

Ben Quilty

The Accident

19 February – 16 March 2019

Ben Quilty's upcoming body of work, *The Accident*, is largely possessed by images of torment. Predominantly featuring new etchings, the bulk of these works were created in the weeks and months after the artist dislocated his right shoulder and left knee.

Immobilised, the artist went to farcical lengths to make work, inventing various rigs and tools to aid him and fulfill his compulsion to create images. Etching tools allowed Quilty to incise, gouge and scratch. For the maddened artist, the metal plate stiffly wears the countless marks of this deeply cathartic ritual. Reflecting the accident itself, this is a violent process, from which works like *The Last Supper* are produced. Here, frenzied teeth are ready to snap on the artist's desk and contorted hands shimmer in muted frustration.

Etching is a medium which cannot shake its past, and the works which emerged from Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as printmaking was transforming our world, are visible here too. The prints produced in reformation Europe expressed the profound anxieties of the time, commonly depicting apocalypse and debauchery, like that in *Man Cave* and *The Last Supper*. The bloated male figure in *Endone* echoes Martin Schongauer's depiction of St Anthony as he is attacked by demons on his ascent to heaven. Quilty's blob of a saint metastasises as he descends gift-laden stairs. These etched images glare with a particular directness, nothing is softened, blackened lines imprints of acid's bite on exposed metal.

Jan Murphy Gallery presents this exhibition ahead of Ben Quilty's major survey exhibition, *Quilty*, which will be presented at three major state galleries in 2019, commencing with the Art Gallery of South Australia in March, before touring to the state galleries in Queensland and New South Wales.

Milena Stojanovska, 2018