

The Village Within

It always comes back to where you live, which in the Painter's case encloses the practice of painting.

Yet Canberra's endless blue skies and vivid natural surroundings go on seemingly not to care, just like the world.

We are constantly being made and unmade.

What if the Painter could transpose this notion to painting, which after all is a repository of human enterprise?

To do so would entail a pursuit of meaning through subjectivity – to be read and felt via a painted surface.

What if that subjective surface has come into being through a process of violent erasure?

A mediated painterly surface from start to finish, but one that falls short of the maker's desire for an ideal.

Projections of beauty, poetic forms, colour harmony, biographical projections, both optimistic and dispiriting, erased by a force of will, an unsatisfactory result of graft.

The process of making starts again under nocturnal light by circumstance, a thirty-year-old routine.

The Painter has a day job.

The Painter has been undone, made and unmade, mirroring the painted surfaces.

What now of the forms emerging? The painter has a revulsion to illustrate the forms, becoming concrete.

The Painter wants Virginia Woolf in the room to read *The Waves*: becoming form, a state of in-between, neither male nor female, good or bad – binaries that insult the endeavour.

Soon the Painter's room will be invaded by light.

The ghost-like trace of forms silent on a surface lost at sea.

Paintings are turned to the wall dunce-like.

Routine returns the Painter to the day job, remade.

The Painter returns again to the room on schedule.

The surface of erased forms now has a tension between readability and unreadability.

They are now in-between.

The number of the dedicated body is eight to twelve.

The individual surfaces relate to archaeology the way an archaeologist discovers fragments of volumetric history.

Combined, they form a whole body, a way of encapsulating the conundrum – bridging the gap between an idea, its realisation in material form, its reception, the naming of its individual parts, its generator of atavistic impulse: The Village Within.

Derek O'Connor

March 2024