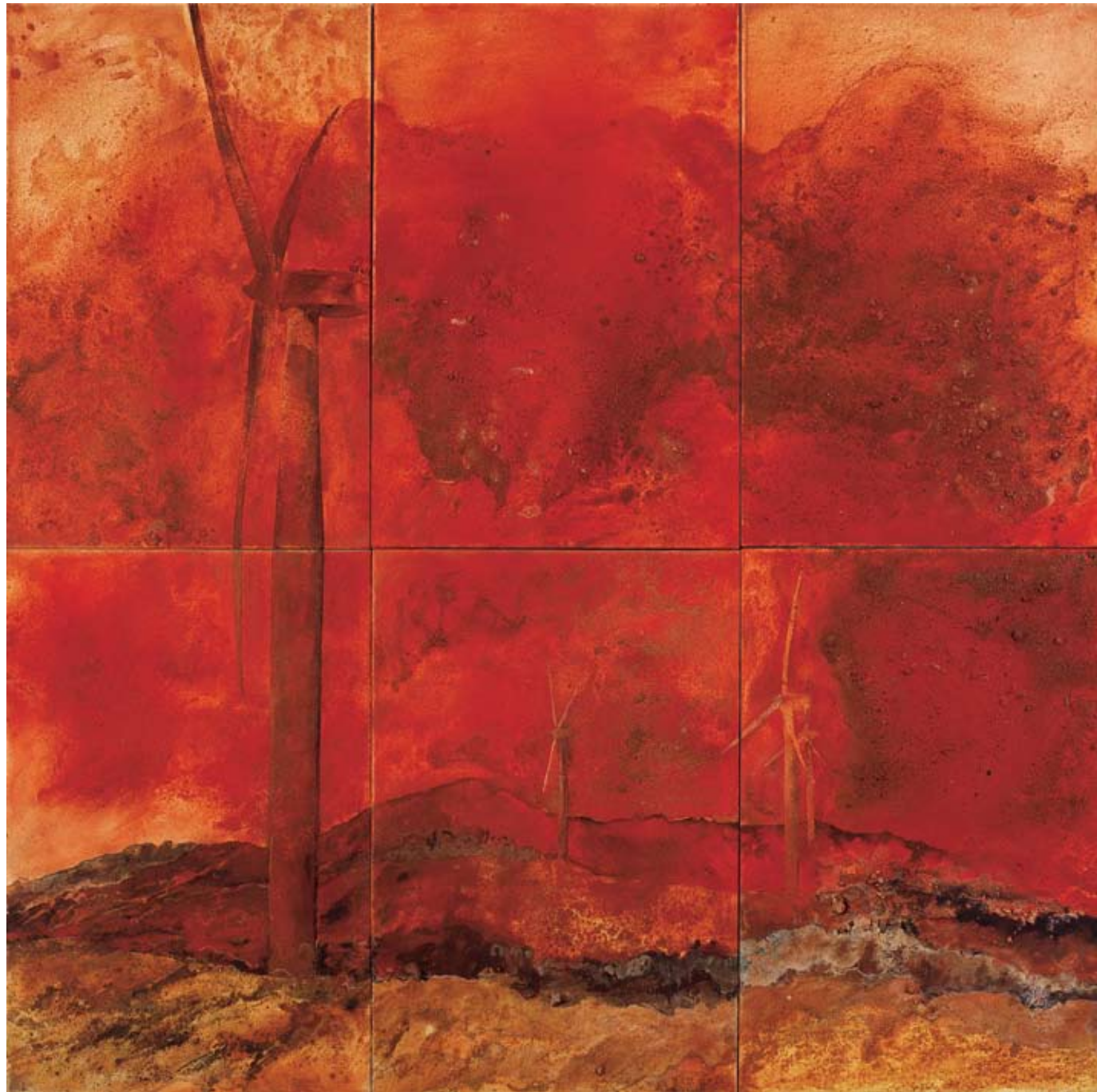


MANDY MARTIN



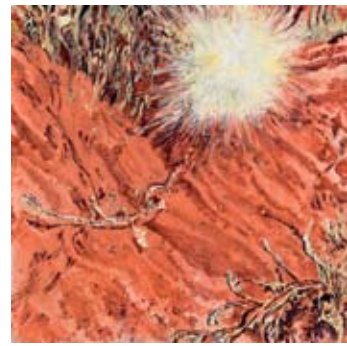
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Cover: *Dust Storm over Toko Range* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 180 x 180 cm

