

DEREK O'CONNOR

Canberra artist Derek O'Connor's dynamic paintings come to life through sumptuous swathes of oil paint paired with energetic brush strokes. His full-bodied abstracted canvases are tantalisingly seductive, as movements of vivid paint melt into one another. Derek is an artist who layers paint, then erases and then paints again – it is this honouring of the paint that gives his works such meaning and power. He says of his practice, "To be a painter in the 21st century is to swim in an ever-expanding matrix of technology, special effects, photographic processes and art created using installation, video and performance. Making art historical references in your work means selecting from a monstrous array of art movements in a world rife with political, environmental and humanitarian issues that are all potential fodder for art. Concurrent with my interest in the recuperation of anachronistic technologies – books, expressive painting – lies a deep commitment to the medium of paint as a vehicle to embed meaning through a process of application and erasure." Whilst many of his works appear spontaneous and dynamic, they are products of a highly contemplative and gradual process of layering and waiting, allowing for the abstracted forms to slowly emerge. This highly intellectual and intimate process produces works that engage the viewer on many levels. A notion echoed by art historian and critic, Sasha Grishin, who contends that the power of Derek's paintings lay in their ability to "first seduce the eye and then engage the mind in a slow journey of contemplation and meditation".

Born in Warwickshire, England in 1957, Derek moved to Australia in 1969 and now lives and works in Canberra. He graduated from the Canberra School of Art with a BA (Visual Arts) before completing further study at the University of Tasmania School of Art in 1992. Since graduating, he has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally. In 2017, Derek's achievements were celebrated in 'At home he's a tourist', an exhibition held by the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. This comes a decade after the Canberra Museum and Gallery presented 'Derek O'Connor: 10 year survey', a major exhibition curated by Mark Van Veen honouring the artist's career. In 2022, Derek was awarded the Calleen Art Award, an acquisitive prize for the Cowra Regional Art Gallery collection. He was the recipient of the Canberra Contemporary Art Space Inaugural Art Prize in 2003 and the CAPO Fellowship Award in 2007. Derek is also a regular finalist in significant art prizes throughout Australia including the Blake Prize, the Mossman Art Prize and the Arthur Guy Memorial Art Prize. His works are held in several prominent collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Canberra Museum and Gallery.

BIOGRAPHY

1957	Born 28 March, Warwickshire, England
1969	Emigrated to Australia, Adelaide
1988	BA (Visual), Canberra School of Art (now ANU School of Art & Design)
1992	Graduate Diploma, University of Tasmania School of Art

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024	"The Village Within", Beaver Galleries, Canberra
2022	"Erasure and shape", Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra
2019	"Notations. The son and heir of nothing in particular: one more time for the record", Nancy Sever Gallery, Canberra
2018	"Human smoke", Watters Gallery, Sydney
2017	"At home, he's a tourist", Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra
2016	"Hundstage", Watters Gallery, Sydney
2014	"Pink", Watters Gallery, Sydney
2010	"A new body of work and lesser known appendages", Watters Gallery, Sydney
2009	"While you were art: new prints" Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
2007-08	"Derek O'Connor: 10-year survey", Canberra Museum and Gallery (curated by Mark Van Veen)
2007	"Reciprocal translocations 2", Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra
2006	Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
2005	"Collapsible", Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra
2004	Legge Gallery, Sydney Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
2002	Legge Gallery, Sydney
2001	Legge Gallery, Sydney "Reciprocal translocations", First Floor Gallery, Melbourne
2000	Legge Gallery, Sydney
1999	"Pairs", Legge Gallery, Sydney
1998	"Cabin fever", Lovers Gallery, Melbourne
1997	"Cold", Stripp Gallery, Melbourne

