

'Smith finds sublimity in today's world and paints it with a lushness that is palpable. For many, who sift through the papers with global catastrophes, wars and local tragedies, this is nothing short of extraordinary but then Smith is no ordinary artist. Collector of antiquities and art, mathematician and painter, Smith is drawn to the beauty that surrounds us all, to eternal metaphors and truths in mathematics, science and astronomy. From the diagrammatic details of flowering cacti to the mathematical equation of the speed of light, Smith presents a world where elegance and a yearning for truth, prevail.'

Clare Watson, Curator, Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale, Victoria, Australia, 2009.

An installation of paintings by Peter James Smith is cinematic - like reading visual images in a darkened room - yet the narrative sense remains open-ended. Many fluid unfoldings happen as the viewer shifts to engage with word and image, blackness and illumination. Realist imagery is balanced by strong mark making and text. A revelatory light illuminates the painted scenes. Still life and landscape images juxtapose with scientific observations, poetic and historical references in the form of handwritten citations, notes, jottings, diagrams and erasures.

The painted objects are a natural extension from the traditional format of oil on linen and invite a looser approach. Found objects, such as a book of verse, pile of bricks and a Chinese vase, provide a resonant beginning for the artist before intersecting with the surface and bring a Beuysian sense of the charismatic object – one that has a life that may remain unobserved to many people.

Peter James Smith addresses the role images play in the formation of memory and identity, both in the individual and collective senses. His works celebrate a sublime sense of possibility and the excitement of discovery while admitting the blacker counterpart of action: accident, disaster and uncertainty. His works chart the desire for progress born of scientific invention and enquiry - and create a space for the imagination, for nostalgic reflection and wonder.

Born in Paparua, New Zealand in 1954, Peter James Smith is a prolific artist, holding several solo exhibitions each year. He has worked in both New Zealand and Australia since the mid 1970's as a contemporary painter and is currently based in Melbourne. His practice is built from the traditional painting medium of oil on linen. He is widely published as a mathematician and holds the degrees BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD with a Master of Fine Art in Painting. For many years he was a Professor of Mathematics and Art with the School of Creative Media at RMIT University, where he was Head of the School of Creative Media (photography, creative writing, screenwriting, multimedia, music, sound, digital art).

Peter James Smith has participated in many group exhibitions throughout Australia since 1994. His work is represented in many public, private and corporate collections in Australia, New Zealand and internationally.