



Judith White's *Canal Path* in Causeway at Beaver Galleries.
Photo: Judith White

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Water metaphor for history's ebb, flow

ART REVIEW

CAUSEWAY

Paintings by Judith White. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until April 29. beavergalleries.com.au.

REVIEWED BY Sasha Grishin

In the two decades that I have been following the work of Judith White, there has been a gradual transition from the figurative to a more non-figurative mode of expression. While never literal in her art, formerly she embedded thematic anchors around which a symbolic narrative would evolve.

In this exhibition, White adopts an abstracted language of mark making evoking a mood and sensibility, rather than a narrative that can be deciphered.

The theme of White's new exhibition is that of water within European medieval towns, where it becomes a slippery metaphor for the flow of human history reflecting past civilisations.

Causeways, canals, moats and rivers flow through the old towns both reflecting and shaping their histories.

As in much of her previous work, she continues with a technique of covering her canvases with pigments mixed with acrylic and combined with collage to create dense layered spaces.

With the exception of *Prelude No 1*, which seems to be out of keeping with the general mood of the rest of the exhibition, in this show she adopts a sombre palette with heavy structured forms punctuated by small windows of space that permit air to flow through the compositions.

One of the more successful paintings in this exhibition is *Canal Path*, where the flowing dark, almost nocturnal forms are contrasted with small vivid slashes of brilliant colour with vibrant blues and small streaks of bright red.

It is a painting which, once entered by the viewer, becomes a dynamic and dramatic exploration of shapes suspended in space.

In some ways I am reminded of the late work of John Passmore, a wonderful Sydney-based painter who is as yet to receive his proper recognition.

Some of White's strongest paintings in this exhibition, including *Medieval moat* and the dramatic *Causeway*, play with an almost architectural sense of fragmentation with forms drifting apart,



White's *Causeway*, acrylic and collage on canvas, 106 x 135cm "plays with an almost architectural sense of fragmentation". Photo: Judith White

yet possessing a sense of grandeur and majesty.

She develops an effective balance between the flowing, organic forms of watery masses and the constructed spaces through which they pass.

It is like the ebb and flow of human history that is at the same time ancient and contemporary.

Although White has been exhibiting for more than four decades, her most recent

work includes some of her most successful paintings.

Her immaculate technique, lyricism and musicality have always been a feature of her art, but now it is enriched with a brooding introspection.

Her watery metaphors may have been inspired by a journey to the south of France, however, they also express a whole philosophy of being and speak of the passing of time like an echo of the fugues of Bach.