



MICHAEL MUIR

*Unplugged*



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## *Unplugged*

4 – 27 June 2026

Opening Celebration, Thursday 4 June 2026

The works of Scottish-born, Sydney-based artist Michael Muir occupy a space where familiarity is spun into something gently estranged. Drawing on landscape, architecture and the figure, his paintings for over two decades have rendered recognisable scenes in a quiet unreality – flattened, heightened, held in suspension. Built through careful accretion and revision, each image feels tightly choreographed yet slightly out of sync with itself, as if reality has been slowed down and re-staged. In his new suite of paintings, ‘Unplugged’, this sense of temporal and perceptual drift is hedged with ideas of withdrawal, and reconnection.

Muir is often positioned within a generation of painters who re-engage abstraction not as a purely formal exercise, but as something contingent – tied to lived experience, spatial awareness, and the instability of images in a post-digital world. In ‘Unplugged’, this tendency is sharpened into a desire, as the artist describes it, to “step away from technology, try to reconnect to people and nature, and enjoy pauses.” What it means to be *unplugged*, Muir suggests, sits somewhere between disconnection and return. Stylised forms and warm, nostalgic hues show Muir tuning into his surroundings – here, it’s the landscapes of Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs – and dialling down the noise; of the world, of the screen, and of the machine. What remains are dreamlike vistas distilled into a buoyant, surreal register – where faceless figures drift through velvet fields of candy pink and blue, acid green and cream-soft yellow.

His restraint in pictorial detail is counterbalanced by Muir’s material approach to paint – where texture & tactility take the lead. “I had a conscious plan many years ago to pare my work back to abstract flat shapes,” Muir reflects. “This was a deliberate reset. Since then, I’ve been slowly adding more colour, depth and texture, staying true to my interpretation of the world.” Working primarily with a palette knife, he drags and deposits thick passages of pigment across the surface, creating forms that feel more built than painted. Edges sharpen under pressure, and paint sits with physical insistence as if assembled from solidified movement. Across each canvas, marks shift like slow tectonic plates – reconfiguring space while holding it in place. In de-pixelating and de-noising his high-key surfaces, Muir channels his ongoing interest in how painting operates in an age saturated with fast images. His compositions feel arrived at slowly, rather than declared, inviting a kind of prolonged looking.

Muir’s paintings are cinematic – not in narrative terms, but in atmosphere. There is a sense of mise-en-scène, with staged figures, silent and still, like actors paused just before a scene begins. Within his carefully composed worlds, hues are impossibly harmonious, landscapes are always sun-drenched, and pastel skies glow like painted backdrops holding clouds that hover with a suspended, almost artificial weight. Yet beneath this constructed calm, there’s a tacit tension, the suggestion that beyond the picture plane lies reality in all its messiness and discordance, looming just out of reach.

Within Muir’s profound sensitivity to surface, space is subtly unsettled. Overlapping planes, shifts in scale, and competing visual cues compress and loosen perspective at once, so that foreground and background slip into one another. This instability resonates with Muir’s own way of seeing landscape, shaped by movement and travel. “I realised over time,” he notes, “that my approach to finding subject matter relates back to my personal experience of shifting homes and countries at a young age.”

In ‘Unplugged’, Muir arrives at a kind of quiet withdrawal – not an escape from the world, but a loosening of its signal. Here, landscape, memory and image are gently untethered, allowed to drift into a softer space where attention moves more slowly, more deliberately. To be “unplugged,” in this sense, is not to disappear, but to be returned – to worlds still switched on yet no longer rushing, and to oneself, deep beneath the noise.

Elli Walsh

Principle Writer - Artist Profile

*Bondi scene.  
This is  
somewhere  
dear to the  
heart for a lot  
of people,  
and it's  
important for  
the positivity  
of the place  
to remain.*



*Misty Memories*  
oil on linen  
167 x 137 cm  
**\$30,000**

*Crystal Light, is around  
Double Bay. I recall a  
not-so-chic moment as  
my driver managed to  
park half on the  
footpath.*



