EUAN HENG
SELECTED WORKS
1977 – 1987

Latrobe Valley Arts Centre
138 Commercial Road, Morwell
25th June – 19th July, 1987
FOREWORD

Euan Heng has been living and working in the Latrobe Valley for the past five years. He moved to the Latrobe Valley in 1992 to take up a lecturing position at the School of Visual Arts at the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education. Since moving here one of the main sources for his work has been the industrial landscape. Although Euan Heng sees his work with a regional context, like most other professional artists working in the Latrobe Valley his exposure has mainly been in the metropolitan region of Melbourne and overseas. It is opportune that the Latrobe Valley Arts Centre is able to mount a major exhibition of his work, selected from the period 1977-1997 to mark his tenth anniversary in Australia.

For making this project possible, I would like to thank the artist for his help and understanding. I would like to thank Chris Caveney for writing the essay, Greg Simmons for designing the catalogue, and finally the curators who generously lent their paintings, prints, and drawings.

Peter McColl
Director
LVAC

THE STYLE IS THE MAN

The Chinese artist Kuo Jo-hsia wrote an essay in 1774 AD, "The Taste of the Man", in which he listed the ancient traditional Six Techniques of Painting.

"First, creating a vital tone and atmosphere; second, building structure by brushwork; third, depicting the forms of things as they are, fourth, appropriate colouring; fifth, composition, sixth, translation.

Above all the first, 'Tone and Atmosphere', he considered to be the most vital ingredient, and to have the thought born within the artist, uncontrollable and unapproachable: though he did not believe this to be mystical or magical, it was "the man". "In all things, that we say or do, or feel, our mind leaves its mark. So much more is this true of painting where it comes from the feelings and thoughts of an artist and is recorded on silk or paper."

This vital element in painting constantly appears in universal painting theory under various seemingly inadequate labels, always with the alibi that it is untranslatable: stimulating atmosphere, soul, mood, feeling, spirit, tone, etc. Like the Chinese, almost everyone implies that there lies the essence of painting and it comes from within the artist, the artist's soul, a gift from gods or fairies. Shrouded in mystery and disguised by art, it remains the stuff of magic; even now the starting point in the study of painting and alchemy has become obscure. It is most likely that the absolute mystery of painting in the 18th century was caused by the two new desire of society for belief, magic, and myth.

Nowhere is the temptation to write a romance instead of a story - historical, theoretical, or critical - so compelling as in painting, and its frequent recourse to the genre is in painting; and it usually comes down to romanticizing the artist, based on speculation about the artist's personality. This has always been the most popular view of painting even before the invention of psycho-analysis, with the attendant belief that painting is the product of abnormal behaviour, even neurosis.

"Everything great in the world comes from neurotics. They have composed our masterpieces. We enjoy lovely music, beautiful paintings, a thousand delicacies, but we have no idea of their cost to those who invented them in sleepless nights, spasmodic laughter, red wine, opium, and fear of death, which is worse than all the rest".

(Marc Fouquet, Remembrance of Things Past.)

The work of Euan Heng, seemingly invites a study-by-case analysis because it is directly concerned with autobiographical themes: he is an artist whose personal vision and personal identity is influenced by his work. The artist here often portrays himself with the effect of a Freydan dream-image, presenting himself as a persona, as if it were a mirror of public, defining his psychological identity. One of Heng's master's, Max Beckmann, said in a 1938 lecture, "I am immersed in the phenomenon of the individual... what are you? What am I? These questions constantly permeate and torment me and perhaps also play a part in my art."

Myths of madness and magic are based on critical inaccuracy, but we are compelled to try to understand them with our most intellectual sense, sight, which always demands an explanation. However, when writers speculate about art and artists, in search of the 'true' meanings of art, they frequently feel that they have to point out what the artist does in terms that are not artistic, by harnessing art to other intellectual activities, to give it merit, seriousness, and authenticity. Thus most artists have been convinced that it is certain that writers will never get to the point.

The real problem with most of the views is that they fail to posit us to look at the paintings, they blind us with ideas that explain but do not direct our imagination because they do not connect with our mind's eye, or correlate with the way our mind sees and structures perceptions, what we see; the mind's internal representations. The fact is almost no one looks at paintings, we are glances and it takes a lot of looking to understand a painting: it requires something of the same stuff that it took to make it; the will to understand its imagination.

Fundamentally the viewer needs to understand something of the 'norm' of the process of thinking in painting. It is true that anxiety plays its part; not the art of the psyche's personality unearthing the romantic, subjective, unconsciously structured art of myth, but the anxiety of the artist under pressure to invent his or her art. It did not interest Picasso that Cézanne painted apples and cobles: what interested him was Cézanne's anxiety to get it right.

It is a particular feature of Modernism that its heroes are portrayed in many - hidden by their drive to make new art, with the romantic notion of reinventing painting. Euan Heng suffers from this dilemma, which is basically metaphysical insecurity caused by the constant strain between the notion of personal, intimate self. The dilemma is what to paint and how to paint.

