

Shaw

Kate

Story Kate Adams

KATE SHAW has crossed many sectors of the arts: painting & installation, screenwriting, curating, teaching & interactive television, but admits, "I'd rather be making art — this time, it's painting." *Artist Profile* caught up with her from Darwin to discuss her recent work, environmental concerns and possibilities other than paint.

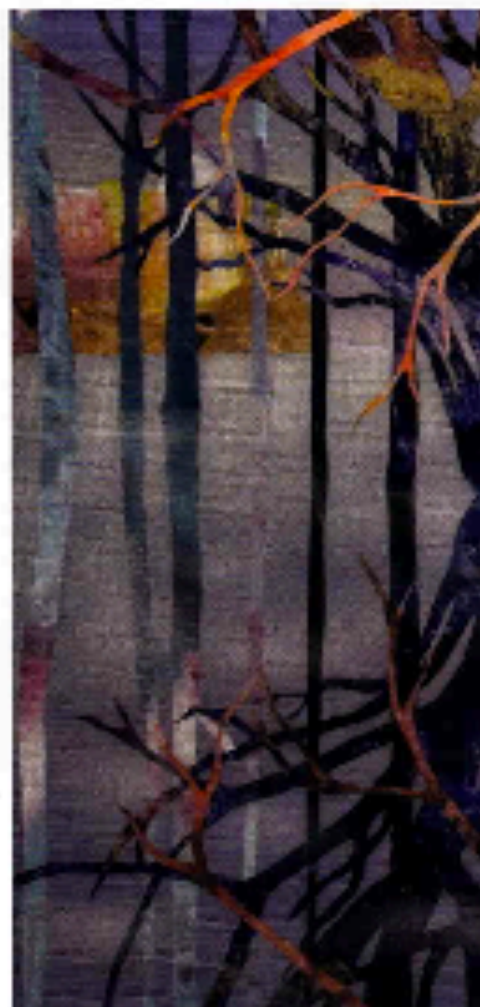
*What landscape(s) did you draw your inspiration from when creating the works in your recent **Redux** and **Virtuax** exhibitions?*

Virtuax was created as the exhibition component of a residency at 24HR Art in Darwin. I visited national parks around Darwin, Kakadu, Litchfield, Tamarara Gorge and the aboriginal communities of Gumbalanga and Wirrimans. These places were the inspiration for the works, particularly the immense variety of trees in Kakadu growing in the most unusual places — clinging to a rocky cliff outcrop, or between the cracks in a cliff or a flooded lowland. It really reminded me what a harsh continent Australia is and the ingenious ways plants and animals survive.

Redux (held at Sullivan & Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney) was a combination of imagery I had worked with before — such as the icebergs. Some of the inspiration came from the jungles of Costa Rica, particularly the unusual shapes and variety of leaves. I made this work in Brooklyn, where I had a great view of the Manhattan skyline from my studio. There is not a lot of what you would call 'nature' in New York — Central Park is the exception — so to me the Manhattan skyline became a mountain range.

*You use a variety of techniques to create your landscapes. Please explain your process for creating a work like **Carbon Shadows**, as an example.*

I use a technique of peeling paints, inks and mediums and then finding form within the result. Sometimes I am referring to a landscape I have recently visited or am interested in, other times imagery comes out of the suggested forms of the paint.



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In *Carbon Shadows* for example, I utilized the gradation in the way the paint had dried to suggest light moving across a landscape. I then collage these pieces to board and finish with resin.

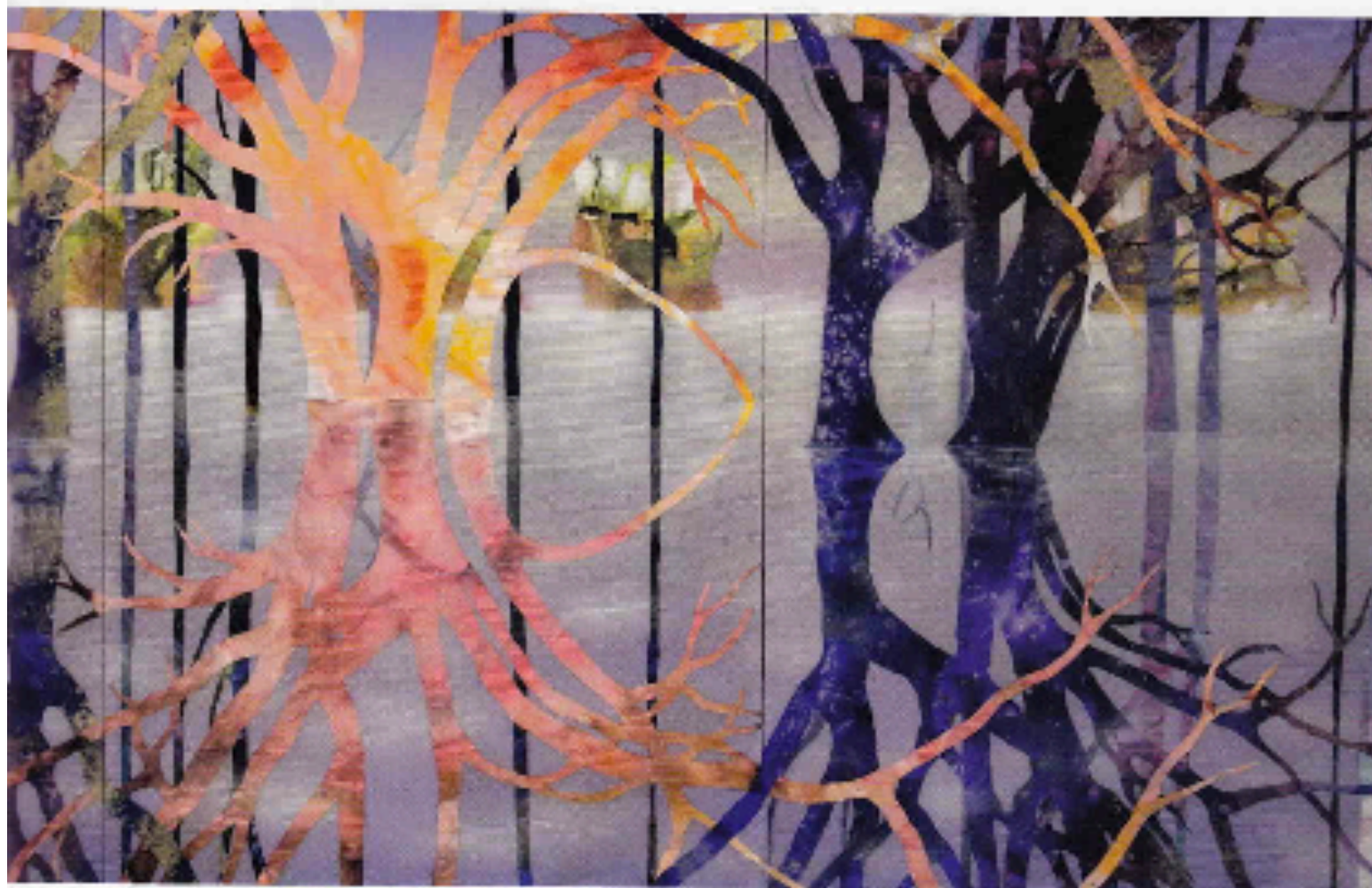
These works refer to the history of painting — particularly the modernist notion of 'truth to materials' by creating a tension between the random nature of the paint pours and the representations created by collaging the paint. In a way, the collaged paint, as well as representing a tree etc., also represents 'paint' — it becomes distanced from its material truth. This distance is further emphasized by the resin surface.

