

# Outer serenity conceals turmoil

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**PETER Boggs:** *Landscapes and interiors.* Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 5pm. Until June 14, 2020. [beavergalleries.com.au](http://beavergalleries.com.au).

If a couple of weeks ago attending an art gallery was like an encounter with a forbidden pleasure - a glimpse into a rarefied world made by appointment and observed under supervision - now a new normality reigns. Save for a few discreet signs and bottles of hand sanitiser placed at strategic points throughout the gallery, the Beaver Galleries is open for business and is observing regular opening hours.

Peter Boggs, the New Zealand-born, Blue Mountains-based artist, has been a regular exhibitor in Canberra for the past 22 years. Boggs champions a form of "slow art", where he relies on the viewer to pause in front of his work, to become absorbed by its inner logic that has been created through severe geometry and finely observed subdued oil colour glazes and to enter into a contemplative trance.

Nothing much happens in his landscapes or domestic interiors - they are completely depopulated - yet the situations created are begging for interpretation and an interpretation on a human level. There is a sense of mystery and of the uncanny created in his small finely worked canvases as if alluding to allegories for which we are provided few clues. Compared with his previous exhibitions, there is a greater sense of anxiety in this body of work, something that is difficult to articulate when you are faced with images of apparent distilled outer serenity concealing an inner world of turmoil.

All the works in this show are paintings from the past year and may have been made in a time of anxiety with choking smoke from the bushfires that ringed his studio home followed by the enforced isolation of the pandemic. We are living in an age of heightened anxiety and it should be of no surprise that some of our most perceptive artists reflect this in their work.



Peter Boggs, *Garden path i* (detail). Picture: Supplied

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Boggs' small tondo (round) painting *Garden path i* (2019), measuring 30 centimetres in diameter, traces a laneway between hedges and tall trees in subdued light. All is wonderfully ordered and balanced and it is possible to read the "golden section" into the geometric structure of the composition.

Despite this distilled serenity, there is a melancholic anxiety, perhaps a sense of lurking danger, perhaps something less tangible and more abstract.

In a similar way, Boggs' paintings like *Villa interior i - variation* and *Hallway in sunlight - variation* manage to play on our emotions through carefully controlled geometry and layers of tonal light beautifully manipulated.

In his compositions, the artist has become increasingly ambitious in exploring the space beyond the frame.

He is fascinated with the view through the window or the open doorway where we assume life is continuing beyond that which

is seen within the picture space.

The growing geometric complexity at times starts to detract from the lucid simplicity of the concept as the viewer is called upon to untangle the labyrinth of architectural spaces.

Although in all instances, Boggs bases his compositions on actual known locations - parks that he has visited on many occasions, villas and galleries in which he has sketched - in the finished paintings such details become irrelevant and specificity has given way to universality. The paintings become small contemplative gems into which the viewer is invited to enter and through which to create their own daydream of reality.