

Andrew Browne

By Artist Profile

In Andrew Browne's solo exhibition 'Spill', the Melbourne artist builds on his enduring interest in natural phenomena by examining the suggestive ambiguities of water and the metamorphic effects of light. Developed from his large and ongoing archive of observational photography, Browne's oil paintings are an 'accumulation of glimpses' knitting together fragments of landscape, light and form. He captures anthropomorphic lurkings and nuanced details in nature to conjure new realities.

Featuring large charcoal drawings and paintings of differing scales, 'Spill' impels us to consider the power of water – its physical presence, physiological importance, aesthetic valence and symbolic potency. In *Threshold* (2018), an androgynous figure balances on a makeshift bridge of fallen boughs or rocks, silhouetted by the white waters cascading behind. Against the dense chiaroscuro of the foreground, the waterfall emits an otherworldly light like the artificial glow of a giant computer screen. Head bowed, the figure appears to be engrossed in a mobile phone; a glaring juxtaposition to the sublime landscape. She stands, metaphorically, at the precipice of an age where technology is eclipsing nature.

In the painting *Spill #1* (2018), elongated drips of water illuminated against a black background evoke the ghostly fringe of a weeping willow or an X-Ray image of an underground root system searching deeper and deeper for the water source. The drips dance down the page like soft bolts of lightening, luring us to look closer whilst also warning of danger. In a similar way, Browne's charcoal drawing *Frozen* (2018) is both threatening and alluring. The sublime spectacle of a waterfall rendered solid builds a tension between stasis and motion, silence and tumult. It feels as if at any moment this surreal fossilised cascade will unravel into a gushing, roaring torrent. At the same time, the frozen waterfall summons imaginings of an extra-terrestrial organism enveloping the environment, spreading and dripping in a slow yet pervasive epidemic. Here, the natural world becomes stylised, reductive and alien. Browne's monochromatic palette amplifies the drama and ambiguity of the works. The vertically flowing water in *Fall #1* (2017) comes forth in white luminance like a figure spotlighted on stage. In this charged cinematic moment, abstract elongated limbs and body loom in and out of view in spectral scintillation. Flip your perspective and you have *Fall #2* (2017), a cloud-like mass of water on the verge of bursting, drips spilling from its blurry seams evoking illuminated cracks in the night sky. In

these works there are echoes of the gothic character of Browne's earlier series of apparition-haunted paintings and photogravures.

While Browne's lustrous atmospheres draw solely on a substance of the everyday; water, they manage to conjure surreal visions that partially elude our cognitive grasp. Playing with the theatrical possibilities of light, they dart between revelation and concealment.

EXHIBITION

Andrew Browne | Spill

7 June – 7 July 2018

[Tolarno Galleries](#), Melbourne