

Michael Muir

Slush Fable

24 March – 18 April 2015

Sydney based artist Michael Muir presents a new body of work, *Slush Fable*, at Jan Murphy Gallery this month. The exhibition follows the artist winning the significant Mosman Art Prize 2014, which has further established him as a successful contemporary Australian painter.

Muir is particularly known for his landscapes that evoke a sense of nostalgia and playfulness through his use of flattened perspective, muted colours and engaging scenes. In producing his artworks he skilfully uses a palette knife to convey his narratives, which are often inspired by his personal family life. For *Slush Fable*, Muir was informed by an unexpected trip he took to Japan. He visited Tokyo, Akihabara and Nagano, making an exciting visit to snowfields in the Nozawa Onsen area, where he stayed at the Schanze Nozawa. It was an experience that led him to reminisce on his own childhood:

“The rushed departure and subsequent arrival transported me back to my childhood of settling in Australia. The correlations being the sense of the unfamiliar, as well as the difference of the landscape and myself to the people.”

The series has also been motivated by the film *Pulp Fiction* as he felt it was a symbol of the peculiarities he had been experiencing in Japan. He developed the paintings whilst having the film’s soundtrack on repeat and the titles of each work are snippets of lyrics from the songs.

“Tell me a story” is a command familiar to anyone who spends time with young children, but with patience, the child will provide an equal reward by revealing a new way of seeing. Early modernists recognised the potential of childish mark-making and imaginative perspective, and Michael Muir has had similar experiences as a parent of young children. It is perhaps his sons who can take some credit for his paintings’ unaffected appeal to the playful, inventive possibilities of narrative.

Honing his studio skills through formal studies in painting and design, Muir has departed from traditional plein-air painting to describe more ambiguous visual puzzles derived from the urban landscape. In our digitally redolent culture, his exclusive use of the palette knife acts as a kind of universal leveller, flattening and de-pixilating his high-key canvases.

A sense of everyday fantasy is modulated by Muir’s careful balance of the palette, his sunny, animated landscapes tensioned by a late storm warning.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Scotland, Muir's own childhood began in South East Asia before settling in Sydney, a time punctuated by frequent travel to his mother's native Philippines. The cultural milieu of early experience cannot be under-estimated, but equally important is Muir's attention to the immediate: "Drawing with my boys gives me a chance to reflect on my own childhood, and moving the paint around becomes a metaphor, as they progress from scribble to image, for my own artistic expansion."

Muir was the winner of the 2014 Mosman Art Prize and a finalist in a number of awards over the past decade including the Metro 5, Sulman and Fleurieu Art Prize. His work is represented in Australia's Artbank collection and private collections throughout Australia and Internationally.

The exhibition is Muir's third solo show at Jan Murphy Gallery and he has exhibited extensively in Australia, and overseas. His work is held in numerous collections, including Australia's Artbank collection and private collections throughout Australia and internationally. He has been a regular finalist in national art prizes and awards over the past decade including Fleurieu Art Prize, Metro, the Sulman Prize and the prestigious Wynne Prize.