

The drowned world:  
Jon Cattapan  
works and collaborations





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## Contents

4	<b>Foreword</b> Robert McKay
5	<b>The drowned world</b> Dr Chris McAuliffe
12	<b>The group discusses</b> Dr Karen Burns, Jon Cattapan, Dr Chris Healy and Tom Nicholson
20	<b>Plates</b>
50	<b>Jon Cattapan—biography and bibliography</b>
54	<b>Catalogue of works in the exhibition</b>

## Foreword

Robert McKay  
Chairman of the Ian Potter Museum of Art Board

In 2005, Jon Cattapan played a small, but significant, part in the presentation of a survey of the art of Gareth Sansom at the Potter. Speaking at the opening of that exhibition, Cattapan reflected on the early support Sansom had given him in his own career and reminded us of the importance of acknowledging the generosity and achievement of senior artists. With this exhibition, we in turn must acknowledge Cattapan's achievements in over twenty-five years as an artist.

The works in this exhibition traverse Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, the US, Korea, India and Italy. Not surprisingly, given Cattapan's wide-ranging exhibition record, it is the first time that some of these major paintings have been shown in Melbourne. Commencing with a painting made while Cattapan was still a student and concluding with a large, new triptych, this exhibition is a record of studio practice, research, teaching and international exchange. In it, we can see the ways in which Cattapan and his peers have developed an ambitious Australian art, embracing local and international experiences, exploring new technologies and ideas, and grappling with the personal and moral challenges of global culture.

Our sincere thanks go to Jon Cattapan for his enormous dedication to this project. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the exhibition catalogue by Vasili Kaliman and Irene Sutton through the Potter's 2006 Donor Program. As well, we are grateful to the many public and private lenders who have generously loaned work to *The drowned world* from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. And finally, my thanks go once again to the many Potter staff who have worked to realise this major exhibition and catalogue at the museum.



## The drowned world

Dr Chris McAuliffe  
Director and exhibition curator

Jon Cattapan's art frequently commences from personal experience—a fleeting instant in everyday life, a significant personal crisis, or deeply held belief—so he has a wealth of stories to tell. Cattapan's practice is inseparable from tales both private and public: a succession of relationships, artistic partnerships, localities and residences; a deepening engagement with his materials and an embrace of new technologies; and a career traversing the boom/bust/recovery rhythm of the 1980s and 1990s.

Cattapan's sources are unselfconsciously revealed. Paintings were made in response to the world outside his window, to jarring life events, and to the impact of artists such as Bosch or Tanguy. These are, so to speak, the internal points of commencement; life, love and the lure of art itself. Less familiar, but nevertheless ubiquitous, origins also lie in cinema, digital technologies and travel. These point to origins in the new terrain of globalization and digital culture.

Commencing art school in 1975, and maturing over the course of the 1980s, Cattapan is on the cusp of the modern and the postmodern. One of modernism's classical motifs—the social experience, *in extremis*, of the individual within the metropolis—propelled his work from the outset. And a melancholic fascination with seductively decrepit cities, inherited from Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin and JG Ballard, continues to colour his art. Likewise modernism's other great theme—the life of the unconscious, the libidinal economy of desire—is evident in Cattapan's oily dreamscapes.

Simultaneously, Cattapan's art shows signs of the emergence of postmodern culture: 'the change from atoms to bits'.<sup>1</sup> His cityscapes are fragmented, mobile, excessively mediated, and dematerialized. The apocalyptic tone of *fin-de-siècle* postmodernism has shaped discussion of Cattapan's work, but the best itemisation of his iconography is the fine print of a domestic insurance policy: fire, flood, theft, injury, act of God. Shit happens, and it doesn't stop happening. Cattapan looks on in fear and fascination.

Cattapan's watery canvases suggest the slippery virtuality of postmodern experience. His many images of surveillance allude to the paranoid experience of digital culture. The paintings survey the intense but indistinct terrain of the dream. The sci-fi allegories of Philip K Dick—everyday life in a city teetering on the brink of techno-abyss—are there, but also the brutal and seductive effrontery of Surrealism's *merveilleux* (marvelous).

Cattapan is both a realist and a symbolist, an observer and a dreamer. His deluge is allegorical; ours is a world swamped with information. But it is also a real flood, one that found the artist waist deep in water on a St Kilda street in 1989. His conflagrations are not only Freudian symptoms but real blazes in East Melbourne, St Kilda and Footscray, which brought down a church, a town hall and a chemical factory respectively. Cattapan revels in the digital—he produces sketches using a scanner and Photoshop software—but he speaks in the analog media of painting and drawing.



Cat. 1 Bananas 1977–78

Cattapan is more inclined to mark the stages of his development with references to pop and street culture than to artistic epiphanies. The first, and still one of the most important of these was the irruption of punk rock within Melbourne's music, fashion and literary scenes. The brash, do-it-yourself attitude of punk was liberating for a young student still unsure of his capacities and qualities as an artist; 'We felt like anybody could get up and have a go at it'.

A sense of creative community developed, and with it, the first of the geographical and social territories that would appear in Cattapan's work: 'It was very interesting living in St Kilda in the early '80s because you didn't just have visual artists. You had young writers and young musicians, and they all talked to each other. You had one café that everyone went to, the Galleon, upstairs in Acland Street. You'd bump in to half a dozen people working in different art forms'.<sup>2</sup> *Bananas* (1977–78), begun while Cattapan was still a student, refers to another punk hangout: the long-defunct music venue on St Kilda's Upper Esplanade. Op shop fashions, pointy boots and sunglasses after dark set the tone of this and other works of the late 1970s.

St Kilda's bohemians didn't form a movement but punk gave legitimacy to the raw, emotional style that Cattapan and his friend Peter Ellis were developing. Repressed and forgotten aspects of modernism reappeared; the expressionist James Ensor was a favourite. The return to figuration sweeping European art was echoed in the rediscovery of local mavericks such as Danila Vassilieff. The moves seem familiar in retrospect but were confronting after the cool reserve of 1970s abstraction and conceptualism. Throughout the first half of the 1980s, critics scolded Cattapan as an artist with 'disturbing and macabre fantasies' and 'much sorting out to do'.<sup>3</sup>

For Cattapan, the studio and the street were just the place to sort things out. Outside his flat on Grey Street, St Kilda, there was never a dull moment. Haggard faces, eviscerated bodies and eerie toy-like figures all registered the rough poetry of late nights and long parties.

By the mid-1980s, Cattapan's urban imagery had become less confronting. Time spent in Europe in 1978 had amplified punk and expressionistic impulses. A second sojourn in 1985 led to a deliberate decision to focus on the psychological spaces of the city. Some significant formal strategies were developed to pursue this goal. The grounds of the paintings became open, flattened fields of aqueous colour. Localities and incidents hovered in indistinct spaces, popping into focus with the sharp but jumpy clarity of a dream. Physical forms, such as people and buildings, became more schematic as Cattapan forged a kind of Freudian hieroglyphics which referred to home, desire and travel through simple outlines and silhouettes. The gridded drawings of the early 1980s grew into large, multi-panel canvases—the reactive studies—each of which offered a 'screen in screen' detail or commentary on an adjacent event.

