

VICTOR RUBIN
THE LOST DOMAIN



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Penelope Trotter,
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Victor Rubin – *The Lost Domain*, 2007 Mahoneys Galleries.

In an earlier interview Rubin stated that, “The history of art is in my work”.¹ Since his first show in 1971 Rubin has indeed taken inspiration from various semi-abstract modernist painters such as Cubist artist Pablo Picasso, and Surrealist artist Max Ernst. He has then reworked the techniques of these artists into his own unique style that endeavours to recreate the recognisable. To do this, Rubin combines the ancient alchemical method of deciphering symbols of wisdom called Hermeticism, with the Cubist method that goes under the same name of Hermetic (or Analytical) Cubism. In recreating the recognisable, Rubin states that he is depicting the creative exploration of trying to recover the lost domain. For Rubin the lost domain is an Arcadian place where there exist the ultimate civilised luxuries, yet it is also a primal place that relates to the primitive, much like the yearnings of many of the modernist painters. The intention of his current show is that such a process of yearning will thus be projected through the viewer’s own psyche and personal response to the works.

The first work in this 2007 series named *Vessel and Voyage*, reads like an alchemical drawing found on the pages of one of the first ever scriptures. The vertical lines that Rubin has created on the canvas divide the work into three sections so it can be read as a triptych from which we can begin our psychic contemplation or voyage. The foreground symbol is a depiction of an empty vessel left open for us, showing us what

there is to explore, while the moon in the background can be read as an astronomical symbol reminding us that wisdom will be gained when we know how it influences the earth.

The lost domain is also emphasised through the peculiar sense of lighting created by Rubin. He states that he likes to create an uncanny form of lighting from which the audience cannot decipher whether it is daytime or night, and strange shadows are cast from each of the objects depicted. The piece titled *The Lost Domain* is brightly lit but the shadows are depicted so that they are drawing inwards and the audience is invited to enter into the time of day that is twilight, a zone of obscurity in which anything can happen.²

Since he first began making art, Rubin recalls that the personal symbol of flowers has been a recurring theme. The Lily, the Orientals, and the Birds of Paradise exist as the reconstructed figurative elements of this show, while the roses are painted both as abstract and existing in their full form. Rubin states that there appear to be a number of operational vortexes within the structure of the rose, as they come in many natural compositions. He postulates that the depiction of the vortex shape of the rose invites the viewer back into the painting in an abstract sense. In the work titled *White Rose, Wood Owl and Other Images*, Rubin accentuates the formal ambiguity of the rose by stripping it back to its barest hues, and reducing



“Vessel and Voyage”, 2007, acrylic on linen, 183 x 152cm

the outermost forms to flat Cubist inspired shapes. The theme of altering the composition of the rose is then mirrored in the Hermetic formation of Rosicrucian - or the symbolic formation of roses into the shape of a cross. The lack of colour evident in this work also draws the eye to the layer of paint in which he has used the Surrealist technique of decalcomania, which involves the pressing of rags against the wet canvas surface, from which new and interesting shapes can be conjured up by the minds eye.

The piece titled *Paradiso, the Song from the Sea Shell* is a powerful and brightly coloured work that contains more angles and vortexes than any of the other works in this series. To Rubin, the Birds of Paradise are a masculine symbol because of their protrusions, but the surrounding objects represent the multiple levels of the human psyche. This work suggests that perhaps with an acceptance of the many levels of wisdom comes the Arcadia that was originally thought to be lost.

Penelope Trotter
Melbourne
April 2007

1 Victor Rubin, cited in David Thomas, “Victor Rubin: An Original”, catalogue essay for Victor Rubin – A Survey Exhibition, Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne, 2002.

2 Victor Rubin, studio interview, Melbourne, 2007.



"The Lost Domain", 2007, acrylic on linen, 183 x 152cm



"Paradiso the Song from the Sea Shell", 2007, acrylic on linen, 152 x 183cm



"Rose Bay Retreat", 2007, acrylic on linen, 183 x 152cm



“Red Rose Trio”, 2007, acrylic on linen, 152 x 132cm



"Dancing the Rose", 2007, acrylic on linen, 183 x 152cm



"Enchanting the Place", 2007, acrylic on linen, 183 x 152cm



"Red Rose Duet", 2007, acrylic on linen, 152 x 132cm



"Paradiso and the Shape of Idols", 2007, acrylic on linen, 152 x 183cm



"Flower Flowering I", 2007,
acrylic on canvas board,
51 x 41cm



"Flower Flowering III", 2007,
acrylic on canvas board,
51 x 41cm



"Still Life Australis I, 2007", acrylic on composition board, 120 x 90cm

Victor Rubin Curriculum Vitae

Solo Exhibitions:

