



Nature Speaks: CD, 2005, synthetic polymer paint, gouache on 16 canvasboards, nos 71950–71965, 101.6 x 142.2 cm, courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

LAND BEYOND GOODBYE

I describe the way and meanwhile I am proceeding along it.
Hilma af Klint

Art is a solitary activity – a solitary journey of introspection. Like a garden that is never finished, the work of an artist is forever in the process of 'becoming'. 'I am "I" who is becoming "I" who is not I', writes Haniya Yutaka. Furthermore, for an artist on this journey of introspection, there are several principles to observe: the necessity of 'trusting the process'; the value of total immersion in the process of production; and the idea that while art can be many things it is, above all, 'a way of knowing'.

The works in this exhibition continue my concept of 'the canvasboard system', where individual paintings made up of canvasboard panels are also part of a larger, ever-expanding whole. The first panels, which were begun in 1981, were numbered from one to 49 and subsequent panels have been numbered consecutively, onwards over the decades, towards infinity – an impossible goal. The eight works in *Land Beyond Goodbye* span the minute interval from 75955 to 76491. While the existing body of work (which is also a body of knowledge) determines to some degree what comes next, there is always, within this system, an openness to chance, to serendipity, to coincidence and the possibility of new directions and unexpected interventions.

In recent years I've been working in series – there is, for example, the *Nature Speaks* series of over one hundred 16-panel works, which

was begun in September 1998. This exhibition, however, focuses on the *Outback* series (begun in June 2003) and the *Blossoming* series (begun in February 2004). Each series provides a distinct structure enabling the pursuit of different themes and interests; subsets within the larger canvasboard system or chapters within the so-called 'Book of Power'.

The *Blossoming* series takes its name from what the great German Romantic artist Philipp Otto Runge described as 'the year in its successive states – blossoming, producing, bearing and destroying'. Runge, of course, was describing a particularly European rhythm of the four seasons, which is significantly different from what we experience in the Australian landscape. However, the early European settlers to Australia, alienated from the strange landscape they found themselves in, imported their beloved plants (and animals) and created familiar gardens for themselves. The place I live and work at Blairgowrie in Cooma is just such a European sanctuary (dating from the nineteenth century) in the midst of the dry, austere and treeless landscape of the Southern Tablelands – the Monaro – and the works in the *Blossoming* series take as their point of departure aspects of this experience. It could be the flowering of Jacobean lilies, the first daffodils or crocuses, the grove of birches in autumn, the mist rising in the morning, a crystalline frost or the stunning transformation of a snowfall that suggests, for me, a real or imagined connection with northern Europe, reminding me not only of its artistic inheritance

