



# ALAN MULLER

## PERTH 360

A RETROSPECTIVE OF  
PAINTINGS 1997–2017



SPONSORED BY THE  
CITY OF WANNEROO



## FOREWORD

The City of Wanneroo is excited to be presenting this exhibition: Alan Muller Perth 360, A Retrospective of Paintings 1997–2017.

Alan is an esteemed and prolific local artist, who explores pertinent West Australian issues and makes social commentary on cultural and historical aspects of life in Perth.

Alan is well represented in the City's Art Collection and is a regular contributor to the City's Art Awards exhibition, having secured the acquisitive Open Award prize in 2012.

The City of Wanneroo has great pleasure in presenting to the public, two decades of Alan's painting which will strike a resounding chord with City residents.

## ABOUT ALAN MULLER

Alan Muller was born in 1953 in Margaret River, Western Australia. As a child he developed an ongoing love of drawing. At age twelve Alan finally persuaded his parents to buy him a small set of oil paints. He began learning to paint by trying to copy Masters from books, along with instruction and encouragement from his school teachers and local adult artists from Merredin.

In 1969 he achieved equal top marks in Western Australia for Art in the Leaving Certificate and was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship for tertiary studies. He was offered a place in Fine Art but due to parental insistence, in 1970 began an Associateship in Design course at the Western Australian Institute of Technology, now Curtin University. He began full time work in late 1973 as a Designer for the Western Australian Museum.

In 1977 he exhibited paintings professionally for the first time in the Seven Young Western Australian Artists at the Undercroft Gallery, University of Western Australia [UWA]. His first solo exhibition of paintings was in 1980 at Fremantle Arts Centre. Three solo exhibitions followed at Gallery 52, Claremont that included two portraits that were finalists in the Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales. These were a portrait of George Haynes in 1983 and a self portrait in 1984.

He was offered a Senior Designer position in 1984 with the History Trust of South Australia and moved to Adelaide to design a new Migration Museum, the first of its kind in Australia. Alan held two solo exhibitions at Anima Gallery in North Adelaide.

Alan moved to Sydney in 1987 to take up a Senior Designer position at the new National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour and exhibited regularly in alternative art spaces in Redfern, Newtown and Surry Hills.

In 1997 he returned to Perth to focus on Art. Since 2000 he has lived in Heathridge, where he has home studios for painting and drawing. He held solo exhibitions at Gallery East, North Fremantle in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. He held a solo exhibition at Melody Smith Gallery in Carlisle in 2014 and a solo exhibition of drawings at Nyisztor Studio in Melville in 2015.

Alan's work is held in the collections of Artbank, Armadale Redevelopment Authority Collection, Lawrence Wilson Gallery [UWA] Perth Central Tafe, Royal Perth Hospital, City of Perth, City of Stirling, City of Fremantle, City of Wanneroo, Shire of Mundaring, Army Museum of Western Australia, and in private collections in Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.

*Photography of artworks by Eva Fernandez and Alan Muller*



## INTRODUCTION BY CATHERINE CZERW

A strange and seductive sense of the Everywhen pervades Alan Muller's paintings. It's the soulfulness of his suburbs, the dreaminess of his night scenes and the ethereality of his aerial landscapes. First coined by Australian anthropologist and essayist W.E.H. Stanner to describe the sacred and abiding narrative of things that connect the past, present and future of Indigenous people to their land, Everywhen can be felt everywhere once we accept and respect its inexplicable existence.

Unlike many other contemporary artists of his generation, Muller is not interested in creating art that talks purely with and about itself; he paints and draws to understand the complex environment he perceives around him. Returning to Perth after living for 13 years interstate, Muller's initial work as a professional artist reflected his re-experiencing of the sky, light and sense of space that is so unique to the Western Australian landscape. An initial fascination with the emerging tension between Perth's natural environment and its rate of suburban change evolved into a serious questioning of his role as an artist in this ancient place. From this point forward, Muller's paintings of contemporary suburban life have become increasingly concerned with the undisputable truth that he was born on Noongar land and lives on Whadjuk country.

With such deep respect for and appreciation of the Everywhen of this place, Muller brings his keen observations, intelligence and sensibility to his increasingly complex interpretations of landscape, time and space. Gently guided by the artist's imaginative vision and visual language, landscapes are experienced from impossible heights and extraordinary viewpoints. Joining the artist in traversing unfamiliar territory and culturally sensitive terrain, we are challenged to recognise and acknowledge what has been taken, destroyed and lost since white settlement.

In his 1968 Boyer Lecture, W.E.H. Stanner called on historians to cease what he called the Great Australian Silence, a pervasive cult of forgetfulness of this nation's Indigenous people, practiced on a national scale. Some 50 years on, Alan Muller's paintings evoke a similar rethink. He intentionally reimagines the Western Australian landscape, challenging us to remember the ancient history of this place and the central place it holds in the contemporary life of all Australians. His paintings hopefully reflect the changing conversation Australia is having with itself; a more sophisticated dialogue that accepts that we are not a young country of new people but an ancient land of ancient, cultured people.

### **1. *Between - A Cultural Centre***

*2001 Diptych Acrylic 30.5 x 183.5cm | Private Collection*





## 1997–2005 URBAN ELEMENTAL

When I first moved to Perth from Merredin at the beginning of 1971 to begin tertiary studies at what is now Curtin University, Perth was a real urban shock. Perth seemed at the time to be overwhelming, complex and noisy.

In 1997 I moved back to Perth and had the opposite experience. Even though Perth was a much bigger city I was reawakened to its elemental aspects such as the big blue skies of striking cloud forms, the sense of space and light and the beautiful Indian Ocean.

I lived in Sydney from 1987 to 1997 in the inner City suburb of Redfern, a very old suburb with areas including my street that were Dickensian in appearance. My house was a very narrow 1880's Georgian Terrace with a backyard the size of a Perth kitchen. The tiny one way street was full of creative and interesting people but after ten years it was time to come home to Perth.

On returning to Perth in 1997 I immediately felt a sense of environmental revelation. There were places in Perth that had not changed but a lot of the City had grown rapidly along with the population. Perth now had tall skyscrapers, extensive freeways and a more varied culture.