- Legge Gallery, Sydney
1996 Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
1995 Legge Gallery, Sydney
1994 Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
1993 Legge Gallery, Sydney
1992 Legge Gallery, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 "Of Ghosts and Angels" (with Paul Uhlman, Lesley Duxbury, Sarah Elson, Gregory Prior, Galliano Fardin), WA Art Collective, Perth
"Overload" (with Joel Arthur), CCAS, Canberra
"Resistance!" (with Ruth Waller, Stephen Pleban and Paul Uhlmann), M16 Artspace, Canberra
- 2020 "VIEW FINDING: Monash Gallery of Art 1990-2020", Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
"The Green Room" (with Christoph Preussmann, Melita Dahl), Wallendbeen Park, Wallendbeen, NSW
"Flow line" (with Vivienne Binns, Ham Darroch, George Foxhill, Thomas Gleghorn, Marie Hagerty, Richard Larter, Peter Maloney, Michael Taylor, Rover Thomas, Ruth Waller, Guy Warren), Canberra Museum and Gallery, curated by Virginia Rigney
- 2018 "Celebration: 20 years of collecting visual art at CMAG", Canberra Museum and Gallery, curated by Deborah Clark
"Monochrome: Empty & Full at the VCA", Victorian Collage of the Arts, Melbourne, curated by David Sequeira
- 2017 "Material World", M16 Artspace, Canberra, curated by Suzanne Moss
"Colouring Out" (with Anthony Bartok, Emma Beer, Helen Shelley, Mitjili Napurrula, Dionisia Salas), RKD, Wamboin, NSW, curated by Kirsten Farrell
- 2016 "War" (with Fiona Fell, Rew Hanks, Steve Harrison, Ian Howard, Richard Larter, Euan Macleod, Reg Mombassa, Robert Parr, Ken Searle, Evan Salmon, Ruth Waller, Ken Whisson), Watters Gallery, Sydney, curated by Geoffrey Legge
- 2015 "B5761626572" (with Robert Cleworth, Ham Darroch, Christoph Preussmann, Paul Uhlmann), M16 Artspace, Canberra
- 2014 "Velocity" (with Gilbert Bel-Bachir, Robert Boynes, Jon Cattapan, Merylyn Fairskye), ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra, curated by Terence Maloon
- 2012 Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Watters Gallery)
- 2011 "Intersections" (with Merryn Bowan, David Jolly, Jonathan Nichols, Christoph Preussmann), Emmanuel Walderdorff Galerie, Köln, Germany,
"Gleam of Light" M16 Gallery, Canberra, curated by Helen Maxwell
- 2010 "The navigators" (with Lionel Bawden, Penny Byrne, Nicholas Folland, Locust Jones, Rhys Lee, Rob McHaffie, Alex Spremberg, Madonna Staunton), Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne,
"Audible surface" (with GW Bot, Greg Hodge, Kensuke Todo, Ria Vlavianos, Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, M16 Gallery, Canberra
Art Month Sydney, Watters Gallery, Sydney
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Watters Gallery)
"Something in the air: collage and assemblage in Canberra Region Art", Canberra Museum and Gallery, curated by Deborah Clark & Mark Van Veen
"Black and white", Monash Gallery of Art Travelling Exhibition (photography)
"This way up", Australian National University, Canberra
- 2009 "Derek O'Connor and Richard Larter Works on Paper", Legge Gallery, Sydney
"To whom it may concern: the written word in contemporary art" (with Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, Del Kathryn Barton, Lily Hibberd, Locust Jones, Nell, Elizabeth Newman, Sanja Pahoki), Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
Blake Prize, National Art School, Sydney
"John Bartley, Vivienne Ferguson, Derek O'Connor", Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2008 "The fall of the night", Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra
"Retroactive", Canberra Contemporary Art Space, curated by Julian Laffan
- 2007 "Them", Canberra Contemporary Art Space, curated by Steven Zagala
"Myself by myself", Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra
Mosman Art Prize Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize Bendigo Art Gallery, Vic
Prometheus Visual Arts Award, All Saints Anglican School, Merrimac, Qld
- 2006 "Who cares?", Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney
"Landscape Show", Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2005 Muswellbrook Open Art Prize Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW
Legge Gallery at Big Star Gallery, Adelaide