The style of Heng's paintings is connected to Post-Impressionism, that is, he is: influenced by the masters of that school and adheres to some of its theories, the literary; the flat, flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain way. Most likely the connection is through the habits of that school in Britain with its quiet relationship with academic drawing. Heng's paintings have absorbed the off-spring of Post-Impressionism, the art of Synthetic Cubism, and Expressionism, and their prime influence, universal primitivism. All these modes feature the elements of flatness, dormativeness, that includes devices for representing volume: marks, patterning, and, above all, colour. It is the marriage of colour and drawing, giving them both equal opportunity for expression and representation, that so differentiates this mode of painting: from academicism with its insistence on the primacy of drawing.

The reason colour and drawing are so successfully married in these paintings lies in the post-impressionist procedure of drawing with colour, using patches, a difficult medium that few can claim to have mastered. Hen's color, and it is because he knows the secret is tone. Tone is often suggested in colour painting, for the sake of colour, in this topic attempt to let the purity of the colour do the work; to generate the effect of clarity. It is no illusion of volume, space, and texture in the effort to overwhelm the dominance of drawing, by attempting to divorce tone from colour. Heng's command of tone informs all his work. His ability to compose tone with a wide range of the light suggests that influence of British Post-Impressionism, his "rigorous study of light" schooling in drawing would have enhanced this ability, but it is likely much of the skill was acquired through design training. This assumption explains the graphic strength of all these pictures, that is, how well designed they are. The composition, the orchestration of the colour, the placement of the shapes, the measurement of space, are all cemented by the arrangement of tones.

In the prints, the black and white media, tone is taken for granted, but even here the ability
to use and control the full tonal scale is rare.
Heng is a master printer, technically and
expressively. He is, too, a master painter,
attempting the subtleties of light and shade
with a light touch. In the end, the rich
nuances of light and shade give the painting
its depth and dimension.

"Drawing honestly does not mean
affirming a thing which is true in
natural; but, instead, using pictorial
idioms which do not disguise one's
thoughts." (Cezanne)

Euan Heng, like many artists who
consider the human figure as an object
of study in art, his perception is
influenced by the way he sees the
figure. His work is often
characterized by a meticulous attention
to detail, a focus on the human
form, and an emphasis on the
psychological aspects of the
human experience.

Within the discipline of his theatre of
design, in all Heng's work, it is the sense of
which fills the 'tone and atmosphere' of
the theatre. The Char Man may be taken in Heng's
architectural chamber that is the
work of art, not just of theatre, not
just of art. The theatre is the
expression of the essence of the
human form, which is theatre, in the
teaching of the essence of art.

Shared Exhibitions:
1981: Works on Paper (with Arthur
Weston) (Galleria, London)
1983: Armadillo College of
Advanced Education, Orange Centre
Gallery, and Corpus Christi
Gallery, Mitchell College of
Advanced Education, Bathurst, and
Tasmanian Regional Gallery,
Tasmania, N.S.W.

Group Exhibitions:
1973: International Print Exchange,
Galleria, London, Scotland,
Montpellier Eole Des Beaux Arts,
Illinois State University, and
Dundee College of Art.

Awards,
Prizes, Scholarships,
Commissions:
1973: Pat Horse Memorial Prize
(Drawing)
1974: "Tree", Stirling Gallery, Stirling,
U.K.
1975: "Tree", Stirling Gallery, Stirling,
U.K.
1976: Permain Scottish Art, Art Centre,
Edinburgh.
1977: Ten Years, Dundee Young
Painters, Dundee Museum and Art
Gallery, Dundee.
1983: Seven Painters, Museum of
Melbourne Art Gallery.
1983: International Print Exhibit, 1983,
Republic of China Taipei City
Museum, Tainan, China.
1984: Contemporary Australian
Printmakers, Queensland College
Of Art, Gold Coast, Brisbane.
1984: Contemporary Australian
Printmakers, Harbourfront Gallery,
Toronto, Canada, Print Graphic
Centre, New York, N.Y.A.
1984: Australian Printmakers (Victoria)
Aichi Prefectural Museum of Fine
Arts, Tokyo, Japan.
1985/86: The Relief Print, Dundee
Gallery and Museum, Dundee,
Scottish Arts Council Exhibition
Tour, Perth, Scotland.
1986/86: Australian Print 85: Melbourne
Brookes Museum, Melbourne in May
Festival and touring the U.S. A.

EUAN HENG
1945 Born Davae, Scotland
1960-69 Merchant Services, and various
other occupations
1970-75 Diploma and Post Diploma study
at Dundee College of Art, Dundee, Scotland
1977 Arrived Australia.