After three years of living in Bayswater I decided I wanted to be closer to family in the northern suburbs and in 2000 moved to Heathridge. The constant hum of city traffic was gone and apart from car burnouts, the soundscape was birdsong and trees in the coastal winds.

**2. Skyscraping I**  
2000 Acrylic 91 x 25cm

**3. Two By Two, Cottesloe**  
2000 Acrylic 91 x 25cm





**4. Bushfire Sunset, Ocean Reef, Heathridge, Joondalup**

*2000 Acrylic 20 x 121.5cm*

In 2000 a bushfire in the Yanchep National Park, north of Joondalup, darkened the sky. An enormous long cloud of smoke slowly drifted over the suburbs and out across the ocean. The sun became a single red eye trying to peer through the wall of brown grey smoke. The 'tents' of Lakeside are on the far right of the work.



**5. Into The City We Go - Merging**

**Mitchell Freeway North**

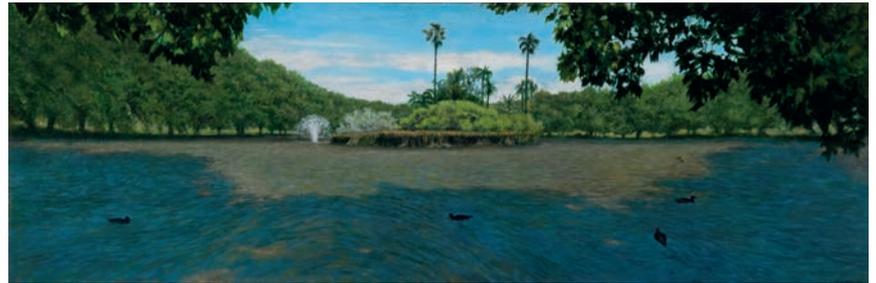
*2000 Acrylic 112 x 50cm*



## **6. Urban Elemental - Leederville Station - Mitchell Freeway North**

*2000 Acrylic 112 x 50cm*

Along the Mitchell Freeway in Perth the white almost maritime language of the stations Leederville, Glendalough, Stirling and Joondalup seemed very familiar to me. Sydney based Architect Phillip Cox brought a completely new language to station design in Perth. The Mitchell Freeway gave the northern suburbs quick and easy access to the City. Friends living in Fremantle thought Heathridge was 'South Geraldton' and would not believe me when I told them that my drive into Perth was quicker than theirs from Fremantle.



## **7. Respite, Hyde Park**

*1999 Acrylic 92 x 30cm | Private Collection*

Before I left Perth in 1984, I had lived in North Perth and Mt Lawley so Hyde Park was very familiar to me and had inspired some of my early paintings. After I returned to live in Perth in 1997 the Highgate Blockade was in the news, where the police were attempting to rid the area of street prostitution and 'curb crawlers' who were harassing local women walking home from work. The work portrays Hyde Park as I wanted to remember it and not what it had become at that time.





### ***8. Temple, Evandale Road, Marangaroo***

*2001 Acrylic 55 x 167cm*

The Pho Quang Pagoda Temple was a surrealistic vision in the middle of the suburbs. It was not only what had been built but also the gardens and the way trees and shrubs were shaped and contoured. Under the big blue Perth sky it appeared like it was in another world. The orange columns separate three different views. On the left the view of Evandale Road is looking south. The centre section with the Temple is a western view, while on the right the Evandale Road view is looking north.



**9. West 1**  
*2003 Acrylic 218 x 218cm*

**10. West 2 | 2003 Acrylic 218 x 218cm**

When I was living in Sydney the environment seemed all 'back to front'. There the sun rose over the ocean and set over the Blue Mountains. It took a long time to get a sense of direction. When I arrived back in Perth to live, seeing the sun rising over the Darling Range and set in the Indian Ocean gave me a true sense of being home.



**11. Sunset Ocean Reef -  
Moonrise Heathridge**  
2001 Acrylic 183 x 40cm





### **12. *Sprawl and Splendour***

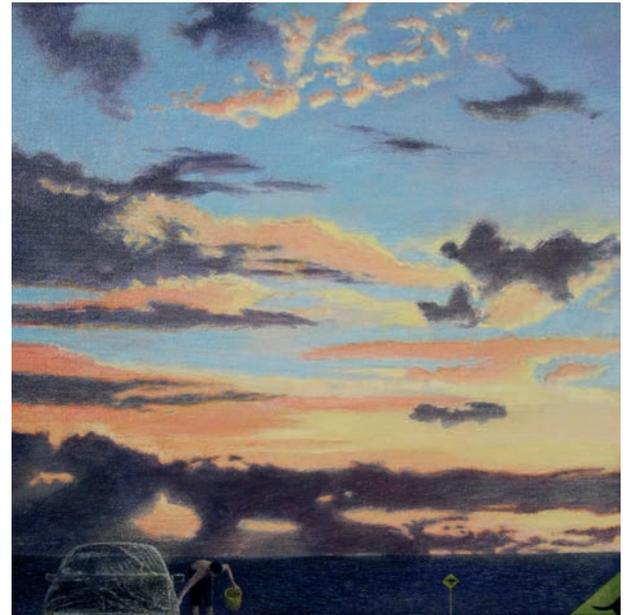
*2001 Acrylic 40 x 168cm*

*Sprawl and Splendour* was painted after seeing the areas of Landsdale and Alexander Heights. I remembered these suburbs as bushland but they have since become a sea of tiled roofs.

### **13. *Urban Yonga***

*2004 Acrylic 40 x 40cm | Private Collection*

*Yonga* is the Noongar word for Kangaroo. While driving along the Mitchell Freeway near Whitfords, I noticed a sign with a Kangaroo symbol on it. I had already had the experience of being in a car that hit a large kangaroo and it was an experience I never wanted to go through again. With traffic on the Mitchell Freeway going at 100 kilometres an hour in two directions and with a railway line between the roads, it made me nervous to think that if a kangaroo attempted to cross it could cause a multiple car pile up. A number of kangaroos met their fate in the early days of the Mitchell Freeway. I have got used to seeing that sign but to me it now means that the area I am driving through was once the habitat of kangaroos.





