Research Statement

Title: William Robinson: The Transfigured Landscape
Curator: Van Ooyen, Vanessa and Williams, Megan L
Location: QUT Art Museum, Brisbane, 17 April to 14 August 2012

Research Background

William Robinson is one of Australia’s most commercially successful senior living painters, however, his work has only drawn moderate curatorial and critical attention outside of his home state of Queensland. While the artist’s work has been celebrated through a number of survey exhibitions, none has demonstrated the singularity of his vision across the various subject matter he has tackled over his fifty years of art making.

Research Contribution

The exhibition and catalogue essay argue that Robinson’s primary artistic concern has been to capture the landscape of his life, and that this landscape is transfigured through the artist’s spiritual experience and the materiality of the painting process. Robinson does this by undermining the temporal and lineal narratives that dominate the way in which Western philosophies of thought present a view of the world. Curatorially, this was articulated by including over 80 artworks, among them an unappalled selection of the artist’s acclaimed Creation Series. Displayed across two gallery spaces, the exhibition spanned Robinson’s practice from the late 1970s to the 2000s and demonstrated the development of the artist’s unique multiple view-point perspective.

Research Significance

The exhibition was the highest attended exhibition presented in the history of QUT Art Museum and the William Robinson Gallery and welcomed 16,000 people. It was officially opened by The Honorable Quentin Bryce, Governor of Australia and accompanied by a 204-page monograph of the same title that included essays by Michael Brand, David Malouf and Deborah Hart, among others, and is stocked in major Australian state gallery bookshops, including QAGoMA. The exhibition attracted critical reviews, including from esteemed Australian art critic and writer, John McDonald, who said ‘the show outshines all previous Robinson surveys, including the Queensland Art Gallery’s touring retrospective of 2001’ in his review in the Sydney Morning Herald, 14 May 2011.