

ANDREW SOUTHALL: *COUNTRY*

Like A burst of sunlight Southall's paintings in this exhibition are a decided change in direction for this mid-career artist.

What is Andrew Southall – what do his paintings tell us he is? This seems to be the proper question to begin with. Picasso has said, (in free translation) “it matters less what the artist paints than what he is,” which recognises that quality within the artist himself and that his art is merely an expression of it.

Yellow is the dominant hue in this exhibition; it may appear that the works are mainly abstract. But it may be only that he no longer feels the necessity to retain the clues of objective identification in his imagery, preferring to present only the distillate. The plastic structure seems in part essential to his form of romantic expression.

Even when not made evident Southall relies on the observation of his country environment – natural or man-made. His acrylic paintings combine found objects such as glass, twigs, wheat straw, feathers, lumps of paint and beer cans. A large triptych titled *Three Good Years* is equivocal, luminous and decidedly lyrical and breathes with expectation and seems to live in a world of its own.

In a previous exhibition held at the La Trobe University Visual Art Centre in Bendigo, Southall exhibited another large triptych titled *Not of This World, Only in It*, a bold, tactile work of great simplicity and lineal masses. This painting gifted to the La Trobe University is currently installed at the Bundoora campus administration building.

One thinks of Balzac's “Art is a slice of life through a temperament”, which tells us of a person deeply involved in life and like Southall's new direction, a multi-dimensional and deeply experienced personal expression.

- Ernest Smith 2014