

Left to right, top to bottom:

total paranoia is just total awareness, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 168 x 198 cm

I'm your kind, I'm your kind, and I see, 2006, acrylic and gouache on canvas, 167 x 152 cm

we are all in this together, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 167 x 137 cm

Richard, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 35.5 cm

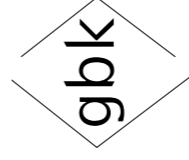
anything you see in me is in you, 2006, acrylic and gouache on canvas, 167 x 305 cm

Reverse:

the magical mystery tour, 2006, acrylic and gouache on canvas, 152 x 305 cm

come in now closer, 2006, gouache on canvas, 137 x 137 cm

everyone's playing a different game with the thought, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91 cm

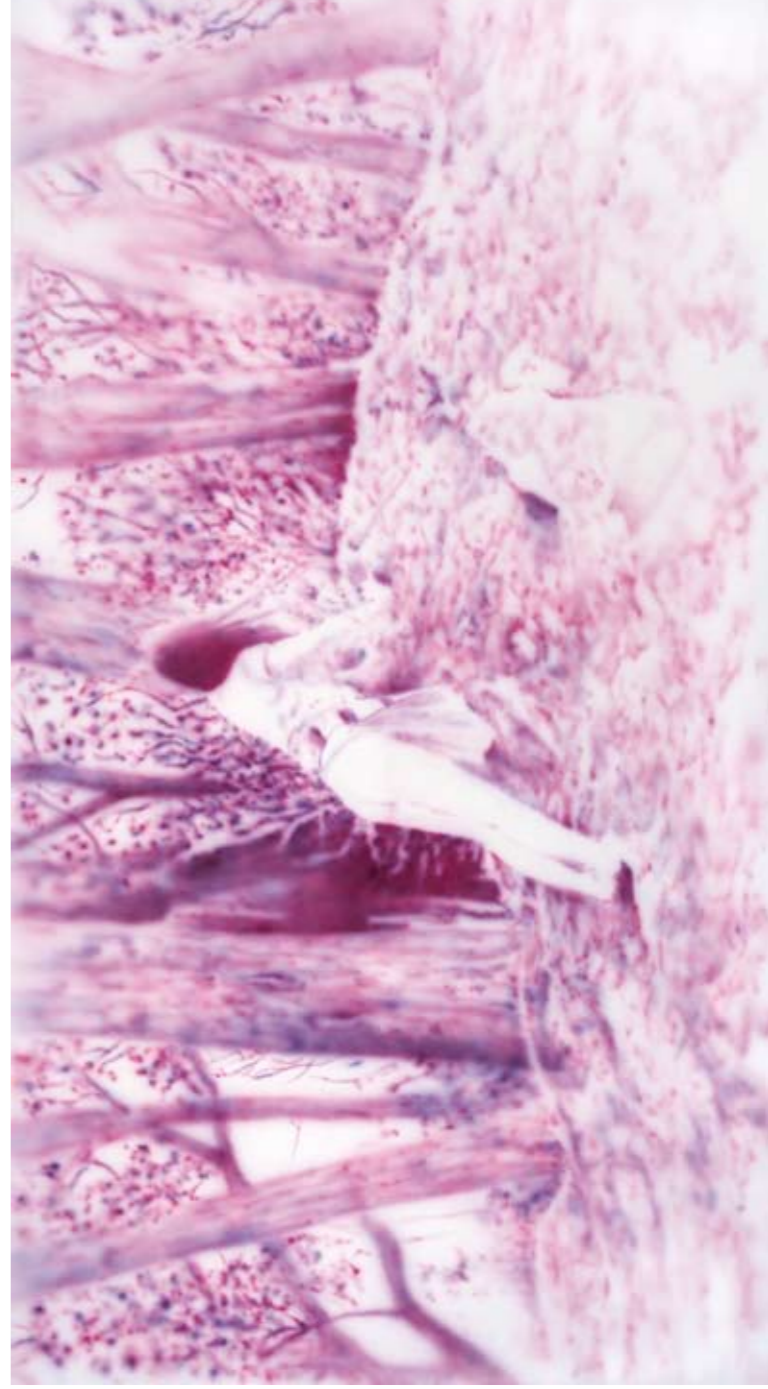


gallery **barry keldoulis**

2 Danks Street Waterloo Sydney

barry@gbk.com.au www.gbk.com.au

+61 2 8399 1240



Fiona Lowry



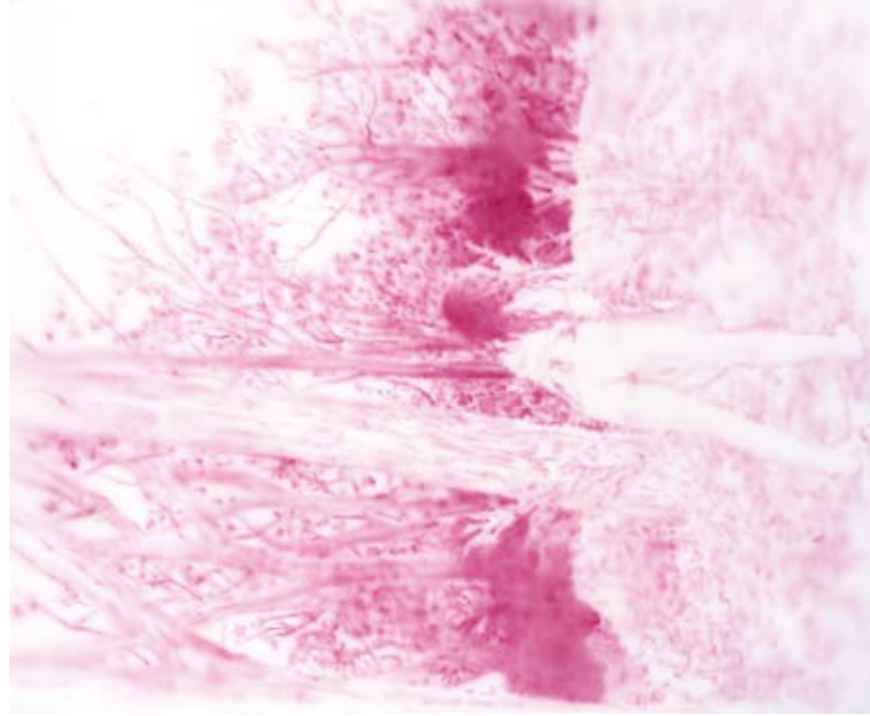
Fiona Lowry

come in now closer

Whispered rustlings from the trees coalesce into painted scenes, “I’m your kind, I’m your kind... anything you see in me is in you... we are all in this together.” In a soft but persistent manner, Fiona Lowry dares us to engage in the physical encounters being played out in her forest landscapes, hinting at events that might be traumatic, revelatory or fatal. The events offer a gateway to reflections on our own sexual memories, particularly those heightened exchanges involving submission, consent or game play. We may be tempted to resolve the ambiguities associated with these potent experiences, and yet they often remain inexplicable blind spots.

By gently pursuing a psychedelic sensibility, Lowry forms a connection between our own incomplete narratives and a broader inability to come to terms with renegade histories, particularly the failed countercultural projects of the 1960s. Whether it is seen as a nightmare theatre for psychopaths, an ecstatic setting for sex or the psychically fraught site of communes and death cults, the forest has become a compelling symbol for activities that fall outside regulated social structures. This connection is made clear by Lowry’s splicing together of forensic and poetic visions - forming a link between the analytical eye and the haze of cultural memory. The airbrushed application of paint creates a literal detachment between artist and canvas. It’s clear that we are dealing with something more complex than a false nostalgia trip. Lowry avoids simply revisiting ‘the magical mystery tour’ by offering an astute, inter-generational assessment of an earlier social milieu that refuses to fold back into history.

