

# John Forrest

## Selected Works 2006 – 2016

John Forrest, as the late artist and art critic Nancy Borlase observed, ‘works dryly and competently within the photo-realist convention. But somewhere along the line of dry, matter of fact paintings, a shift to fantasy opens the door to Magrittian ambiguities, evoked with commendable restraint.’

Over the past ten years Forrest has tackled an admirable range of themes, and his latest exhibition at Yering Station Art Gallery brings together a selection of works that trace the evolution of his practice over this period.

From his irreverent exploration of Hollywood iconography, through his study of place, childhood, memory and loss, to his ongoing visual diary entries that evoke a 1920s ambiance within contemporary contexts, Forrest speaks with wry humour employing an always impressive realism, a powerful juxtaposition of imagery and an ability to weave emotional, political, psychological and oneiric truths invisibly into the fabric of his art.



*Yellow Brick Road*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 152 cm



*Over the Rainbow*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 152 cm



*Hollywood Flesh*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 152 cm



*Beverly Hills Hotel*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 213 x 152 cm

Forrest's work inhabits a third space - not reality, although they are depicted realistically, and not fantasy, although they often contain fantastic elements. In this third space a promiscuous intermingling of reality and fantasy occurs. Like suburban sprawl, the realistic encroaches on the fantastic, while the fantastic leans in to examine the strangeness of the real. In this third space, the uncanny, the unexpected and the emergent are common currency, and viewers travel uneasily from the familiar into the threatening and strange.

Binoy Kampmark in describing 'Over the Rainbow' writes of 'the bemused, even shocked cast of the Wizard of Oz gazing down at the absorbed figures of Deborah Kerr and Burt Lancaster on the Hawaiian beach at Halona Cove ... This, he writes, is Forrest at his best, the sexless utopia of those who pursue the yellow brick road, and the very sexual, troubled side of Hollywood. Sea, sand and pulp fiction, with lashings of pathos.

Recently a senior lecturer in Visual Arts at Deakin University in Melbourne, Forrest now divides his time between Melbourne, Cologne, Greece and Southeast Asia. In addition to a successful career as an academic, Forrest has authored and illustrated published picture story books, he has exhibited in major Australian and international galleries, and is regarded as one of Australia's leading contemporary realist artists.

Forrest is currently completing a series of drawings for a visual diary called *Spirits on the Move* comprising works that, in John's words, have a 'sideshow sensibility', akin to the wonderment you had as a kid when you came across sideshow alley at the show, a freakish visual world of half-humans, half-beasts. The series, prints of which appear in this exhibition, has been partly inspired by Southeast Asian interpretations of the Hindu religion and their construction of Hindu gods.



*Forrest's paintings reawaken us to the familiar scenes with focal clarity and obsessive detail. The images 'freezing' the mundane, can have an enigmatic effect. Communicating Arts*