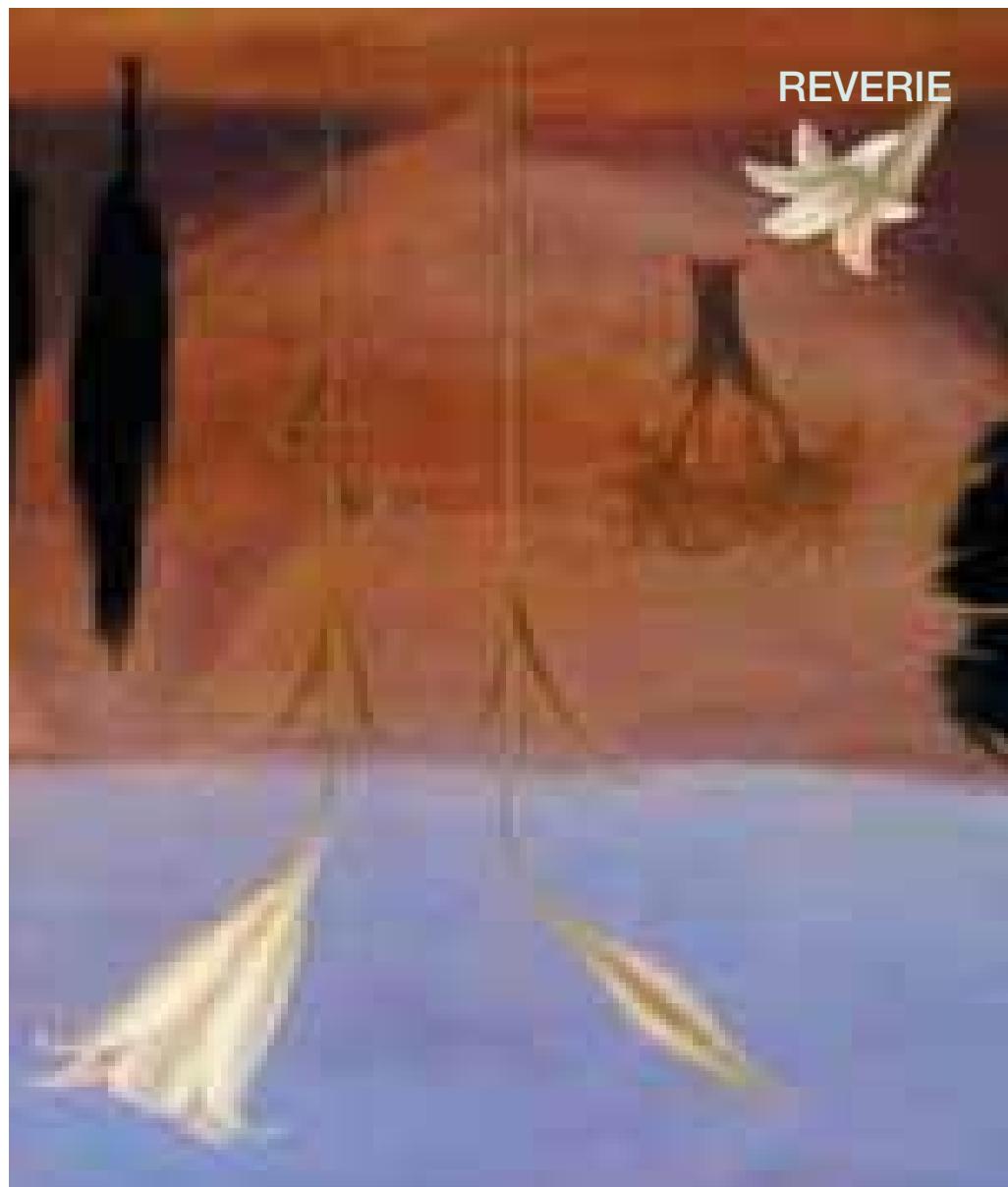


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**REVERIE**



## REVERIE

Kirrily Hammond

French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon once said 'My drawings suggest and cannot be defined. They determine nothing. Like music, they spirit us into the equivocal world of the indeterminate.'<sup>1</sup>

Drawn together from the Monash University Collection, the works in this exhibition share an ambiguity of form and meaning that relies on the viewer's intuition to decipher and interpret. The origins of the indeterminate and evocative qualities in many of these works might be traced back to the romantic aspirations of the Symbolist movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Symbolist artists sought to capture elusive, abstract notions such as moods, emotions and ideas through their highly subjective interpretations of the world around them. Images of nature, figures and cityscapes all became vehicles to express the artists' inner worlds. The vast realms of memory, emotion and imagination were brought together in idiosyncratic works of art that were both fanciful and beautiful, seducing viewers into their own states of reverie. In looking at subsequent generations of artists who pursue similar philosophical interests, it becomes clear that these are timeless and enduring concerns.

Peter Graham explores the metaphysical realm of the imagination in his works on paper. The scratched, overwrought surfaces reveal traces of the artist's meandering thought processes in the layers of abstract marks and texts that make up his images.

Like an idea emerging from the subconscious, a fragile and delicate plant-like structure rises out of the murky depths in *From Frozen Grounds* 1996. The light, lyrical swirls of new growth defy the sombre environment from which they emerge, sharing an affinity with the hanging trees and lilies that populate Rosslynd Piggott's *Upside-down landscape* 1989.

