

...drifting off the plane...

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42 years into space:

AN EXHIBITION OF WORK BY NOBBY SEYMOUR

FROM 1976 TO THE PRESENT



LANGFORD120

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*At the time of going to press, arrangements are in place to exhibit all studio works reproduced in this booklet, with the exception of **Falls. Peony Screen** and **Captor Captive**. Other works, not included here, will also be on exhibition.*

In 1976 I abandoned my career as an architect and fled to London where I could drift aimlessly, free from the troubled concern of the elders.

I had digs in Kings Rd, Chelsea. I bought some paper and paints from an Art Shop nearby and in the intervals between the bizarre jobs that paid the rent, I began painting pictures on a regular basis. I painted flowers because I liked them and continued to do so for the next 8 years in between gigs in the catering industry.

In 1984 a family in Double Bay, NSW, had lost their view of Sydney Harbour. A great artist friend¹ of mine suggested I might be able to replace it. My architectural background combined with feeling for plant form ensured a successful result and launched a successful international career as a muralist - specialising in Trompe L'oeil.

By 1996 I was in my early fifties and was tired of swinging on scaffolds and the constant travel. I became a studio painter and held my first solo exhibition in 1998.

It is only in the last few years that I realised that I have travelled an intuitive path investigating the nature of space - and the nature of the surface that confronts it. From the first watercolour, where the leaves creep off the picture plane² to the latest works, some 42 years later, where knots from earlier works unclinch themselves and then proceed in constant reference to their past and future trajectory, but wholly avoiding any contact with it.

The majesty of space is thus made apparent.

1 Janet Alstergren, 1946-2016

2 *The imaginary plane, established by the artist, between the object and the viewer on which the representation of the object is depicted. It usually coincides with the surface of the painting.*



1



2

- 1 **Chrysanthemums**; watercolour #1, 1976
- 2 **Mural, Double Bay, NSW, 1984**
(approaching completion)



1



2

1 Courtyard, Prahran VIC

2 Poolside Mural, Palm Beach, Fla USA



1



2

...and the knot appears.

1 **Magnolia Grandiflora**, vestibule, St Kilda Rd apartment, 2000, Flashe Acrylic

2 **The Hoarders and the Wasters** (Detail), Level 4, Lygon St Carpark, Carlton VIC, 2002

...studio work...



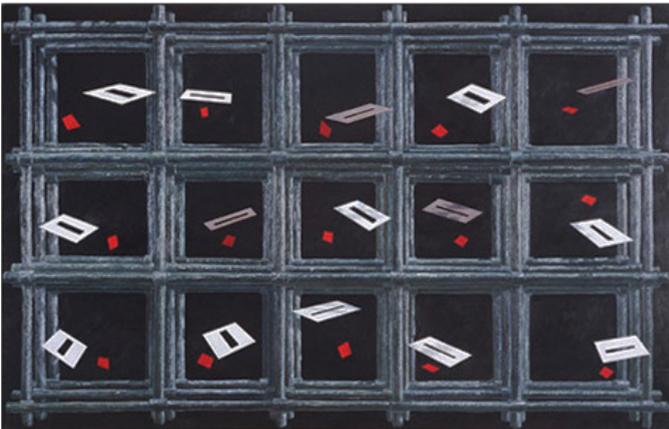
1

Early intimations of the interval around the object.

- 1 ***Towering Confection***, 150 x 95 cm, Oil on canvas, 1997
- 2 ***It's mostly in the Frame***, 122 x 122 cm, Oil on canvas, 1999
- 3 ***Scaffold Frame***, 165 x 410 cm, Oil on canvas, 1999



2



3



1



2

1 **Peony Screen**, 3 panels 170 x 40 cm, Oil/oil pastel on linen, 2004

2 **Green Belt**, 4 panels 170 x 40 cm, Oil/oil pastel on linen, 2004

FOLDING SCREENS; DISCOVERING THE SPACE BETWEEN THE PANELS.

IT TEEMS WITH POTENTIAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED VIEWER.

The vertical space between columns of text is known as the 'gutter' in the printing industry. In a comic strip, for example, leaps in time and narrative occur across (and within) this gap.

I have used it to vary the focal length, thus some panels appear closer than others, causing the picture plane to fluctuate or shimmer - intimating a sense of immateriality in this oh so concrete world.

'Falls' illustrates how we are able to scan horizontally but not vertically.

The vertical continuity of the waterfall was interrupted by the horizontal spaces. By 'camouflaging' the horizontal spaces with horizontal elements (the mossy boughs) the vertical waterfall is thus read as a continuous design element.



I have been advised to curb my didactic impulses, in line with current ideological correctness within the Artworld ("the Artwork should speak for itself"), which I frankly think is a load of bollocks; my appreciation of a work has never been diminished by a deeper understanding of the philosophical or technical problems resolved in the execution of it.

In the early nineties I purchased Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* and was enraptured (as much as I could understand it) for it confirmed my suspicion, formed by early childhood experiences, that the world is an illusion.

