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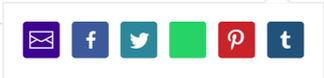
Abstract response to littoral life

Laetitia Wilson - The West Australian on March 24, 2016, 12:23 pm



Jeremy Kirwan-Ward: You Can See it From Here, 201.5 x 368cm. Acrylic on canvas.

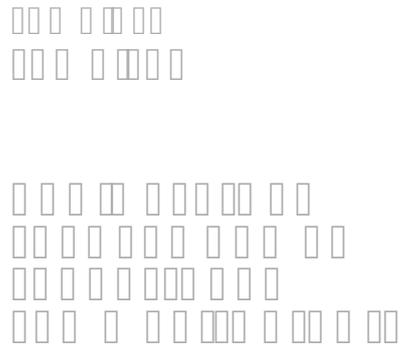
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VISUAL ARTS

Jeremy Kirwan-Ward
Art Collective WA
Review: Laetitia Wilson

The natural phenomena surrounding us are a source of endless inspiration for artists. When sensitive to the play of light on water, the infinite morphology of clouds, or the exquisite patterns of wind brushing sand, how could you not spin into artistic reverie?



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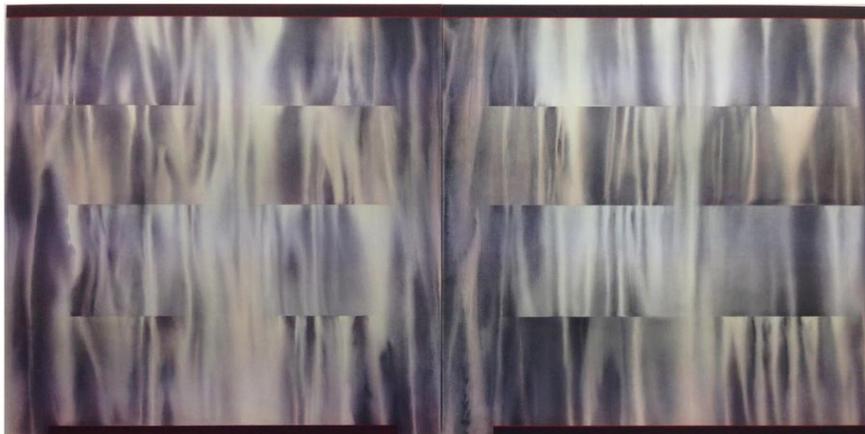
An artist who responds to the natural world, albeit with measured deliberation, is Jeremy Kirwan-Ward. In a small self-titled solo show he presents three large-scale, very recent, abstract paintings.

The source of inspiration for these works is the artist's coastal existence, and the view from his North Beach deck of the water and the sky. Transformations of the seaside through light and varying weather conditions feed into painterly challenges that have compelled Kirwan-Ward for more than three decades.

The littoral coastal subject matter is interpreted as a darkly atmospheric intensity. The experience of each painting shifts from the nuances of textural detail at close range, to a gentle or more intense spectral pulse at a distance. While there is fluidity to the works, as with the ocean itself, there is also a formal line structure put in place through methodical segmentation, splicing and dividing of the picture plane.

In *You Can See it From Here*, the ocean or sky has been painted as if on different days in the last moments of dusk, then turned vertical and put together as regular, rectangular segments. The familiar colour intensity of the coast at those times is transformed. We look at it awry as the perspective is rotated and the coastal phenomenon is reduced to abstracted tonal variation, from rich red to moody blue.

In *Flora Terrace Squirm*, the image is sliced and rearranged horizontally and it is like ocean rips are coursing through the cool watery, silvery grey surface and threatening to engulf the painting. Rather than violent, the effect is soothing and from a distance the grainy sand-like texture gives way to a partially structured pattern and undulating play of light.



Jeremy Kirwan-Ward: *Flora Terrace Squirm*, 201.5 x 368cm. Acrylic on canvas,

Flora Terrace Back Step-Side Step, half of the canvas is pushed forward while the other rests in the background. The foreground is a golden amber cloudy mass, while the background slides into a darker, fiery sky/ocean. A single vertical line disrupts both panels and suggests a horizon.

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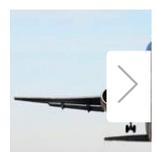
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This and the other works, again, invite a sideways turn of the head and an impulse to locate a horizon. It is like the subject matter demands to be realised despite the abstraction. Yet somehow these paintings succeed in capturing a sense of indeterminacy between sea and sky and refuse to be locked down.

They are not the artistic appreciation of the natural environment popular in the nineteenth century in that there is no romantic elation. They are not traditional landscapes. Instead, an essence arguably closer to the felt experience is communicated. There is method to these paintings as nature is segmented, abstracted and reduced to colour and light, a play with surface, depth and subtle movement.

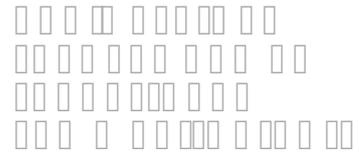
The image of the coast, ocean and sky retains its ever-changing nature. It does not become trapped in a fixed idea or ideal of the iconic sunset or sunrise but it still communicates the ongoing allure of this environment.

There is nothing quite like gazing upon the coastal horizon daily and daily being enraptured by the spectacle of nature. Oscar Wilde said that "sunsets are quite old fashioned", but clearly his direct experience of this ever-changing phenomenon was limited.

Jeremy Kirwan-Ward is showing at Art Collective WA, 115 Hay Street Subiaco, until April 9.

The West Australian

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