#### **14. The Sunset Coast**

*2004 Acrylic 50 x 153cm*

Because of the domination of cars in Perth, many birds and tortoises have 'come to grief' trying to cross urban roads. At the entry to the Mitchell Freeway at Leederville, I drove past a mother duck and her ducklings that were on the side of the road. The mother duck's head moved from side to side as she tried to see a break in the oncoming traffic so she and her ducklings could cross the road - three lanes going one way and three the other. That image haunted me for days.



#### **15. Metro Birds**

*2004 Acrylic 60 x 60cm*



**16. Scarborough Beach Road Collective**  
2004 Acrylic 40 x 40cm

The section of Scarborough Beach Road from Hutton Street to Huntress Road has seven sets of traffic lights in close succession. I was caught on this section of road one day in peak hour traffic where all the cars crawled slowly through with the traffic lights taking forever to change. The work juxtaposes the frustration of driving through this area with a tranquil ocean sunset beyond.

**17. Urban Yonga II**  
2004 Acrylic 60 x 60cm





### **18. *The Indian Ocean from Tripleview***

*2004 Triptych Acrylic 1.2 x 3.6m*

The word Tripleview is a play on the word Doubleview. The painting is of an ideal Perth seaside location, albeit one that does not really exist. A panoramic view of the Indian Ocean is interrupted by street lighting referencing urban development all along the coast. In Mindarie for example, houses had been built to the ocean's edge, treating a part of the beach as private real estate.



## 2005–2010 PERTH NIGHT PAINTINGS

As a ritual to complete a day's work in the studio I often went for a night walk around a couple of blocks of my suburb. Night views to the City of Perth and across the northern suburbs were part of this walk. A number of artworks were informed by these expansive views and those of my local neighbourhood. Images and information from greater Perth came from the Community Newspaper, the West Australian Newspaper and talkback radio on ABC 720 and 6PR. I became as interested in the antisocial as a way of revealing the frayed boundaries of law abiding in suburban life.

Perth was becoming a much more confident city and there was a noticeable increase in mentions in the national news, reflecting the huge income Western Australia was earning for the nation at that time. With a thousand people moving to Perth every week, the stresses and strains of a rapidly growing City were becoming evident.

**19. Arriving Leaving**  
*2010 Diptych Acrylic 152 x 38cm*

People had become more affluent. Consumption and renovation went into overdrive. Television programs resulted in a wave of home renovation and some local households produced a mountain of rubbish for the annual verge collection. Some houses were doubled in size.

The new Fly-In Fly-Out lifestyle enabled the earning of extraordinarily high salaries for some. The term 'cashed up bogan' created by new wealth from high paying mining jobs, challenged the stereotyping of bogans as they were earning more than Lawyers, Doctors and Politicians.

At night the constant noise from cars doing burnouts was very noticeable when I first moved to Heathridge in 2000. One local section of road surface looked like a large abstract painting with layer upon layer of black lines that would be added to each night. Today trees and bollards have largely stopped the burnouts on this particular road. Government legislation involving seizing and crushing of cars have had their effect.





## **20. Christmas and Xmas**

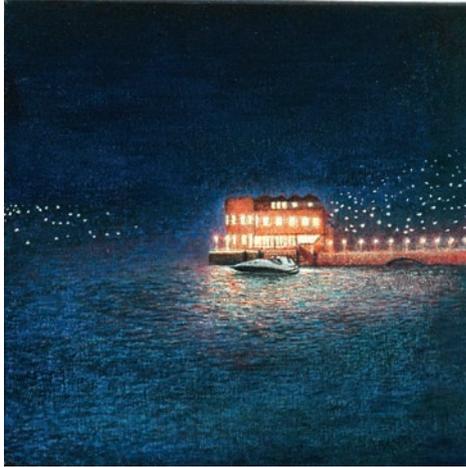
2006 Acrylic 100 x 100cm

As Australia has Christmas during summer, the 'cold climate' imagery of Christmas decorations is surreal. Snowmen, reindeers, Scandinavian Father Christmasses, angels, and nativity scenes are all part of the mix. Christmas decorations had gone from Christmas trees in the lounge room to the whole house or whole street becoming a blaze of colour and light. The people of Perth began to vote on the 'best lights' with bus tours of Christmas lights raising money for charity.

*'This kind of thing will always be wonderful for children but we are really happy that so many older people get so much out of it. A lot of them have got no family or if they have they are alone a lot of the time so it is really special to see them get some enjoyment out of Christmas.'*

Alba Vanderburg of Prairie Dunes Drive, Connolly, The West Australian Newspaper, December 16, 2004.





## 21. *The Castle*

2005 Acrylic 30 x 30cm | Private Collection

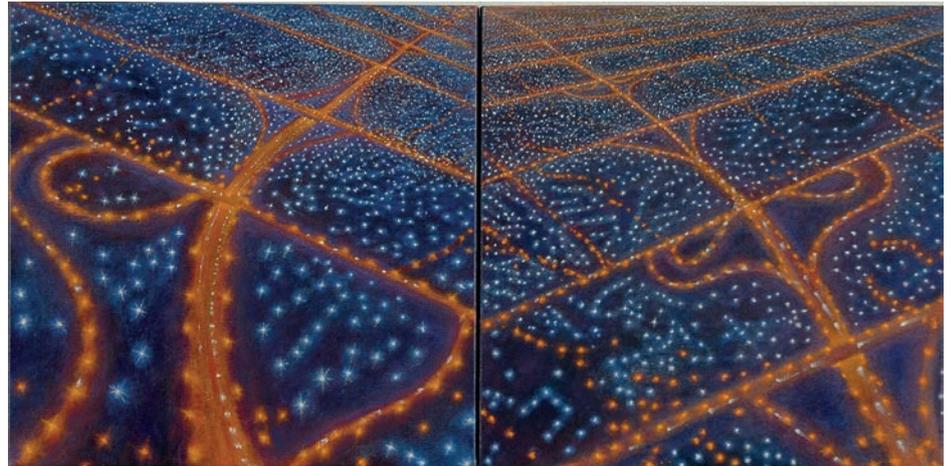
'The Castle' has been used in the past to describe modest Australian suburban homes. People in Perth began building large houses dubbed 'McMansions'. In Mandurah some went further and built big houses with a castle like appearance. A boat or boats at the front of the waterfront house became the new status symbol. There were problems on the canals in Mandurah where large boats had been parked out the front of waterfront McMansions causing access problems for residents and other boat users. I was particularly amused by an article in the West Australian newspaper, on Saturday March 18, 2006 that quoted two opposing opinions from Port Mandurah residents:

*'The whole point of having a house on the canals is being able to have your boat right out the front of your house'* said Mr Ron Taggart.

