



handmark

*looking in:
fifty years of
painting*

bruce
tharrowgood —

hobart

27.11.20 —
04.01.21

I have great pleasure in introducing you to the extraordinary works of Bruce Thurrowgood. Bruce quietly walked into Handmark just over two years ago to show us his portfolio and we were immediately excited to offer him an exhibition.

As his first solo exhibition in Tasmania, I wanted to share Bruce's artistic journey with the public. This survey, which is a snapshot of his fifty years of painting, sits alongside new work that evokes Bruce's idyllic existence in seaside Bicheno.

Congratulations Bruce, and thank you for providing us with such artistry.

Enjoy!

Allanah Dopson
Director

cover:

light lines, bicheno

2019
acrylic on belgian linen
87 x 107 cm

Bruce Thurrowgood: Fifty Years of Painting

As a member of 1970s surfing culture in the Victorian seaside town of Torquay, Bruce Thurrowgood spent many days marvelling at the play of light on the ocean's surface. A keen artist since childhood, this fascination with water and light has remained a constant for Thurrowgood and for fifty years it has endured as a consistent subject in his painting practice.

Working with techniques of abstraction, Thurrowgood initially painted geometric expanses of singular colours. Studying drawing and painting at art school in Geelong, Thurrowgood was inspired by the work of Mark Rothko and Robert Hunter and developed a style similar to the growing number of artists experimenting with colour as a way to elicit an emotional response. It was during this time Thurrowgood became involved with Bruce Pollard's Pinacotheca Gallery, an experimental space that filled the gap John Reed's Museum of Modern Art Australia had left

in Melbourne when it closed in 1966. Pinacotheca became a melting pot for the avant-garde, a landing point for the conceptually driven work of Dale Hickey, Ian Burn and Robert Rooney.

From these fertile beginnings, Thurrowgood steadily continued his art practice into the 1980s. Moving away from the geometric abstractions of his early work, Thurrowgood began to hark back to the sunlit water of Torquay by painting elements of the natural environment. Often focusing on a cropped viewpoint to capture juxtapositions of angular and organic lines, in the mid 1990s, Thurrowgood studied the distorted reflections of boats moored near the wharves of the Bellarine Peninsula. Adding realism to his paintings, the bows of aged barges and the white curves of sailboats contrasted with the constant movement of surrounding water. A selection of these paintings was shown at Lauraine Diggins Fine Art in 1994, where Thurrowgood's work was described as containing "a prevailing sense of the infinite, or a multitude of possible interpretations, not unlike the sensation experienced in a hall of mirrors."

Thurrowgood's way of working is meticulous. To achieve the level of intense detail he creates within his paintings, Thurrowgood starts with a photograph, transferring the image via a grid on to a larger surface ready for painting. Methodically working across every inch, each tiny detail is the sum of hours of dedicated labour. In works like *A Thousand Rainbows*, 2020 and *Rockpool and Magenta seaweed*, 2020, the eye is filled with the rippling colour of ocean, rock and plant. For Thurrowgood, water has become a way of connecting a moment in time to an exploration of light, allowing him to express abstract concepts while still remaining figurative. Thurrowgood cites he is informed by the work of seventeenth century Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer for his mastery of light and the sculptural assemblages of Rosalie Gascoigne for their textural and emotive evocations of the Australian landscape.

Objects within the landscape are also prevalent in Thurrowgood's oeuvre. As a child he grew up on his family's Camperdown dairy farm in

southwestern Victoria and this early experience of the rural landscape connects to his paintings of agricultural structures. Studies of decomposing wooden barns and round haybales reveal the colours and time-worn forms of tarnished corrugated iron and spikes of dried grass. In 2017, his painting *Patterdale Landscape with Wire*, was a finalist in the Glover Prize. Reinterpreting John Glover's c.1833 painting, *Patterdale Landscape with Cattle*, Thurrowgood replaced Glover's central tree with a tangle of twisted fencing wire. Traveling through the landscape of north east and midland Tasmania, Thurrowgood observed the eucalypts synonymous with Glover's work had now mostly disappeared. In their wake were remnants of sheep wire, balled up and partially eroded, the discarded evidence of gridlines marking out the boundaries of a colonized landscape.

After living and working as an artist in the surrounds of Geelong for most of his life, Thurrowgood made his way to the east coast of Tasmania, settling in the small coastal town

of Bicheno. Known for its pristine beaches and temperate climate, it is paradise for an artist inspired by coastal environments. As a result, Thurrowgood's most recent work is lyrical in its depiction of the brilliant east coast sunlight and the region's unparalleled natural formations. *Light Lines*, 2019 is resplendent in iridescent refractions of light on water and *Broken Shells and Granite Pieces*, 2019 is a visual symphony of colour and form. Hinting at what lies beneath the surface is *Inner World*, 2020. Thick tendrils of kelp and sea grass sway with the current and one can imagine the striped trumpeters, wrasse and draughtboard sharks winding their way through the protective fronds, skimming in and out of the light.

