

CONTEMPORARY EDITIONS

MICHAEL MUIR

'TELL ME A STORY' IS A COMMAND FAMILIAR TO ANYONE WHO SPENDS TIME WITH YOUNG CHILDREN, BUT WITH PATIENCE, THE CHILD WILL PROVIDE AN EQUAL REWARD BY REVEALING A NEW WAY OF SEEING. EARLY MODERNISTS RECOGNISED THE POTENTIAL OF CHILDISH MARK-MAKING AND IMAGINATIVE PERSPECTIVE, AND MICHAEL MUIR HAS HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES AS A PARENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN. IT IS PERHAPS HIS SONS WHO CAN TAKE SOME CREDIT FOR HIS PAINTINGS' UNAFFECTED APPEAL TO THE PLAYFUL, INVENTIVE POSSIBILITIES OF NARRATIVE.

HONING HIS STUDIO SKILLS THROUGH FORMAL STUDIES IN PAINTING AND DESIGN, MUIR HAS DEPARTED FROM TRADITIONAL *PLEIN-AIR* PAINTING TO DESCRIBE MORE AMBIGUOUS VISUAL PUZZLES DERIVED FROM THE URBAN LANDSCAPE. IN OUR DIGITALLY REDOLENT CULTURE, HIS EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE PALETTE KNIFE ACTS AS A KIND OF UNIVERSAL LEVELER, FLATTENING AND DE-PIXILATING HIS HIGH-KEY CANVASES.

A SENSE OF EVERYDAY FANTASY IS MODULATED BY MUIR'S CAREFUL BALANCE OF THE PALETTE, HIS SUNNY, ANIMATED LANDSCAPES TENSIONED BY A LATE STORM WARNING.

BORN IN SCOTLAND, MUIR'S OWN CHILDHOOD BEGAN IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA BEFORE HE SETTLED IN SYDNEY, PUNCTUATED BY FREQUENT TRAVEL TO HIS MOTHER'S NATIVE PHILIPPINES. THE CULTURAL MILIEU OF EARLY EXPERIENCE CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED, BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS MUIR'S ATTENTION TO THE IMMEDIATE: 'DRAWING WITH MY BOYS GIVES ME A CHANCE TO REFLECT ON MY OWN CHILDHOOD, AND MOVING THE PAINT AROUND BECOMES A METAPHOR, AS THEY PROGRESS FROM SCRIBBLE TO IMAGE, FOR MY OWN ARTISTIC EXPANSION'.

A WINNER OF THE MOSMAN ART PRIZE (2014) AND A FINALIST IN A NUMBER OF AWARD EXHIBITIONS OVER THE PAST DECADE INCLUDING THE METRO 5, SULMAN, ALBANY AND FLEURIEU ART PRIZES, MICHAEL MUIR'S SENSE OF PLEASURE IN PAINT INVITES A FRESH-EYED RESPONSE.