

The People Are Missing

On Jake Baglin's *Ten Paintings and a Drawing*

By Mairéad Phillips

—*I could paint for a hundred years, a thousand years without stopping and I would still feel as though I knew nothing.* (Paul Cézanne)

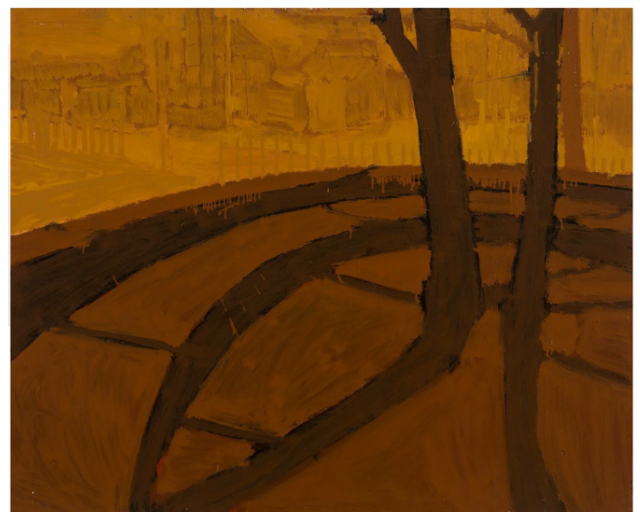


Ten Paintings and a Drawing represents Baglin's ongoing exploration of and engagement with a lineage of landscape painting which owes more to John Constable and Paul Cézanne than any Australian models, past or present.

Returning daily to specific Northcote locations, Baglin's evolution within the landscape tradition is founded on a commitment to drawing on location. In the exhibition, the ten paintings—and one drawing—represent the culmination of four years of daily practice, observing, tracing and retracing points of orientation along Separation Street and Northcote Plaza environs.

This painterly remaking of Northcote landmarks describes a process of renewal in the face of the mundane, the ordinary, the familiar. Each work is a concentrated survey of the terrain with its own reorienting perspective of the urban milieu. Each point-of-view is a hard-won victory over

the chaos of matter and the well-worn principles of Renaissance perspective, suggesting Baglin's approach to landscape is not to immerse the viewer within a scene but to detail the artist's efforts to find a viable way in. The titles of the work are interesting in the sense that they often give us not only a place (Dandenong Ranges) and time (Summer Morning), but an orientation as well (*from Separation Street*).



Plaza—Midday—from Community Health Centre



Three Trees—Autumn—on Separation Street

The horizon, visible or implied, necessarily situates an observer but the sense of their place in these hauntingly familiar yet wholly impregnable landscapes is far from certain. It's as if the people who might inhabit these worlds have not yet arrived. There's a shadow of a memory of the activities that haunt these spaces: shoppers arriving at Northcote Plaza, commuters driving down Separation Street, children playing at the community health centre, teenagers milling in All Nations Park, students occupying the Reading Room at the State Library; but where are they now? Where have they gone?

Each work suggests an entry point and offers a way in, but the invitation to traverse these spaces has been hard won. The protracted creation of each studio-bound work evolves over months of intentional daily observational drawing on site (see *Plaza from Separation Street, Watercolour*). Through this committed practice, Baglin offers us a unique opportunity to witness the dawning of new approach to landscape. His dedicated approach to painting actively resists the siren call of the cliché, erases the expected geometries of the past, and eradicates incidental, fleeting motion in favour of casting his own net so that he might take up a stone with his brush, and, like Cézanne observed of Titan, be "ready to strike at the enigma, the flint of mystery, to make a spark of truth fly."

Ten Paintings and a Drawing lays the foundation of a new orientation, with no lagging sense of nostalgia for the present, but rather a robust and vital vision for a people yet to come.

Let us trust that we have arrived.

Jake Baglin, born in Townsville (1993) is an artist currently living and working in Northcote, Naarm (Melbourne). Completing a Bachelors of Fine Art at Victorian College of the Arts in 2018, Baglin has participated in numerous group shows, had three solo shows at 484 Presents in 2021, 2023 and 2025 and a solo show at an ARI in 2024. Baglin is held in private collections in Australia.