

# BACKWARD GLANCE

Important works from the 1980s

Curated by John Buckley

21 March – 21 April 2007

**John Buckley Gallery**

8 Albert St

Richmond, 3121

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**Linda Marrinon**  
*Tossing a coin* 1984  
Oil on linen  
61 x 45 cm

## Press release

Continuing its practice of combining shows of new work by individual artists with curated exhibitions, the John Buckley Gallery is pleased to announce Backward Glance: Important works from the 1980s.

Not a survey – more of a rough sketch; a sample bag, put together as part memento, part opportunity to re-evaluate, and part celebration of a decade which, in retrospect, produced a surprising diversity of directions.

It was the decade in which the youthful critic Paul Taylor heralded a new tendency in the visual arts through his groundbreaking exhibition *Popism* at the NGV in 1982. It was the decade in which the Victorian Government was persuaded to fund a new exhibition space for temporary exhibitions of contemporary Australian art, which started life as the Centre for Contemporary Art and, within a short time, morphed into ACCA. It was the time of *Visual Tension* and *Art and Text* but above all it was the decade in which the emerging post-modernists, armed with the double barrel of “political correctness” and French theory, had their sights firmly set on subverting the still-prevailing modernist discourse.

Fuelled by punk, there was an important crossover between music and art. The Boys Next Door and The Saints were the hot tickets and bars like The Crystal Ballroom in St Kilda and the Tiger Lounge in Richmond were the places to be. Out of this post-modern potage came the diverse talents of the likes of John Nixon (whose gallery, Art Projects, played an important role in defining the moment), Tony Clark, Howard Arkley, Stieg Persson, and Jenny Watson. They were the new kids on the block.

Outside this set others like Robert Rooney, Geoff Lowe, Peter Tyndall, Juan Davila and John Young were also using the new vogue of appropriation and post-pop patois to produce quite diverse manifestations of the genre. It is the period in which these artists, together with others like Paul Boston and Bill Henson, developed their signature styles.

But it is also the decade when Peter Booth astounded us with his first large-scale figurative canvasses and which saw the emergence in Fitzroy of a youthful collective calling itself *ROAR*. The accent was on raw (the pun was intended) and noisy painting espousing honesty over what they took to be the hollowness of post-modern puff.

Most of what is currently shown in the more vogueish galleries of Melbourne has its roots in the 80s. It was a vital and exciting decade and this quite modest exhibition (but nevertheless featuring work by many of the main protagonists) is intended as a reminder of what a watershed time this decade was in the visual arts.

John Buckley  
Melbourne  
March 2007



**Top:**  
Peter Booth  
*Giant insect in landscape* 1983  
Oil on canvas  
182 x 244 cm

**Bottom:**  
Tony Clark  
*Two landscape paintings and a print of project for the Church of the Madeleine* (3 works) 1984  
Oil on canvas and etching ink on paper  
51 x 194 cm

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