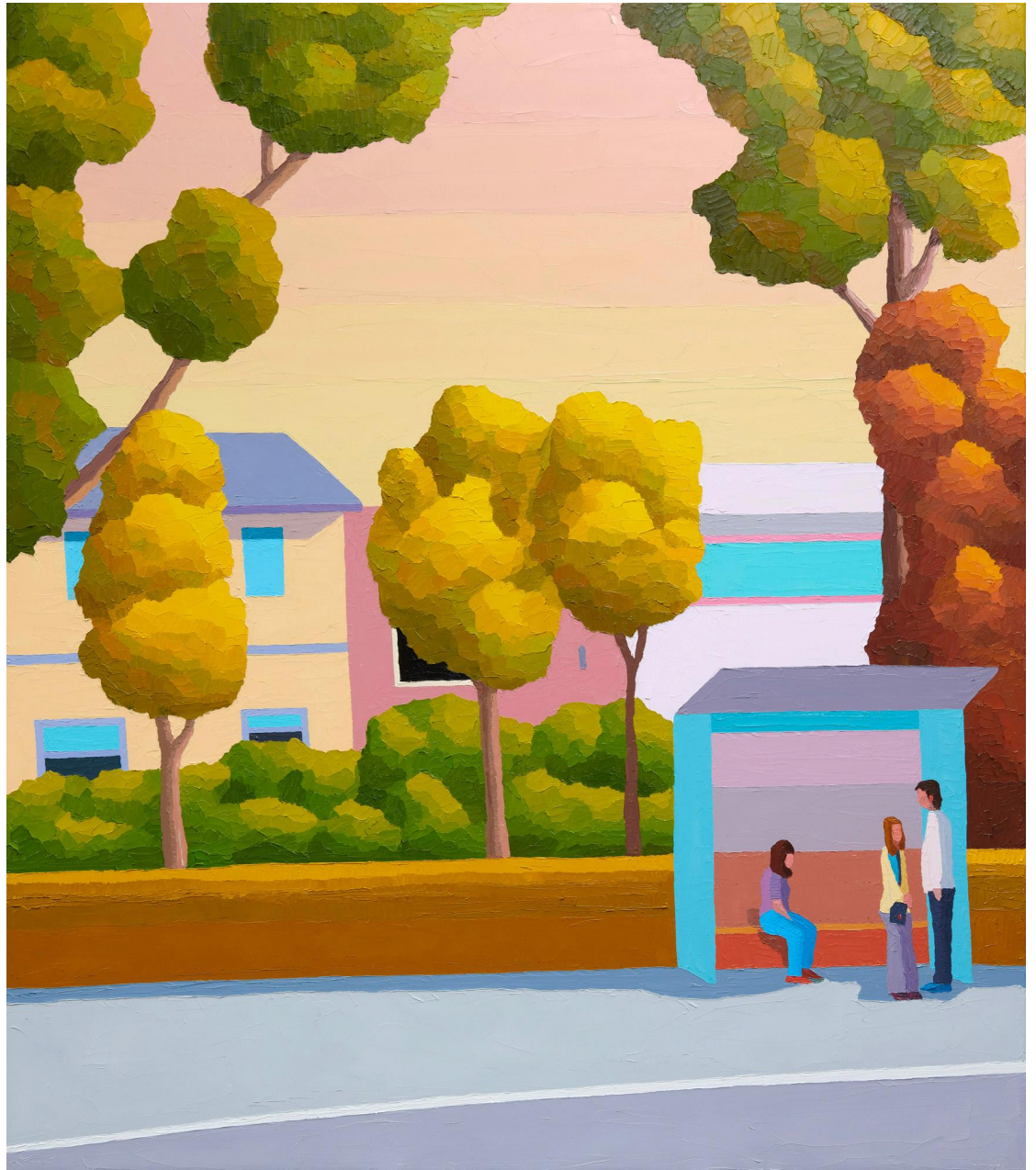
*Crystal Light*  
oil on linen  
122 x 107 cm  
**\$21,000**

*Everyone wants a selfie at Bondi, but they seem to forget to look without a lens or a device.*



*Down to Paradise*  
oil on linen  
122 x 107 cm  
**\$21,000**

*Waiting and watching  
at a bus stop around  
Woollahra can feel like  
it's time lost, but when  
there is no alternative.  
It can be time well  
spent.*



*Step Ahead*  
oil on linen  
122 x 107 cm  
**\$21,000**



*Walking Through*  
oil on linen  
137 x 167 cm  
**\$30,000**

*Coogee, people watching, live music and a long way home.*

*Watsons Bay ferry.  
Observing people  
connecting with friends  
and family. There is  
something special  
about journeys and  
destinations.*



*Come Running*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*Like most aspects of my show, it's about the present, the past and how we fit into the context of our environment. As the mind wanders about what the future holds, I find myself around the streets behind the Watsons Bay ferry.*



*A New World*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*Even with changes of season, Clovelly always feels like a European holiday. Reducing numbers and allowing for space takes on a different feeling.*