*Name and address* (1988), was still based on St Kilda's nocturnal theatre. Still living on Grey Street, Cattapan witnessed a police sweep in which entire blocks were closed off while pedestrians were questioned. This moment has haunted Cattapan's art since. The elevated point of view that dominates the later cityscapes is there, as is the gloomy dream twilight. While the incident involved a crude round-up, rather than sophisticated technological surveillance, there is an air of Orwellian social control. The painting is a harbinger of later works, such as *Curtain line* (*Australian crowd no. 2*) (2001) and *The taking of Richmond* (1999), in which containment and the confrontation of communities take on an explicitly political cast.

Cinema showed Cattapan the way at this time. Scorsese's *Mean streets* (1973) and *Taxi driver* (1976) mapped the city's heart of darkness. Fellini's *Roma* (1972) presented the eternal city as a movable feast of history, memory and sexuality. And Hitchcock revealed the Freudian subtexts of urban life, in dramatic eruptions of sex and violence from beneath the banal surface of the everyday.

Cattapan's cities became increasingly abstract over the course of the 1990s. An extended stay in New York in 1989–90 had the paradoxical effect of dissolving, rather than consolidating, his vision of urban space. Paintings such as *Documentary* (*Melbourne as Rome*) (1989) had fantasized about life in a cosmopolitan metropolis. Real life in a mega-city was so overwhelming that Cattapan sought solace in canvases emptied of incident, like *Dog day* (*Seep*) (1991), or, as in the case of *Double ellipse* (from 'The city submerged') (1991), dissolved the city into a droplet of oily colour.





Cat. 33 Name and address 1988

Paradoxically, the other defining characteristic of life in New York was its small scale. Life was patterned around spaces in Williamsburg (the studio), the Lower East Side (the apartment), Little Italy and the East Village (nightlife). The isolated incidents of the large paintings and reactive studies were now scattered over myriad small sheets of paper, so that the city became a constellation of moments scattered across a wall-length installation.

Increasingly, Cattapan's urban imagery echoed descriptions of the postmodern city. Composite, mobile and fragmented, this city of flows and vectors embodied an increasingly digital and global environment. The ongoing *The city submerged* installation constantly reconfigures the city as an array

of instants. Cattapan's aerial views montaged buildings from multiple cities into generic centres of 'the bit radiation business'.<sup>4</sup> His palette mimicked the RGB (red, green, blue) of the computer monitor, and pixel-like dots form a veil over the surface of the canvas. Curious signs of social transition began to appear: a member of the gathered crowd in *Woden waiting* (1992–93) uses a mobile phone, perhaps the first entry of this now common device into painting. And in *The bookbuilder* (1992), the earlier communications revolution—the printed word—is exiled to the sidelines, overwhelmed by the city of bytes.



Cat. 60 Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
 Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda/Melbourne) 1996-97

*The Bookbuilder*, *Fuse* (1994), and *Skeletal* (1995) mark the development of a cyber-sublime. Cattapan was one of a generation for whom Ridley Scott's *Blade runner* (1982) was an *Urtext*. Just as the shock and awe of an avalanche was the cue for terrified reverie in the eighteenth-century landscape, so the layered chaos of street and cosmos was the postmodern *terribilità*. *Blade runner* offered a seductive vision to artists and theorists alike. David Harvey's paean to the film could serve as a description of Cattapan's paintings: 'The chaos of signs, of competing significations and messages, suggests a condition of fragmentation and uncertainty at street level ... Images of creative destruction are everywhere'. More significant, in terms of the paintings to come, was Harvey's observation that a hallmark of the film was 'the sense of shattering and fragmentation of social life'.<sup>5</sup>

As globalization came to dominate both artistic and social consciousness, the foundations in localities—both actual and mythological—that Cattapan had built for his practice were threatened. The mobility of the individual and the mutability of the image meant that 'The places associated with home, with the Self, and with identity are being replaced by places that ought to look different but are in danger of not doing so ... [I]t is apparently the burden of some of us in the world to consume difference while others are condemned historically to supply that difference'.<sup>6</sup>

Embarking on a series of residencies, and working within Australia's university system, Cattapan lived in Ohio, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Seoul and Baroda. Working collaboratively forced Cattapan into direct communication with local artists and did something to dilute the distinction between consumers and producers of difference. In handing over a drawing or watercolour to Surendran Nair in Baroda, Cattapan ceded his territory to the local. The returned drawings, completed by another hand, encapsulated both the openness and disorientation of the traveler. The artist had to be willing to welcome the new and to allow the unfamiliar to occupy his work. At the same time, he was able to recreate the sense of intense community and partnership that had driven his earlier collaborative drawings with Peter Ellis. This openness and partnership through drawing holds also for his 2001 collaboration with Eugene Carchesio.

Drawing had always been the bedrock of Cattapan's work, travel only increased its significance. Small-scale, immediate work is both a practical and metaphorical solution to the challenges of travel. Drawings are easily made and portable. Quick notations register the impact of new experiences when there is no time to digest them fully.

In spite of their humble physical nature, the drawings reveal key characteristics of Cattapan's practice. Meaning is generated by isolated symbols. Often heraldic or totemic in their nature, these symbols recall both the icons of the Italian Trecento and the fetishised found objects of Surrealism. Typically, they are human in scale or in derivation—the body itself, or items that can be held in the hand—in order to counterbalance the overwhelming sweep of global vistas.

This recovery of the human within the global became a dominant concern for Cattapan at the turn of the millennium. His reflections on the city had taken him to writers like Richard Sennett, who lamented the loss of a neutral civic realm in the age of privacy and intimacy.<sup>7</sup> Against the private realm, Sennett argued for the benefits of a society of strangers, supported by public institutions; in effect, a healthy society premised on citizens recognizing their need for each other without having to know each other.

This model, which found hope in an impersonal social institution, takes shape in the small clusters of citizens who gather in Cattapan's paintings, often against a back-drop of civic buildings. More specifically, the neo-liberalism of Victoria's Kennett government brought the politics of public spaces and institutions to the fore in Cattapan's art. *The taking of Richmond* condenses events and ideologies provoking this turn to community politics. Richmond Secondary College was one of the many state schools closed or restructured during the Kennett era. Parents and community members occupied the school in protest for 360 days, before being forcibly evicted in a baton charge later described as an 'unreasonable' action using 'excessive force'.<sup>8</sup>





Cat. 76 Psychasthenia 101 (video) 2005



Cat. 69 *Carrying* 2002

The force of the state response to this and other community protests, raised suspicions that, 'Whenever there is genuine opposition by members of the community to the government, the police are there'.<sup>9</sup> Where police actions were once limited to, and expected in, the red light districts of St Kilda, now, it appeared, they were to appear wherever policy or ideology was to be enforced.