*'I can't park a semi trailer out the front of my house, so why should people be allowed to moor the Queen Mary in the canals'* said Mr Wade.

## 22. *Freeway Car and Train*

2005 Diptych Acrylic 46 x 91cm





### 23. *Saturday Night Fever*

2005 Acrylic 76 x 76cm

*'Young people are being treated differently to other people. On the one hand they are being asked to get actively involved in the community and to be upstanding citizens. On the other their access to public space is restricted. People underestimate the importance of public space' (to young people). 'The consistent perception of teenagers as perpetrators of violence is overblown. In fact boys between 13 and 17 are at the most risk of being subjected to violence'.*

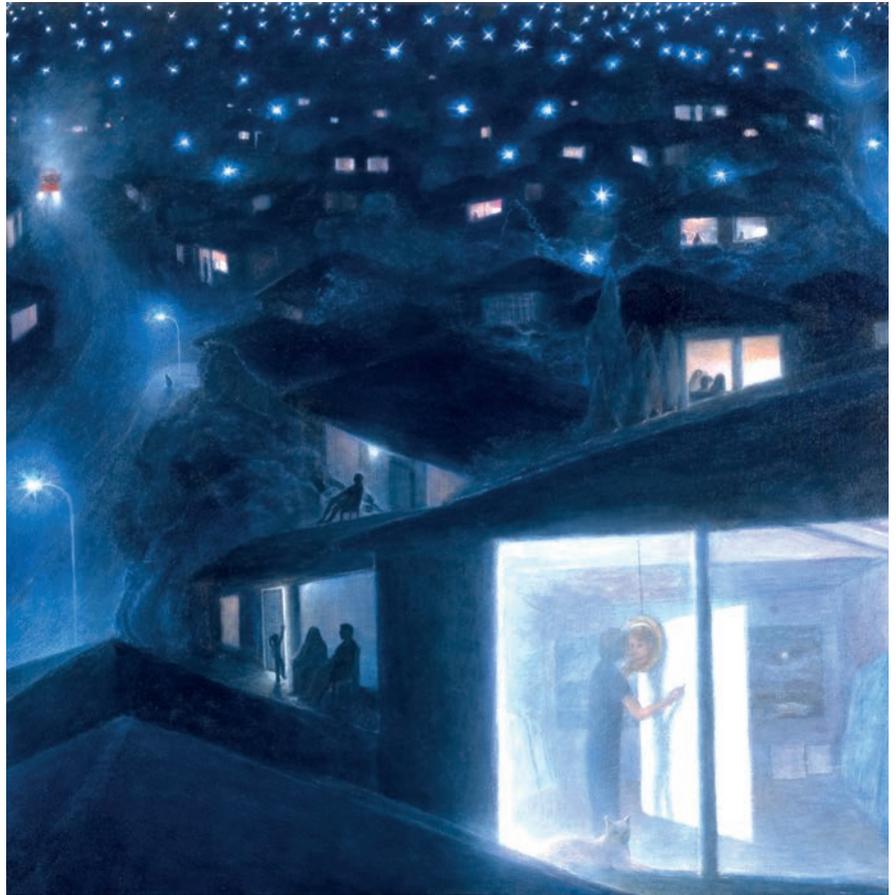
Dr Dave Palmer, Sunday Times,  
March 13, 2005.



**24. Heathridge - About to paint  
a Self Portrait**

*2008 Acrylic 100 x 100cm*

The work depicts my home studio and my neighbours at the time, all who have changed since this work was completed. A major aspect of suburban living is the duality between living in close proximity to others but completely separate. I first saw Heathridge in the late 1970's under construction when a few brick box-like houses stood lost on swathes of sand. Today Heathridge is a fully established suburb going on forty years old.



*25. The Black Swan,  
Darlington to Fremantle*  
2005 Acrylic 137 x 137cm



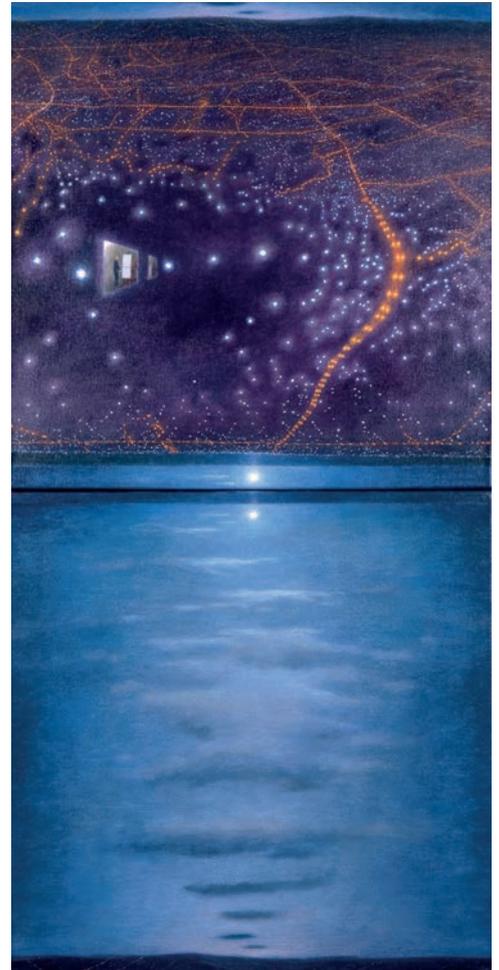
Perth is predicted to have a population of 3 million people by 2050. This is a futuristic aerial view of the City of Perth where the open spaces and semi-rural areas are now housing and commercial buildings.

