

Catalogue Essay
by Dr Margaret Baguley
Hill's Edge; Jane Giblin & Sue Henderson
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Jane Giblin is an artist who captures an indefinable quality in her sweeping Tasmanian landscapes by bringing together a range of layers both in terms of media and memory. Giblin seeks to recapture fondly remembered childhood experiences of journeys, both in the car and on foot, of discovery beyond the reality of experience. Her love of the Tasmanian landscape results in works which are carefully yet spontaneously layered; anchored by objects which are often manufactured. Giblin forces the viewer to acknowledge and value every element and aspect of the work, which reveals her story of space and place. Oftentimes the negative spaces in Giblin's work resonate with the same energy as the forms she depicts. This results in a rhythmic energy throughout her works, which is both alienating yet strangely familiar. It is a sense of the rhythms inherent in seasonal changes, which many people from the land are familiar with, and those who are not are alienated from. Her use of devices such as lengths of paddocks and fence posts recall to her the fleeting glimpses from a car window and the memory of the rhythmic pace of the journey being undertaken.

The sense of being 'other' is a recurring theme in Giblin's work resulting in paintings and drawings, which often contain shadows, symbolising herself, against the landscape. The layering of paint or ink is also important to Giblin because it is in the spaces in between where she recognises existence. Giblin's commitment to her art has seen her work in isolated landscapes for extended periods of time. As she states: 'I adore the Tasmanian landscape, I feel like I am part of this Tasmanian landscape, I love the soil here.' However, the tension in her work also reflects a quiet sense of dispossession of the land and empathy for others who have experienced this sense of isolation and disconnectedness. The denuded hills symbolise her intuitive concept of their forms rather than a realistic portrayal of their surface. The scratching and scoring of the surface of her work with ink results in her feeling and experiencing the landscape as she did when she was a child 'with bindy burrs in your feet, walking barefoot, scuffing around in bare feet in gravel or getting the bitumen stuck on the soles of your feet'.

Giblin's work is immediate and urgent. She seeks to capture a sensory and emotional recollection based on remembered physical immersion in the landscape itself. To this end her most recent works feature the recurring motifs of an irrigator and a shed, which she notes 'have to take prominence for a time'. Giblin's work cannot progress without real experiences resulting in her constantly experimenting with these motifs until her next immersion experience with the land. Although rapidly, but expertly executed, these works continually reflect upon and challenge the motifs, which Giblin is working with resulting in landscapes imbued with her story. The inclusion of water in her work, for example, references her father's work with drought-ridden regions and his responsibilities in examining bores and designing dams for the communities of Tasmania and New South Wales. Including water in her work therefore enables Giblin to seek 'a tiny vestige of redemption' for water is a powerful symbol for both cleansing and survival. It is also a tribute to her father for imbuing in her this love of the land, which she constantly honours in her work. Giblin does not try to master her subject matter through challenge and control but allows it to speak to her, with gentle sensory reminders of smells and sounds, which are the same, yet different from those she encountered in the past.

Giblin's compositions reveal an insightful and intelligent eye, which makes full use of the space available to capture the essence of the land and her relationship to it. Her drawing skills, honed after decades of practice, are expertly used to bring definition to the transient quality she endeavours to capture. Layers of paint and ink are skilfully used to reveal complexity and depth to the forms she has depicted. Her palette is defined by the mood of the work which ranges from brooding to celebratory, reflecting both an internal and external dialogue between her and the land itself. Drips, splashes and scratching into and onto the work allude to her recognition that nature itself is uncontrollable. They also lend a vibrancy and sense of movement to the more formal compositions simmering on the rag paper or canvas beneath.

The somatic experience involved in encountering Giblin's work is similar to that captured by Lloyd Rees. Both artists seek to capture the immediacy of mood and the myriad effects of light resulting in works, which have an ethereal, enigmatic yet emotional quality. Giblin's commitment to truth in materials and subject matter brokers no compromise between the way she perceives the landscape, her relationship with it, both past and present, and her absolute passion to capture its complexity and beauty. There is a lyrical quality to Giblin's work, which reminds the viewer of their transient existence in relation to nature, which positions our lives with seasonal changes; constantly reminding us of time passing. Her work however also reveals that it is possible to work with the land rather than against it; to celebrate its immense power and constant claim on our existence. Giblin

perceives denuded, desolate and scoured landscapes as possessing difference, interference and arrhythmia as well as rhythm, warmth, delight and seduction. These are qualities, which she has internalised and transformed into works, which are transitory and immediate, sensual and earthy.

Giblin seeks to create work, which is informed by past and present experiences simultaneously, which explore the qualities of space and personal sensory experiences. Her ability to do this in such a powerful and effective way reveals an artist who has interrogated her arts practice through discipline and hard work. Her prolific output is remarkable and is a genuine commitment to her role as an artist. We are indeed privileged to be able to view and converse with such honest, emotive, passionate and reflective works inspired by the Tasmanian landscape in this exhibition from an artist of Giblin's calibre.