

nature imagined
WILLIAM ROBINSON



Eagle landscape 1987
oil on linen 141 x 192cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 1991 through the Vice-Chancellor's
Special Initiatives Fund

INTRODUCTION

The landscape is a spiritual form that fuses vision and creativity because each act of seeing creates an 'ideal landscape' within us.¹

The visual art object often fails to command our attention for more than a few seconds, maybe minutes, as we cross its path. However, if a special connection is made, we can carry that experience with us for life, reconnecting with it through our mind's eye. This is one of the most powerful experiences we can have with an artwork and we never know when it will happen or which inherent qualities an object must possess in order to instil this effect on us for years to come.

It could be said that William Robinson is an exponent of the 'slow art' movement. He's often referred to as a late bloomer—his career as an artist has been slow, steady, but most importantly, consistent. He held his first solo exhibition in 1967 at the age of 31, gained significant commercial success during the early 1980s exhibiting with the Ray Hughes Gallery in Brisbane, and was included in *Australian Perspecta* 1983 and the *Biennale of Sydney* 1986; but it was after winning two of Australia's most

prestigious art prizes—the Archibald and the Wynne—that his career flourished and he gave up his teaching position to paint full-time in 1989. Since then, he has produced some of the most memorable paintings of his generation, and, with the fullness of time, some of the nation's most significant artworks.

Nature imagined is the eleventh exhibition to be held at the William Robinson Gallery since it opened in 2009. In this show, we revisit Robinson's most popular subject—the landscape, or more accurately, his output from 1985 to the early 2000s. This period includes the 'Beechmont' works produced when Robinson moved with his family to a 200-acre property in the Gold Coast Hinterland, and then from 1994 when he relocated his studio to Springbrook, which lies across the Numinbah Valley from Beechmont. Robinson was living on the coast at this time, but would make visits to the Springbrook studio until 2005.



Eagle c.1985
oil on linen 46 x 52cm
Private collection, Brisbane

¹ Raffaele Milani, *The art of the landscape*, trans. Corrado Federici (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 29.

Undoubtedly, the creation of Robinson's art originates from a lifetime of intense observation and joy in the natural world; yet, the work has always been produced in the studio, founded on Robinson's memories, feelings and ideas impelled by the contemplation of the beauty of nature and the cosmos. Comprising works in all the artist's mediums—painting, print, watercolour, pastel, pencil and ceramic—*Nature imagined* offers a new understanding of Robinson's sophisticated vision of his lived environment, and how, while providing source material, the landscape is never a mere representation but an emblem of Robinson's world view.

Within our contemporary world, an artist's temperament is played out on gallery walls and in studios across the globe. In making their art public, artists are offering a little piece of themselves—it's an accepted premise that artworks are the result of the creativity of an individual. But the term 'landscape' too often brings with it a perception of an artist going *out* into nature to capture its inherent beauty; a product of a set of strict rules and conventions; or being tied to a physical site or place. However, ideas of this 'natural vision'—that an artwork presents a realistic representation of a place—are essentially contradictory, as any act of forming a visual experience, whether

on a two-dimensional surface or within a three-dimensional space, is an act of artifice. Every aspect—from medium, scale and size to what to include or exclude—is the result of the artist making choices informed by reality or by their imagination, conscious or unconscious.

Of course, we must also acknowledge that the very idea of nature is historical, generated within a particular culture and time. William Robinson has pursued 'landscape' painting at a time when it has been seen as deeply conservative, hidebound, the antithesis to conceptually and politically driven practice dominating the programs of major institutions, biennales and triennials around the world. In many respects, Robinson is of another time and place—as an artist influenced by early 20th century modernists and as an artist working in Queensland, a place that has only recently begun to emerge as an art centre in its own right. As with his paintings, Robinson is not overly concerned with looking outwards to what is happening around him—he is more concerned with looking inwards.

Robinson is rightfully attributed as one of the most original artists of his generation, altering the way we perceive the Australian landscape



Sketch for 'Dry grass landscape' 6 1986
pastel 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape study no. 2 1989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape study no. 3 1989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape study no. 11989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane

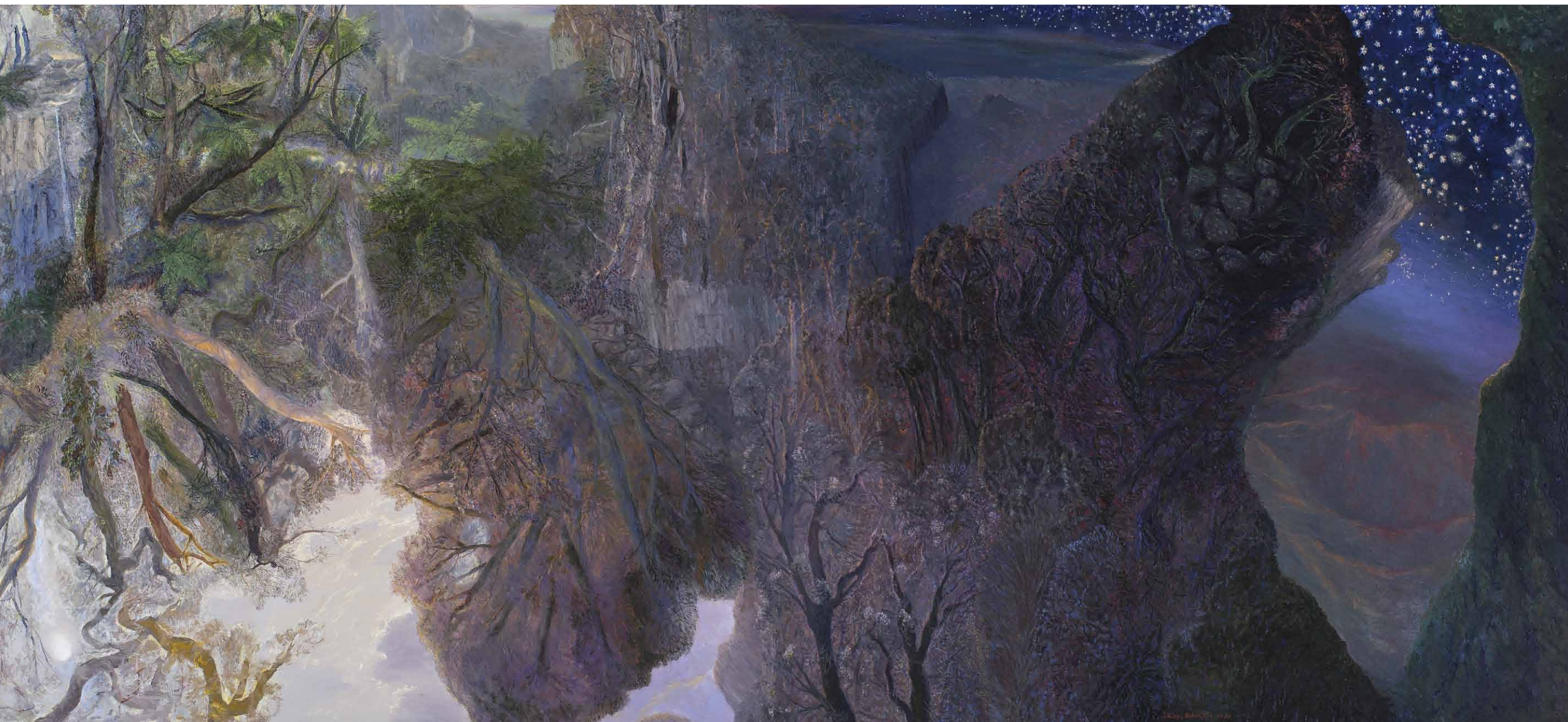
through his unique perspective. We cannot visit our country's vertiginous hinterland or lush rainforests and not imagine one of Robinson's artworks in our experience of that environment. This is undoubtedly a powerful quality of his work and it impacts on our very way of seeing; however, *Nature imagined* seeks to reclaim some of the visionary and dreamlike qualities of Robinson's 'landscape' works. In doing so, it asks viewers to rethink their relationship to nature and the art object. It reminds us to stop, look and experience both the real and imagined worlds that this extraordinary