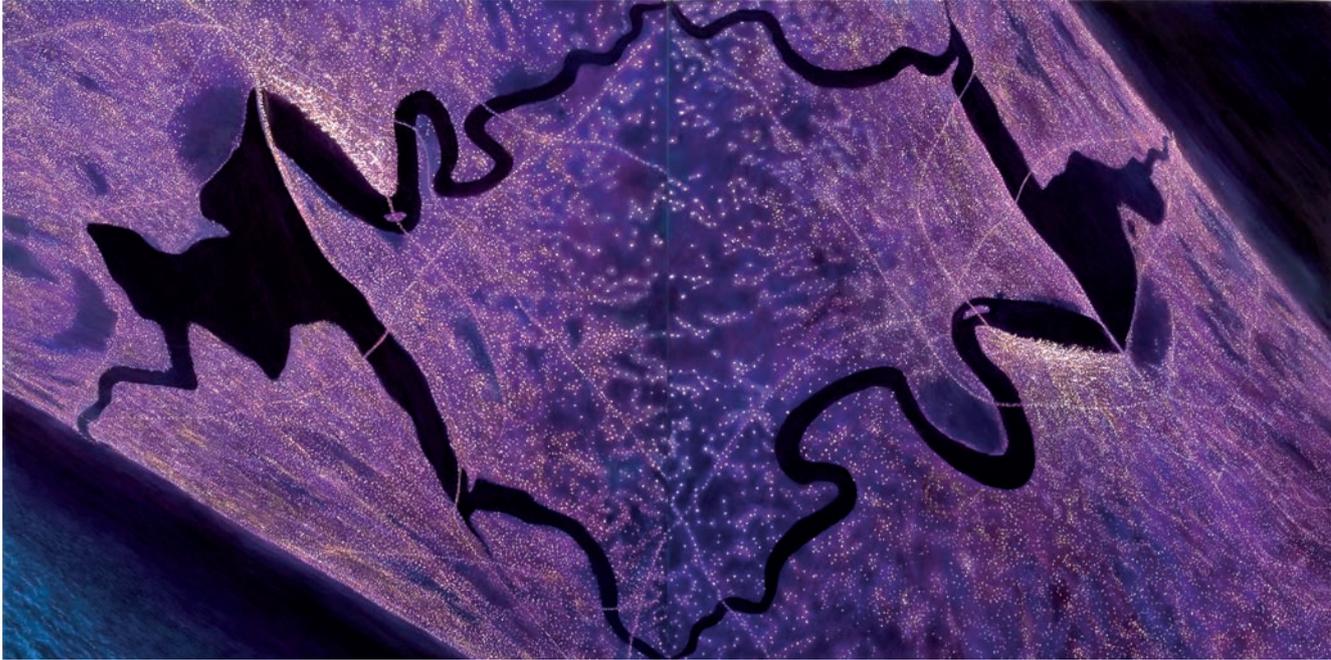
For decades the Swan River had been under environmental pressure due to declining rainfall and chemicals from run off causing toxic algal blooms. 'River hoons' on jet skis and in high powered motor boats caused major problems for the river and other river users. Reports at the time cited the threat to the Swan River by silt.

*'Wall of silt kills the Avon River - and now it's bearing down on the Swan'*

The West Australian Newspaper,  
May 2006.

**26. Dawn Place 360**  
*2010 Diptych Acrylic 124 x 62cm*





### **27. Perth Fly Out Fly In**

2008 Diptych Acrylic 120 x 240cm

The mining boom in the north of the State caused enormous changes to how people lived and worked. For the hundreds of 'fly in fly out workers' in the mining industry that lived in Perth, home was 'fly out and fly in'.

A neighbour who lived and worked like this described '*being on the Mines*' as like '*Groundhog Day everyday until you get to fly home*'. Heralded as a way of earning a large salary, Fly In Fly Out work began to reveal a darker side with marriage breakdowns and stress.

## **28. Perth Pyro - the Night Canopy**

*2006 Acrylic 120 x 120cm*

In the summer of 2004/2005 there was a huge bushfire at Karragullen, in the hills of Perth. The person who deliberately lit the fire, caused maximum mayhem not only with a dangerous fire but with a blanket of thick smoke that covered Perth for days. I was working on a project with a colleague who lived in Mt Pleasant. Driving from Joondalup into and through the City everyday was like descending into hell with the bushfire smoke getting thicker as I drove south. The fire at Karagullen burned out of control for a few days and a huge canopy of smoke covered much of the City of Perth causing a lot of distress.





## 29. Rituals

2005 Diptych Acrylic 76 x 152cms

The work depicts two houses in Heathridge.

*Left:* A house in the next street was at the time the only one in their street to decorate at Christmas. And decorate they did. The house became an extravaganza of lights that blazed away like an outdoor disco in the silence of night.

*Right:* The deliberate burning of untrimmed palm trees was a phenomenon of the northern suburbs. Someone leaving a local party set alight the untrimmed palm tree at the front of my neighbour's house. My neighbours were asleep at the time in the front bedroom - less than three metres from the fire. Their baby daughter was also asleep in the house. The palm tree became a beacon of fire with flames leaping high above their house. If the wind had been in another direction the house would have caught fire. The next day, what was once a big palm tree was reduced to a black stick. The palm tree has since regrown its leaves.



### **30. The Annual Collection II**

*2006 Acrylic 101 x 101cm*

The annual verge collection was a time when at night my suburb looked like an alien place due to streetlights illuminating piles of rubbish. There was both a sense of renewal through home renovation but also a sense of wastefulness.

A retro orange vinyl swivel chair was placed on the verge near my mother's house in Heathridge. At the time I thought this was a real find and took it home. I soon discovered that even though the upholstery was perfect, the frame of the chair was broken so I placed it on the verge at the front of my own house. Within half an hour a neighbour had grabbed it. The next day the chair was back on the verge. Another neighbour then took the chair only to place it back on the verge again. Yet again the chair disappeared and ended up in a neighbour's garage. It was back on the verge at the next annual collection. The work won the Best Oil/Acrylic Award in the City of Albany Art Prize in 2007.





