



# THE COLOUR OF SPACE

To put people into perspective, **Tony Lloyd's** landscapes entirely omit the human figure.

WORDS | BRIONY DOWNES

Based on hiking trips taken through Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland, most of **Tony Lloyd's** recent paintings are focused on landscapes of epic proportions. Awe inspiring snow-capped peaks rising from dense wilderness into vast expanses of blue sky are frequent subjects. Painting these vistas both from photographs and memory, Lloyd seeks to capture a feeling rather than geographical accuracy. "The specific locations are not as important to me as the creation of a psychological space," he says. "The landscape is so

much bigger than us. Looking at it you feel small. It's connected to the sublime but not in a dramatic way, in a quiet way."

Lloyd's upcoming exhibition at Melbourne's MARS Gallery takes its title from a line found in a short story by Argentine writer **Jorge Luis Borges** – "The Garden of Forking Paths is an incomplete, but not false, image of the universe ... an infinite series of times, a growing, dizzying web of divergent, convergent, and parallel times." Contrary to the expansive landscapes they depict, Lloyd's

paintings are often small in scale. "There is something about little paintings that can change your life, they are portals into another world," he says. "I don't want to tell someone what to think with my paintings. I just want to shift their perception a little bit."

As closely cropped representations of an expansive view, the way Lloyd paints and frames the landscape in works like *Aoraki Road*, 2022 is prompted by how we view scenery from a car window. Also influenced by techniques used in film and cinematography,





Lloyd consistently positions the viewer as the sole protagonist in his scenes. “If there was a figure in the painting, you’d be looking at someone else’s story,” he says. “Instead, you can insert your own story into the landscape. Figures change the dynamic between the viewer and the landscape. It makes humans too big and important, I want to put humans in perspective.”

Across Lloyd’s oeuvre, blue is a dominant hue, representing the misty gradients of sky and water. He explains how blue has been a prized colour for centuries: “From the powdered lapis lazuli used to make ultramarine in the 13th century to **Yves Klein’s** International Klein Blue – it’s always been a magical colour. Blue turns the painting into a window. It’s the colour of distance, of scattered light and the atmosphere. It’s the colour of space in the daytime. I spend hours mixing blues before I start my paintings.”

In addition to cinematography, Lloyd also points to the work of **Hercules Seghers**, a 17th century Dutch painter and printmaker, as a significant influence. Painting landscapes at a time when fashion dictated nature be used predominantly as a backdrop for portraiture, Seghers became known for his daring depictions of mountainous vistas with only the tiniest hint of human presence evident. With landscapes at the centre, Lloyd also pulls a tight focus on the majesty of nature, reveling in the subtle details of colour, light and texture. In his new works, our eye follows the light as it gently skims the snow-lined summit before plunging into hazy blue shadows. Chasing this changing light, Lloyd captures the landscape, “when the sun is coming at an angle, slowly revealing all the textures and light.”

Lloyd is represented by MARS Gallery, Melbourne, Gallery 9, Sydney and Hill Smith Art Advisory, Adelaide.

OPPOSITE: Tony Lloyd, *Everness*, 2022. Oil on board, 30 x 45cm.

ABOVE: Tony Lloyd, *Deified*, 2022. Oil on board, 30 x 45cm.

NEXT PAGE: Tony Lloyd, *Aoraki road*, 2022. Oil on board, diptych, 45 x 60cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND MARS GALLERY, MELBOURNE.

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Tony Lloyd’s solo exhibition *The Garden of Forking Paths* shows at MARS Gallery, Melbourne from 12 October to 5 November 2022.

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