Australian artist has offered for our meditation and appreciation.

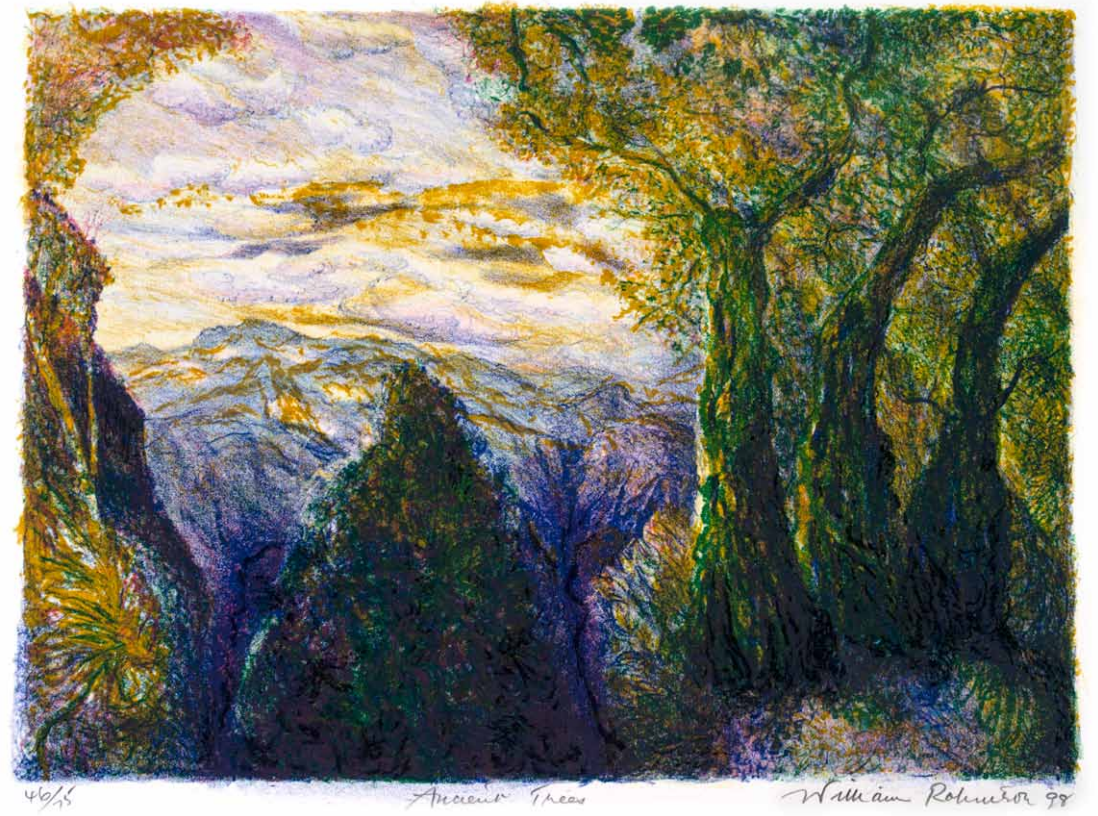
As Robinson notes, "My landscapes are not a reflection of the natural world but a search for what lies beyond. My pictures require quiet contemplation where the observer can bring something of themselves to allow the work to completely resolve."²

Vanessa Van Ooyen
Senior Curator
William Robinson Gallery

² William Robinson, "A parallel vision of place", in *Realms of vision* (Brisbane: QUT, 2009), 11.



Springbrook merging towards night 2004
oil on linen 111.5 x 246.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Ancient trees 1998
 colour lithograph 40 x 50cm
 QUT Art Collection
 Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

NATURE IMAGINED AND OTHER MEANDERINGS



Creation landscape: Man and the spheres III 1991
colour lithograph 67.5 x 81.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Vanessa Van Ooyen The curatorial rationale behind *Nature imagined* is to explore how your work draws upon internal landscapes from your memories of the places you've experienced. It attempts to show how each work evokes a different response to the landscape, as they consistently tug at the memory and recognition of lived place. The paintings are more about feelings derived from a place rather than being a response to place itself.

William Robinson Yes, my paintings are more about how I felt, rather than the place I painted.

VVO Your landscape paintings are primarily described as being representations of a vista or place; most prominently, the hinterland area of South-East Queensland. Sometimes, it's easy to fall back on the old assumption of landscape painting being a 'truth' that captures the reality of nature, similar to the tropes around photography in the late 19th century.

WR Yes, I wonder why this is so often the assumption. For example, in John Constable's paintings, all the variations he painted were altered from the subject in front of him: they are in no way about capturing a true representation.

VVO Yes, there is also this view that landscape is a deeply conservative genre, and that it was the pinnacle of 'good' or exceptional artwork in the classical period, when in fact it was lowly ranked in the 17th century academies, falling beneath portraiture and still life. Because of this misconception, it suffers from being incorrectly seen as 'historical', hidebound, popular—thus anti-theoretical and anti-conceptual.

WR To me, these are theoretical assumptions that have little to do with my paintings, which were responses to feelings. I



Crack of dawn 1988
oil on linen 142.5 x 198cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural
Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2016

wasn't really looking at art or art developments. So many of my pictures are still questions, but nature itself has many questions as well.