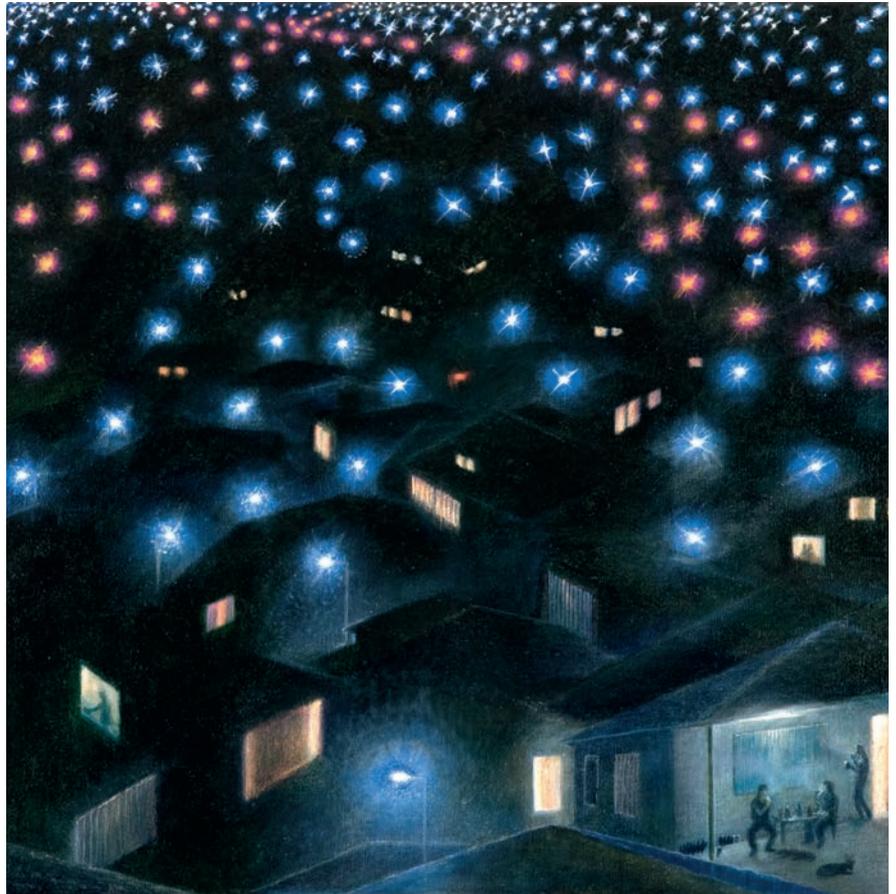
**31. Tag Practice - the Still Life that was thrown over the back fence**  
2007 Acrylic 30 x 30cm

The volume of my new neighbour's stereo was painful. The whole of the back fence between us seemed to be vibrating. I stood on a chair to speak to them over the fence, as there was no way they would hear me knock on their front door. A startled teenager was cleaning the swimming pool in the backyard, with the back fence acting as a giant 'woofer' for his stereo. He immediately turned the stereo down and then off. The afternoon remained quiet.

The next day I found items of rubbish had been thrown over the fence, including a large ball of screwed up pages of the teenagers graffiti tag practice. These items of rubbish sat on my studio table for months in case I had need of them to counter any further nuisance. There was none and they became the subject for a still life painting.

**32. Bogan Villa**  
*2007 Acrylic 60 x 60cm*

Bogans were often derided as unsophisticated, but have always been a part of our culture. The mining boom brought many people to Perth to live while the good financial times lasted. On television recently was a program about bogans. One of the men in the program turned out to be Mark, a kind hearted young man who lived over the road from me in a happy bogan household that regularly played cricket and football in the cul-de-sac.





### **33. Blown**

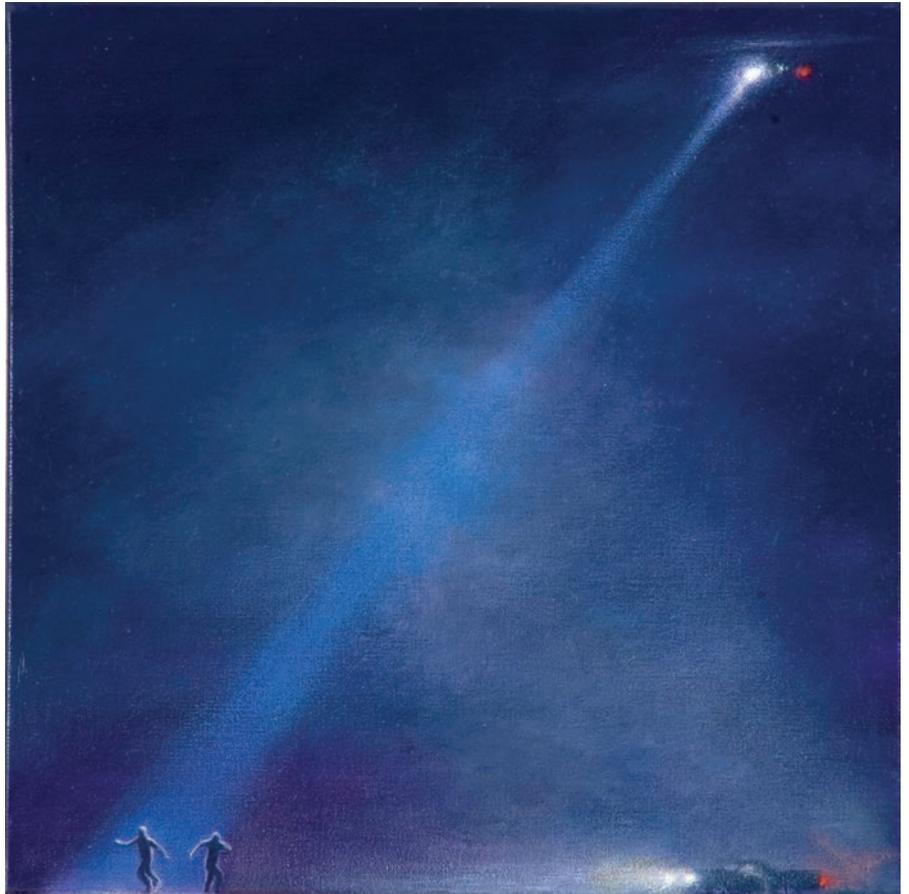
*2007 Acrylic 76 x 76 cm*

In the early hours of the morning I was awoken by the scream of distant tyres. The screams got louder and louder as the vehicle reached my neighbourhood. On and on it went until the sound changed to a dull 'kathunk, kathunk, kathunk' - the sound of blown tyres; mangled rubber barely protecting metal rims from the bitumen road surface. The voices of the young male occupants of the car could be heard discussing the best way to deal with the situation. They then turned off the engine and ran the car home as quietly as possible so no one would know it was them that had just woken up the whole suburb.