Consider a solid wall. It feels solid; we see it as solid; we sense its presence from radiated heat and reflected sound.

Yet we now know from sub-atomic particle physics that both the feel and appearance of solidity is an illusion.

Push against the wall with your hand.

At sub-atomic scale there is the energy field of your hand against the energy field of the wall, visually we can imagine it as nothing against nothing - so why doesn't your hand slip into the mass of the wall?

Matter and energy each have a basic particle - the fermion and boson respectively. Let me just interrupt here to say the term 'particle' is very misleading,

a hangover from early research in physics. We think of a particle as being similar to a pellet of matter, but these particles are more abstract and refer to what is known as a wave function of energy. Now, whereas bosons attract each other, Fermions repulse each other, so there is no way the fermions in the wall are going to accommodate the fermions in your hand.

So much for the illusion of the solid wall. What about the appearance of the wall, how is that an illusion?

To best illustrate the illusionary appearance we shall turn to carbon, the essential element in all organic forms, including ourselves. Its structure, (the nucleus contains six positive protons, attracting six negative electrons) is capable of assuming several symmetrical forms, each with their unique properties: lamp black, graphite, graphene and diamond. In diamond, the electrons

1 *A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME from the Big Bang to Black Holes; Stephen Hawking.*
Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 1988

'The Artist is an imitator of images, and very far removed from the truth.'

(Plato, The Republic, X, 27).

(or their orbits) form a regular tetrahedral lattice, thus making it the hardest substance known.

When photons (particles of light) strike the electrons of a surface, all hell breaks loose. There is, in a poetic sense, hissing, scratching and spitting, and the escaping photons register on our receptors. We see colour, texture and form. Not with the diamond however. We perceive some photons reflected as light from the surface, but beyond that there is crystal clarity, because the structure is so tightly interlocked there is none of the surface nonsense that occurs with other materials.



Trompe l'œil revisited; where is the true surface?

CBS#6 Cobalt Blue, 124 x 84 x 14 cm, Oil pastel on panels, 2007



1

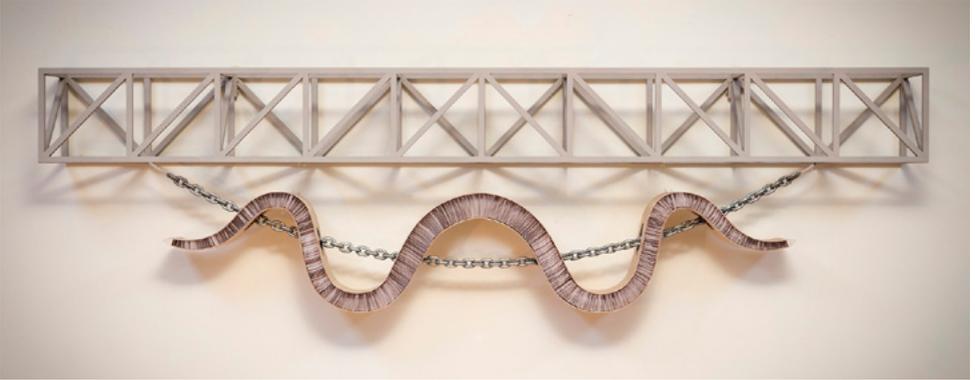


2

1 **Notation**, 80 x 60 x 12.5 cm, paper, card, thread, 2008

2 **Descending Ranker**, 60 x 38 x 11.5 cm, paper, card, concealed pigment, 2009

3 **Gravity/Wave**, 150 x 181 x 19.5 cm, timber, chain, ply, paper and beeswax, 2015



Celebrating the interval - both around the object and between the viewer.



3

It is encouraging that my *Gravity/Wave* (2016) creation from my last exhibition has been chosen to illustrate a scientific exposition, namely Malcolm Cameron's *Mathematics the Truth*. Cameron, whose book has virtually gone viral, advocates modernising mathematics teaching to relativistic and quantum physics replacing Newton's Renaissance physics and pre-1920s physics before the modern quantum unravelling of nature.

Mathematics the Truth, displaying *Gravity/Wave*, is available free from Apple iBooks for an initial offer.



1

1 **The Captor Captive**, 61 x 30 x 6.5 cm, rope, timber, calico and cotton string, 2014

2 **Presence and Beyond**, 222 x 108 x 44 cm, timber, calico, cord and synthetic filling, 2014



...the majesty of space...



TREFOIL, 30 cm diameter, Rope, piping, cord and silk, 2016



Crown of Skewers, 50 cm height, 90 cm diameter, Bamboo skewers, 2016



Linear Form activated by its Trajectory, AKA Slinky, the Spiny Spaceworm

1.8 x 2.1 m, bamboo skewers, curtain rod, various fabrics, 2017





The Nature of All Nature, 140 x 132 x 90 cm, bamboo skewers, gravel, MDF and timber podium, 2018



CREDITS

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