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shadow play

Inspired by their *transient beauty*, Zoë MacDonell captures the **LIGHTER** side of *shadows* in her latest body of work.



TRACES OF LANDSCAPES thread through artist Zoë MacDonell's work. By extruding information from the details of her surroundings, her art becomes symbolic of place and time. "Concentrating on the textures and interesting items that I find within a particular landscape allows me to discover and establish their inherent beauty," she explains. "I'm interested to disclose the hidden story within these items."

MacDonell's previous work layered botanical elements and motifs into textile designs that allude to the atmosphere and recollections of a place, and two recent artist residencies in rural New South Wales have intensified her relationship with landscape. Six weeks spent on half a square kilometre of rolling green hills with ocean glimpses sounds like an idyllic retreat from city life, and MacDonell admits the Byron Bay property where she stayed for the Helena Constantine Artist in Residence (in association with the Tim Olsen Gallery) was paradise, but it was far from a holiday. >



PREVIOUS PAGE: MOMENTS OF PLACE AND TIME ARE ATTACHED TO MACDONELL'S STUDIO WALL FOR INSPIRATION. THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT: MACDONELL IN HER STUDIO. TOP RIGHT: *BARCODE FLOWER* (2006), A PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT ON PAPER USING PAINT, CANVAS, PAPER AND SILK. ABOVE: THE ARTIST'S TOOLS AND, LEFT, *FANTASYLAND* (2006), INK, PAINT AND COLLAGE.



< In all the stillness and solitude, MacDonnell started to notice the shadows outside and the way they skirted the trees and laced the ground. Capturing that very impermanence became the focus of her residency and a glowing body of work has evolved.

“Shadows don’t exist in isolation – they are constantly changing. Shadows also imply there’s something nearby. They reference and distort the original object. In a way, they make the light itself visible. And I became interested in what shadows mean. A lot of people see shadows as a dark side within themselves or an environment. When I look at them I see colours. And I guess it means we see beyond the things themselves.” Tracing the shadows that fell across the floor of the studio from a bunch of flowers she had collected was a spontaneous act expressive of MacDonnell’s relation to her surroundings. By repeating this gesture with different flowers, reeds and branches she has captured fleeting moments in time, suspending each instant forever. The tracings, drawings and paintings are reminders of those lost flowers, and of the transience of beauty and life.

Many of the works are tonal studies in white; simply white pastels and oils on white with only hints of colour. They become subtly iridescent as the light casts across the surface, catching on the chalky texture of the pastel and revealing it as an image. This luminosity is as mutable as the shadows and landscapes they recall.

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TOP: MACDONELL'S INNER-CITY SYDNEY STUDIO. TOP RIGHT: ABSENT SHADOW (2007), PASTEL AND PENCIL CRAYON ON PAPER. ABOVE: DAYDREAMING THE OTHER (2006), A PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT ON PAPER USING CANVAS AND PAPER. RIGHT: A COLLECTION OF WORKS IN PROGRESS HANGS TO DRY ON MACDONELL'S STUDIO WALL. FAR RIGHT: THE RED NAPKIN (2006), PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT ON PAPER USING PAINT, CANVAS AND PAPER.



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