



Judith White's *Slipstream*, and, below, *Figure in landscape I*.

A journey with slipstream

Slipstream – Judith White
Beaver Galleries

81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until July 3
Reviewer: **Charly Smith**

Working in the muted tones of a mist-shrouded Australian bush, Judith White has placed depictions of leaf, air and water at the centre of her practice for several years. In this, the latest of many solo exhibitions at Beaver Galleries, White maintains her focus upon the natural environment, with subtle developments in technique and some departures in content.

Last seen at Beaver Galleries in 2009, White's work has retained many of the features noted in that show. The landscape she immerses us in is distinctly Australian in form, light and hue, and her surfaces are built from layers of energetic brushstroke and skilfully placed materials.

The introduction of the figure into the landscape is the most

obvious shift in White's work. These landscapes feature the human form, floating through the familiar locales of riverbank and stream. White's people are faceless, almost formless, reduced to the suggestion of humanity in shadowy silhouette. This inclusion achieves mixed success.

In the best examples, such as *Figure watching water*, they lend the ethereal landscapes a sense of habitation and harmony. In other works, however, the figures seem awkward additions, not a part of the landscape or embodying any sense of identity or emotion in their form. Are these people intruders? Are they haunting the land? The lack of detail and a stubborn sense of disconnect from the earth lends awkwardness to their presence. It is worth noting that through her titles White implies a connection to country for these people. *The Descendants*, *The Custodians* – this terminology brings to mind notions of first nations and ongoing connections between land and inhabitant, a

sense which is at odds with the jarring effect of the depictions.

There are some works in this show which remain unpeopled, and these, to my eye, are White's strongest pieces. *Landscape (path)* edges deliciously close to abstraction with its frenzied layering of paint and paper. A rich

cobalt blue is scribbled through the misty eucalypt hues, adding boldness and vibrancy. The works in *Slipstream* continue a lengthy meditation on the bush space. Using a similar approach and technique to her earlier work, these show a tentative and partially successful introduction of

the figure – faceless, formless, static and stylised, these people are imprinted on the dynamic natural environment, grounding it in narrative. This is a well-established artist recreating and reworking imagery which has held her attention for several years, and this assurance is evident in the works.

