

Jeff Ferris

In the Words of the Artist

I work slowly, taking a simple idea through to a fully developed pencil work, then to a small colour-working sketch. If the idea has developed as I visualised it initially and still holds my interest then I'll do a full work of it.

Most of my initial ideas are seen as I just move around Melbourne - the western suburbs of Altona, Williamstown, Point Cook, Laverton, Tullamarine etc. Sometimes a planned idea can change direction as I'm working through the painting. When this happens I just go along with the changes, these works, where a different direction happens often are some of the more exciting paintings. They just seem to happen and produce happy results – The “Bacchus Marsh Swimming Pool” is an example of how this can happen. Initially the pool had water in it – then I drained the pool – the painting changed.

All my images I see around me every day. Petrochemical tanks, weatherboard houses, letterboxes, open backblocks and new buildings. The empty wastelands of the outer western suburbs have become a source of inspiration lately. The images of the continual pushing out past the established fringes from the more traditional areas of Altona to the new areas of Laverton, Point Cook, Tullamarine. This push out has offered me great images to paint. I always try to capture a certain light, a certain moment. I've often considered painting my works in more neutral tones – more monotonous. But colour really does excite me. I love the joyousness of colour. I always battle to make those colours work – colours moving across the painting excite me.

I hope my paintings contain memorable images. I want the viewer to stop, to be captured and to look. I don't want them to walk past. We live in the most technological visual times. So much to distract and attract the eye. For a painting to compete for attention, to hold interest, it must have a strong memorable image. The best part of painting for me is that it allows me to take a blank piece of paper or canvas or whatever and with a simple visualisation and idea to develop it and create something of my own. It's amazing to have an idea come to fruition as a painting. I admire the technical skills of the Australian artists William Delafield Cook and of course the sheer brilliance of Jeffrey Smart.

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