

Oliver Ashworth-Martin

Musings of a journeyman

28 April – 6 June 2017



Oliver Ashworth-Martin, *Flindersia*, Pastel, 75 x 105 cm

For UK artist Oliver Ashworth-Martin, the Australian landscape's vastness and abundance of life evokes a sublime connection with nature, and so *Musings of a journeyman* is as much a personal exploration of a uniquely Australian expression of the sublime as it is a communion with nature through objects found scattered across the landscape.

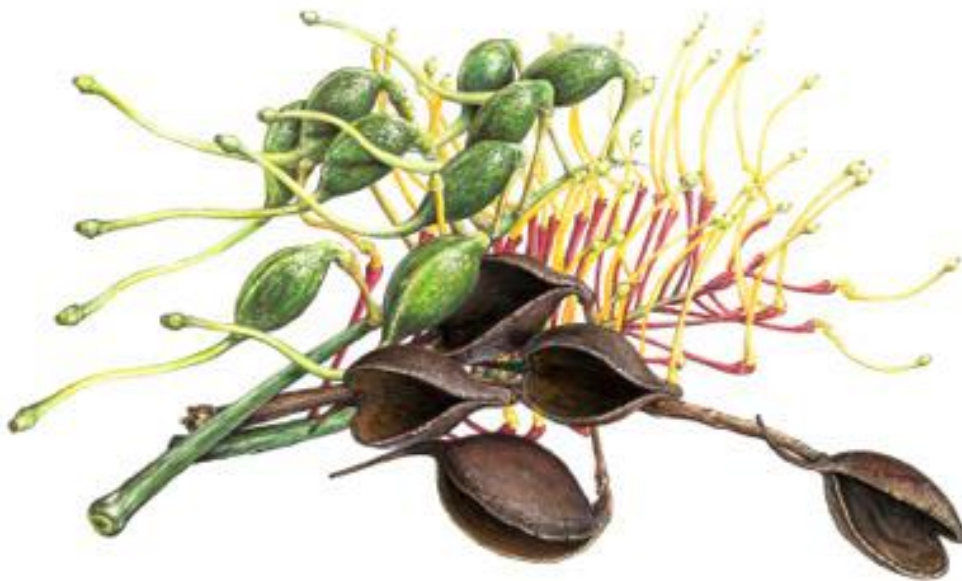
In Ashworth-Martin's works, native seeds and pods express nature's unfathomable complexity and her cycles of renewal. Represented in isolation and transcending their natural scale, these inspiring forms exist autonomously, and yet their individuality still bears the traces of their connection to a greater whole: to the tree, to the forest, to the sky and to the void. As such these life-bearing vessels act as doorways that open into nature's unknown and unknowable depths.

'When we look beyond the objective form of these pods,' Ashworth-Martin has observed, 'we see that woven into their forms are echoes of vast forest canopies,

rolling and undulating hills, labyrinthine waterways breaking free to cascade down rugged mountainsides, and cavernous voids, where slumber hides in the earth waiting for rejuvenating light to break through.'

These outsized studies of seed pods echo the micro and macro that exists in all forms. As Frederich Franck observed in *The Zen of Seeing*, only when we become mindful do we realise that 'what we have always seen as so natural reveals how wondrously supernatural it is'.

A result of several years studying and practicing Shamanism in Europe (predominantly in Scandinavia), Ashworth-Martin's union of artistic endeavour and Shamanistic philosophical principles has engendered a harmonious and insightful practice in which new and engaging approaches to landscape painting, drawing and sculpture have emerged.



Oliver Ashworth-Martin, *Grevillea Robusta*, Pastel, 75 x 105 cm

By drawing viewers into an intimate communion with nature, while exhibiting a deepening atavistic knowledge of and respect for the environment, Ashworth-Martin is asking us to apply new modes of seeing and thinking about the land.

Ashworth-Martin has exhibited in the Tacit Gallery, Melbourne, Sherbrooke Gallery, Melbourne, Aberglasney House Gallery, Wales and Stroud House Gallery, England. He now lives in Melbourne, Australia.

Artist Statement

I approach my practice as an animist, one who sees the potential and aliveness in all materials. I prefer to think in terms of materials and their possibilities rather than directing my thinking towards the fulfilment of conventional techniques and disciplines. This allows for an inclusive, informed and liberated artistic development encompassing painting, sculpture, installation and drawing.

The natural landscape is my inspiration, and I use the teachings and philosophies of Zen, Taoism and Shamanism to establish a connection with my surroundings. Working with these concepts allows me to explore both the form and the formless intelligence present in nature: all forms derive from the void and back to the void they will return. Life is an endless flow of coming into form, moving through form and leaving form. Nature's vast landscapes and unfathomable depths are mirrored even in the most diminutive pod-like beginnings of life, and this sublime conversation acts as a focal point for my art.

Much of my work takes its inspiration from Eastern aesthetics and design. The concepts and techniques of Chinese and Japanese landscape painting for example echo my ongoing study of the three stages of our physical world: foreground, middle ground and background, or in Shamanic teachings: lower, middle and upper worlds. This concept of the 'three' is prevalent in all my work because of a desire to explore our collective fascination with this ancient and significant number, symbolically reflecting the physical world's cycle, while simultaneously pointing to the impermanence and temporal nature of all life.

Only by forging a deeper relationship to our surroundings can we find our way back to our true being, one that sees us as part of an ever-changing landscape of form and formlessness.



Oliver Ashworth-Martin, *Banksia Pod*, Pastel, 110 x 125 cm

*To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower, to hold infinity in the palm of
your hand and eternity in an hour* William Blake

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