality, a Bandy Bandy snake slithers out alongside them. Amidst the dry grass is a glass dome enclosing the figure of an erstwhile bushranger. Having emerged from its shell after a long subterranean sojourn, the cicada signifies awakening."

Renowned for its courtship behaviour, the male Bower Bird builds elaborate structures and collects brightly coloured, generally blue trinkets in an attempt to attract a mate. Within Perry's *The Bower* painting such a bird perches atop a throne-like Georgian chair which is situated between the customary, arched stick walls. It peers down at the approaching blue-tongued lizard – certainly not the mate he was trying to lure! Perry tells that in folklore, a blue-tongued lizard represents the 'wise old man' of the bush and here it could perhaps personify a sage or moral questioner. She humorously suggests that it would be quite unadvisable for the Bower Bird to attempt adding the lizard's ever-darting, blue tongue to his collection. "We humans often amass precious objects for reasons not dissimilar," Perry adds. "Status and allurements motives aside, there can also be more personal collections of echo-like memorabilia stored away in our bowers."

Elucidating the *Concerto (Pollinating the Orchard)* imagery Perry offers, "This work takes its inspiration from Sinding's classical piano composition *Fruhlingstrauschen*, which translates to 'Rustle of Spring'. The music echoes the fecund energy of bees in a springtime orchard as the twigs burst into blossom. The queen bee represents Mother Nature, the composer and conductor. While the piano in the painting is but a ruined shell, the 'music' it evokes will continue into perpetuity. It celebrates renewal and rebirth."

Echoes of times past resound in the *Wild Horses (High Country)* canvas. Perry recalls seeing a mob of brumbies when she was wandering along a non-designated hiking trail in the Tumut High Country region. The painting captures the mesmerising moment of profound stillness as the group of powerful horses halted briefly on an icy hilltop. "The cinematic bubble shattered into an explosion of dust and hooves as they charged off again, the echo of heroic folklore in their wake," declares Perry. The old, now dilapidated leather armchair denotes the pioneering pastoralists who had introduced the horses that would subsequently become wild brumbies into this area. A restraining whip lies abandoned before it. Upon the chair a bridal horseshoe acknowledges the women who helped shape the folklore.

No allegorical vestige of former human presence is evinced in the *Water Ballet (Brolgas)* work. Instead, we are invited to view one of the natural world's most spectacular performances – that of the dancing Brolgas. The angled reed formations in the foreground direct attention up to 'centre stage' and the duet ballet presentation.

The portrayal was inspired by a tale told to Perry decades ago by an Indigenous girl about the Dreamtime Brolga. "I do not remember its entirety, and neither is it my story to tell," she recounts, "but the Brolgas in my painting are engaged in the species' legendary courtship dance, the white veil emerging from the water symbolizes their union."

As in the resonance of sound waves, each of the exhibition's works encourages us to be aware of our own 'memory echoes' and their potential to assist a greater understanding of present reality and future possibilities.

29 Tedder Avenue Main Beach, QLD 4217 **Postal Address:** PO Box 985, Main Beach, QLD 4217

Phone: 07 5561 1166 **Email:** info@antheapolsonart.com.au **Web:** www.antheapolsonart.com.au