- 10 *Dust Storm/Windfarm* 2010 pigment and acrylic on Velin paper 100 x 100 cm
- 11 *Power Station 1* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 135 x 135 cm
- 12 *Power Station 1* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 180 x 180 cm
- 13 *Desert Place 4* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 14 *Power Station 11* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 15 *Desert Place 2* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 16 *Power Station 16* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 17 *Open Cut Coal* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 80 x 91 cm

MANDY MARTIN



WANDERERS IN THE DESERT OF THE REAL 2011

17 MAY - 4 JUNE 2011

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WANDERERS IN THE DESERT OF THE REAL 2011

Mandy Martin inhabits two worlds as an artist. One threads through the industrial matrix of the Australian coastal cities and inland environs with their pipelines and power plants, their mines and conveyor belts, refineries and mills. Martin, like many postmodern geographers, navigates this overbuilt terrain in a vehicle from which she points a camera to shoot quickly through the fences and barriers protecting the corporate assets. The other life she conducts on foot in the desert, walking the area around her campsite, then hovering over the ironing board that she uses as an easel, her horizontal images composed above the small patches of ground that she studies for days.

Australia has the oldest and most weathered soils on Earth, soils so ancient that most of their minerals have migrated downward leaving behind a thin layer of sand atop clay subsoils. The country is also famously the driest of the inhabited continents. Add to its propensity for droughts and floods the accelerant of climate change and you have conditions requisite for epic sandstorms, like the one that Mandy Martin drove through in September 2009 on her way to Sydney from her home near Cowra. Her route that day took her past the coal-fired power station of Wallerawang, the cooling towers of which she has painted many times as monumental symbols of environmental degradation. The towers dominate the valley in which they stand, but that day were all but invisible. The terrain that she paints so patiently in the desert had come to visit the industrial territory.

The phrase "the desert of the real" was coined by cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard to describe life in a world of simulacra where images and symbols and advertising are apprehended prior to, or even instead of reality. The phrase was recycled memorably in the movie *The Matrix* when the character of Morpheus welcomes Neo to the reality underlying the computer simulation in which humanity has been trapped. Martin has for years used the phrase to allude to the equally dissonant and entirely more real discovery by 19th-century Australian explorers that the interior of their continent held no great lakes and rivers, no promise that humans could remake it into a garden, but rather was an arid region larger than most European countries.

In Martin's latest iteration, the phrase means to experience what in Australia can be the desert itself wandering. When last we saw Martin's work in her first Wanderer exhibition at Australian Galleries during 2009, she had painted an enormous triptych of the Wallerawang powerplant, its center panel featuring a single figure fleeing the outfall of ash from the towering stacks on either side. In a counterpoint painting this time around, nature dominates the architectonic,



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whether it's the power plant or a relatively benign wind farm. Both are references to our output of carbon increasing greenhouse gases and hence promoting increasingly vivid reactions in the weather, the actual meteorological events that cumulatively comprise climate.

Although Martin has spent much of her career creating large canvases of industrial structures and monumental panoramas of desert landscapes, she has also invested long field seasons painting those small studies of the ground at her feet, hundreds of sketches in notebooks and on canvases of ancient soils at a microcosmic scale. The view from her eyes to the ground is tightly circumscribed, without a horizon, not remarked upon by any grand gesture - yet these little patches of the planet have witnessed more time than is humanly imaginable. The ochre ground with its trailing vines and spiny grasses is a fractal counterpart to the continent. Sit with one of these paintings long enough and the issue of size falls away; they invest themselves with rivers and hills, trails and dry lake beds. This is nature that is not only similar at different scales, but one that endures.

We tend to define Romantic landscapes as large-scale images of powerful views (with the occasional allowance for small but potent images of large views). Their goal is to invoke the sublime, that touchstone of the Romantic wherein your sense of self is diminished enough to feel the helplessness of humanity in the face of the much larger reality of a nature that is, yes, beautiful, but also indifferent to us. The result is usually awe tinged with some terror, as during the sandstorms. The orange atmosphere of the windblown sand is magnificent to witness, but life-threatening, and doesn't care if it is overwhelming coal-fired power plants or the more benign wind farms.

