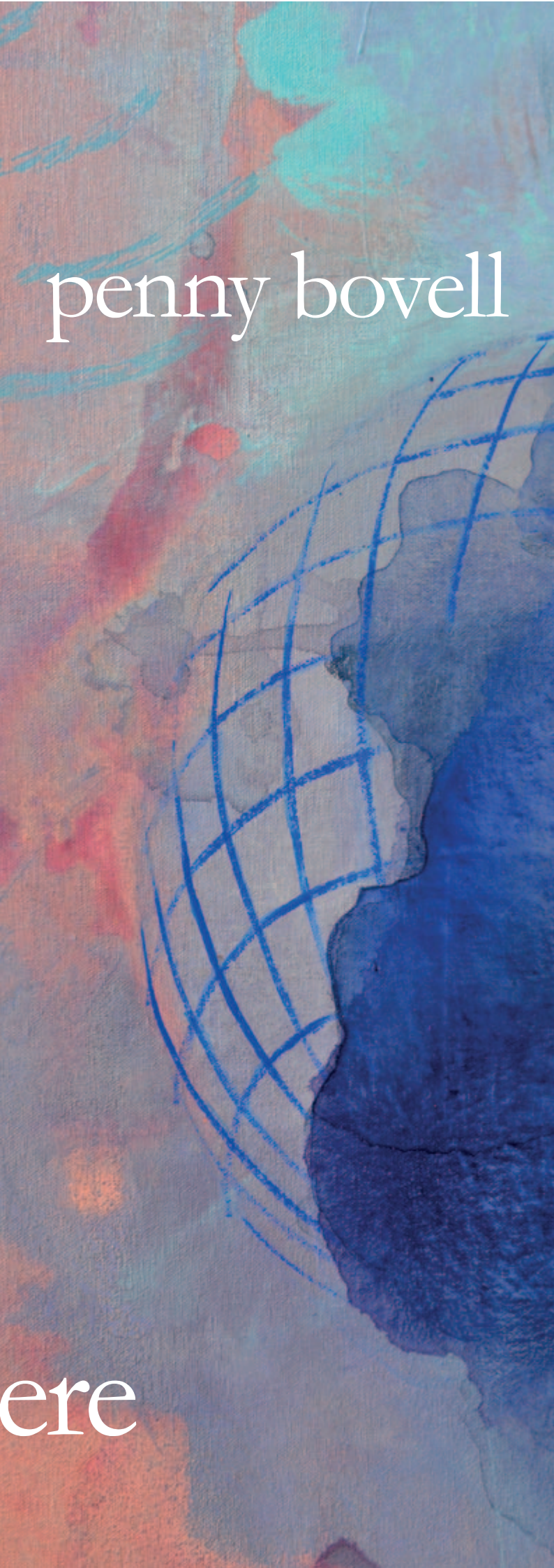




penny coss



penny bovell

out
there



Penny Coss *Fall to Ground* 2012, Oil on Board 51 x 67 cm



Penny Coss *Temporal Traverse* 2012, Oil on Board 51 x 67 cm

Above and below; the two opposite yet complementary elements of Penny Bovell's and Penny Coss's art practices, both centred on environmental elements though seeking their inspiration in different realms. A pervasive lyrical sensibility permeates each artist's oeuvre, with the lightness of Bovell's poetic imagery contrasting to the solidity and grounded nature of Coss's fluid compositions.

The physical process employed by both artists, who share an airy studio in South Fremantle, is initially similar: pouring paint onto the canvas then forming meaning from the random outcomes. Ideas are bounced off each other; neither person is premeditated in their approach although their driving sensibilities differ. Bovell's is an enquiry of air as opposed to Coss's investigation of landscape; the engagement of ephemera compared to ground forms and matter.

Signs and Signals and *Air Waves* or the ambiguous grid structure (inspired by fruit tree netting) in *Signs Taken for Wonder* and *Navigating the Ether*. Here the grid structures pervade into the ether, piercing the cosmos in an intermingling of the human experience and space.

There are parallels between Bovell's theories and theorist Steven Connor, both acutely aware of the social responsibility of air and its relationship to humanity. For as Connor elucidates, human habitation of the air is encroaching and persistent, we occupy the space above as well as below.ⁱⁱ

Bovell follows a long artistic tradition of the exploration of air; harking back to the painters of the 18th and 19th century, from Constable, Turner and the Dutch to Duchamp's whimsical glass ampoule of Parisian air.ⁱⁱⁱ The figurative depiction of clouds and sky in Bovell's earlier works is now replaced with a deeper exploration of what lies beyond these.

causing circular ripples on the surface of the opaque black lakes that lie in shadow of the bush hill ... the patterns of the shadows from the trees across the ground.'^v These memories are elucidated in the delectable forms in *Fall to Ground*.