The promise offered by the rediscovery of community is forced, however. Boundaries and national mythologies were reinstated at the same time. In 2001, 'The wandering winds of *Tampa* talk-back blew into some very dark corners of the Australian psyche'.<sup>10</sup> The 'children overboard' affair heralded, variously, the defeat of small-L liberalism, an Opposition in lockstep with the government, the politicization of both the public service and the military, and the disheartening spectacle of a Norwegian seaman more *au fait* with the Australian notion of a fair go than Australians themselves. *Carrying* (2002) grapples with the

event itself, while *Curtain line* (Australian crowd no. 2) charts its aftermath; a pallid citizenry huddled within Australia's coastline, weighed down by the rhetoric of border protection.

With the liberal-pluralist social contract giving way to *Realpolitik* and xenophobia, Cattapan's early fascination with the work of JG Ballard re-emerged. Ballard's poetics of a postmodern Fall were updated. The flood was now the mooted onslaught of illegal immigrants. Primitive tribalism and paranoia elbowed liberal democracy aside. The 'children overboard' affair is inseparable from a loss of faith in the truth of the image and a witnessing of the degradation of the public sphere. It is not surprising that Cattapan's figures become spectral, his grids more forceful and enclosing, his boundaries white-hot.



Cattapan's paintings are not pictures of specific moments of crisis. Indirectly, they take their cue from Frederic Jameson who, having recognised in Ballard, 'the contradictions of a properly representational attempt to grasp the future directly', proposed that artists imagine resistant worlds in a process of cognitive mapping.<sup>11</sup>

The connections forged between people are Cattapan's imagined future. They are presented as tenuous, all the more so as the source imagery for works such as *Psychasthenia 101* (video) (2005) and the *Carbon group* drawings (2003) is often randomly gleaned from the daily press. But importantly, the connections are physical. In *The fold* (2000), the contact is ambiguous; a struggle or an embrace. It may be grandly metaphorical (the biblical tale of Jacob wrestling the angel) or banal (two footballers in a clinch). There is a recovery, or a dream of the recovery, of those elements of community dissolved in the age of privatization, neo-liberalism and self-interest. Communities become physical and local again: artists, activists, residents, parents, citizens supplant the bohemians and jetsetters of the earlier paintings.

In the works of the 1980s, the blaze and the flood were crepuscular, catastrophic and fetishised; classical (the stuff of the Bible or of Bosch) and yet ephemeral (done to death in disaster movies). This was the heart of Cattapan's landscape; the city laid waste and cheap thrills galore. It's what we wanted, we *fin-de-siècle* Neros; to have a good old fiddle as we watched our culture burn.

A different collapse, the moral collapse always latent in Ballard's superficially sci-fi stories of post-apocalyptic cities, is the current looming disaster. In response, Cattapan seems intent on rebuilding his world from the ground up. In 2005, he returned to his parents' province, the Veneto, to the small Italian village of Mogliano. The drawings he made there are small, attentive and poetic. A non-descript mound modeled on his son's blanket. Variations on the attenuated form of a stick insect found in the garden. And, tellingly, the figure of light—of reason—in a spun aluminium desk lamp. This is no retreat into the pastoral. Trying to make sense of the world, rather than the comforts of a settled world, is their subject. Drawing breath, Cattapan is able to return to qualities in his art that might serve as ways of shaping the world. Fascination is one of these; a determination to dwell at length on whatever humble object catches his eye. Affect is another; the exploration of how and why one builds an emotional anchorage to a thing, a place or a person. Vision, too; the freedom to see the world your way, then another way, then another.



Cat. 81 'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite' 2005

- 1 Nicholas Negroponte, *Being digital*, Hodder & Stoughton, Rydalmere, NSW, 1995, p. 4.
- 2 Interview with the artist, September 2005.
- 3 Ronald Millar, 'A look below the surface', *The Herald*, 28 April 1983, p. 24.
- 4 Negroponte, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- 5 David Harvey, *The condition of postmodernity*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 311.
- 6 Himadeep Muppidi, *The politics of the global*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, p. 97.
- 7 Richard Sennett, *The fall of public man*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1977.
- 8 Deputy Ombudsman (Police Complaints) Dr Perry, quoted in David Baker, 'Police, policy and practice', in Brian Costar & Nicholas Economou (eds), *The Kennett revolution: Victorian politics in the 1990s*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 240.
- 9 Liz Curran, Federation of Community Legal Services, quoted in Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
- 10 Guy Rundle, 'The opportunist: John Howard and the triumph of reaction', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 3, 2001, p. 6.
- 11 Frederic Jameson, 'Progress versus utopia; or, Can we imagine the future?', in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art after modernism: rethinking representation*, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984, p. 245.



## The group discusses

Jon Cattapan and I spent a long time talking about his art while preparing this exhibition. We realised that this was something missing from the public discourse about Australian art. There were few opportunities to see people talking about art, pointing to details, asking the artist questions, floating ideas and arguing over interpretations. So we invited some visitors to Jon's Moorabbin studio. What follows is an edited transcript, amounting to only one tenth of the full conversation held on Friday 10 March 2006. Participants are Dr Karen Burns, Jon Cattapan, Dr Chris Healy and Tom Nicholson.

Dr Chris McAuliffe





Cat. 70 The group discusses 2002

**Dr Chris Healy:** *Documentary (Melbourne as Rome)* [1989] reminded me of the Phil Noyce film *Newsfront*, because of the figure with the 16 mm camera on top of a VW Kombi van. There's such a strong documentary logic. The impulses that go with the desire to produce history paintings are there in a fantastically self-reflective way, because you're producing the paintings but also providing us with a way of thinking about the means of their reproduction in the image of the cameraman.

**Jon Cattapan:** I should 'fess up and tell you that I went to art school as a way of getting into film school. There's a Hitchcockian way of framing those earlier works.

**Healy:** It's almost like you have a spotlight thrown on various elements in the image.

**Dr Karen Burns:** It's a particular representation of urban life; a nocturnal, slightly green dreamscape of urban life.

**Tom Nicholson:** There's obviously a reference to film-making but for me the language is very strongly a painting language which I would trace back to a certain image of Melbourne figuration.

**Cattapan:** The thing that triggered the body of cityscapes was that, in 1985, I went to live in Italy in my parents' hometown outside of Venice; a place called Castelfranco, which is the birthplace of Giorgione. The main work there is a painting called *Castelfranco Madonna* [c. 1506] and in it I saw Giorgione leaving us a portrait of Castelfranco, which still looked remarkably like what it did in the sixteenth-century painting. And I thought: I could almost do that with Melbourne. So I began to look more seriously at people I hadn't considered before in art school, like Nolan and Tucker and Boyd.

**Burns:** The nineteenth-century modernist idea is of the city as a place of random encounters which can also be potentially hazardous. So it has built into it that sense of disjunction, then the dislocation of various immigrant populations, whether from the country or overseas, moving in and out of that space, and the mixing of social class and gender. There can be parallel lives existing in the same place.



Cat. 41 *Dog day (Seep)* 1991

**Nicholson:** It struck me there is a persistence of a specific place even though some images swing into an urban space that's unidentifiable as any one city. It's Melbourne but it could also be any of a number of large metropolitan centres.