- “Deep Purple”, Manning Clark House, Canberra, curated by Rozalind Drummond
Summer show, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2004 “Del Kathryn Barton, Cathy Blanchflower, Derek O’Connor, Monika Tichacek”, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Karen Woodbury Gallery & Legge Gallery)
- 2003 “Collage”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
“Scratch the surface: recent portraiture”, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
Summer show, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2002 “SHIT: Vivienne Binns in collaboration with Derek O’Connor & Geoff Newton”, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
“It’s a beautiful day: new painting in Australia 2”, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, and Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney
Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Legge Gallery)
Redlands Westpac Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney
Summer show, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2001 “Coincidence: an exhibition of abstract painting”, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra, curated by Geoff Newton
“Legge Gallery Artists Use Atelier Artists’ Acrylics”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 2000 “On the brink: abstraction of the ‘90s”, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, curated by Kelly Gellatly
Seventh Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Legge Gallery)
“Ten Years”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
Summer exhibition, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1999 Tenants Show, Artspace 71, Kingston, Canberra
“Contemporary Australian Paintings from the Allen Allen & Hemsley Collection”, UTS, Sydney
Legge Gallery, Sydney
Artspace 71, Canberra, with Peter Vandermark
10th Summer Exhibition, Legge Gallery, Sydney
“Duo” (with John Vella) Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
- 1998 Tenants show, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra
“Go home, there’s nothing to see”, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra
Sixth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
Christmas show, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1997 “Living with art”, Spiral Arm Gallery, Canberra
“Recent acquisitions”, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Alumni painting show, Photospace, Canberra School of Art, Canberra
“Sanguine valediction”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
“Wer Schutzt un Fuor HANSI?” Kunstwerk Kard, Cologne Art Fair 1997, Germany
“First love: Paintings by Derek O’Connor and Robert Cleworth”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1996 “Dirty Surface”, Stripp Gallery, Melbourne
“Snow”, Stripp Gallery, Melbourne
“Restless and messy”, Contemporary Arts Centre South Australia, Adelaide, curated by Bala Starr
“Acquisitions of contemporary Australian Art”, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
“First Love: Paintings by Robert Cleworth and Derek O’Connor”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
Fifth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
“Abstraction now curated by Simeon Kronenberg”, touring exhibition
“Fuss”, Gallery Constantinople, Queanbeyan, NSW
- 1995 “Drawings Part B”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
Carlos Raz Studio 12, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
“Chameleon: A Decade of Contemporary Art Services Tasmania”, Long Gallery, Hobart
“The Derwent Collection: Australian Art of the 1980s and 1990s”, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Summer exhibition, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1994 Zac Patafta, 108 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
Fourth Australian Contemporary Art Fair Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne
“Artists don’t believe in sanity clause”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1993 Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition
“A show of strength”, Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
Canberra Contemporary Art Fair, ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra
The Allen Allen and Hemsley Collection, Westpac Gallery, Melbourne
“Tempest”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1992 “Thickness”, Legge Gallery, Sydney
- 1991 “When love blooms”, Legge Gallery, Sydney

- Works on paper, Legge Gallery, Sydney
"Group of five", Legge Gallery, Sydney
1990 "Works from the studios", Ben Grady Gallery, Canberra
"Sue Andrews, Derek O'Connor, Glenn Murray", Legge Gallery, Sydney
1989 "Eastern States", Western States Beach Gallery, Perth
1988 "Persistent memories", EMR Gallery, Sydney

AWARDS / COMMISSIONS

- 2022 Calleen Art Award, Cowra Regional Art Gallery, NSW
2017 Megalo Artist in Residence program, Canberra
2009 Finalist, Blake Prize, National Art School, Sydney
"Lost in a kiss", commissioned installation, Allens Arthur Robinson, Deutsche Bank Building, Sydney
2007 Capital Arts Patrons Organisation (CAPO) Fellowship, Canberra
Finalist, Mosman Art Prize, Sydney
Finalist, Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize Bendigo, Vic
2005 Finalist, Muswellbrook Open Art Prize
2003 Canberra Contemporary Art Space Inaugural Art Prize
1998 ACT Department of Arts and Culture Artist Grant, Studio Residency, Cologne, Germany
1995 Pat Corrigan Award for exhibition development
1992 Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board Individual Arts Grant
1990 CAPO Individual Arts Grant
1988 Lend Lease Painting Award