Implicit in Coss's work is her own life; the hinterland locales of Perth and Sydney; Perry Lakes and its underlying aquifer near her home in suburban Perth; and soothing memories from childhood such as the luminescent green of sunlit grass. These are reimagined in the green blurs of *Yellow Camber Shadow*, akin to driving past the verge with only glimpses of nature - the constancy of nature versus the speed of her life.

Dramatically articulated colour references are also at play in the burnt landscape series based on Reabold Hill, Perth. In *Smoulder Sky* and *Outcast* a fire 'leaves in its wake the burnt shards of ancient zamia plants, enormous banksias...left in a tangled mass of charcoal embers.'^{vi}



Bovell presents imagined spaces beyond the slipstream; the ethereal, elusive qualities of the sky and deep space bewitch her; 'the sky is a space for imaginative possibilities, it is something and nothing, we are immersed in it and it is within us.'ⁱ She transforms this fascination into globular shapes and hazes on the canvas, held together by a repertoire of symbols. Amorphous forms break from the gravitational pull and float upwards in *Nothing Matters* and *Flourish* to simultaneously dissolve and appear. Bovell's work is literally out there.

After the initial freedom of tipping copious amounts of paint on the canvas, Bovell will sand back the work to generate a tight painting out of the seeming chaos. She will layer the work with marks and motifs such as the telecommunications tower in

Coss's luscious style has evolved from the tradition of Abstract Expressionism, taking its formal elements and melding them into her own visual language. In works such as *Littoral Excess* there are echoes of de Kooning and Hodgkin; their bold gestural styles referenced in Coss's spontaneous mark making and layering, forging a new interpretation of the Australian landscape. As Coss explains, 'my work is about those important moments of exchange within the landscape and with the possibility of being simultaneously in there and out there.'^{iv}

Coss's art practice compresses a multitude of experiences into a single moment; her personal histories are encapsulated in the image. Indeed her new paintings originated from walking in the landscape, absorbing 'the deep green colour of the reeds

One of the defining links between the two artists is their evident joy in the use of colour; for Coss it is the lush greens, lurid yellows and brilliant blues of the landscape whilst for Bovell it is the evanescent powder blues, pinks and wispy greys of the atmosphere. For these two artists there is clearly inexhaustible inspiration out there.

Sandra Murray
Curator, Bankwest
August 2012

Notes

- i. Artist's statement, Penny Bovell July 2012
- ii. see Steven O'Connor, *The Matter of Air: Science and the Art of the Ethereal*, Reaktion, London, 2010
- iii. Marcel Duchamp conceptual work *Paris Air* (1919) that he brought to America as a gift
- iv. Artist's statement, Penny Coss July 2012
- v. Artist's statement, Penny Coss August 2012
- vi. Artist's statement, Penny Coss July 2012