VVO You paint from the memory and experience of the natural environment where you have lived. Do you believe this somehow makes for a stronger sense of connection to place as opposed to going into the landscape as a plein air painter?

WR I know that a lot of artists actually get on an aeroplane, go to Central Australia or whatever place they feel compelled to visit, spend some time making art, and then possibly a couple of years later, they go somewhere else, and do the same thing. But because of specific circumstances, my life didn't work that way. We had a small farm at Birkdale and with this came responsibility—to the animals and the family. I was tied to the place—but this gave me a sense of connection with the land, particularly seeing the animals' relationship and livelihood as intricately linked to the land, nature, and the seasons. It gave me a different sense of the place.

VVO What led you to decide to acquire and move to these properties at Birkdale, Beechmont, and later Springbrook? It's fairly left of field to do so when you have a young family and work commitments in the city. Was it part of a larger plan?

WR When we were living at Coorparoo, we could see development going on, so we went to Birkdale. If you went to Birkdale now, you'd think it was a city, but it was just paddocks in those days. Then we could see development starting around there, and so we thought we'd better see if we could move further out.

We didn't have enough money to buy anything that was a successful farm or anything like that. I mean, we looked at a lot of dairy farms and things like that, but they looked like a lot of hard work and failures to me, almost—you had to do the milking by hand and so forth. The property at Beechmont was rundown. The house was falling apart. It hadn't been lived in



Landscape drawing 54 1991
ink 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

VVO

for donkey's years. There was no electricity, no water, no town water, or anything like that.

WR

You bought that property in 1972, but didn't move permanently until 1984. Did you use it as a weekender or stay for extended periods?

We visited Beechmont as early as 1970 and in early 1972, we drove up to see a place that Shirley had found on a couple of hundred acres on the western side of Beechmont. You go through Canungra and it is just before you get to the top of Beechmont.

We wouldn't stay there, but we'd go for the day occasionally. Our friends Graham and Marie Nash lived on the property for a period of time during the 1970s; I think they kept goats.

When we moved there in 1984, it was a shock to the system because there was no electricity. It was very much snake territory, but it was extraordinarily beautiful. It had previously been owned by a war veteran who had possibly been granted the 200 acres by the Government. Like everybody else in the area, he started a small dairy farm, but that had all gone by the time we bought the property.

When we arrived, we lived in the old house and that became my studio after we built a new house to live in. I gradually came to terms with the landscape itself, by walking it every day and experiencing all of the various types of place, animals, changes in light and seasons. We had dingoes, kangaroos, and pademelons—very small marsupials—and many, many birds would migrate across the territory, especially black cockatoos and parrots.

When you have a farm, you are grappling to understand all the nuances of the land, the animals, the seasons and even night and day. You experience so many things that are happening, even shifts in clouds. If you set up your easel in plein air fashion, you would only capture a short moment of time. Perhaps I was a bit overwhelmed by it.



Watercolour triptych A 1985
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Creation landscape: Man and the spheres II 1991
 colour lithograph 67.5 x 81.5cm
 QUT Art Collection
 Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002



Early light, Coomera Gorge 1994
oil on linen 138 x 182.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural
Gifts Program by Michael Gleeson-White, 2013

My first paintings of Beechmont still included our farm animals—the cows and chooks—but in these paintings, I was discovering the natural environment and the structure of the landscape. Gradually, the animals disappeared and I was left with the landscape itself.

VVO The topography at Beechmont is very densely treed, with steep cliffs and gullies. It is a very distinctive natural environment and I can't think of another area in Australia that has these characteristics; you are afforded glimpses of ocean, rainforest and mountains simultaneously. Because it's such a rare environment, it doesn't have a great precedent in our country's art.

WR We had a little bit of rainforest on our property. I'd never painted rainforest before. I'd never really been in a position to see it so intimately either. Most of Australia's landscape painting was to do with the dry, flat landscape. This was a landscape which had to be discovered in another way.

VVO Was it an intentional decision to paint the landscape or did it happen more organically?

WR I think I was internalising everything that I saw until a certain vision could be put down on canvas. It took some time—from 1984 until 1988—until I produced the first of the 'Creation' series. Somehow or another, the presence of God, if you like, comes into it. People can define God in any way they wish, but we don't really know what God is. God has been portrayed by people such as Michelangelo as an old man, but we don't actually know what they are.

Whatever the presence of God is, it's all-enveloping and it is in nature because nature is an ever-growing and ever-changing thing. I realised that some force was acting behind the landscape I was seeing and I was somehow or other trying to articulate that force in painting. It was a landscape made up of connections and, by walking around it, I had to work out how a multi-vision could be used to connect the aspects of the environment.

You could call this employing a form of perspective, but it's not like architectural perspective. It's much more organic, even illogical, because viewing the work, you still get the overriding feeling of the landscape. If you made it mathematical, somehow or other you'd be creating it and destroying it in the one go. A lot of the pictures that I did with a multi-perspective were rather confusing to some people. They looked at them as a failed jigsaw puzzle that didn't work out. But putting the puzzle together perfectly was not the point.

VVO Yours was a process of exploration, discovery and learning.

WR Yes, I made gradual moves from one picture to the next, and it takes a lot of pictures to sort of seal these moves. Sometimes a lot of drawings or watercolours or something like that to see how, for example, in that particular move to Beechmont, I didn't suddenly wake up to the multi-viewpoint perspective. It came gradually, working through my ideas in a lot of drawings and watercolours and so forth.

A lot of them were very, very awkward and I think that's the beauty of the Gallery at QUT—it can show those awkward strivings, as it were, from one point to another point. I appreciate that the exhibitions are not a case of sorting out the best pictures to pretend that I was always good, because I wasn't always good. A lot of the work is very, very uncertain and was only just saved from being burnt along the way. It's these sorts of things that the Gallery should be about—piecing together all this history over a long, long period of time as people lend their pictures and perhaps even donate their pictures in the end, so that the whole story can be told.

VVO What I find engaging in your work is they literally have no boundaries; your paintings challenge our standard vision, our beliefs and knowledge of how we understand and perceive the environment. No matter how familiar we become with a certain painting, there always seems to be more to discover. In their continued giving, they remind us to slow down and actually look



13/5
Cloud
William Robinson Jr.

Cloud 1992
colour lithograph 38 x 40.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002



14/6
Cloudy sun
William Robinson Jr.

Cloudy sun 1992
colour lithograph 56 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

at them. They are also disorientating in that they fundamentally undermine the ground on which we stand.

WR Yes, I know that some critics have argued that they don't work as paintings, but I think these critics are trying to make them work like a plan or a map and they don't work like that.