PUBLICATIONS

- 2024 "Local ways of looking..." Sasha Grishin, *the-Riotact.com*, 5 April
2022 Exhibition review, Sasha Grishin, *Canberra Times*, 21 March
2020 VIEW FINDING: Monash Gallery of Art 1990-2020 (catalogue), Monash Gallery of Art
2019 "Derek O'Connor's latest show at Nancy Sever Gallery in Canberra is quirky, playful and curious", Sasha Grishin, *Canberra Times*, 15 November
2018 "At home he's a tourist", Peter Haynes, *Canberra Times*, 1 February
2017 *He's a Tourist* (catalogue essay), David Broker, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
"At home he's a tourist", Oscar Capezio, *Art Almanac*, November
2014 *Velocity* (catalogue essay), Terence Maloon, DHG publishing
2010 *Something in the air: collage and assemblage in Canberra region art* (catalogue essay), Deborah Clark & Mark Van Veen, Canberra Museum & Gallery
2009 "Derek O'Connor, Galleries, Box Office" Age Magazine, March
Hetherington, S: "Derek O'Connor", *Art World*, Issue 7, Feb/Mar
Broker, David & Yolande Norris: "Artnotes", *Art Monthly Australia*, March
Nelson, Robert: "Aesthetic appetite for eating their art out", *Age*, 11 March
Grishin, Sasha: "Bold interventions", *Canberra Times*, May
Ulmann, P: "Derek O'Connor" (catalogue essay), Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
Gates, Merryn: *Lost in a Kiss*, catalogue essay for commissioned installation at Allens Arthur Robinson, Deutsche Bank Building, Sydney
2008 Holt, M: "Marie Hagerty and Derek O'Connor in Canberra", *Art Monthly Australia*, Summer
Clark, Deborah: "Derek O'Connor", 25th CAPO Auction (catalogue), CAPO
Clark, Deborah: "Derek O'Connor", *Reflections: Canberra Museum and Gallery Collection*
2007 Grishin, Sasha: "Unbridled, hedonistic joy of paint", *Canberra Times* 20 November
Lakin, Shaune: "Them", *Photofile #79*
Van Veen, Mark: "Derek O'Connor 10 Year Selection", *Art World*, Issue 7 February/March
2006 Hansen, David: "Ominous modernists", *Sightlines*, *Age*, 24 November
Bossy, J: "Derek O'Connor Paintings" (essay), Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
2005 Grishin, Sasha: "Inner strength on display", *Canberra Times*, 29 September
2004 Backhouse, M: "Abstract landscapes, Around the Galleries, A2", *Age*, 27 November
Nichols, Jonathon: *Derek O'Connor* (catalogue essay)
2003 Foster, Ernest: Review in *Public of Individuals [NAS]*, No.4, Feb-Apr
Lamark, Richard: Review of *It's a beautiful day*, *Public of Individuals [NAS]*, No.4 Feb-Apr 2003
Fern, L.: "People at play", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March

- Chapman, Chris: "Bette Davis eyes", Art Monthly Australia, August
Ashcroft, Michael: "Ugly paintings are always framed", Muse, Dec/Jan 03/04
Byrne, Lisa: SHIT (catalogue essay), CCAS, Nov-Dec
Gates, Merry: SHIT (catalogue essay), CCAS, Nov-Dec
2002 McAuliffe, Chris & Bala Starr: It's a Beautiful Day: New Painting in Australia 2 (exhibition catalogue), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Loxley, Anne: "A day in the domain", Sydney Morning Herald, 27 November
2001 ABC TV: Coast to Coast, arts program, August
1996 Malone, Gavin: "Loungeroom of ideas", Artlink, vol. 17, no. 1, March
King, N & Simeon Kronenberg: Abstraction Now (exhibition catalogue), Geelong Art Gallery
Butterfield, B: "Messy & restless, Contemporary Art Centre of SA", db Magazine issue #131, SA
O'Connell, Stephen: Messy & Restless (exhibition catalogue), CACSA
1995 Hammond, V: Chameleon: A Decade (catalogue), CAST
Hammond, V: The Derwent Collection: Australian Art of the 1980s and 1990s, TMAG
1994 Cato, N. (ed): Fourth Australian Contemporary Art Fair, ACGA
1993 Heathcote, Christopher: "Möet & Chandon", Age
Heathcote, Christopher: "Contemporary Australian paintings", Age
Annear, Judy: Möet & Chandon Touring Exhibition (exhibition catalogue), Melbourne
Mendelssohn, Joanna: "Popping the cork", Bulletin, March
1990 Haynes, Peter: "The land sited", Unreal City, no.1, Canberra Contemporary Art Space
Haynes, Peter: "Reviews", Art Monthly Australia, September

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia; Australian War Memorial; Artbank; National Gallery of Victoria; Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; Canberra Museum and Gallery; Art Gallery of Ballarat, Vic; Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne; Tamworth Regional Gallery, NSW; Cowra Regional Art Gallery, NSW; University of Technology, Sydney; University of Wollongong, NSW
Corporate collections include: ABN AMRO, Aurora Place, Sydney (Renzo Piano building); Allens Arthur Robinson, Sydney (installation commission); Art and Australia, Melbourne; Austcorp, Sydney; Pan Pacific Hotels Group Collection; RACV Collection, Melbourne; UBS Collection, Sydney