

steve tyerman

On The Path That Leads Back To You

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Instinctual energy permeates Steve Tyerman's works. Characterised by an intense involvement in the materiality of paint they are the outcome of an intimate engagement with the environment. However, his art communicates a visual experience well beyond the strictures of traditional landscape painting. "The works are always a reflection of myself and my life experiences made palpable on the canvas surface," he relays.



In speaking of the title for his current body of work, Tyerman quotes the 19th century French artist Pierre Bonnard, "It is not a matter of painting life, it's a matter of giving life to a painting. Nature provides the inspiration or stimulus but it is the 'inner life' that remains the ultimate reference." The artistic path leads you back to yourself. The title of the exhibition also refers to the fact that most of his works have paths, tracks or roads in them. Tyerman explains there are several reasons for this, "They have metaphorical associations - life's journey, the options we have and the decisions we make. The path is also such a handy pictorial device, it's an obvious way to create the illusion of depth and direct the eye in and around the picture. As soon as our eyes find a pathway they want to follow it. There are literal connotations too. Roads and pathways are our way of accessing the landscape. They are symbolic markers of human presence and our interaction with nature."

Tyerman is noted for his impasto renditions that express his visual and emotional responses to scenes encountered. Inspiration for recent paintings evolved from a road trip down the east coast of NSW last February. Not site specific, the works are infused with coalescing memories of previous excursions to that region and imaginative compositional devices. "I think of these paintings as other than seascapes", he informs. "I'm increasingly focusing on the type of landscape found along coastal areas rather than just ocean vistas. This is because I enjoy walking tracks that enable a discernment of the flora and fauna and the 'lay of the land'. When driving towards the coast I am fond of the brief peek at the ocean when surmounting a hill and the glimpses of beach and waves espied through trees as one ambles down pathways. I think it's the little teaser - the anticipation and the mystery I like the best. So many of these works have snippets where the sea and shore views are confined to 'pockets'. I often try to incorporate a few of them into the single picture."

Atypical of Tyerman's usual imagery, the exhibition has a number of small works depicting Japanese gardens. "They are a subject I've wanted to paint for many years," he muses. "We've been visiting various such gardens over a long period of time and they've always been subtly urging me to paint them. The design philosophy behind Japanese gardens aims to harness nature's energies in order to create a tranquil space in which to de-stress and quietly contemplate. That seems like a worthwhile goal for any landscape painting or for art in general. My energetic, palette knifed surfaces should be at odds with a Japanese garden's intended aura of meditative stillness, especially in works of this size, but when viewed from a distance I'm hoping they exude that sense of harmony and serenity."

The potency of Tyerman's palette knife's passage animates our visual sensibilities, prompting us to share in his immersive experience of a landscape's physical and metaphorical offerings. His paintings encourage the viewer to extend perception beyond manifested form and discover the path that leads back to a time of unfettered elation and forward into a future of integration and wholeness.

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