### **34. A Run for it**

*2007 Acrylic 40 x 40 cm*

Before the completion of Hepburn Avenue through Marangaroo, a section of road was notorious for the abandoning of stolen cars. Pursued by police with helicopter support, thieves would abandon the stolen car and make a run for it through the bush and market gardens that existed in the area at the time. Police programs on television often featured real chases filmed in this location from helicopters using night vision.





### **35. *Night, Dawn and Morning Songs***

*2010 Triptych Acrylic 50 x 152cm*

A massive Tuart tree on the front verge of my property in Heathridge is the home of a group of Magpies. At times they would carol all night with others in the distance answering the call. The senior male of the group was a one eyed Magpie I called Chappie who like the others, would take food off my hand. His Magpie 'song' included mimicking the sound of other birds, human speech and even the police siren. He would sometimes seek my company if I was sitting under the back pergola and would stand on one leg and go to sleep only about a metre away from me. I first noticed him in 2002 and assume he is now deceased as the last time I saw him was Australia Day 2017. I estimate he was 25 years old.



**36. Derbarl Yerrigan Whadjuk Boodja II,  
(Swan River Whadjuk Country)**  
2011 Diptych Acrylic 50 x 50cm | Private Collection

## 2010–2017 WHADJUK COUNTRY OF THE NOONGAR NATION

In late 2009 I was confronted with some of life's biggest questions due to the death of my mother. This included a deep questioning of what I was doing as an artist. In response I began to focus more on the Swan River - its meaning and its ancient history. The Swan and Canning Rivers became central to my work because they are the physical, historic and spiritual heart of Perth.

How Australians view their history is very different today and continues to change. As a child of the 1950s and 1960s I was taught that Australia was a young country of new people - the daughter of Mother England. Today we recognise that the land on which Australia exists is an ancient land of ancient people, comprised of about 350 Aboriginal nations.

In my research into the English settlement of the Swan Colony in 1829, I noticed that English explorers continually used the word 'park' to describe the landscape around the Swan River. In 1827 E. W. Landor wrote *'whole country of the middle and upper Swan resembles a vast English park'*. This referred to an alternation of open grassland with *'stripes of good forest land'* (Stirling, 1827) which became grassland with fewer trees closer to Moorda (Darling Range). This park like appearance of the landscape around the river had been created by annual burning and land management of the Whadjuk Noongar people over thousands of years to maximise the availability of food and ease of movement over country. This made the riverscape very attractive to the English who were looking for suitable lands for settlement and agriculture.

As my ancestry is European I began to make work that engaged with what the English explorers were seeing at that time - a spectacular river park landscape that was the great Whadjuk Noongar estate of the Perth coastal plain.





**37. Derbarl Yerrigan Warlitje Boodja**  
**(Swan River Wedge Tailed**  
**Eagle Country)**  
2011 Acrylic 100 x 100cm

**38. Dawn Over Mooro Country - Site of the City of Perth**

2013 Acrylic 75 x 150cm

A southern oblique aerial view over what is now the City of Perth. The lakes in the foreground have been filled in and built over. Small islands where East Perth is today were dredged with part of the river filled in and a single Heirisson Island created.

The River is a place of human histories that go back thousands of years. Sites included places to camp, places for women to give birth, places only for men, places only for women, places to fish and gather food, places to have ceremonies and places not to go at all.





**39. Derbarl Yerrigan in Djilba (Swan River in Spring)**

2012 Triptych Acrylic 76 x 228cm

Djilba is one of the six seasons identified by the Whadjuk Noongar people. In the past rainfall was much higher than it is now, perhaps by as much as fifty percent.

Georgiana Molloy, an English settler described the new land as,  
*'an unlimited extent of dark green woods .....trees of full growth with branches untroubled by storm and unpruned by man.'*

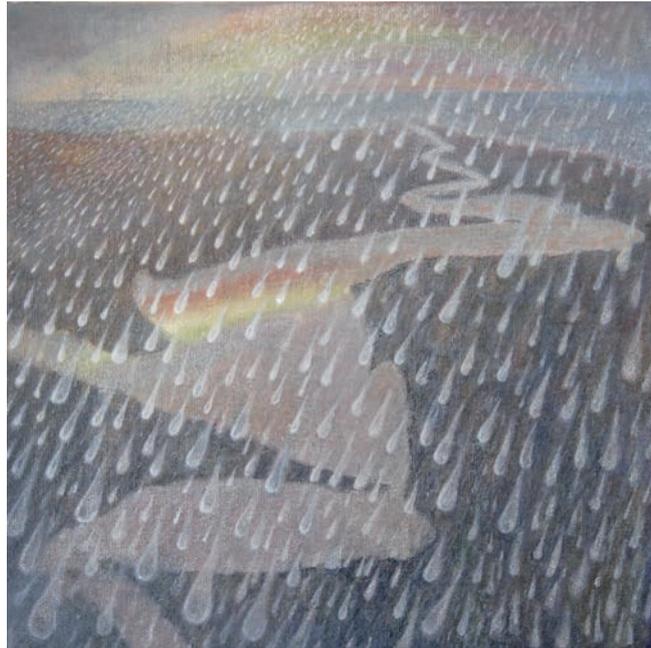
**40. Rain on Derbarl Yerrigan,  
Djarlgarro Beelier II  
(Rain on Swan River, Canning River)**  
2013 Acrylic 120 x 120 cm





