

Albert Tucker: The Futile City

25 June to 9 October 2011

Albert and Barbara Tucker Gallery

Curator: Lesley Harding

HEIDE
MUSEUM
OF MODERN
ART



The Futile City 1940
oil on cardboard
44.5 x 54.5 cm
Purchased from John and
Sunday Reed 1980

The Futile City derives its theme from Albert Tucker's iconic 1940 painting of the same title in Heide's Collection. The exhibition juxtaposes images of the city painted by Tucker over his lifetime with those by several contemporary artists for whom the city and its structures provide rich and complex source material.

Inspired by T.S. Eliot's elegiac poem 'The Waste Land' (1922), which is both a lament and search for redemption of the human soul, Tucker's *The Futile City* reflects a mood of personal despair and anxiety in the face of the realities and social crisis of World War II. Tucker recognised in Eliot a 'twin soul' who painted with words images of horror, futility and prophecies of doom, to all of which Tucker had a heightened sensitivity.

Just as it has for Tucker, the darker and enigmatic aspects of the city have been an enduring interest for a number of Australian artists. Through their eyes, this exhibition speculates on the rise of the city, the expansion of its limits and its rapidly increasing density from the modern era to the present day.

Robert Boynes, Louise Forthun, Richard Giblett and Jeffrey Smart each use imagery of the city as a means to examine aspects of the human condition and the rituals of urban existence, and to suggest the place and power (or powerlessness) of the individual in the city's physical, political and social structures.

Other artists like Susan Norrie and David Jolly invoke some of the unpredictable psychic states to which the claustrophobia and dystopia of the city give rise. Teasing out tensions between private and public domains, reality and fantasy, and the vulnerability and intimacy of the body and mind, their images present stark counterpoints to the immensity of the urban landscape, and suggest the various ecologies and histories the city colonises.

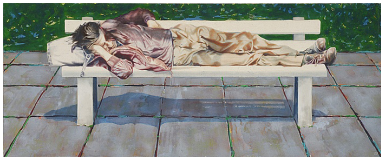
The Futile City reflects on the facts and fictions of the city through the visions and imaginings of seven Australian painters working over seven decades, whose preoccupations have alerted us to the potency and pitfalls of the rising and expanding metropolis.

List of works

This catalogue is arranged alphabetically by artist then chronologically. Measurements are height before width before depth.

Robert Boynes

born 1942 Adelaide



Laid Out 1978
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
97 x 243.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Samuel E. Wills Bequest, 1979



Faith and Empire (Low Tide) 1986
oil on canvas
180.2 x 240.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of
Victoria by the artist, Fellow, 2000



High Rise Boogie Woogie 1990
oil on linen
46.0 x 35.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Spencer Street and China Town Night
2003
oil on canvas
120.0 x 320.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Karen
Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne

Louise Forthun

born 1959 Port Macquarie,
New South Wales



Melbourne Cemetery 1992
oil on synthetic polymer on cotton canvas
168 x 168 cm
Gift of Louise Forthun 2012

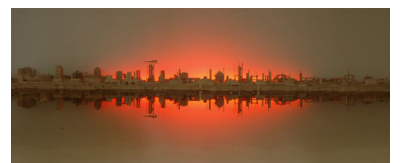


Melbourne 1928 2008
oil on linen
197 x 231 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Block Projects,
Melbourne



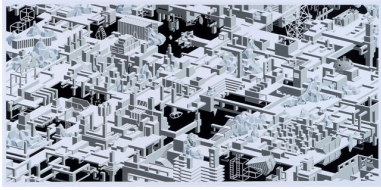
Electrifying 2010
oil on linen
115 x 180 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Boutwell
Draper Gallery, Sydney

Richard Giblett



Shiftwork 2007
plywood and fluorescent light
51 x 235 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Murray White
Room, Melbourne

Richard Giblett



Obsolete Plant 2008
gouache on paper
120 x 240 cm
Private collection, Melbourne



Fluorescent Pyre 2011
acrylic and enamel on MDF and
hardwood
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Murray White
Room, Melbourne



Grid System 2011
enamel on glass, Perspex, shelf,
fluorescent light
63 x 70 x 10 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

David Jolly

born 1972 Melbourne



Craneo 2004
oil on glass
44 x 29 cm
Private collection Courtesy of the artist
and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne



Esto no es Disneyland 2004
oil on glass
41 x 76 cm
Mercer collection, Melbourne



Parc del Perro 2004
oil on glass
44 x 29 cm
Private collection, Sydney



Siesta II 2005
oil on glass
46.5 x 70.5 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Susan Norrie

born 1953 Sydney



The Sublime and the Ridiculous 1986
oil on marine plywood
239.5 x 179.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1986

Jeffery Smart

born 1921 Adelaide; Italy from 1965



Cahill Expressway (1962)
oil on plywood
81.9 x 111.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1963

Albert Tucker

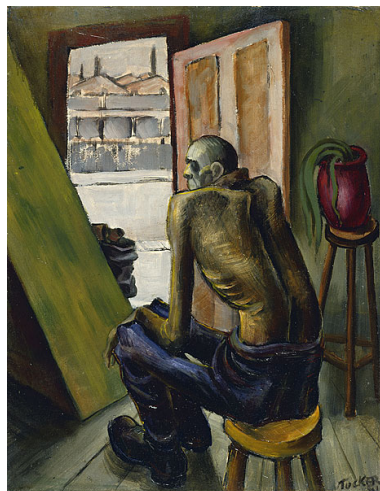
born 1914 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



The Futile City 1940
oil on cardboard
44.5 x 54.5 cm
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed
1980



We are the Dead Men 1940
oil on cardboard
47 x 51.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist 1993



Spring in Fitzroy 1941
oil on paper on cardboard
56 x 43.4 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Albert and Barbara Tucker 1997



The Waste Land 1941
oil on paperboard
33.8 x 46 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1982



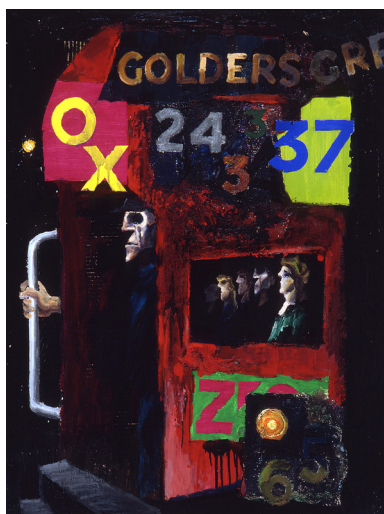
City 1944
oil on plywood
61 x 76 cm
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2005



Killing 1954
oil on composition board
81 x 62 cm
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation

Albert Tucker

born 1914 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



London Bus 1957
oil on composition board
122 x 92 cm
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



Manhattan Suite 4 1958
synthetic polymer paint on composition
board 71.5 x 56.6 cm
Private collection, Melbourne



Night Image 1973
oil on composition board
56 x 71 cm
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2014



Extinction Express 1988
synthetic polymer paint on composition
board
61 x 137 cm
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2008