VVO It's questionable how we can even judge whether a painting is good or bad, successful or unresolved. We can approach a work as a technical exercise in pure painting or as an experiment drawn from the imagination. That intuitive response still holds substantial sway despite our sophistication and scientific progress.

WR For me, the point of making these works was still the supremacy of the picture and its composition and its forms, which is no different from the way that the realisation of a painting would be for Cézanne. If one goes back and looks at Cézanne very carefully, he has many unresolved paintings. He was always heading towards the resolution of paintings, but many paintings were discarded by the artist because they reached a stage of, mathematically, being unresolved, but painterly they're very resolved. They're just beautiful objects and constructions.

To say that you can completely find the answers is, I think, wrong. I never really entirely find the answers. I could feel that there was a presence in the landscape of a force, if you like, and I couldn't believe that that force was just there by an uncontrolled, mathematical accident.

I realised that was part of it, that there was a force or a control there somewhere, otherwise we would never experience beauty—which is a word that's almost wrong today in art. My work has nothing to do with developments in art. I knew there were artistic developments and I had to teach students and so forth. There was such rapid change in the arts during the 1970s and 80s and a lot of people said that landscape painting didn't deserve to be alive.



Evening shadows, Numinbah 1999
oil on linen 138 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2003

VVO Do you think your faith impacted on how you interacted with this ancient and deeply nuanced environment? Or has this environment impacted on your faith?

WR The simplest explanation I can give is when we had an illness in the family with our oldest daughter, we had been living at Beechmont for quite some time. You don't expect immediate resolution to your problems through faith, but when I started to work on the 'Creation' series, it made me see that, in a way, whatever my simple philosophy was about, I could portray it in a painting and this helped me immensely through this difficult period.

The first 'Creation' landscape is about the very idea of Creation, with the central panel showing the cosmos at night. In the bush and in the valley, you could see the stars most beautifully, and I had to find a way to show the cosmos and whatever those rings of the cosmos were. (I realised, of course, scientifically, that they're only the edge of a galaxy, and I have no idea of the whole concept of the cosmos.)

That was the only thing to draw upon, and then the two opposites of darkness and light—the darkness of this volcanic landscape, a white cockatoo appearing into the light, and out of the light into the darkness is a black crow. There were so many crows and cockatoos in the area that it played on my imagination.

VVO Interestingly, people take much of what you paint as being literal; for example, I was surprised that someone commented that the rainbow in *Passing storm, late afternoon, Beechmont* 1993 from the 'Mountain' series was not 'accurate'—that the sequence of colours was 'wrong'.

WR Much of my landscape paintings could be likened to metaphors, but I don't think many of them are actually grand enough to be a metaphor. For example, Shirley and I are often found in the paintings swimming in the creek, like Adam and Eve as it were—but we never actually swam. We did have lots of water



Morning landscape, Beechmont 1989
oil on linen 147 x 193cm
Private collection, Brisbane



William Robinson

Landscape Ia 1987
watercolour 28 x 37cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape 17 1987
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

VVO

lying around after big storms, which allowed me to paint reflections. Inserting Shirley and myself in this way was a little playful and fun, while it also explored different ways of looking in the painting.

I think that it's really important to push that boundary of actually seeing and viewing, and to make us question how we interact with the work. You're also asking the viewer to slow down and truly look at the painting. You don't give everything away at once; I think it's a lovely thing that in the busyness of life, your art is asking us to slow down.

Your work is about being able to observe, both your internal and external world at the same time.

WR

And how you feel.

VVO

It's interesting that nature is perceived by society as such a desirable 'quality' to have in our lives and that we are somehow lacking it. People go into the forest, into the bush, to spend time and reconnect with themselves—forest bathing.

WR

I don't believe in reconnecting with yourself. I think you're reconnecting with an outside force, with providence. You can't connect with providence in, say, a busy banking situation or a legal thing. I think it's good to get to go into the bush.

VVO

Yes, it's just interesting that there's this distinction—that, as humans, we're not part of nature. I suppose I'm just interested in that idea of people returning to nature—thinking that it's still something other than what we actually are.

WR

So many other cultures have a strong sense of mythology and nature, it's just part of their very being. Indigenous Australians have a mythology. We didn't have that. We just arrived as a mob of convicts who killed all the natives, as it were. We're still not doing too good a job.

Aboriginal artists have shown us the hidden landscape that is

there. They don't sit down and 'do' the landscape; they walk all over it and then they sit down, and painting is about memory and songs. It's an entirely spiritual aspect of their work. I have great admiration for artists such as Rover Thomas and you can feel that he has sung his way through his pictures. It's hard to describe. He's almost like an orthodox priest who can go into a closed area, away from the congregation. Quite often, he's surrounded by the most exquisitely beautiful icons, and he moves into a mystical world.

VVO

There's such a complex body of knowledge behind Indigenous art and I think that sometimes we over-simplify the visual arts, that we are just looking for something that is a symbol of some very simplistic idea. In some respects, Australian literature has been more successful at representing our relationship and connection to land than the visual arts have in Australia. There is a depth that comes with tugging at people's imagination that drags you through a book, whereas people don't seem to have the trust in themselves to look at a painting or a willingness to understand that a significant body of knowledge is behind that one object. Sometimes, the visual arts can fall short of those grand ideas, but we certainly understand that what we see in Indigenous art is not the sum of that object in front of us.

Equally, there's such layered complexity in your work, that it's very difficult for a lot of people to understand, and also that it's very much internal, that you yourself acknowledge as not 'knowing'. I recall you explaining your paintings once as not being a closed circle.

WR

I'm not in any way extraordinary in terms of having a lot of knowledge about many things. Even in art, I realise that I have only the ability to reflect to myself. I mean, I love looking at other people's work, particularly the great masters. I don't feel that I belong to contemporary society much. I don't just mean contemporary art, which I can mention now and then, but in other ways as well. I mean political history, world history. I find

it appalling the way that politicians can create wars and treat other humans. I can barely listen to the radio where every five minutes we're hearing about the latest footballers and so forth.

VVO

What are some of your concerns for the futures of your grandchildren and their grandchildren and what they face in the world?

WR

That is an interesting question. One of my great concerns is whether they'll have time to smell the roses or whether everything will be so organised for them.

In a way, I think Shirley and I took quite a lot of risks. Are the young ones going to take these risks now or are they not? Are they going to be game to do an art course? Or are they going to worry that they're not going to get a job with a computer or whatever the case may be? That didn't occur so much once. Today, it's a case of am I going to head out to the wilderness and start milking goats or am I going to buy an apartment in South Brisbane and make that my life?