**41. Kep Midjaliny (Raining heavily)**  
2014 Acrylic 28 x 28cm

**42. Makuru Djart (Light Rain)**  
2014 Acrylic 28 x 28cm





**43. Walgens - Derbarl Yerrigan,  
Djarlgarro Beelier (Rainbows -  
Swan River, Canning River)**  
2013 Diptych Acrylic 40 x 80cm

**44. Walgen - Derbarl Yerrigan, Djarlgarro Beelier  
(Rainbow - Swan River, Canning River)**  
2013 Acrylic 60 x 60 cm





**45. *Derbarl Yerrigan Whadjuk Boodja (Swan River Whadjuk Country)***

2011 Acrylic 38 x 76cm

**46. Smoke Haze Dawn over Moor  
Country - Site of the City of Perth**

2013 Acrylic 100 x 100cm

*'In December of 1696 Willem Vlamingh's ships stood off the Perth coast, and he saw a sight familiar to sailors. Smoke from many fires came like thick fog from the land. Vlamingh realised that people had lit them...'*

Bill Gammage from his 2011 landmark book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth, How Aborigines Made Australia*.

The Whadjuk people of the Perth coastal plain shaped and changed the landscape in rhythm with the seasons over thousands of years. Long held practices of land management that included regular controlled burning ensured a steady and often abundant supply of food. This created a spectacular park like landscape that greatly appealed to European explorers in search of colonial and farming potential.





**47. Derbarl Yerrigan - Swan River 1**

2011 Acrylic 120 x 120cm

The City of Perth Art Collection

Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River) have sustained the Whadjuk Noongar people as a spiritual place and physical resource for millennia. The River formed natural boundaries for the different Whadjuk communities. The Mooro lived to the north of the river, the Beeliar to the south, while the Beeloo and the Daren communities resided to the east.

*'Every bush as well as every sheet of water supplies their commissariat. Their rivers abound with fish, and their forests with game. Their time is therefore entirely spent in moving from place to place, as hunting and fishing may require; or in playing and receiving visits from the neighbouring tribes'.*

Robert Menli Lyon describing the Whadjuk Noongar People in the Perth Gazette, March 1833.

The work won the People's Choice Award, Royal Agricultural Society Art Awards in 2011.





**48. Nungan Derbarl Yerrigan I (Mother Swan River)**  
2014 Acrylic 30 x 30cm

**49. Night and Dawn Rain - Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River),  
Djarlgarro Beelier (Canning River)**  
2013 Diptych Acrylic 30 x 60cm





**50. Mooro Boodja (Mooro Country)**

2012 Acrylic 76 x 76cm

*The City of Wanneroo Art Collection*

The Mooro people lived north of the river and are a sub group of the Whadjuk of the Perth Coastal Plain. The work depicts the line of lakes that were part of the seasonal migration of the Mooro people from the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) north to the Moore River. The work won the 2012 Wanneroo Art Award.



**51. Nungan Derbarl Yerrigan III (Mother Swan River)**  
2013 Acrylic 76 x 76cm



**52. Nungan (Mother)**  
2013 Acrylic 150 x 90cm





**53. Western view to Mooro Katta (Kings Park) after Garling 1827**

2017 Acrylic 90 x 150cm

A reinterpretation of a watercolour by Frederick Garling painted on the Swan River in 1827. James Stirling was trying to attract private investors to establish the Swan Colony as the English Government had ruled out putting any money into the venture. Garling was commissioned to produce a series of small paintings that would be convincing to private English investors.

On the 1827 Swan River expedition James Stirling wrote:  
*'The quantity of black swans, pelicans, ducks, and aquatic birds seen on the river was truly astonishing. Without any exaggeration, I have seen a number of black swans which could not be estimated at less than 500 rise at once ...'*

In 1833 Eliza Shaw, an English settler wrote:  
*'Curiosities: I have none to send you at this time, nor have any here been able to rear the Black Swan or indeed the Kangaroo. Animals and birds have become extremely scarce.'*



#### **54. Derbarl Yerrigan - Swan River II**

2017 Triptych, Acrylic 40 x 540cm

A southern aerial panoramic view of the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) from the moon rising over Moorda (Darling Range) to the sun setting in Wardan (Ocean).

After the expedition to the Swan River in 1827 Stirling enthusiastically wrote about the establishing of a Swan River Colony:

*"... The great ease with which a settler can bring his land into cultivation, the forests averaging not more than eight to ten trees per acre; secondly, the facility with which he can bring his produce*

*to market, either by land or water ... thirdly, the great abundance of fresh water of the best quality ... fourthly, the great abundance of limestone."*

Whadjuk land (Perth coastal plain) was advertised in the London Gazette in 1828 as free land if English settlers arrived before the end of 1829. The advertisement read: *"Settlers will have no purchase money to pay for their lands ... Their Grants will be conveyed to them in fee simple and will descend to their assignees or heirs for ever."*

#### **Detail: Derbarl Yerrigan - Swan River II**





**55. Boona Boodja (Tree Country)**

*2014 Acrylic 100 x 100cm*

In this work the atmosphere, ocean, land and trees interact as part of the living Earth. The shape of the view down onto the trees references an oblique view from space of the south-west of WA, where vast forests existed before English settlement. The Bibbulmun, Kaneang, Wardandi, Pinjarup and Whadjuk Noongar peoples saw their country radically and irreversibly changed by the cutting down of trees and the clearing of land for English agriculture. One of the unintended consequences has been a constantly declining rainfall.

*I would like to thank the City of Wanneroo for presenting this exhibition.  
Thank you to friends, family and colleagues who have supported my  
work over many years. A special thank you to Ron Nyisztor,  
Catherine Czerw and Gina Pickering.*

**Alan Muller 2017**



*Cover Image:*

***Derbarl Yerrigan - Swan River 1***

*2011 Acrylic 120 x 120 cm*

*The City of Perth Art Collection*



**WANNEROO GALLERY**

Wanneroo Library and Cultural Centre

3 Rocca Way, Wanneroo

.....  
**16 September to 18 October 2017**  
.....

**Open Monday–Saturday : 10am–4pm**

Closed Sundays and Public Holidays

**[wanneroo.wa.gov.au](http://wanneroo.wa.gov.au)**