

CRITIC'S CHOICE: THIS IS REALITY

Critic **Andrew Frost** takes his pick of the five artists producing works that warrant a lingering look.



1. // Tony Lloyd, *Near Earth asteroid with highway (Ida)*, 2017. Oil on linen, 45 x 61cm. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND GALLERY 9, SYDNEY.

Setting off a trial balloon by asking on social media who Australia's best realist painters are, I received 177 responses, covering a range of artists, styles, genres and approaches to my innocent question. My interest in this kind of work has grown from a consideration of what the edges of realist painting looks like - at one end of the spectrum, a hot kind of quasi-expressionism, somewhere in the middle a calm type of tonal realism, and at the other end a cool hyperrealism. Realist painting is of course a vast field of activity, and as I have conducted informal research into the best of what is being painted, I have discovered a number of artists who for me represent some of the most interesting work in the field. And so, in no particular order, I offer a selection of painters in various shades of reality.

TONY LLOYD

Perception and interpretation play a significant part of **Tony Lloyd's** work. His recent exhibition at Gallery 9, Sydney, presented a selection of subjects in keeping with the artist's continuing obsessions - highways at night, grand mountains, an owl, a bucolic lake scene, and an astronaut. Painted with an eye to detail but avoiding the bland surfaces of exact replication of a found image, Lloyd imbues his paintings with an the aura of the uncanny, suggesting a connection to the grand surrealist tradition of **René Magritte** with Lloyd's juxtaposition of images, sometimes by the way the pictures are hung in the show, or sometimes within the same frame. One of the key works of the show for me was Lloyd's *Near Earth asteroid with highway (Ida)* (2017) that conflated near and far space, the dreams of highway hypnosis and the collision of fantasy and reality.