



Peter Kennedy

ONETWOTHREEFOUR
(gumtrees)

Exhibition dates
21 November – 20 December 2008

Peter Kennedy is best known as a conceptual artist, whose large scale installation works are most frequently seen in the context of the museum: notable exhibitions have included *Far Side of the Moon*, McClelland Gallery & Sculpture Park, 2007; *Peter Kennedy: Selected works 1970 to 2002*, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne in 2002; *Requiem for Ghosts*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in 1996 and *Chorus: From the Breath of Wings*, Fifth Australian Sculptural Triennial, Museum of Modern Art at Heide in 1993.

Over the years Peter has had what he calls a "subterranean practice" of traditional watercolour landscape painting. These drawings of gum trees in some ways reflect that interest as well. An interest in the gum tree as subject can be traced to a childhood love for its representation in Australian art while Peter was growing up in the 1950's. "During this period the landscape in Australian art commonly featured a gum tree as the central subject or, alternatively, as a framing device for the landscape beyond. Reproductions of the works of artists Hans Heysen and Albert Namatijira were ubiquitous and I recall that the latter years of my primary school education were spent in close proximity to several 'classic' Hans Heysen works displayed, as prints, on the classroom wall." By the 1960's, the gum tree and the 'gum tree school' had fallen into disfavour. Since then any connection between art and the gum tree has been artistically 'suspect.'

The drawings presented here draw on several impulses. There is, of course, the pleasure of drawing, working with charcoal, watercolour and pastel in combination and on a larger scale than is traditionally the case. However, in so doing there is also an implicit acknowledgement of the gum tree's iconic presence in Australian art history and culture and so it is that "in these drawings, the gum tree is recast."

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