Solo Exhibitions:
1974 Prints, Stirling Gallery, Stirling,
U.K.
1976 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
1979 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
1980 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
1984 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
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2015 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
2016 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
2017 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
2018 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
2019 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
2020 Paintings, Stirling Gallery, U.K.
COLLECTIONS:
Australian National Gallery, Canberra
Beaupre Art Gallery, Victoria
Lorne Art Centre, Victoria
Mornington Peninsula Art Centre, Victoria
Box Hill Municipal Art Collection, Victoria
Bathurst Art Gallery, N.S.W.
Wagga Wagga Regional Gallery, N.S.W.
Newcastle Art Gallery, S.A.
Print Council of Australia, Melbourne
Art Bank
Parliament House Construction Authority, A.C.T.
Hamilton Collection, Victorian Education Department
Griffith University, Queensland
Riverina College of Advanced Education, N.S.W.
Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education, Victoria
Box Hill College of TAFE, Victoria
Ringo Park High School, Melbourne
Lorne Valley Schools Art Foundation, Victoria
Scottish Arts Council Collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Clarke, Berry. Seven Painters: Different View. [Portraits, University of Melbourne, June, 1983, (catalogue)]
Thorpe, David. Euan Hung, Australian Galleries, Melbourne, 1984, (catalogue intro.).
Rooney, Robert. Realism All But Forgotten, Weekend Australian, June, 1983.

CATALOGUE

Measurements in centimetres. Height before width.

PAINTINGS – OIL ON CANVAS

1. Connersen, 1977
66 x 51
Coll. Ly & Graeme Smith

2. Mud Dogs and Englishmen, 1977/78
70 x 70
Coll. Jean & Ron Hafre.

3. Explorer, 1979/80
103 x 92
Coll. Ly & Graeme Smith

4. Irish Queen, 1980
77 x 77
Coll. Ly & Graeme Smith

5. Glimpse, 1980
102 x 83
Coll. Bebe & Bruce Jarrett

82 x 52
Coll. Ly & Graeme Smith

7. Jamboree, 1981/82
76 x 76
Coll. Bernadette & Sid Palazzi

8. Ferrymen, 1981/82
82 x 72
Coll. Smart Purves

9. Glass Factory, 1982
152 x 152.5
Australian Galleries

10. Babal (Monvell Version), 1983
167 x 66
Coll. Catherine Hing

11. Char Man, 1983
122 x 122
Coll. The Artist

12. Prelude to the Dance, 1985
183 x 131
Coll. Jan & Rod Forbes

13. Erica Girl, 1984
122 x 122
Coll. Jackie Nichols & Geoff Dupree

152 x 152
Coll. The Artist

15. Jeordling Still Life II, 1985
197 x 91
Coll. L.V.A.C.

16. Worker, 1986/87
152 x 152
Coll. The Artist

17. Char Fall, 1987
152 x 152
Coll. The Artist

18. March Friday Falling, 1987
213 x 152.5
Coll. The Artist

19. Only Strangers Travel, 1987
183 x 152.5
Coll. The Artist

WORKS ON PAPER

20. Glimpse (Study), 1979
45 x 31
Coll. Bebe & Bruce Jarrett

36 x 35
Coll. Audrey Hing

22. Mocking Bird (Study), 1981
9 x 28
Coll. Stuart Purves

23. Glass Factory (Study), 1982
50 x 49
Coll. The Artist

24. Char Girl (Study), 1984
76 x 76
Coll. Stuart Purves

25. Jeordling Still Life (Study), 1985
76 x 76
Coll. The Artist

26. Jeordling Still Life II (Study), 1985
76 x 76
Coll. The Artist

27. Char Fall III (Study), 1986
76 x 66
Coll. The Artist

28. March Friday Falling (Study), 1986
92 x 77
Coll. The Artist

29. Only Strangers Travel (Study), 1986
92 x 77
Coll. The Artist

30. Harvest (Study), 1987
76 x 56
Coll. The Artist

31. Shelter (Study), 1987
76 x 56
Coll. The Artist
PRINTS – Unless stated all works printed by artist. All prints in the collection of Catherine Heng.

Etchings & Aquatints

33. Serenade, 1979
   12.7 x 8.3
   Ed. 10

34. In Your Own Backyard, 1979
   53 x 27
   Ed. 10

35. Two in the Bush, 1979
   45 x 24
   Ed. 10

36. Explorer, 1980
   36 x 25 (Shaped Plate)
   Ed. 10

37. Bandage Mountain Hat Trick, 1980
   35 x 16 (Shaped Plate)
   Ed. 10

38. Head Piece, 1980
   45 x 27. (Shaped Plate)
   Ed. 10

39. Char Cow, 1982
   30 x 30. (3 plates)
   Ed. 2 Proofs
   Printer. Dianne Fogwell

LITHOGRAPHS

40. Dog, 1982
   24.3 x 16.2
   Ed. 10
   Printer. Kaye Green

LINO CUTS

41. Char Cow, 1982
   36 x 27.2
   Ed. 3 Proofs

42. Erics Girl, 1983
   10 x 30
   Ed. 35

43. Prelude to the Dunce, 1983
   102 x 44
   Ed. 50

44. Iris, 1983
   37.3 x 28
   Ed. 20

45. Lovers, 1984
   40.3 x 40.3
   Ed. 20

46. Head, 1985
   30 x 30
   Ed. 20

Front Cover. "Connoisseur", 1977
Back Cover. "March Friday Falling", 1987