Conversation between William Robinson and Vanessa Van Ooyen held at the artist's studio in Brisbane, May 2018.



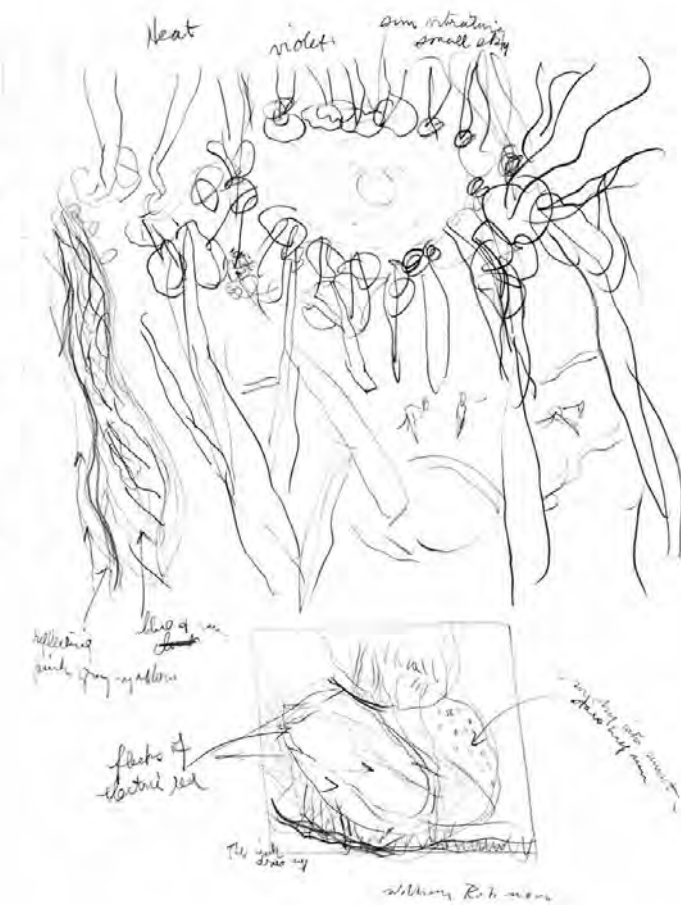
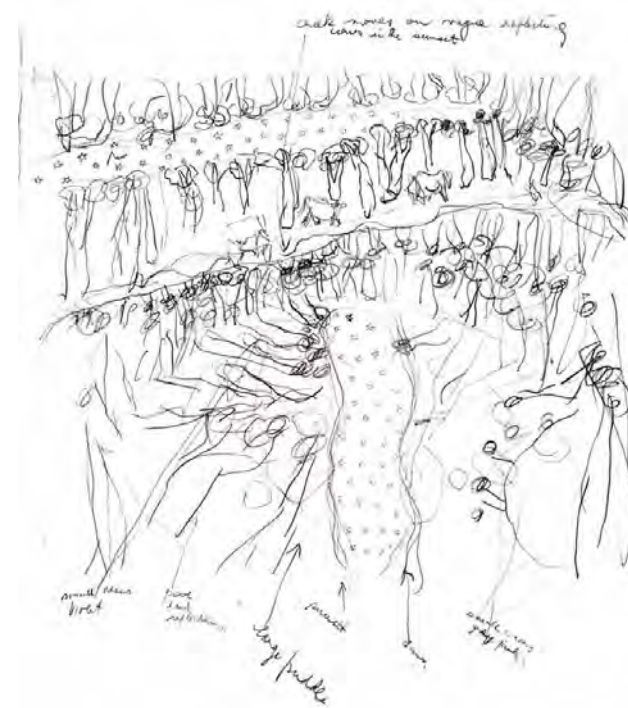
Treeferns and gums in sunlight 2000
oil on linen 137.5 x 183.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape 10 1986
watercolour 56 x 78cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape 11986
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape 11 1986
 pencil 56 x 76cm
 Private collection, Brisbane



Landscape 12 1986
pencil 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Watercolour triptych B 1985
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Tallanbanna with cloud front 1998
oil on linen 138 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2005



Landscape 16 1987
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Twin falls 2000
 colour lithograph 78 x 94cm
 QUT Art Collection
 Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002



Gum forest with pale-headed rosellas 2001
coloured pastels 57 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 2007 through the William Robinson Art Collection Fund

The actual place itself and nature are the triggering device. The work is completed in the memory. I find that if memory lacks absolute accuracy it allows something else to occur in a painting—perhaps something fresh and unpredictable. —William Robinson¹

¹ Lou Klepac, *William Robinson* (Sydney: The Beagle Press, 2001), 132.

FOLLOWING

Passing storm, late afternoon, Beechmont

'Mountain' series 1993

oil on linen 137 x 183cm

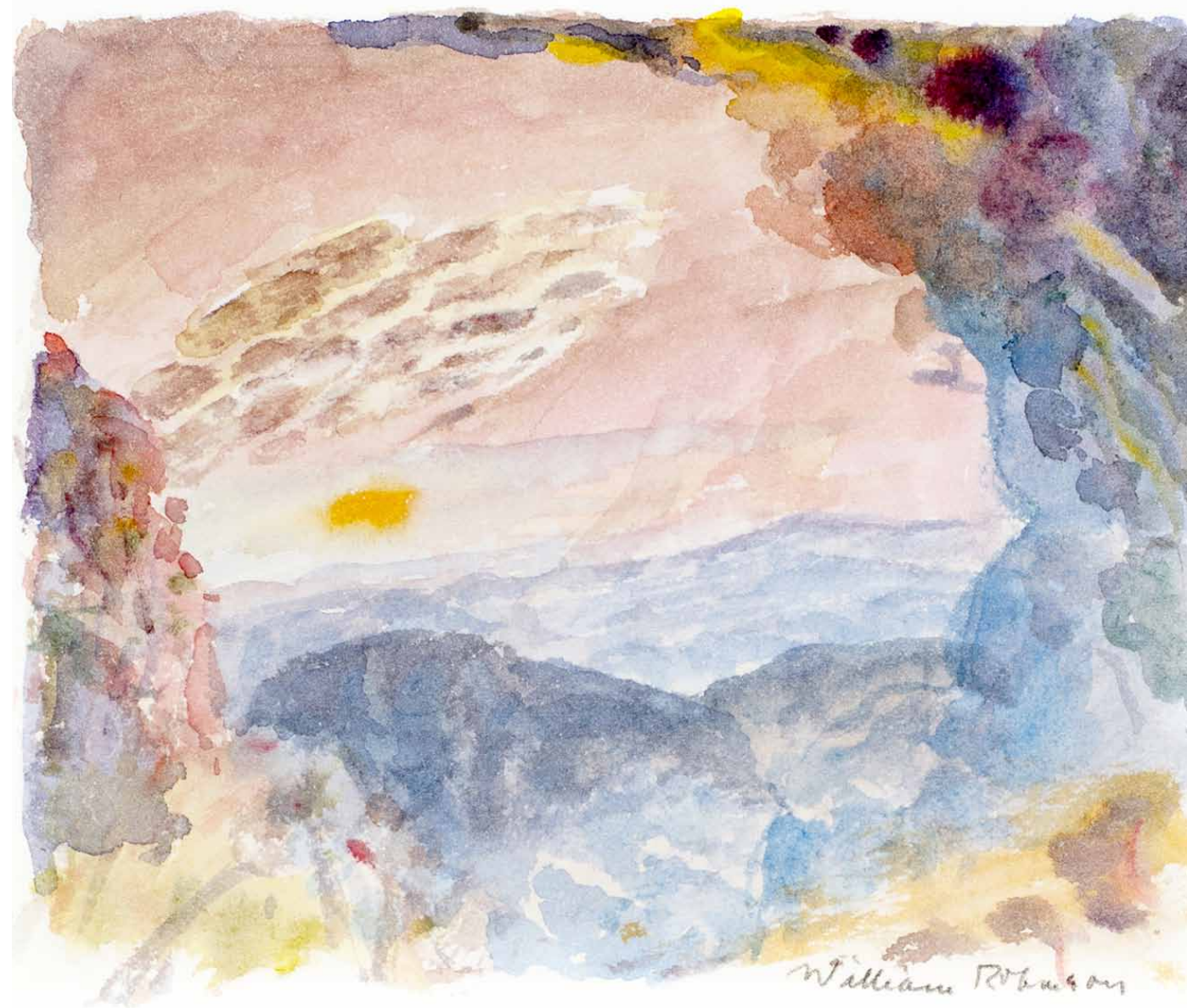
QUT Art Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program
by William Robinson, 2017