**Healy:** Jon's lived all over the world and yet there is a sense he's moving cities around. It's there in the title of (*Melbourne as Rome*), transposing cities. One version of a postmodern citizen is their capacity to move anywhere, whereas in reality movement means ending up on ships that sink off the coast of Australia. And I think Jon really holds that stuff in a beautiful tension. It's drawing our attention to the specificities of living in a place and the banality of globalisation, yet also pointing to incredibly powerful forces that shape everything to do with our lives.

**Cattapan:** I wanted to go and live in New York for a long time and I finally got there late in 1989. I had the sense that the city was going to be really an ongoing motif and I thought New York would be a really interesting place because it's an ultimate city environment. I got completely flustered by the overload of images and stimulus and in *Dog day (Seep)* [1991] I actually completely emptied the work out. I retreated completely into looking for some sort of inner kind of space.



**Burns:** The grid lines I can see in *The group discusses* [2002] don't appear in reproduction. Is the grid a way of controlling the layers of information?

**Cattapan:** The works are made in two phases. The first is a pretty expressive sort of painting. It's about laying down the groundwork and the materiality of the paint. The second phase is laying images or stratas of information in over the top. That's where the work moves from expressive to analytical. Much as I would like that overlay of marks to be mechanical and deadpan, they're incredibly subjective marks. They're very rough. In *Psychasthenia 101* (video) [2005], those red marks are made by using Blu Tack that's attached to the end of the pencil; it's a much coarser kind of look. The secondary part is testing how controlled and patient I can be, whether I can fulfil the vision of the work by becoming like a mechanical dot matrix printer.

**Burns:** One of the functions of those kinds of marks is also to hide things, isn't it?

**Cattapan:** Possibly. The viewer has to work at deciphering the various layers.



Cat. 63 Red system no. 1 (The first deadly system) 1997–98



**Nicholson:** The screen metaphor refers to a system of representation other than painting: a pixel-based system which articulates every part of its surface equally. In *Red system no. 1 (The first deadly system)* [1997–98], those pixels constitute an illusion of a space or a landscape. Swinging back and forward between that data and what lies underneath makes you think of a screen.

**Healy:** I don't buy the data metaphor because to me the reference point for the dots was light. In *Woden waiting* [1992–93], because it's a night-time image in which the light was constituting the city, there's the idea that there's light coming through tears or perforations. It's a much stronger metaphor for me than data drizzling down *Matrix*-like. I think there are many other ways of thinking about abstraction other than simply ones and zeros.

**Nicholson:** For me, they suggest a certain kind of vision which is totally separated from touch. There's a very strong implication that you're encountering the city as you do from an aeroplane. At the same time, you're also aware of Jon making fingerprints with a paintbrush. So the paintings play on a tension between something tactile and sight utterly removed from that sense.

**Healy:** Karen, given your background in architecture, do you think it's the vision of the urban planner? Some writers describe Jon as a *flâneur*, involved in the poetics of walking, which is exactly the opposite of that perspective.

**Burns:** Even though we're located with a view from the tower, because we're actually dealing with the gestural activity of mark-making and a very expressionist technique in the background, we're confronted with the human immediacy of the tactile mark on the canvas.

**Cattapan:** For me, *The group discusses* is like the city in microcosm, whereas *Red system no. 1* is a very experiential work. It was made not that long after coming back from India. Very often for me being in a particular place is about an evocation of colour. The only way I could describe Seoul is that it was a blue sort of city. India was a very red place. Over there, colour and smell were just absolutely overwhelming sensations and I wanted to work back into that as a bodily thing, whilst at the same time continuing to talk about the urban overlay.

**Nicholson:** The point of view in *Red system no. 1* is very evocative of weightlessness; there's not any place in the picture where your body would feel whole or subject to gravity. *The taking of Richmond* [1999] relates to disputes and pickets in the Kennett years; in the picture the weight of the body is a kind of political instrument. There's a very interesting tension between that picture and other images where the body is almost a dispersed entity.



Cat. 65 The taking of Richmond 1999

**Cattapan:** When I painted *Red system no. 1*, I began to think of those little points of light which represent the architecture of the city as being not unlike acupuncture points on a body. I began to think of it as a very bodily sort of space to be in; you're in the flow of the vein and yet you've still got this kind of screen of information stretched out over the top of it.

**Healy:** There's another aspect of your work that's in tension with that. *Curtain line* (*Australian crowd no. 2*) [2001] is a memory work, it's archiving particular moments in political and cultural history that have been forgotten in public culture.

**Cattapan:** But part of me always comes back to the aesthetic. It's not as if I'm setting out just to work with an idea or make a point through the work. I think the work has to be beautiful. So, to me *Curtain line* has a sort of sensual quality to it, it's quite soft.

**Burns:** There is a possibility that we can find certain kinds of beauty in those moments of danger. In the visual arts, the sublime is a particular aesthetic that celebrates terror, pain and fear.

**Cattapan:** I think it's very important to humanise and personalise those events. *Carrying* [2002] is a work about the 'children overboard' affair. I felt that as the son of migrants it had a really particular personal resonance for me. And so, what did I do? I went onto the Internet and typed in the words 'children overboard' and got literally thousands of references, thousands of picture images came up. I think it's a very particular thing to try and record something like that through painting; to actually make a painting very slowly and absorb the event through the actual act, the physical act of making the work takes it somewhere else.

**Burns:** Architectural space encodes all sorts of references in it to other places and spaces. As we move through one space, the body is living out the memory of other spaces we've visited. And maybe that's why there's this dream-like quality to the paintings, because they make me think of that process of memory.

**Healy:** But I think the paintings are also asking: How can you be a witness to the things that the last hundred years have seen?

**Burns:** That's more apparent in the pieces where the material is obviously much more political and deals with traumatic events. There's a kind of anxiety for me if I'm being asked to witness a particular event but the figures have lost clarity.

**Healy:** But aren't we witnessing very particular compartments of bodies in the *Carbon group* drawings [2003]?





Cat. 75 Untitled (Carbon group no. 19) 2003

**Cattapan:** The bodies are really very pained. Although they're anonymous, I think in looking at them you understand that there's love and pain and senses of confinement. So it shouldn't come as any surprise that a lot of them are based on images from various detention centres around the country. How do you register that personal protest? How do you make something that at least embeds itself for you and then maybe might reach someone else as well?

**Nicholson:** Picture-making is always belated. Picturing is a slow process. It's always after the event; an after-image which is remembered. All acts of manual picture-making involve acts of memory. Even if you're drawing a life model, you turn away from the model and record on the page something which is held in memory. I think that there's a sense in which images which you carry around with you are obviously inseparable from the way you encounter external images.

**Cattapan:** The drawings are always for me a very important way of actually being an artist. No matter where you are, in whatever condition you're in, you can pull out a bit of paper and do a quick little notation. If they don't work, you toss them out. Drawings and watercolours are an entirely different way of working to painting. Part of it's to do with the scale and part of it's to do with the speed. I've also mucked around with digital imaging and software for a long time that allows me to generate version after version of an electronic image incredibly quickly. So that too is

incredibly useful as a drawing kind of process. In a drawing, I'm able to tap things in a much quicker, less conscious kind of way. Sometimes I take small elements of the drawings and collage them onto the painting, except I'm literally painting them in. To me they're never as successful as these immediate works.