*Do you associate your reflected landscapes (as in **Continental Drift** or **Underworld**) with the popular surrealist method of decalomania?*

It is not exactly decalomania as it's not a transfer of an image, but I do associate it with the Rorschach ink blot test. The association I have to surrealism is using chance and randomness, and associations with the unconscious mind.

Do you consider the peculiar transformations of the physical environment, as a consequence of climate change & global warming, to be the primary concern of your landscape paintings?

I am interested in physical transformations that are happening anyway — such as the lava flow from a volcano. My interest in these transformative physical environments is how they are mimicked in the flow of paints and pigments. Regardless of climate change, the earth has never been still. I think I'm mainly attracted to unusual forms that challenge clichéd notions of what the idea of nature or a landscape is. [My work] has become about macro/micro relationships — how essentially we are all made from the same stuff and all connected. And if we destroy the earth we are destroying ourselves.



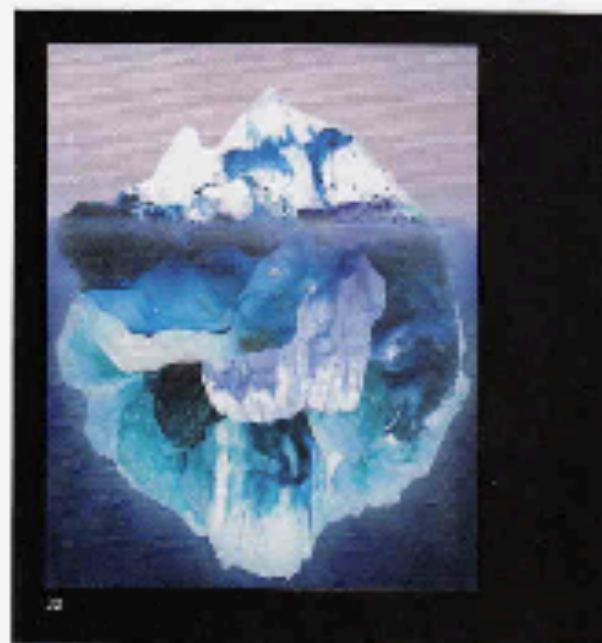
In Ashley Crawford's written piece 'Terra Nullis', which accompanies your 2008 Resler exhibition, you make the comment that the idea of a city in ruin is "only a disaster for humanity". Can you expand on what you mean by this?

I believe the earth will heal itself regardless of what humanity does to it. Part of the healing process might be getting rid of half the population. Consider how the indigenous Australians live with the land — it is a highly sophisticated and regulated relationship grounded in a spiritual and holistic connection to place that creates sustainability. Since industrialization, humanity has been naively taking from the natural world without acknowledging our past connections or indeed a need for a future.

But it is not all doom and gloom. I believe we will change out of necessity. The internet and telecommunication technologies means [our planet] is more connected than ever. This framework creates the means to have a collective conscious when we can no longer think that environmental destruction in one area won't affect us somewhere as a whole.

You've explored various mediums in the past: photographic installation, oil painting & digital imaging programs like Photoshop to name a few. Is there another medium you'd like to explore in the future?

I want to learn Final Cut Pro and [experiment] with animation. I also want to get away from the rectangle for a while and see where I can extend painting too.



Kate Shaw will soon be returning to Brooklyn to work on two solo shows for 2009, one at Melbourne's Nellie Costan Gallery and the other at Sullivan and Strumpf Fine Arts, Sydney.

01 *Woods*, 2005, acrylic and resin on board, 120 x 110cm

02 *Melt*, 2007, acrylic and resin on board, 150 x 100cm