Sunset, flying fox and beyond 2 1992
watercolour 23 x 33cm
Private collection, Brisbane



Sunset, flying fox and beyond 1 1992
watercolour 14 x 19cm
Private collection, Brisbane



A landscape 1987
watercolour 28 x 38cm
Private collection, Brisbane



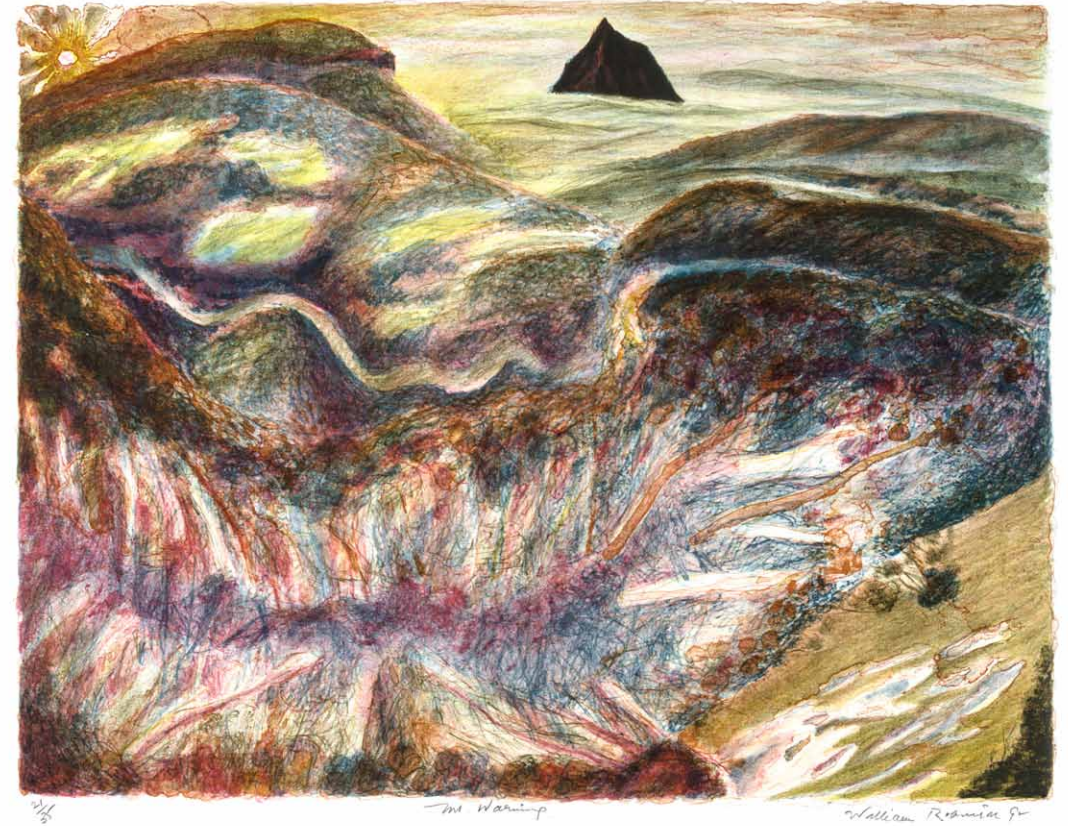
Landscape 41 1989
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

FOLLOWING

Sunset, flying fox and beyond
'Mountain' series 1992
oil on linen 137 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts
Program by William Robinson, 2017