**Burns:** Dead ends are part of what we do. Tell me about your dead ends?

**Cattapan:** I think dead ends are incredibly important. The idea of drawing and the idea of a dead end almost go hand in hand; it's actually something to be welcomed. I mean, with drawing you can be completely risky and the result might be a dead end but it's always an energizing process. You can court failure, which is a great mechanism for growing as an artist. It's always bemused me that my drawings do one thing and my paintings do another. Ultimately, I would always come back to my drawings because they're just completely naked. With painting, there's this slow learning process over time, there's plenty of room to try and orchestrate an open intellectual and expressive breadth to the work.

There's a tremendous moment, sometimes, when things are going well, where you lose the conscious, rational side of what you're doing and you're right in the work. I'm trying to call them into existence, you understand, and at that very moment, if it's going really well, I lose sight of that and I'm actually there. Sometimes when it's going really well and I'm right in it, I can actually taste it, and then I know, just for a few split seconds, I know that I'm not in charge.



**Cattapan:** *The fold* [2000] was a transitional picture. I hadn't made a painting with a couple of big figures in it for maybe ten or so years so it was a pretty bold kind of step. I wanted to have a go at something very different, a really simple idea. It's based on a very tiny image of two footballers tackling, from the sports pages of *The Age*. It's been blown up until what you see are the colour separations of the printing process. I've tried to make a figurative picture applying the logic of some of my cityscape paintings where there's a mapping of the figure over the top. It kind of dovetails with Aboriginal art: although you're looking at two figures, you're also looking at a kind of topography and a kind of mapping.

**Burns:** I think it's an incredibly successful painting. It's a unified picture plane. All of these things that you've separated out into different surfaces have come together and been worked on the same plane. The transition from the abstract language to figuration means the differences between the two are minimised.

**Healy:** I reckon it's a transitional painting because it takes some of the violence that's really central to Jon's work, puts it together with an abstracted version of the cityscapes, makes some references in the bottom quarter to landscape in colour and then connects it to a different sense of landscaping in the dotting at the top, which I think is actually quite distinctive and new. So I think it's an in-between painting in a very positive sense.

**Burns:** I don't read it as violent.

**Healy:** I do.

**Burns:** It could be an amorous act as well.

**Healy:** Water is very consistent in the works. One of the curious connections between the drawings and the paintings is that the drawings—watercolours—often evolve through the malleability of watery paints into a wateriness in the paintings. It's evolved through a different medium but there's still a sense of how your body feels around water or in water or on water.

**Cattapan:** The metaphor of *The city submerged* was about things dissolving, just the territory surrounding you dissolving.

**Nicholson:** It's connected to the nocturnal as well, isn't it? Because the nature of darkness is that you float in it; there's some connection between the appearance of water and the sensation of being in darkness.

**Healy:** Yes, but it's also Jon's take on modernity. I mean Marx talked about modernity as a world in which all that's solid melts into air. So it's about a melting version of modernity. Zygmunt Baumann calls it 'liquid modernity'; he talks of postmodernity not being really after modernity but as liquid modernity. Jon's recognising this in an artistic sense.

**Dr Karen Burns** is an art critic and historian who teaches at the University of Melbourne. She has researched and published extensively on architecture and urban tourism.

**Dr Chris Healy** teaches cultural studies at the University of Melbourne and recently stepped down as co-editor of *Cultural Studies Review* <[www.csreview.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.csreview.unimelb.edu.au)>. His books include *From the ruins of colonialism: History as social memory* (1997), *South Pacific museums* (2006) and the forthcoming *Forgetting Aborigines*.

**Tom Nicholson** is a Melbourne artist. Most recently, his work has been included in *The body. The ruin* (the Ian Potter Museum of Art) and *Ghosts of self and state* (Monash University Museum of Art).

We are grateful to Peter Daverington for recording and photographing the conversation.





Cat. 66 **The fold** 2000  
oil on canvas, 198.5 x 168 cm











27

Cat. 2 **The ochre mask** 1982  
mixed media and collage on paper, 116 x 80.5 cm

Cat. 27 Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Portrait of Ellis]** 1984  
fibre-tipped pen and red ink stamp on paper, 18 x 24.5 cm (irreg.)





3

Cat. 3 *Sister* 1984  
oil on canvas, 155 x 217 cm

Cat. 4 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 7 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 14 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 15 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 16 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 18 'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984  
pencil on paper, 30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)