From his early days watching the light dance across the surf at Torquay, Thurrowgood has refined his craft to become a master of recreating light and colour in paint. Capturing the essence of his subjects with patient skill, Thurrowgood encourages his viewers to look closer at the details of the natural world, to pause and find beauty in

something as simple as a handful of shells or a glint of sunlight on the beach. As oceanographer Jacques Cousteau once said, "The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever."

— *Briony Downes*



*broken shells and
granite pieces*

2019
acrylic on belgian linen
153 x 153 cm



light lines, bicheno

2019
acrylic on belgian linen
87 x 107 cm



broken shells and amber glass #1

2018
acrylic on belgian linen
77 x 77 cm

*looking in, rock pool and
magenta seaweed*

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
138 x 138 cm





looking in, inner world

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
138 x 138 cm



looking in, bicheno

2018
acrylic on belgian linen
107 x 86 cm



moment #3

2015
acrylic on belgian linen
61 x 66 cm



water painting II

2004
acrylic on belgian linen
106 x 80 cm



looking in, a thousand rainbows

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
138 x 138 cm



looking in, love supreme

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
92 x 92 cm

*broken shells and
amber glass #2*

2018
acrylic on belgian linen
62 x 62 cm





moment #1

2015
acrylic on belgian linen
61 x 66 cm



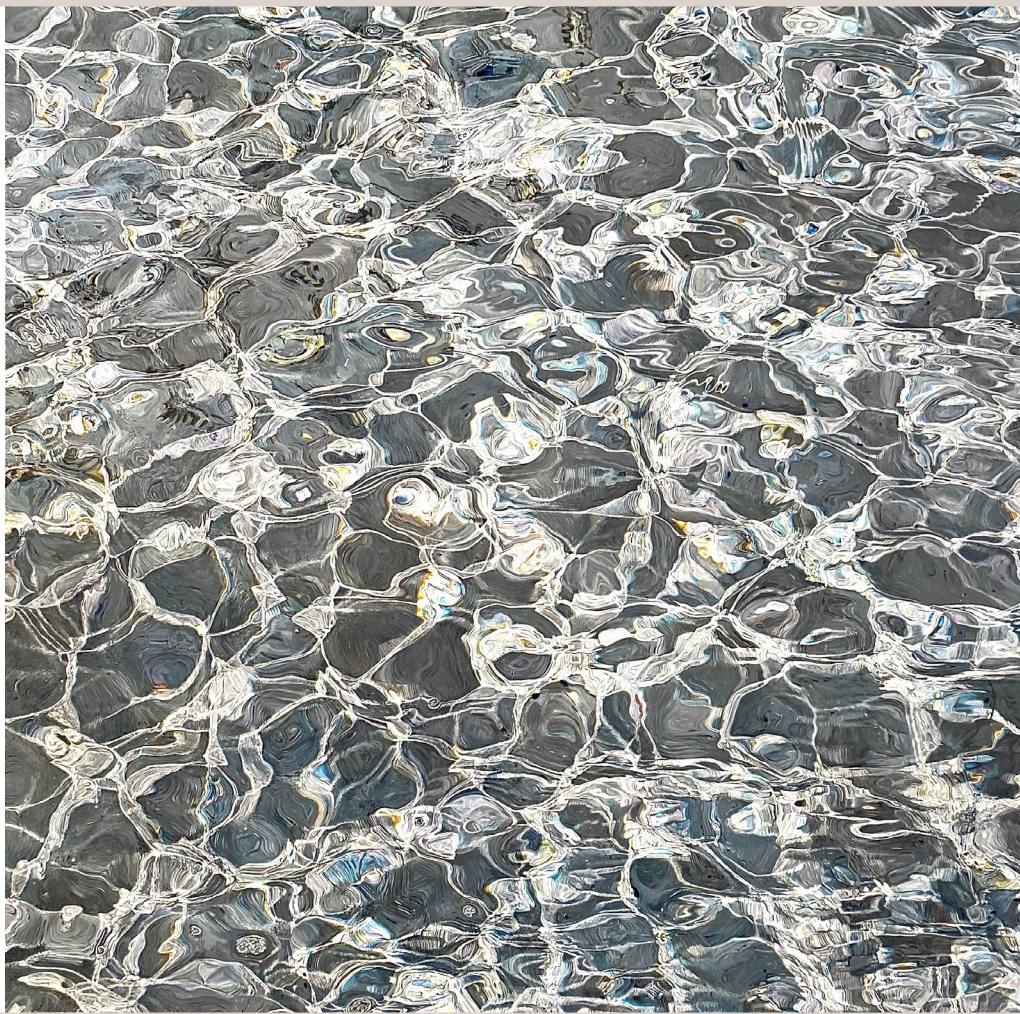
water painting V

2004
acrylic on belgian linen
100 x 77 cm



looking in, the lace-maker

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
138 x 138 cm



looking in, light lines

2020
acrylic on belgian linen
138 x 138 cm

moment #2

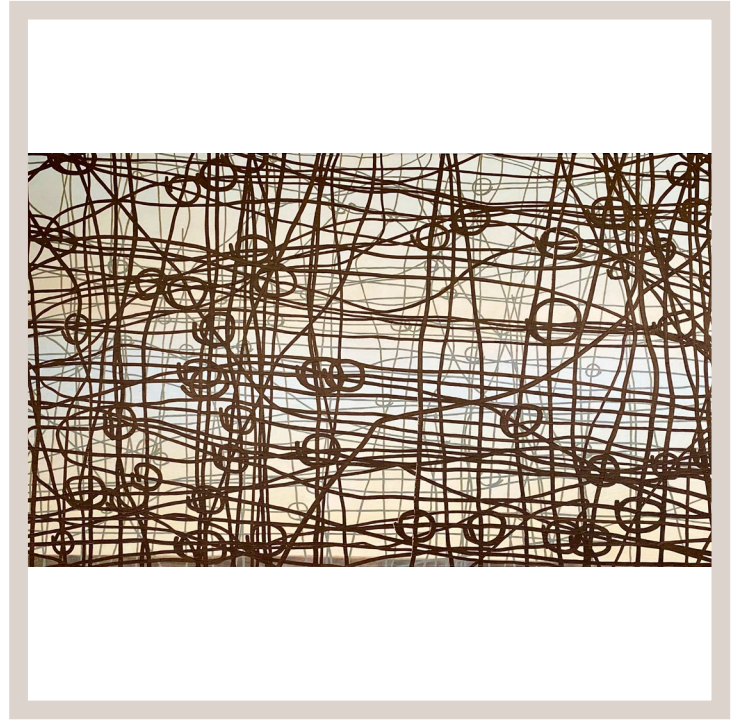
2015
acrylic on belgian linen
61 x 77 cm





wire and seat landscape

2011
acrylic on belgian linen
50 x 80 cm



wire landscape I

2011
acrylic on belgian linen
93 x 158 cm

wire landscape, dusk

2011
acrylic on belgian linen
24 x 30 cm





log, braidwood

1999
acrylic on belgian linen
72 x 157 cm

hay bale, maude

1999
acrylic on belgian linen
92 x 92 cm



barge with onlookers II

1996
acrylic on pumice on linen
45 x 31 cm





bow

1996
acrylic on belgian linen
45 x 31 cm



swan bay II

1995
acrylic on belgian linen
61 x 76 cm



DSG

1994
acrylic on cotton canvas
118 x 87 cm

bow with bollards

1994
acrylic on belgian linen
124 x 90 cm





rocks, water

1980
acrylic and pumice on board
30 x 30 cm



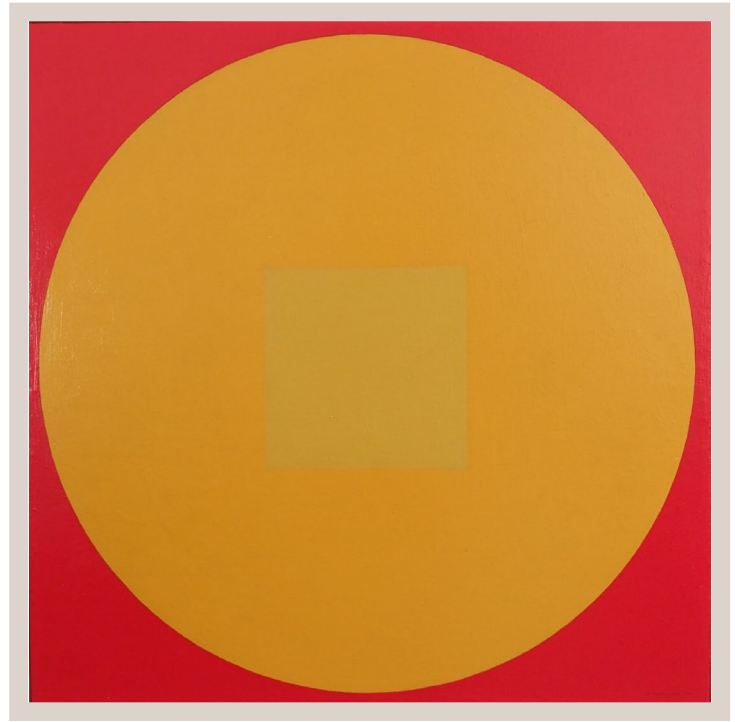
morning waters, babinda

1980
acrylic on cotton canvas
92 x 92 cm



one

1974
acrylic on belgian linen
61 x 61cm



two

1974
acrylic on cotton canvas
92 x 92 cm

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