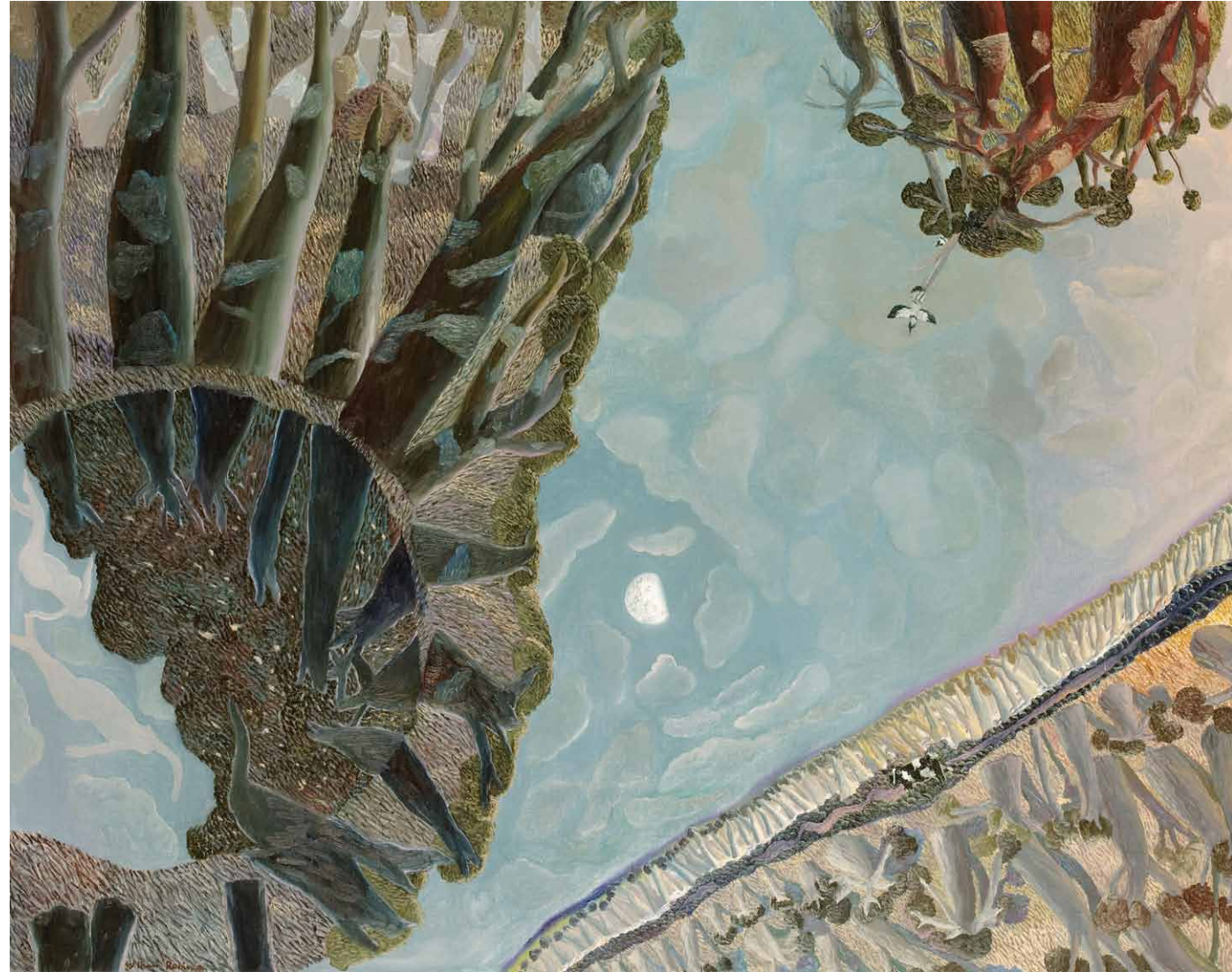






Mount Warning 1992
colour lithograph 56 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

PREVIOUS
Landscape with extinct volcano
'Mountain' series 1992
oil on linen 137 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts
Program by William Robinson, 2017



Landscape with moon and bathers 1988
oil on linen 94 x 118cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 2011 through the William Robinson Art Collection Fund



1940

1936

Born in Brisbane on 16 April, the second of four children to Ada (née Vogt) and Robert Robinson.

1943–49

Lives in Fairfield, a southern Brisbane riverside suburb, with his family. Spends his early schooling at Junction Park Primary School at nearby Annerley. He shows artistic skill early on, producing the best pastel drawings of his primary-school class.

1950

1950–53

Attends Brisbane State High School, South Brisbane. In 1953, he sees the exhibition *French painting today* at the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG), which leaves a lasting impression on him. He shows considerable talent at playing the piano, which remains an integral part of his life. At the end of high school, he has to choose between becoming an art teacher or a professional pianist.

1954–56

Commences training as a primary school teacher at Queensland Teachers' Training College, Kelvin Grove. In 1955, he is awarded a two-year scholarship and embarks on an art teacher-training course at Brisbane's Central Technical College (CTC). In 1956, he is awarded the College's Godfrey Rivers Memorial Medal for excellence in painting, sculpture, applied art and drawing.

1960

1957–62

Appointed instructor in art at CTC, and works part-time towards an art teacher's diploma and a diploma in drawing and painting (which he completes in 1962).

In 1958, marries Shirley Rees, a former commercial art student at CTC. The couple settles in Gaythorne, an inner north-west suburb of Brisbane, and the first of their six children is born in 1959.

1963–69

Commences a six-year tenure as an art lecturer at Kedron Park Teachers' College. Family moves to Coorparoo on Brisbane's south side. In 1967, Robinson holds his first solo exhibition at the Design Arts Centre, Brisbane.

1970

1970–71

The Robinson family moves to a three-hectare farm at Birkdale on Brisbane's eastern outskirts. Robinson is appointed Senior Lecturer in Art at Kelvin Grove Teachers' College (until 1975). In 1971, he travels to Sydney to see the *Pierre Bonnard* exhibition, which exerts a strong influence on his art, particularly his compositions of domestic interiors.

1975

Begins to focus on landscapes of the Redland Bay district and Moreton Bay. He moves to Toowoomba for six months to teach at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education.

1976–80

Starts to teach at North Brisbane College of Advanced Education (until 1981). In 1977, he holds a solo exhibition at Ray Hughes Gallery, Brisbane. The theme of farmyard life becomes the main subject of his art from the late 1970s. He is also influenced by his love of music, with many of his works containing musical references, such as *Orchestra with cows* 1980.

1980

1982–86

Appointed Senior Lecturer in Art at Brisbane College of Advanced Education (until 1989). In 1984, he moves with his family to an 80-hectare farm at Beechmont in Queensland's Gold Coast hinterland, and begins to paint the precipitous landscape of this subtropical rainforest area.

Selected for inclusion in *Australian Perspecta* in 1983 and the *Sixth Biennale of Sydney* in 1986.

1987–89

Awarded the Archibald Prize for portraiture in 1987 for *Equestrian self portrait*. Completes first *Creation landscape* painting in 1988.

Leaves teaching in 1989 and starts working as a full-time artist.

1990

1990

Awarded the Wynne Prize for landscape in 1990 for *The rainforest*. Begins making lithographs. Travels overseas for the first time, visiting Greece, England, France, and Italy.

1991–92

Bill and Shirley's lives are devastated by the loss of two of their children. The artist becomes increasingly introspective, and his work more contemplative. Commences the 'Mountain' series, which he considers among his finest work.

1994–96

Moves to Kingscliff on the northern New South Wales coast, where the changing moods of the sea and sky become a primary inspirational focus for his work. Acquires a rainforest studio at Springbrook in the adjacent hinterland. In 1995, he wins the Archibald Prize for the second time, with *Self portrait with stunned mullet*. Travels to Paris where he makes lithographs at Atelier Bordas (and he makes subsequent prints there in 1998, 2000, 2004, and 2006). In 1996, he wins the Wynne Prize again for *Creation landscape: Earth and sea*.