*Natural Fact*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*From around Surry Hills.  
The food smells, and  
terrace houses hark  
back to thinner  
waistlines and the  
ability to survive a  
hangover.*



*Younger Days*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*Around Gibsons Beach.*  
*A chance discovery,*  
*stumbling along like a*  
*tourist in a new*  
*location.*



*Left Behind*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*This is from around Bronte Beach, and I was thinking about turning public spaces everywhere into functional vegetable patches.*



*Wrapped Up*  
oil on linen  
122 x 107 cm  
**\$21,000**

*Cove Beach is a chance  
discovery. Trying to  
untether myself from  
being a creature of  
habit.*



*In the Middle*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*Positive memories of a  
place outshining others.  
Bondi clubhouse.*



*Shine*  
oil on linen  
122 x 107 cm  
**\$21,000**

*This is about the feeling  
of both looking out a  
window at a passing  
landscape from a  
moving vehicle and  
remembering what it  
was like riding home  
before dark.  
Somewhere between  
Bondi and Maroubra.*



*Riding Home*  
oil on linen  
137 x 122 cm  
**\$26,000**

*This is around  
Centennial Park,  
admiring the open  
green space we have  
and reflecting on places  
without that chance of  
solitude.*



*The Clock Turns*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*Walking in Rushcutters  
Bay Park.*



*Southern Sky*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*On the trail of Sculpture  
by the Sea.*



*These Changes*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*What was meant to  
warn and repel is now a  
beacon drawing in the  
crowds.*



*Long Way From Home*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*Sprawled on the grass  
at Coogee. To be young  
and free.*



*Cycle of Love*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*Around Kutti Beach. A different perspective with the city in the background, hard to imagine the bustle amongst the serenity.*



*Days Lost*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

*Kutti Beach some quiet  
in among the noise.*



*Lonesome Road*  
oil on linen  
43.5 x 43.5 cm (framed)  
**\$5,500**

# MICHAEL MUIR

*Born 1975, Kilmarnock, Scotland*

## **EDUCATION**

- 2002 Diploma Fine Arts, Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney, NSW  
1995 Advanced Diploma Graphic Design & Advertising, Billy Blue College of Design, Sydney, NSW

## **AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES**

- 2018 Muswellbrook Art Prize, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW, Finalist  
2017 Tattersalls Prize, Tattersalls Club, Brisbane, QLD, Finalist  
2016 Kilgour Art Prize, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, NSW, Finalist  
2015 Wynne Prize, Art Gallery New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
2014 Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Winner  
Wynne Prize, Art Gallery New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
Albany Art Prize, Vancouver Arts Centre Albany, Albany, WA Finalist  
Percival Portrait Award, Perc Tucker Gallery, Townsville QLD, Finalist  
2013 Doug Moran Portrait Prize, New South Wales State Library, Sydney, NSW, Semi Finalist  
Fishers Ghost Award, Campbelltown City Gallery, Campbelltown, NSW, Finalist  
Gold Coast Art Award, Gold Coast City Gallery, Gold Coast QLD Finalist  
Calleen Art Award, Cowra Regional Gallery, Cowra NSW, Finalist  
2012 Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
2011 Gold Coast Art Prize, The Arts Centre, Gold Coast, QLD, Finalist  
Muswellbrook Art Prize, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW, Finalist  
2010 Redland Art Award, Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland, QLD, Winner, Second Prize  
Metro 5 Award, Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne, VIC, Finalist  
Sunshine Coast National Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast, QLD, Finalist  
2009 Sunshine Coast National Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast, QLD, Finalist  
Tattersalls Prize, Tattersalls Club, Brisbane, QLD, Finalist  
Plein Air Prize, New South Wales Parliament, NSW, Finalist  
Muswellbrook Art Prize, Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW, Finalist  
2008 Paddington Art Prize, Mary Place Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
Redlands Yurrara Art Prize, QLD, Finalist  
Sunshine Coast National Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast, QLD, Finalist  
2007 Agendo Emerging Art Award, Melbourne, VIC, Finalist  
Metro 5 Award, Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne, VIC, Finalist  
2006 Art on the Rocks, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Gallery, Sydney, NSW, Finalist

- 2005 Sulman Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
Soda Gallery Small Painting Prize , Sydney, NSW, Finalist  
Canberra Art Prize, Finalist
- 2004 Fleurieu Art Prize, McLaren Vale, SA, Finalist
- 2001 John Olsen Scholarship Winner J.A.A.S

