

## Andrew Browne

Andrew Browne has produced and exhibited photographs alongside paintings throughout his career: the relative immediacy of constructing an image through the camera lens providing an antidote to the laborious process of painting in oil. Over time, a slippage between these two mediums within Browne's practice has occurred. While his recent paintings are typically cinematic – dramatically cropped, with the crisp snapshot quality of a film still – the photographs are transformed in various ways to assume more painterly qualities such as soft edges and rich tonal contrasts.

Photographic imagery is also the starting point for Browne's paintings. He manipulates and merges photographs drawn from a vast personal library to construct new realities, which he then translates into paint. Browne had driven past the fractured tree depicted in *Near Kyneton*, 2011, on numerous occasions intending to stop and record it. When he finally did, time and weather had exerted their inexorable effect so that 'the more *picturesque* aspects had disappeared and the final image for the painting had to be cobbled together ... taking this abject found form into more surreal areas – transformation both of its reality and (his) associative and emotional response'.<sup>1</sup>

While the subject matter of recent paintings such as *Near Kyneton*, and Browne's ability to render it in a realistic manner, at first suggest direct transcription onto the painted surface, there is always a level of distortion between the original view and the finished work. Locating anthropomorphic qualities in the landscape, Browne imbues the natural world with an uneasy character often verging on the surreal. The artist also emphasises other features in the service of creating mood, particularly the light in his pictures which has changed in recent years from the subdued tone of the nocturne to the cool glare of daylight. While Browne makes no conscious attempt to comment on the fallout that inevitably occurs when the natural world intersects with the man-made, he often depicts peripheral landscapes in

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<sup>1</sup> Email from the artist, 16 April 2012.

which the effects of human intervention are seen in discarded detritus and neglect.

The sense of melancholy present in much of Browne's work is evoked in *Near Kyneton* in a different way; the once majestic conifer has now collapsed, perhaps the result of a lightning strike, or simply due to time and decay. Rather than highlighting the detrimental effects of human activity, this could be read as a metaphor for the inevitability of change, or as a statement of nature's power and fundamental indifference.<sup>2</sup>

**Kirsty Grant - Senior Curator of Australian Art NGV**

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Andrew Browne  
born Australia 1960  
*Near Kyneton* 2011  
oil on linen  
122.0 x 336.0 cm  
Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2011  
(2011.416)

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<sup>2</sup> ibid.