7



4



14



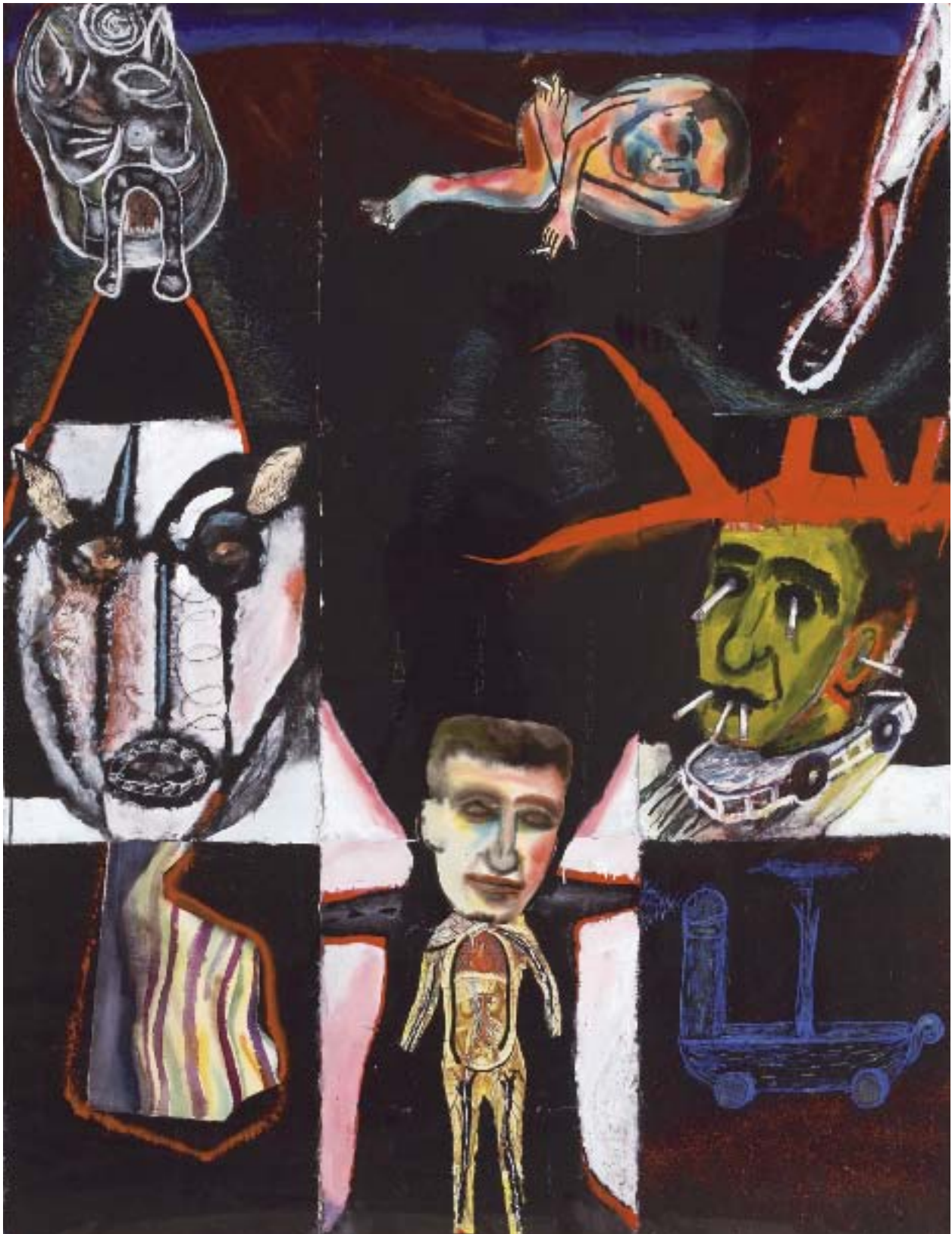
18



15



16





Cat. 30 **Reactive study (with late night cigarettes)** 1986  
mixed media and collage on paper; 9 parts: 165 x 125 cm, each: 55 x 41.5 cm

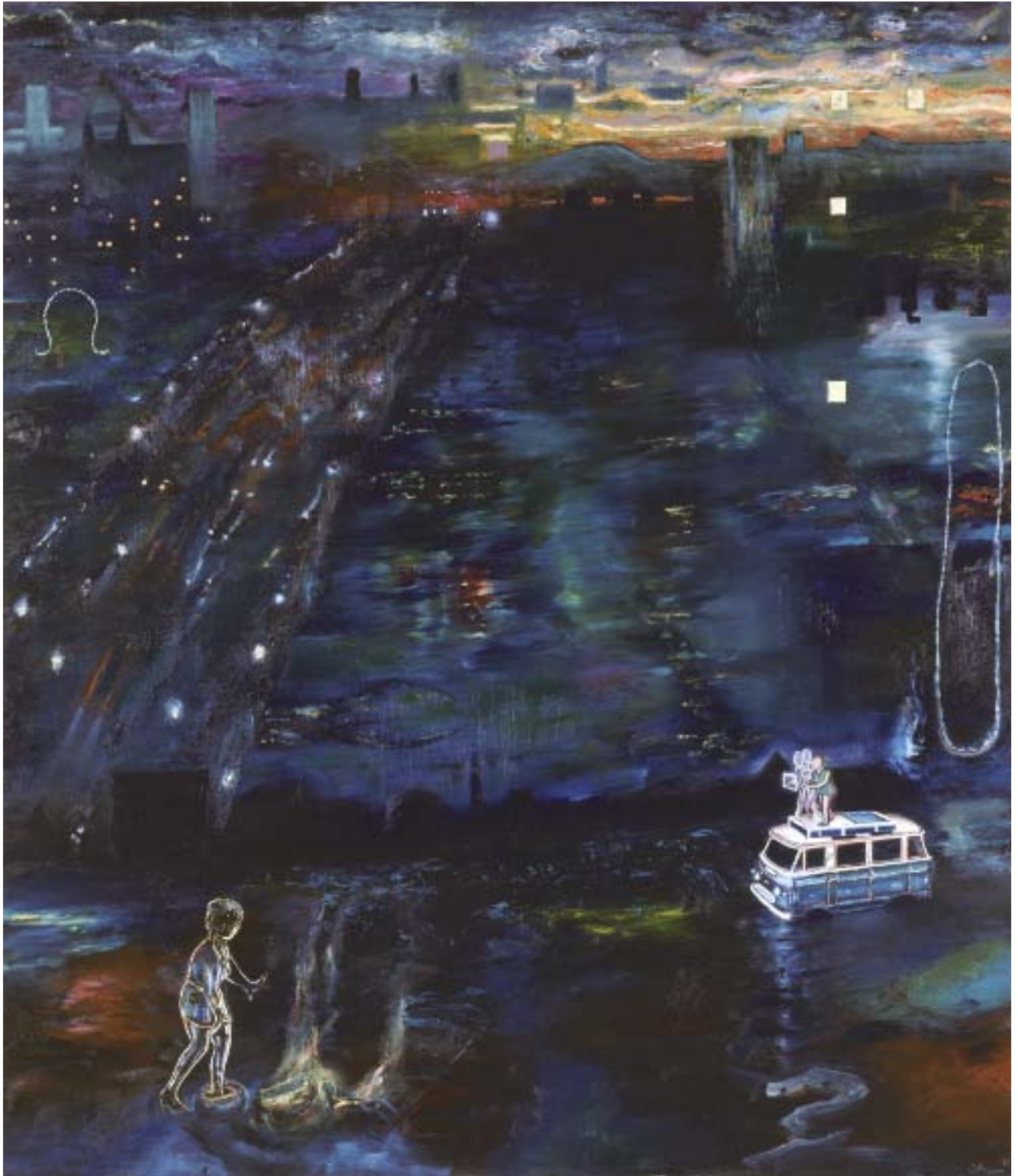
Cat. 31 **A view from flat 3/42 Grey St** 1987  
oil on canvas, 152 x 213 cm



Cat. 32 **Church alight (East Melbourne)** 1988  
oil on canvas; 10 parts: 183 x 289 cm;  
a: 183 x 151 cm, b-j each: 61 x 46 cm

Cat. 34 **Documentary (Melbourne as Rome)** 1989  
oil on canvas, 213 x 182 cm









Cat. 35 **Stack** 1990  
oil on canvas; triptych: 152.5 x 76 cm;  
a: 43 x 38 cm, b: 45.5 x 60.5 cm, c: 56 x 76 cm

Cat. 40 'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990  
oil stick on paper; triptych: 60 x 25.3 cm; a: 13 x 23 cm  
(irreg.), b: 19 x 25.3 cm, c: 19 x 25.3 cm









Cat. 42 **Double ellipse** (from 'The city submerged') 1991  
oil on canvas; diptych: 50.6 x 85 cm,  
each: 50.6 x 40.3 cm (oval)

Cat. 44 **The bookbuilder** 1992  
oil on canvas; triptych: 213 x 300 cm;  
a: 213 x 198 cm, b: 50 x 40 cm (oval), c: 50 x 40 cm (oval)









