

## JOHN R WALKER: Journey through landscape

09 May – 15 June 2008



*Self-knowledge is at the heart of being a modern artist.  
Paint the places that you know instinctively and ignore nothing that  
might deepen your knowledge and understanding of those places.*

John R Walker

The National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery presents the first opportunity to examine the landscape *oeuvre* of John R Walker, one of Australia's foremost painters. Looking at work from the past decade, this exhibition features paintings, gouache, artist books and ink studies. Major works are on loan from important private & public collections and there are selected works not previously exhibited before this.

John R Walker has immersed himself in the Australian landscape since childhood and is now considered one of the leading practitioners of the genre. Although Walker is a five time Archibald Prize finalist for portraiture, landscape remains his first love.

Since moving from inner west Sydney to the NSW town of Braidwood in 2002, Walker has become deeply engaged with the diverse landscape surrounding the historic town. The seclusion and the natural beauty of the region has inspired artists for generations and increasingly, the area is being called home by a growing group of artists.

Braidwood, the first entire town to be listed on the NSW State Heritage Register, sits on the south-east edge of the Southern Tablelands, surrounded by national parks that offer endless bushwalking trails of changing vegetation, natural sandstone & limestone features, caverns & mountains, stunning views, gullies, roads, drylands, forests & ridges, native flora & fauna.

John R Walker's passion for bushwalking and intense study of the environment allows him to collect a uniquely personal experience on his daily walks and painting trips in the region. Walker's colourful & expressive paintings & ink studies present a visual diary of these experiences and observations in the natural environment. However this is an environment that has also been shaped by man. Evidence of the old gold fields, farming, dam-building and fencing practices have all left their mark and Walker's paintings capture the diversity of the landscape in an eloquently expressive manner.

Walker has also been inspired by *Bedervale* (1836) an historic grazing property in the Braidwood district, that is closely associated with the National Trust. *Bedervale* is one of Walker's favourite painting sites where he has completed many works that evoke the atmospheric nature of the land.

In 2006, John R Walker was invited to participate in the ABC TV's *Painting Australia* in which he mentored three emerging artists to challenge their perception of landscape painting and complete a work of art within an allocated timeframe. The popular series went to air in 2007.

Walker often reflects that "landscape is the stage" and invites the audience to "step in" and "have their own experience" with his artwork. He continues to explore the boundaries of his own work, reaming true to himself – painting what he sees and feels and recording how he responds to the environment.

John R Walker has held over twenty five exhibitions in Australia and the United States since 1979. His work has been included in many important group exhibitions and is held in major public collections & many corporate collections throughout the country. John R Walker is represented by Utopia Art Sydney.

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National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery, Observatory Hill, The Rocks, Sydney

Public Viewing 09 May – 15 June 2008

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### Public Program of Guest Talks Sundays at 3pm

- 11 May**      **Christopher Hodges**, artist and Director, Utopia Art Sydney, has known John R Walker since they were at high school. This friendship developed into a professional partnership when Hodges offered to represent Walker through his gallery, Utopia Art Sydney more than twenty years ago. During this time, Walker has enjoyed considerable visits to Hodges' Hunter Valley farm, which have helped him to articulate his own vision of the landscape. Hodges is an acknowledged expert in the field of contemporary and Indigenous art. He has been an exhibiting artist for 25 years and is the former chairman of the Melbourne Art Fair Foundation.
- 18 May**      **Julie Harris & Euan Macleod**  
John R Walker and Julie Harris have shared studio space, and travelled on painting & study trips together resulting in a long and close friendship for many years. Harris introduced Euan Macleod to Walker some years back and the three artists have since become close friends and allies in the world of art. Harris & Macleod reflect on Walker's landscape work by sharing stories of their painting trips and time together at Walker's studio and home in Braidwood. Macleod & Harris joined Walker on several painting trips to Garie Beach in the Royal National Park, NSW, resulting in a group exhibition.
- 25 May**      **John R Walker** in conversation with respected curator **William (Bill) Wright AM**  
Bill Wright is currently the Sherman Foundation Fellow in Contemporary Art, at the Power Institute, University of Sydney. He is undertaking a four year research project documenting a series of interviews with contemporary artists working in Australia. In 2002, Wright was awarded the Australia Council Emeritus Medal.
- 01 June**      Landscape artist, **Leo Robba** and John R. Walker have enjoyed painting trips together in Maitland, Hunter Valley and the National Parks surrounding Braidwood. Robba has also assisted in the design of Walker's many catalogues. Leo Robba leads a floor talk around the exhibition, offering insights to Walker's painting practice.

image: JOHN R WALKER *The Dry Dam, Bedervale*, 2004, archival oil on canvas 190.5 x 199 cm. Private Collection.



**NATIONAL TRUST  
S.H. ERVIN GALLERY**

LOCATION:	(end of) Watson Road, Observatory Hill, The Rocks, Sydney
GALLERY HOURS:	Tuesday - Sunday 11am – 5pm. Closed Mondays. Closed Public Holidays
EXHIBITION ADMISSION:	\$6 / \$4 national trust members, seniors and concessions
FRONT DESK / Bookshop mail orders:	PH: 02 9258 0173 <a href="mailto:shervingallery@nsw.nationaltrust.org.au">shervingallery@nsw.nationaltrust.org.au</a>
PUBLIC PROGRAM:	Guest Speakers Sundays at 3pm (subject to availability & may change without notice)
EXHIBITION FLOOR TALKS:	Tuesdays at 12 noon
GROUP / SCHOOL TOURS:	<u><a href="#">Bookings essential please</a></u>
Education Officer:	PH: 02 9258 0122
Media information	PH: 02 9258 0150 <a href="mailto:lhaynes@nsw.nationaltrust.org.au">lhaynes@nsw.nationaltrust.org.au</a>
Trust Café	PH: 02 9258 0175 <u><a href="#">bookings advisable</a></u>
Onsite parking available	