Is it possible to achieve that frisson of the sublime by looking at pictures at the other end of the scale and with more intimate knowledge of the ground versus monumental landscapes? Mandy Martin answers this with a definitive yes. The paintings of storms and cooling towers--the latter a kind of industrial sublime--have surfaces often characterized by strong brushstrokes loaded with paint. The images of desert ground, whether large or small, are quieter in execution and affect, but over time we're as taken by the grains of sand as we are shaken by the sandstorms. Martin continually reinvents our notion of nature and our relationship to it. That she is able to do so across a range of scales is to also reinvest the sublime into an age that desperately needs it.

WILLIAM L. FOX,
DIRECTOR FOR THE CENTER FOR ART AND ENVIRONMENT
AT THE NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART



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- 1 *Dust Storm Diamantina* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 180 x 180 cm
- 2 *Power Station Snow* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 135 x 135 cm
- 3 *Dust Storm/Power Station* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 180 x 180 cm
- 4 *Power Station 12* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 5 *Desert Place 5* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm

- 6 *Power Station 15* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 51 x 51 cm
- 7 *Desert Place 2* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 135 x 135 cm
- 8 *Power Station 2* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 180 x 180 cm
- 9 *Desert Place 1* 2011 pigment and oil on linen 135 x 135 cm

SELECTED BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Born 1952, Adelaide, Australia. Mandy Martin is a practicing artist who has held numerous exhibitions in Australia, Mexico and the USA. She has also been exhibited in France, Germany, Japan, Taiwan and Italy. Her works are in many public and private collections including the National Gallery of Australia, most state collections and regional galleries. In the USA she is represented in the Guggenheim Museum New York, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno and many private collections. She lives in the Central West region of New South Wales, Australia.

1972-75 Studied at the South Australian School of Art, Adelaide
1978-03 Lecturer at the School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra
2003-07 Fellow of Australian National University, Canberra
2008 Adjunct Professor Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University, Canberra
www.mandy-martin.com

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 'Wanderers in the Desert of the Real', 2011, Australian Galleries, Royston Street, Sydney
- 2009 'Wanderers in the Desert of the Real', 2009, Australian Galleries, Derby Street, Melbourne
'Mandy Martin and Mangkaja Artists painting Fitzroy River Valley Country 2007-09', Australian Galleries, Smith Street, Melbourne
'Mandy Martin Painting 1981-2009', survey exhibition, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Canberra
- 2008 'Wanderers in the Desert of the Real', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 2006 'Salvadoresque', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
'Absence and Presence', Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 2005 'Strata: Desert of the Mind's Eye' - An exhibition of Ikuntji artists and 'Mandy Martin', Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, NT
- 2004 'Absence and Presence', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 2003 'Bridging the Wild: Salvator Rosa Series V', Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
'Salvator Rosa Series IV', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 2002 'Peripicia: The Salvator Rosa series', Drill Hall Gallery, The Australian National University, Canberra
- 2001-02 'Inflows: the Channel Country', Touring exhibition: Canberra Museum and Gallery, ACT; Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW; Albury Regional Art Gallery, NSW; Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW; Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, QLD
- 2001 'Salvator Rosa series', Casa de la Primera Imprenta de America, Festival Centro Historico Mexico City; Casa Gene Byron, Festival Cervantino, Guanajuato, Mexico
- 2000 'Salvator Rosa Series III', Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
- 1999-00 'Watersheds: the Paroo to the Warrego', Touring exhibition: Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, VIC; Mildura Arts Centre, VIC; Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW; Newcastle Region Art Gallery, NSW
- 1997-98 'Tracts: Back O'Bourke', Touring exhibition: Nolan Gallery, Canberra; Moree Regional Gallery, NSW; Broken Hill City Art Gallery, NSW; Dubbo Regional Art Gallery, NSW; Albury Regional Art Centre, NSW

RECENT WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST

Robin, L. Dickman, C. Martin, M., *Desert Channels: the impulse to conserve*, CSIRO Melbourne, 2010
Martin, M. "Absence and Presence" in Potter, E., Mackinnon, A., McKenzie, S., McKay, J, *Fresh Water. New Perspectives on Water in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2007
Martin, M., Robin, L., Smith, M., *Strata: Deserts Past Present and Future*. An environmental project about a significant cultural place. Goanna Press, Canberra, 2005



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