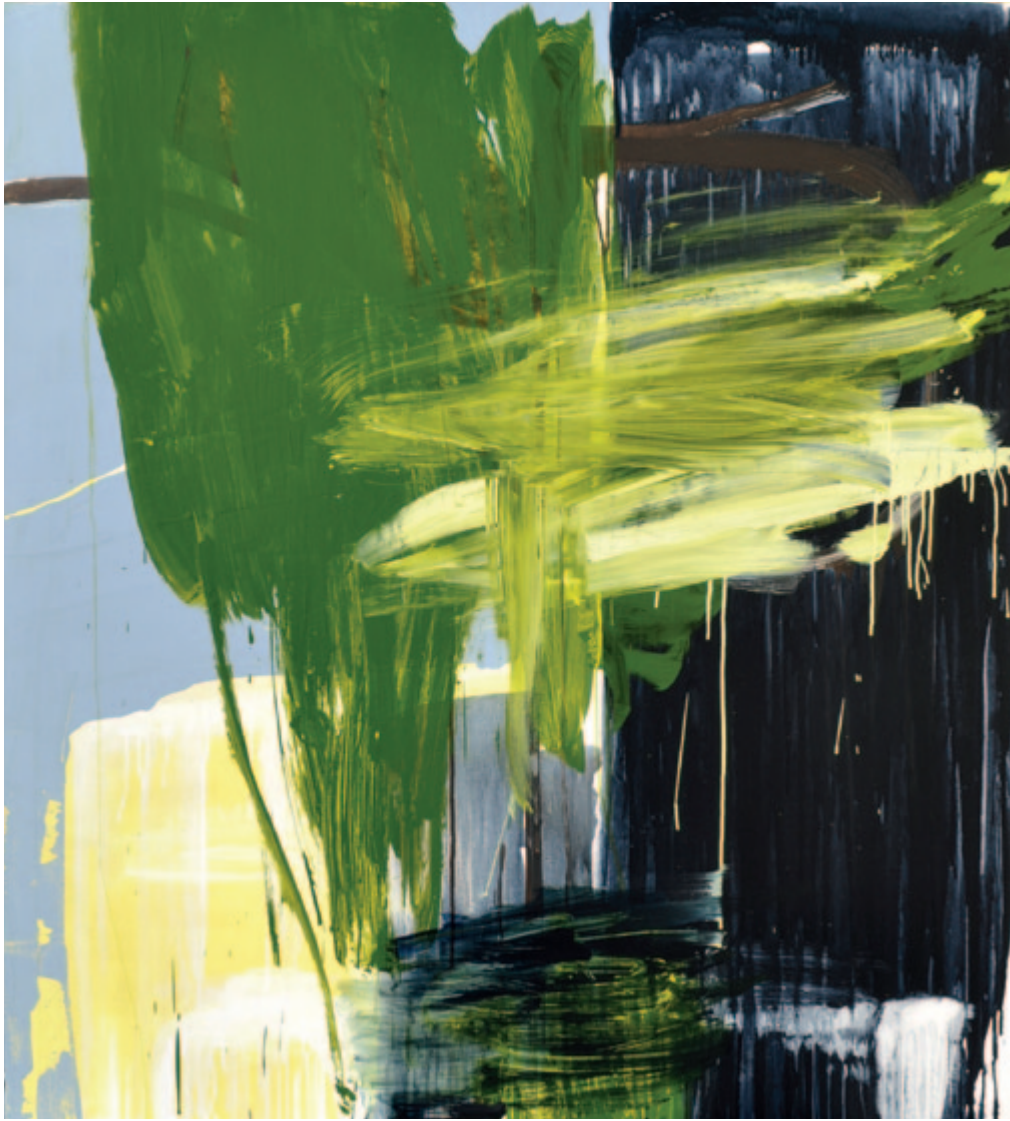
Photography: Penny Coss, Bo Wong, George Howlett



Penny Bovell *Flourish* 2012, Acrylic on canvas 101 x 101 cm



Penny Bovell *Nothing Matters* 2012, Acrylic on canvas 101 x 101 cm



Penny Coss *Littoral Excess* 2012, Acrylic on Canvas 152 x 130 cm



Penny Coss
Marginal Sign 2012
Oil on Board
51 x 51 cm

Like ‘taking a walk’, a painting can’t be taken in all at once. It unfolds slowly. Walking involves both the terrains of our exterior and interior life; it cannot be perceived all at once because it unfolds in time. This temporal element has made painting and walking resemble each other.

My paintings do not offer a literal depiction of landscape but sit somewhere between something like a straight fall of paint and something we may recognize. The indexical trace of formless colour I apply dries into resultant new and unexpected shapes that look somehow familiar. Other vertical and horizontal forms are painted in a gestural manner,

testimony to the memory of a particular landscape in flux. Long walks in the landscape see the trees taking on portraits, their random positioning hinting at a narrative of a type that is both deeply layered and contiguous.

Being ‘Out There’ in the landscape for me excites the imagination and shapes what is in there. And where in imagining nature and the imagination and nature are inextricably linked, the tenuous material and bodily processes of painting introduces a sense of doubt that reflects the mutability of contemporary life.

Penny Coss 2012



Penny Bovell *Something For Nothing* 2012, Acrylic on Canvas 120 x 120 cm



Penny Bovell
Signs And Signals 2012
Acrylic on Canvas
91 x 91 cm

My work explores ideas about air, sky and space. As immaterial, often abstract and invisible phenomena they stand as the antithesis to the solidity of earth. Whilst past bodies of work dealt with clouds, air, the weather and climate change I am currently exploring notions of deep space and cosmology; in other words attempting to find expression for how we understand the universe and being in the world.

I am driven by the focus and reverie that comes from concentrated time spent in the studio wherein painting and drawing remains a tenacious and central form of expression. I try to focus this interest by exploring the appearances and resemblances specific to aerial subjects. Dispersal, precipitation, flow and erasure of pigment and medium evoke myriad shapes and events that I imagine to be puffs of smoke, floating clouds, currents of winds or astral explosions.

Penny Bovell 2012

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Tue-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 11am-5pm