



PEACE AND HARMONY

Artist Peter Boggs moves from gardenscapes to the indoors for his latest exhibition. His calming style is attracting fans among Hollywood celebrities

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The timeless elegance and reflective tranquillity of intimate interior spaces has been artist Peter Boggs' sole focus for the first time in an exhibition. Boggs has recently favoured gardenscapes, especially idyllic arcadian visions, but his current exhibition of 23 paintings at Philip Bacon Gallery, Fortitude Valley, is his first show exclusively dedicated to interior settings.

"As my interest in interior subjects has grown, I've tried to find a way to connect the various interior arrangements, rooms and views, to glimpses of 'the garden' or the landscape more generally," says Boggs, a tonalist.

Boggs' work has captured the attention of connoisseurs globally, including Hollywood collectors such as comic legend Steve Martin and producer Nancy Meyers (*The Intern*), who finds the paintings "so calming ... yet they really pull you in". Martin is impressed with Boggs' Brisbane exhibition and predicts it will be one of the artist's most successful shows. "These (paintings) are beautiful," he told Boggs.

The interiors, featuring soft translucent tones, have a European sensibility with Boggs drawing on a 2014 trip to Italy and France, where he spent considerable time in museums, such as The Louvre and Musee Carnavalet, both in Paris. The paintings are largely memory-based with a small amount of invention to ensure there is "character of place".

"The way in which I work with all my material is to look and try to absorb the feel of

the subject, accompanying that with records like photographs and line drawings and quick on the spot sketches," he says.

New Zealand-born Boggs, now based in NSW's Blue Mountains, says *View from the Director's Apartment* is a good example of the workings of his process because it is based on an invented interior space in Rome's Villa Medici.

The striking maritime pine though is not invented, with Boggs saying the trees are a feature of the Villa Medici garden. "The single

stately maritime pine becomes the anchor around which the atmosphere of the garden is based, while the interior and its arrangement reflects my interest in the Swiss-French painter Balthus who was director of Villa Medici in the 1960s," he says. "I'm very interested in ... the approaches he took to redecorating the rooms in Villa Medici during his tenure as director so this picture is a kind of homage or metaphor."

Many of the interiors in this show are drawn from Boggs' knowledge of a villa (Villa

Barbarigo) near Padua in Veneto, Italy. "Outside, through the windows and doors, is one of the great gardens in Italy if not the world – Valsanzibio," he says.

Boggs wants his work to inspire contemplation and engagement with viewers and he hopes viewers will be encouraged to place themselves in the welcoming space.

"The mysterious and the enigmatic is at the core of my work. They (the paintings) appear as straightforward, but the 'meaning' ... is often just out of reach," he says. "It's about providing a glimpse of something familiar but not – as though in a dream of having seen or been in such a place."

Boggs has been painting since the late-1960s when he attended art school. He has been exhibiting since 1974 in New Zealand and from 1993 in Australia. He first came to Brisbane in 1998 when Margaret Olley presented him with the Tattersall's Prize and has been exhibiting at Philip Bacon Galleries for 16 years.

He originally favoured abstract expression, including that by trailblazer Jackson Pollock, but found the tonal style suited him better. He was influenced by his teacher Colin McCahon.

"Good painting in my mind, should keep the viewer thinking and provide only a few clues, not everything or the complete story. I want pictures to have a lasting engagement and a degree of continuing intrigue for the viewer," he says.

Peter Boggs is showing at Philip Bacon Galleries, 2 Arthur St, Fortitude Valley, until August 20.



Homely tones: Peter Boggs' works *View from the Director's Apartment* (main) *Interior IV* (above) and *Interior VI* capture a calming sense of beauty.