A gentle element of the absurd permeates Piggott's upturned Tuscan landscape and invokes the surreal, inner world of the imagination.<sup>2</sup> The meticulously detailed white lillies belong to a personal symbology, mysteriously floating in the sun-drenched hills and merging with the fine glazes that enrich the painting's surface. This still and tranquil landscape of the mind contrasts with the urban landscapes by Siri Hayes. Her large-format photographs depict the environs of Merri Creek and suggest an element of the sublime

in this pocket of Melbourne bushland, despite the inner-city detritus that is plainly evident. The series title, *Lyric theatre*, calls attention to the miniature protagonists of a fictional play enacted on the banks of the creek. The vast scale of the surrounding landscape engulfs these diminutive figures, creating a setting that recalls notions of the sublime prevalent in Romantic paintings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In their individual depictions of landscape, both Piggott and Hayes have suspended time and movement for a moment of introspective contemplation, encouraging personal journeys of the mind.

Enigmatic and beautiful, open-ended and impenetrable, Graeme Hare's images create an opportunity for subjectivity to enter the arena of photographic representation. His deliberate blurring of the photographic image removes it from the original subject matter and conveys the presence of the artist. This aesthetic manipulation was also a key element of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Pictorialist tradition, in which emotional effect was privileged over mechanical representation. As Hare once stated, 'I make pictures, not photographs, to convey moods.'<sup>3</sup> His sepia-toned moving train is an image that transcends any literal depiction of travelling. Instead it evokes the imagined act of staring from a train window, allowing the eyes to blur and the mind to wonder, evoking the *memory* of a past journey.

Whether it be a fanciful interpretation of the world around us or a poetic meandering into the subconscious, each work in this exhibition inhabits a place somewhere between reality and fiction, consciousness and memory. Just as the Symbolists valued above all the importance of individual experience and expression, the indeterminate and liminal nature of these works encourages viewers to bring their own experiences and feelings to the fore, and respond in a very intimate way. This interaction enables the works to inspire and capture both artist and viewer, allowing for reveries that cross the threshold from the real to the imagined.

1 Odilon Redon, as quoted in Ingrid Erhardt & Simon Reynolds (eds.), *Kingdom of the Soul: Symbolist Art in Germany 1870–1920*, Prestel, 2000, p.17.

2 Rosslynd Piggott describes her landscape paintings as psychological spaces, painted directly from the imagination, in an interview with Gary Catalano, *Building a Picture, Interviews with Australia Artists*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney 1997, p.20.

3 Graeme Hare interview with Louise Bellamy, 'Judge not, just enjoy the ride', *The Age*, 6 October 1989, p.14.



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### List of works

Peter Graham	Siri Hayes	Rosslynd Piggott
Born Melbourne 1970	Born Mornington, Victoria 1977	Born Frankston, Victoria 1958
4. <i>From Frozen Grounds</i> 1996	8. <i>Crossing the Merri</i> 2003	12. <i>Upside-down landscape</i> 1989
charcoal, gouache & pencil on paper	Type C photograph, edition 6/10	oil on linen
205.0 x 140.5 cm	142.0 x 112.0 cm	136.0 x 183.0 cm
Purchased 1997	Purchased 2005	Purchased 1990
1. <i>Drifting</i> 1966-67	5. <i>Unearthly transmission</i>	Ronnie Van Hout
lithograph on paper	( <i>Underground Observatory</i> ) 1994	Born Christchurch, New Zealand
Plate 54.7 x 78.6 cm;	graphite & gouache on paper	1962; arrived Australia 2000
Sheet 56.2 x 78.6 cm	75.0 x 56.5 cm	13. <i>Untitled</i> 1995
Purchased 1968	Purchased 1994	(from the series <i>Mephitis</i> )
2. <i>Princess Bridge Station at night</i> 1960	6. <i>Now my song is sung</i> 1994	selenium toned photograph
enamel on hardboard	graphite and gouache on paper	45.0 x 30.0 cm
62.5 x 79.0 cm	151.0 x 115.0 cm	Purchased 2000
Purchased 1978	Purchased 1994	14. <i>Untitled</i> 1995
Lynn Boyd	Graeme Hare	(from the series <i>Mephitis</i> )
Born Melbourne 1953	Born Melbourne 1952	selenium toned photograph
3. <i>And at every drifting cloud that went with sails of silver</i> by 1989	7. <i>Train</i> 1992	45.0 x 30.0 cm
oil on linen	Type C photograph	Purchased 2000
122.0 x 152.5 cm	Framed: 41.0 x 160.0 x 5.0 cm	11. <i>Child 1-16</i> 1996 (detail)
Purchased 1989	Purchased 1999	(from the series <i>Child 1-175</i> )
Nicola Loder	Graeme Hare	silver gelatin photographic prints
Born Melbourne 1964	Born Melbourne 1952	60.0 x 49.8 cm
11. <i>Child 1-16</i> 1996 (detail)	7. <i>Train</i> 1992	Purchased 1988
(from the series <i>Child 1-175</i> )	Type C photograph	
silver gelatin photographic prints	Framed: 41.0 x 160.0 x 5.0 cm	
60.0 x 49.8 cm	Purchased 1999	
Purchased 1988		