



INTO THE VOID

THERE'S A DREAMLIKE QUALITY TO PAUL Davies' studio in Sydney's Paddington. The walls are covered with images of buildings that are familiar, but rendered surreal through his approach of using just three or four colours; a combination of details and voids. His art recalls the sensation of seeing something in bright sunlight, and then closing your eyes.

A single artwork involves many layers; a photograph will be cut up and made into a collage, the pieces placed onto paper that's been treated with a light-sensitive liquid drawing upon the photogram technique that predates photography. It's the depth of those layers that has attracted the eye of the prestigious Getty Museum in Los Angeles, which has just acquired one of Davies' works.

"Having acknowledgement at that level is really humbling," says the 44-year-old. "It's like all the hard work and the risk of becoming an artist has been made worthwhile."

Davies is enjoying a stellar career with sell-out shows and a client list that includes Soho House; an 18-foot (5.5 metre) painting by Davies for its LA branch is the private club's largest-ever commission. His interest in art stems from watching his father at work in his darkroom. "I never forget seeing the piece of white photo paper going into the developing bath and just appearing. That moment of seeing an image taken from outside appear inside that controlled space."

Together with his wife, Sarah, he moved to Los Angeles in 2014 for a creative reset. Starting out in LA, he says, felt like starting out all over again. No one knew who he was and he felt uninhibited about his art. Relationships with curators and collectors bloomed.

So it was with disappointment that the couple, having returned to Australia in 2019 to be closer to a sick relative,



Above right: The layered meaning behind Paul Davies' work has seen *Belvedere Loop* acquired by the Getty Museum.

Above left: *We Tell Ourselves Stories 1*.

found themselves marooned in Sydney because of COVID. But then a contact at the Getty got in touch to ask Davies to give a talk over Zoom at an event with some museum patrons. The museum's curator then saw some of his works at a gallery in LA and thus began months of emails leading to the eventual acquisition of *Belvedere Loop*.

"I was amazed at how thorough the whole process was. The questions were excellent. All the back and forth about the concepts behind the work. They really took the time to look closely at what I was trying to say."

And the feeling of being in the collection of a museum with such a stature? "It reminds me of the excitement of getting into photography as a kid."

Works by Paul Davies will feature in *Lost in Palm Springs* at the Gold Coast's HOTA, opening on March 4.

Matthew Drummond

FRESHLY BAKED

What do you do when you have already created "the world's most Instagrammed cake" and sold the business for a few sweet million dollars? You go back to the drawing board. Or in Christopher Thé's case, the mixing bowl. This time, the founder of Black Star Pastry and creator of the famous strawberry watermelon cake is keeping it local, with a cafe and bakery in Sydney's inner west. "For Hearthe, I've worked hard to create cakes that utilise Australia's unique Indigenous ingredients, making them part of the conversation," says Thé. His creations include the orange cake with lemon myrtle icing and dried yams shown below, saltbush scones, and tarts layered with smoked chocolate ganache and eucalypt caramel. While expectations are high, he isn't aiming to replicate the world domination of his most famous cake. "You can only put forward what you want to make, and see if people like it."

Hearthe, 16 Douglas Street, Stanmore, NSW.
hearthe.com.au

Jill Duplex