### **SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2025 'Duality', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne, VIC
- 2024 'Remedies', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW  
'Above the surface', JD Malat Gallery, London, UK
- 2023 'Based on a true story', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2022 'Rising Tide', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
- 2021 'Rabbit Holes', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2020 'Chasing Rainbows', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
- 2019 'Proximity', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2018 'Chameleon Effect', Martin Browne Contemporary Sydney, NSW
- 2017 'Disappearing Act', Jan Murphy Gallery Brisbane, QLD
- 2016 'Turning to Water', Sophie Gannon Gallery Melbourne, VIC  
'Home', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW
- 2015 'Slush Fable', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2014 'Under Water', Jan Murphy Gallery & Sophie Gannon Gallery, Perth, WA  
'Corner Shops', Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2013 'Between the lines', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2012 'Perpetual Motion', Eva Breuer Art Dealer, Sydney, NSW  
'Fitting In', Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, VIC  
'Keeping it clean', Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, QLD
- 2011 'Are we there yet', Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, VIC  
'A magic number', Eva Breuer Art Dealer, Sydney, NSW
- 2010 'When you were young', Eva Breuer Art Dealer, Sydney, NSW  
'Growing Pains', Libby Edwards Galleries, Melbourne, VIC
- 2008 'One road to freedom', Libby Edwards Galleries, Brisbane, QLD  
'Room to move', Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne, VIC
- 2004 'Sticky rice', Global Gallery Paddington, Sydney, NSW
- 2002 'Waiting for rain' Alta Gallery Surry Hills, Sydney, NSW

### **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2024 'Here and Now', JD Malat Gallery, London, UK

2024 Martin Browne Contemporary at Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks, Sydney, NSW

2023 Martin Browne Contemporary at Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks, Sydney, NSW  
Winter Group Show Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW  
The Art of Giving Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne, VIC

2022 Martin Browne Contemporary at Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks, Sydney, NSW  
The Art of Giving Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne, VIC

2021 Winter Group Show Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW  
Summer Group Show Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW

2020 Summer Group Show Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW

2019 Martin Browne Contemporary at Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks, Sydney, NSW  
'Mirror Mirror - Portraits from the Collection of Macquarie University', Macquarie University Art Gallery, NSW  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Auckland Art Fair, Auckland, New Zealand

2018 Martin Browne Contemporary at Auckland Art Fair, Auckland, New Zealand  
'Fantasy', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW  
Jan Murphy Gallery at Spring 1883 Fair, The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne, VIC  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Melbourne Art Fair, Melbourne, VIC

2017 Martin Brown Contemporary at Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks Sydney, NSW  
Martin Browne Contemporary at Denfair, Melbourne, VIC  
'Surface', Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, VIC  
'From Nature', Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, NSW

2016 Martin Browne Contemporary at Auckland Art Fair New Zealand  
'Fair Go', Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, VIC  
Jan Murphy Gallery at Spring 1883, The Hotel Windsor Melbourne, VIC  
'The Art of Music', Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW

2015 Martin Browne Contemporary at Art Central, Hong Kong  
Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks Sydney, NSW

2014 Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Hall Industries, Melbourne, VIC

2013 Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Carriageworks, Sydney, NSW

2012 Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Hall Industries, Melbourne, VIC

2011 'Butterfly Dreaming', Aptos Cruz Gallery, Adelaide, SA  
'Together in Harmony', Noori and Arum Korea Foundation Cultural Centre, Seoul, Korea  
London Affordable Art Fair, Battersea, London, UK

2010 London Affordable Art Fair, Battersea, London, UK  
'Grounded' Art Piece Gallery, Mullumbimby, NSW  
Salisbury Studios Inaugural Exhibition, Brisbane, QLD

2009 'Waiting', N.G Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
Winter Group Show, Libby Edwards Galleries, Melbourne, VIC  
'All New Stuff', Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre, NSW

- 2008 'Flesh', Arthouse Gallery Sydney, NSW  
'Salon', Arthouse Gallery, Sydney, NSW  
'Contempo 5', Libby Edwards Gallery, Brisbane, QLD  
'Narrative Show', Brenda May Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2006 Stonevilla Fundraiser Exhibition Chrissie Cotter Gallery Sydney  
Mary Place Gallery Paddington Sydney  
Linden Postcard Show St Kilda Victoria
- 2005 'P+ art + y', Ruby Rabbit Darlinghurst, Sydney, NSW
- 2003 Brett Whiteley Scholarship Shortlist Exhibition, Sydney, NSW
- 1998 Julian Ashton Annual Exhibition

### **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Artbank

City of Port Phillip Victoria

Parliament House

Macquarie Bank

Macquarie University

Mosman Municipal Council

Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre

Harbour City Estates, Hong Kong





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