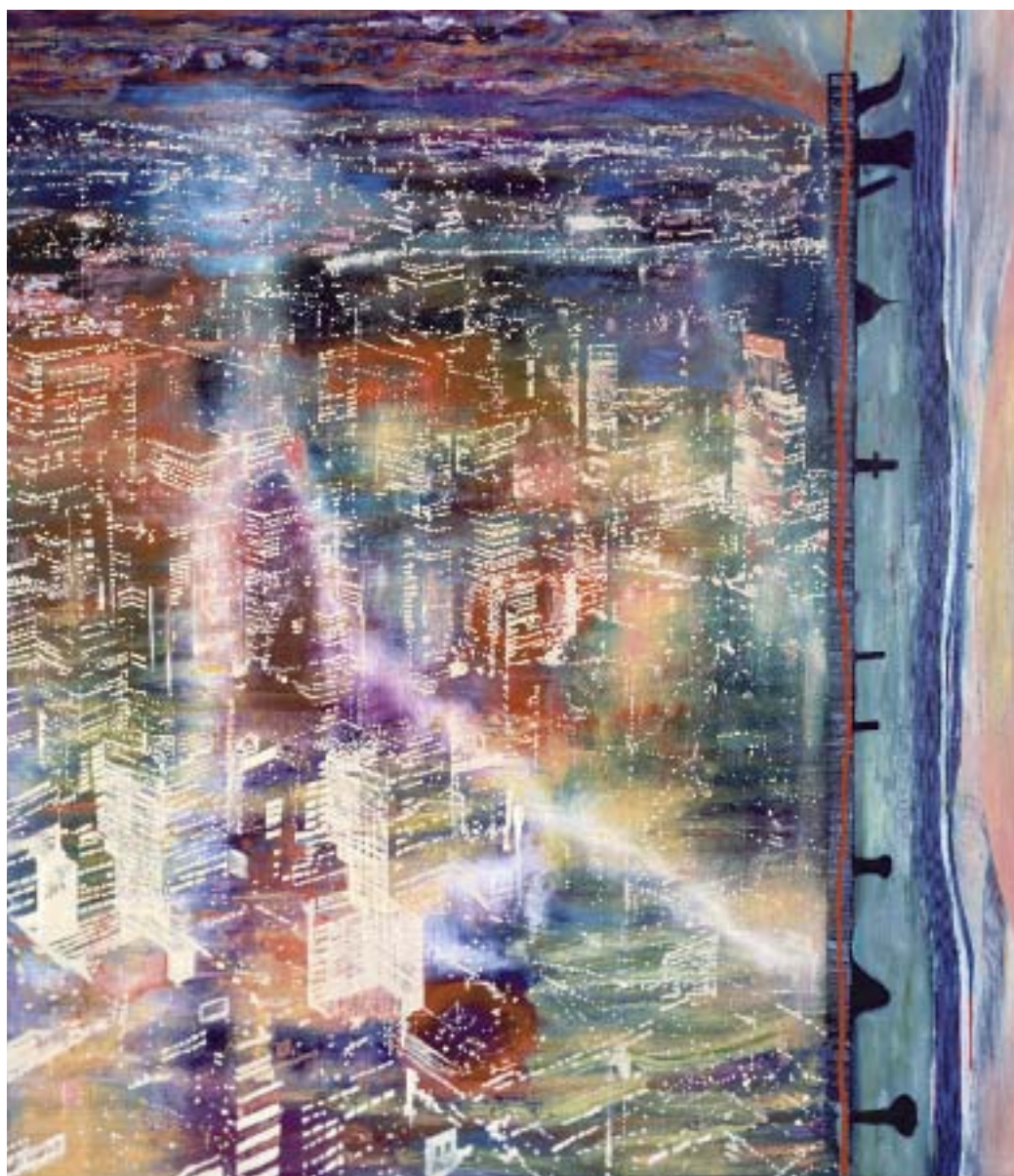
Cat. 43 *The city submerged no. 21 (Rising)* 1991–2006  
oil and mixed media on canvas, glass;  
25 parts: 650 x 350 cm (irreg.)



45

Cat. 45 **Woden waiting** 1992–93  
oil on canvas, 195 x 350 cm

Cat. 46 **Fuse** 1994  
oil on canvas; diptych: 213.7 x 223.5 cm;  
a: 51 x 41 cm (oval), b: 213.7 x 182.5 cm







47

Cat. 47 **Skeletal** 1995  
oil on canvas; diptych: 197.7 x 200 cm;  
a: 197.6 x 28.3 cm, b: 197.7 x 167.2 cm

Cat. 64 **Red system no. 3 (The third deadly system)** 1998–2001  
oil on canvas, 198 x 167.5 cm