The inclination to look back on incomplete Modernist projects or neglected social movements has become a flashpoint in contemporary art. The Scottish artist Peter Doig creates paintings that are not so much treatments of specific sites, but rather reconstructed worlds, works that note “the yawning gap between our present day and our recent past, a real chasm between the new century and the utopias banded about in the earlier period.”¹ Critic Hal Foster also points to a recent tendency for artists to investigate “unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects - in art and history alike - that might offer points of departure again.”²



Although Lowry’s work finds its own ground within these international tendencies, for their real punch they draw on a more local sensibility – a remnant Colonial mythology of the Australian bush as strange and malevolent. This tension between an insistent, imported European culture and our anxieties about theft and ownership of land can be detected in Frederick McCubbin’s painting of a child in scrubland, *Lost* (1886). A similar apprehension arises in Joan Lindsay’s 1967 novel, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, though Lindsay’s approach is more confounding. Just before they disappear, the schoolgirls picnicking at Hanging Rock are described as dreamily looking down from the rock “through a drift of rosy smoke, or mist.” No explanation is given for the girls’ disappearance, and the closest we come to an answer is the sense that they have been swallowed up by a force within the landscape, something beyond their reckoning. The landscape co-opts and infects – getting the girls on side by turning them on to the setting. There’s no sensuality of this kind in McCubbin. It is clear that Joan Lindsay’s novel marks a deepening of our role as subjects in the landscape.

Fiona Lowry takes this even further. The latent power of the land becomes a fully developed and seductive presence that plays off against internal, innate forces within us. Her paintings suggest that we are now mature enough to be uncertain about what’s good for us. They challenge our desire to arrive at well-rounded conclusions by presenting a series of ambiguities. The treatment of these images, mindfully unstructured and blurred, leads us from resolution and towards a space of contemplation.

Is it possible to just let things lie or even find some resolution in mystery? Can painting accommodate such paradoxes?

Melody Willis
June 2006

1. Catherine Grenier, “Melancholy Resistance,” in Peter Doig, Charley’s Space, Hatje Cantz, 2003, p29.
2. Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” in OCTOBER 110, Fall 2004, pp23-48.
3. Joan Lindsay, “Picnic at Hanging Rock,” (1967) Penguin Books Australia, 1977, p34.