1998

Awarded an honorary doctorate by his alma mater, QUT.



2000

2000
Included in the group exhibition *Bonheurs des antipodes* at Musée de Picardie in Amiens, France.

2001

Returns to live in bayside Brisbane. Holds first solo exhibitions at Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane, and Australian Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney. First full survey exhibition of his work is shown at QAG.

2005

2005–08
Purchases coastal retreat near Byron Bay and sells property at Springbrook. Appointed Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2007. In 2008, moves from bayside Brisbane to the city's inner west.

2009–10

The William Robinson Gallery opens at QUT with the exhibition *William Robinson: Realms of vision*, followed by *Hinterland: The rainforest works of William Robinson* in 2010.

2010

2010
Returns to painting in the still life genre, largely as a result of moving back to live in the inner suburbs of Brisbane.

2011

Artist celebrates his 75th birthday. The William Robinson Gallery and QUT Art Museum host a major exhibition of key works from the artist's oeuvre and publish the accompanying monograph, *William Robinson: The transfigured landscape*.

William Robinson: A portrait of the artist opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT. The artist donates seven self portraits (of only eight ever produced) to QUT, including the Archibald Prize-winning paintings, *Equestrian self portrait* 1987 and *Self portrait with stunned mullet* 1995.

2012

2012
William Robinson: Insights, curated by Davida Allen, Betty Churcher, and David Malouf, opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT.

2013–14

Included in major survey exhibition *Australia* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

William Robinson: The farmyards opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT, and the artist donates his eighth self portrait, *Self portrait with basket*, to QUT. In 2014 *William Robinson: Infinite sphere* opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT.

Donates *Creation landscape: The dome of space and time*, the final multi-panel work from the 'Creation' series, to QUT.

Starts revisiting farmyard works based on his sketches from 1984 and produces a multi-panel oil stick farmyard work.

2015

2015
Shows a handful of gouache farmyard works alongside mostly still life images at his solo exhibition at Australian Galleries in 2015.

William Robinson: Inspirations, curated by The Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO, opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT. Artist completes a new work for this exhibition *Poinciana and fern garden*.

2016

Artist celebrates his 80th birthday. The William Robinson Gallery hosts a high tea and conversation with The Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO and the artist.

William Robinson: Genesis, opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT.

2018

2017
Eternal present: The still life paintings of William Robinson, curated by John McDonald, opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT.

William Robinson: Genesis tours to the Embassy of Australia in Washington D.C.

Donates the 'Mountain' series, comprising five major landscape paintings produced in 1992–93, to QUT.

2018

The international tour of *William Robinson: Genesis* continues at the Australian Embassy in Paris. The exhibition returns to Australia to tour to Hamilton Gallery in Victoria and S.H. Ervin Gallery in Sydney.

The exhibition *Nature imagined* opens at the William Robinson Gallery, QUT.

Continues to live and work in Brisbane.

LIST OF WORKS

Eagle c.1985
oil on linen 46 x 52cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape with noon reflection 1985
watercolour 74 x 55cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2009

Watercolour triptych A 1985
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Watercolour triptych B 1985
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 1 1986
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 10 1986
watercolour 56 x 78cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 11 1986
pencil 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 12 1986
pencil 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Sketch for 'Dry grass landscape' 6 1986
pastel 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

A landscape 1987
watercolour 28 x 38cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 16 1987
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 17 1987
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 1a 1987
watercolour 28 x 37cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Eagle landscape 1987
oil on linen 141 x 192cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 1991 through the Vice-Chancellor's Special Initiatives Fund

Landscape with moon and bathers 1988
oil on linen 94 x 118cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 2011 through the William Robinson Art Collection Fund

Crack of dawn 1988
oil on linen 142.5 x 198cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2016

Morning landscape, Beechmont 1989
oil on linen 147 x 193cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape study no. 1 1989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape study no. 2 1989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape study no. 3 1989
pencil and watercolour 25.4 x 35.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Landscape 41 1989
watercolour 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Rainforest with light rain 1990
stoneware vase, wheel thrown with underglaze painting and ceramic pencil 37 x 38cm diam.
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 1990
Wheel thrown by Errol Barnes

Landscape drawing 54 1991
ink 56 x 76cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Creation landscape: Man and the spheres I-III 1991
three colour lithographs each 67.5 x 81.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Sunset, flying fox and beyond 1 1992
watercolour 14 x 19cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Sunset, flying fox and beyond 2 1992
watercolour 23 x 33cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Mount Warning 1992
colour lithograph 56 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Sunset, flying fox and beyond
'Mountain' series 1992
oil on linen 137 x 183cm
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2017

Landscape with extinct volcano
'Mountain' series 1992
oil on linen 137 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2017

Cloud 1992
colour lithograph 38 x 40.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Cloudy sun 1992
colour lithograph 56 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Passing storm, late afternoon, Beechmont
'Mountain' series 1993
oil on linen 137 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Robinson, 2017

Late sunlight and afternoon cloud, Beechmont 1993
colour lithograph 56 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Early light, Coomera Gorge 1994
oil on linen 138 x 182.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Michael Gleeson-White, 2013

Ancient trees 1998
colour lithograph 40 x 50cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Bushfire 1998
colour lithograph 40 x 50cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Tallanbanna 1998
colour lithograph 40 x 50cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Tallanbanna with cloud front 1998
oil on linen 138 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2005

Evening shadows, Numinbah 1999
oil on linen 138 x 183cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2003

Springbrook I-VIII 1999
eight etchings each 25 x 25cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Sketchbook 1999–2001
Private collection, Brisbane

Treeferns and gums in sunlight 2000
oil on linen 137.5 x 183.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane

Twin falls 2000
colour lithograph 78 x 94cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Tallanbanna II 2000
colour lithograph 78 x 94cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Gum forest with pale-headed rosellas 2001
coloured pastels 57 x 76cm
QUT Art Collection
Purchased 2007 through the William Robinson Art Collection Fund

Sketchbook 2002–06
Private collection, Brisbane

Flame trees and Wonga Pigeons 2002
oil on linen 30 x 40.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Kay Bryan, 2015

Tallanbanna with Yellow Robin 2002
oil on linen 30 x 40.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Kay Bryan, 2015

Springbrook merging towards night 2004
colour etching 27 x 60.5cm
QUT Art Collection
Gift of the artist under the Cultural Gifts Program, 2002

Springbrook merging towards night 2004
oil on linen 111.5 x 246.5cm
Private collection, Brisbane



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COVER

Landscape with noon reflection 1985
watercolour 74 x 55cm

QUT Art Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts
Program by William Robinson, 2009

