

ABOUT TIME

Words: Louise Martin-Chew

Andrew Browne's new paintings take you to a memory, somewhere in the landscape of your past, a moody place where a glimpsed silhouette halts the passage of time.

'Times Tide' is his first solo exhibition with Jan Manton Gallery in Brisbane, and closely follows 'silver' at Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne (19 November 2022 to 4 March 2023). Though there is a clear tonal relationship between these two groups of ostensibly abstract paintings, the more recent works have a different sensibility, in their formally reductive yet enigmatic embrace of mutable landscape, each confined in crisp white borders in a sly nod to their photographic antecedents. Whereas the previous series focussed on looking closely at the near at hand, these new works 'are much more expansive, in looking up and around, and placing oneself again in a wider world'.

He told *Art Collector*, 'The curator and writer John McPhee – who curated my work into 'Black Attack' (1996) at the National Gallery of Victoria – once alluded to my paintings as dealing primarily with mortality. I acknowledge that with the capture of elegiac instances inherent in passing time, they picture a range of phenomena, activated by the viewer in each encounter.'

Browne (born 1960) initially studied art teaching; he was a prolific cartoonist as a child, perhaps harking back to the illustrators in his family background. However, his professional focus has been firmly on art. He launched himself into artist-run spaces as co-director of Gotham City, Melbourne (1981-83) before he had completed his formal study (1982), had his first solo exhibition in 1981 and has shown consistently ever since in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth at both dealer and public galleries. He won the Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing in 2016, and the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize in 2018. His work is in institutional, university and private collections all over Australia, as well the British Museum (London).

Though primarily a painter his media also includes drawing and printmaking, often with a tonal and significantly reduced palette (in the case of this new work, silver and Mars black). While Browne has pursued several stylistic shifts during his decades of practice, a consistent touchstone is photography, with an interest in the formal elasticity of spatial depth, illumination and surreal juxtaposition within a cyclical series of subjects. He said, 'From an ever-growing bank of references – both art history and my own photography, from travel and transit – are those flashes of cognition, both visual and conceptual, that place you within a unique visual language. The paintings in 'Times Tide' abstract from a fraction of those.'

Though the abstract depths in these new works are tonal and painterly, their reflective silver/aluminium pigment is responsive to ambient light, in a counterpoint to their reductive spirit. While the exhibition title refers to the irrevocable passage of time, it also acknowledges 'that cyclical, ever-returning nature of tides' in a subtle collision of contrasting perceptions of time.

Times Tide: Andrew Browne  
Jan Manton Art, Brisbane  
11 to 29 April 2023

