

open-minded, but fear has crept into their world. And not only fear, but a kind of vicarious excitement at the possibility of being in the midst of a drama that converts their little spot on the globe into a potentially international place where things happen.

Aljafari's *Visit Iraq* is not just about the kind of paranoia and speculation that can be aroused by the most mundane events around us - such as the closure of a failing business, probably due to the fact that no-one wanted to visit Iraq post the American invasion. Aljafari's film is equally about the ways in which media hypes a story, breeds an angle, sets up a premise for its cast of spectators and bit part players to act out. It is about context and how, in the shifting circumstances of an unquiet world, even the prosaic can be turned into a mosaic of intrigue. JE

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For this exhibition, *The Unquiet World*, Marianne Baillieu presents an installation which she has called *The Faith*. In a grey, enclosed room there are three tables of different heights covered with spent tubes of oil paint. On one table the glistening metallic tubes form a layer almost one foot deep and on another the metaphoric mass of tubes seems to have caused the table to collapse. While these tubes are the literal residue of her painting process, which has 'produced over one thousand paintings', they are also like discarded crusts, empty shells or even cadavers whose souls have been released by the very act of painting and found their way onto her canvases - not here in the exhibition but in a different world, somewhere else.

There is also a soundtrack to *The Faith* - an arcane compendium of sacred music from different religions. These are songs sung by a single voice - a chant of a Gyoto monk, a song of Hildegard of Bingen. Even Aboriginal and Sufi songs are included. What is most striking in this scene is the absence of the artist and her paintings. But as she says: "Me' is the essence that I try to lose ... I strive after something more abstract than myself.' This is the hidden subtext to her installation.

'Installation,' declared the Czech artist Jirí Georg Dokoupi, 'is what plumbers do!' It was an amusing aphorism for one of the leading proponents of neo-expressionist painting in the 1980s to make in a climate when there was an insatiable 'hunger for pictures'. But this appetite for paintings waned as installation art came back with a vengeance and quickly became the new orthodoxy into the 1990s and beyond. However, Marianne Baillieu did not jump on this international bandwagon as it rolled into town, she was already on it. Her very first solo exhibition in 1983 at Reconnaissance in Melbourne had been an 'installation' rather than simply a suite of paintings.



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As the founder of Realities Gallery in Melbourne in the 70s she represented Roger Kemp, Fred Williams and George Baldessin and was one of the first to show the Aboriginal artists from the Western Desert. But when she decided to become a full-time artist herself in the early 80s she gravitated towards a younger generation of artists rather than her own peers (even though Roger Kemp was one of her artistic mentors), showing with Yuill/Crowley in Sydney, Kayrn Lovegrove in Melbourne and Bellas in Brisbane. While she was comfortable with the idea of art as 'installation' or as 'event', painting was her primary focus. And her paintings are abstract and highly distinctive – a kind of whirling chaotic calligraphy that echoes some of the gestural aspects of Fred Williams but also the spontaneous mark-making of Tony Tuckson and Cy Twombly.

There is also an affinity with the kinaesthetic nature of Emily Kngwarreye's output in the way both artists seem to think with their paintbrushes – how the gesture in their work often gives rise to the thought and how they both paint without any preliminary plan or design and without hesitation. 'I am the conductor of something that moves through me,' says Marianne.

The titles of Marianne's works and exhibitions often refer to 'angels', 'morphic fields' and 'pranas' beckoning to possible worlds and principles beyond the visible, the mundane and the everyday. Indeed her interest in Tibetan Buddhism took a more concrete form when she proposed and set in motion, together with her partner Ian, in 1991 the first of 3 worldwide simultaneous 'prayers for peace' organised under the auspices of the Dalai Lama. These 'prayers for peace' were events (the other two following in 1994 and 2003) on a massive scale comparable to Christo's public events, like the recent *Gates* in New York's Central Park or even to the *Baltic Way* in 1989, a kind of proto-Fluxus event in which two million Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians joined hands to

form a continuous human chain across the three Baltic States to successfully (as it turned out) challenge the power and authority of the USSR.

Marianne has also travelled over the decades into remote regions of the world – from the Quinkan caves in Northern Australia, to the Kalahari Desert, to Nepal, Tibet and even to Inner Mongolia. What is she seeking in this restless and often solitary movement across the face of the earth? Enlightenment? Epiphany?

I sense a dislocation from 'place' – an absence of belonging. This is also evident in her paintings which are curiously lacking in what one could call a 'motif', unless of course one sees her marks as representing 'the invisible energy field that exists all around us.' As Marianne notes 'there is no empty space anywhere.' Nevertheless this is in stark contrast to both Fred Williams's and Emily Kngwarreye's highly energised marks which are rooted in a very specific sense of 'place' – indeed their paintings are representations of landscape.

The Swedish painter, Richard Bergh, wrote in 1896 that 'the landscape, that tract in which we live, affects our lives, not just in the superficial sense of enforcing on us certain fixed living conditions, but also the purely suggestive influence it has on our soul. That drama which daily is in front of our eyes puts its mark on our inner being... Every landscape is a state of mind.'

These words come from the catalogue for the exhibition *Dreams of a Summer Night: Scandinavian Painting at the Turn of the Century*. Purchased as a present for her father, Jørgen Dalhoff, the book was never sent, for Marianne in a wild frenzy of paint and emotion, had painted over each page, both text and images in her characteristic calligraphic swirls. Bloated and violated, the book no longer made a suitable present but it did become the source for a series of

collaborations between Marianne and myself – the resultant painting exhibited as *To the Fatherland* at Yuill/Crowley in Sydney in 1988.

Questioned about her deeply felt reaction to this catalogue, Marianne answered that it was the distance between 'what was proper and beautiful in Northern Painting' and her own work – 'the difference between the way I should have been and the way I am' and the fact that some of the images, particularly to do with sickness, loss and death struck a deeply personal chord with her. My own feeling is that she was also expressing the psychic rupture from the Northern landscapes (both geographical and cultural) of her birth. For Marianne is a child of the diaspora. Born in Stockholm of Danish parents, then quarantined alone in a polio clinic at the age of five for several months, she moved with her family to Nelson in New Zealand when she was 10. The remainder of her childhood was spent in New Zealand until as a young adult she moved to Melbourne where she now lives and works.

I believe that Marianne's paintings, while on one level 'seek the sacred in a modern world of the secular', they are also about personal displacement, loss, dislocation and a kind of exile of the soul. But painting can be a path to healing and art itself an act of redemption.

As Ian Baillieu puts it in the following phrases of his poem titled Marianne: 'she sees before the dawn ... feels the undertow of far-off forces, the swell of the king-tide surging over the sea wall' and 'then renouncing reason ... she embarks alone in her frail craft.' IT

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