2007	Mahoneys Galleries, Melbourne
2006	Kenthurst Galleries, Sydney
2005	Drummond Street Gallery, Melbourne
2004	Kenthurst Galleries, Sydney
2004	Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne
2003	Kenthurst Galleries, Sydney
2003	Qdos Gallery, Lorne, Victoria
2002	Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne
2002	Gallery Irascible, Melbourne
2001	Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney
1999	Gallery Irascible, Melbourne
1998	Renard Wardell Gallery, Melbourne
1997	Annandale Galleries, Sydney
1996	Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne
1995	Annandale Galleries, Sydney
1993	Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
1993	Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
1992	Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide
1991	Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1989	Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney
1988	Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1988	Michael Milburn Gallery, Brisbane
1987	Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1987	Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney
1986	Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1986	Michael Milburn Gallery, Brisbane
1985	Mori Gallery, Sydney
1984	Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1983	Mori Gallery, Sydney
1982	Mori Gallery, Sydney

1982	Axiom Gallery, Melbourne
1981	Student's Gallery, Sydney (Now Mori Gallery)
1981	Stanfield Gallery, Melbourne
1981	Closet Gallery, New Zealand
1981	Newcastle Regional Art Gallery, NSW
1978	Macquarie Galleries, Sydney
1978	Student's Gallery, Sydney
1978	Warehouse Gallery, Melbourne
1977	Macquarie Galleries, Sydney
1974	Macquarie Galleries, Sydney
1971	Yellow House, Sydney

Selected Group Exhibitions:

2006	Blake Prize Finalist, Sydney
2006	Sir John Sulman Prize – Finalist, AGNSW, Sydney
2005	After Van Gogh: Australian Artists in Homage to Vincent. Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
2004	Return of the White Bull, Geelong Regional Gallery, Victoria
2004	Sir John Sulman Prize – Finalist, AGNSW, Sydney
2004	Doug Moran National Portrait Prize – Finalist, Sydney
2001	A Studio in Paris: Australian Artists at Cite International des Arts, S.H.Irwin Gallery, Sydney
1999-2000	We are Australian Originated Victorian Arts Centre and Touring
1997	Highlights from the Permanent Collection, Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery
1996	Doug Moran Portrait Prize, National Gallery of Victoria & Touring
1996	Re-Mix, Manly Art Gallery, New South Wales

Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Australian Art,
National Gallery of Victoria

1994 Identities: Art from Australia, Taipei Fine
Arts Museum, Taiwan

1994 The Bailleu Myer Collection of the 80's, Museum of
Modern Art Heidi

1994 The John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize,
National Gallery of Victoria

1993 Nuclear Age, Monash University, Victoria

1992 Interiors, Noosa Regional Gallery, Queensland

1989 Mindscapes, Art Gallery of New South Wales
Modern Muses, S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney

1988 Advance Australian Painting, Auckland
City Art Gallery, New Zealand

1987 Five Artists in Manly, Manly Art Gallery, New South Wales

1987 Urban Anxieties, Australian National Gallery

1987 Young Australians, National Gallery of
Victoria & Touring

1987 A New Romance, Australian National Gallery

1987 Age of Collage, Holdsworth Gallery, Sydney

1986 33 Male Painters - The Male Sensibility,
Heide Park Gallery, Victoria

1986 The Sixth Biennale, Art Gallery of New South Wales

1985 Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales

1983-84 Vox Pop - Into the Eighties, National Gallery of Victoria
Form - Image - Sign, Art Gallery of Western Australia
Soft Attack, Artspace, Sydney

1983 Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales
A Different Perspective, Artspace, Sydney

1983 A Biennale Survey of Contemporary Australian
Art & Touring

1974 Sir John Sulman Prize – Finalist, AGNSW, Sydney

Selected Collections:

Australian National Gallery, Canberra
National Gallery of Victoria
Art Gallery of New South Wales
Queensland Art Gallery
Darwin Art Gallery & Museum, Northern Territory
Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand
Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan
Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Victoria
Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Victoria
LaTrobe University Art Collection, Victoria
Museum of Contemporary Art, New South Wales
Woollongong Regional Art Gallery, New South Wales
Geelong Regional Gallery, Victoria
National Maritime Museum, New South Wales
Riddoch Regional Art Gallery, South Australia
Arthur Robinson (formerly Allen Allen & Hemsley) Sydney & Perth
Ansett Collection (ex)
Bank of Melbourne
State Bank of New South Wales
Budget Collection (ex)
Taim Management Collection
ICI Contemporary Collection
Minter Ellison Collection, Melbourne
Lowenstein Sharp Collection, Melbourne
Melbourne Cricket Cub Collection, Victoria
The Hon. J. Kennett Collection
Late Miles Davis Collection, New York
Late Patrick White Collection, Sydney

Also represented in private collections in Australia, Asia,
Europe, UK & USA



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