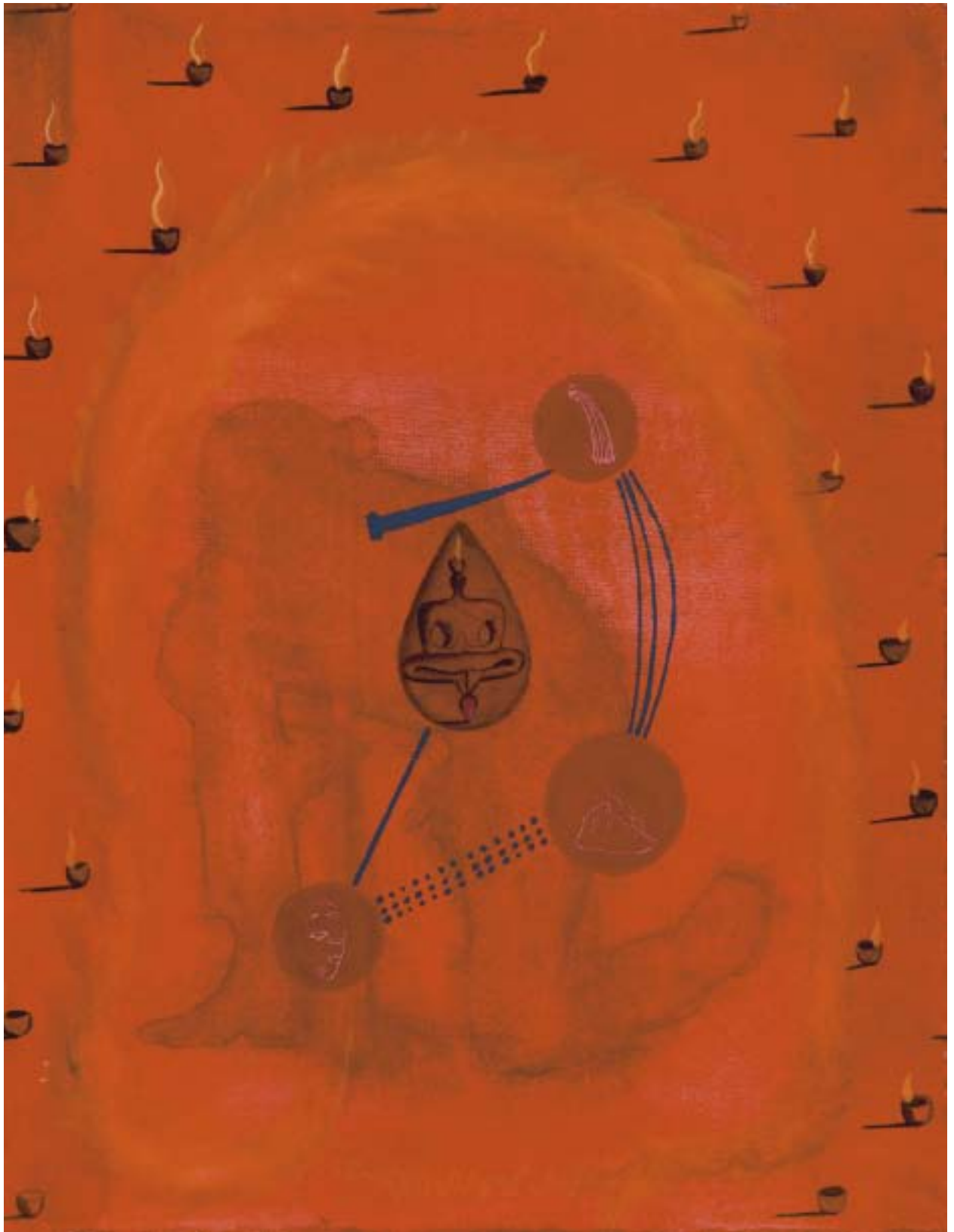


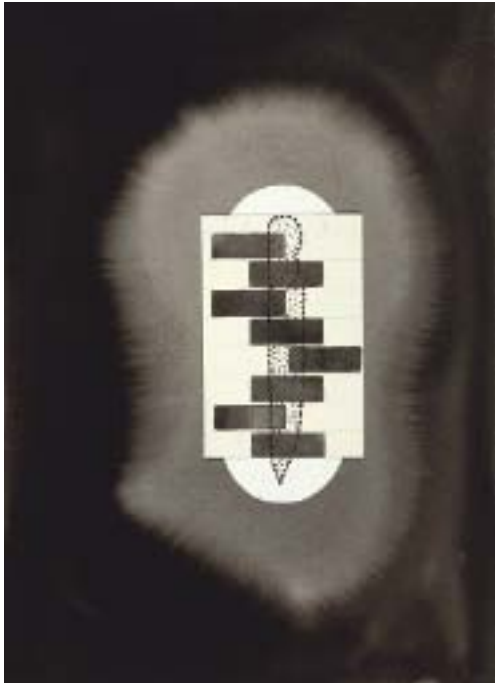
50

Cat. 50 'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)' 1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache on paper; 38 x 28 cm (irreg.)

Cat. 55 Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)** 1996-97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper; 31.5 x 24.5 cm



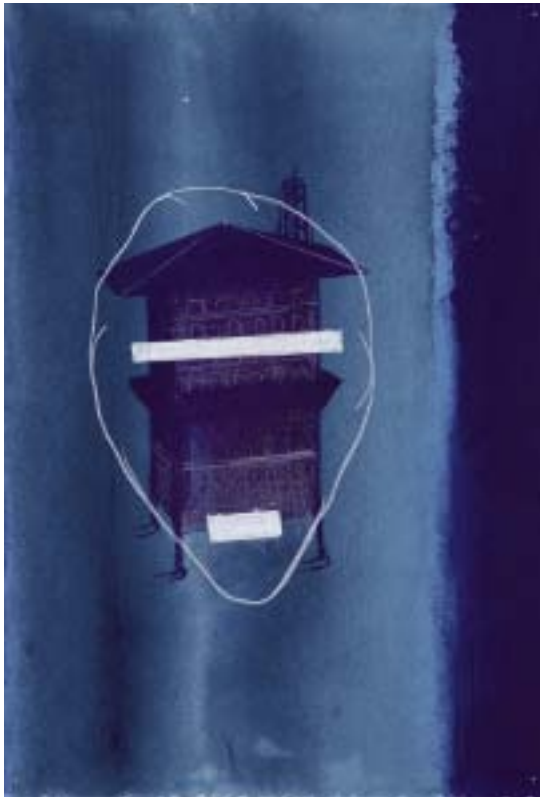




67



67



62



62



Cat. 67 Eugene Carchesio and Jon Cattapan  
**The Jon and Eugene drawings**  
(detail) 2001  
ink and watercolour on paper;  
7 parts: overall dimensions  
variable, each: 36 x 26 cm

Cat. 62 **Life forms (Seoul)**  
(detail) 1997  
gouache on paper;  
8 parts: 50.5 x 187 cm (framed),  
each: 28 x 19 cm



67



67



62



62



68

Cat. 68 **Curtain line (Australian crowd no. 2)** 2001  
oil on canvas; diptych: 180 x 360 cm, each: 180 x 180 cm

Cat. 71 **Untitled (Carbon group no. 3)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and pencil on paper, 50.5 x 66 cm

Cat. 72 **Untitled (Carbon group no. 6)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and pencil on paper, 50.5 x 66 cm



71



72





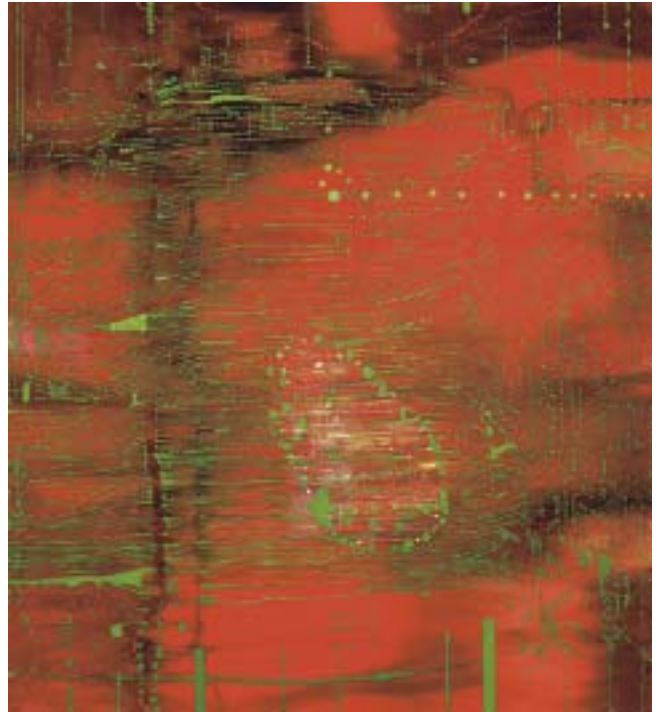
77

Cat. 77 'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite' 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper, 29.5 x 21 cm

Cat. 78 'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite' 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper, 29.5 x 21 cm







Cat. 82 **Possible histories: Keys Rd 2006**  
oil on canvas; triptych: 165 x 490 cm, each: 165 x 150 cm



# Jon Cattapan Biography

Born Melbourne, 1956. Lives Melbourne

## Studies

- 1992–93 Master of Arts, School of Art and Design, Monash University, Melbourne  
1975–77 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Melbourne

## Selected solo, collaborative and two-person exhibitions

- 2005 *After image*, Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane  
*Tiny signals*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
2004 *Line culture*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney  
2003 *Carbon groups*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
*Carbon groups II*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney  
2002 *Figure: ground*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney  
*Jon Cattapan*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
2001 *The Jon and Eugene show* (collaboration with Eugene Carchesio), Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
*Vista: crowd*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
2000 *Some seen*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
1999 *In the present*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
*Jon Cattapan: the city submerged*, Wollongong City Gallery and tour  
*Seven deadly systems (paintings)*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney  
1997 *Fire and life* (collaboration with Surendran Nair), Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
*Fluid*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
*Jon Cattapan—drawings*, Hong Ik University Art Museum, Seoul  
1996 *Alight*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
*Fire and life* (collaboration with Surendran Nair), the MS University of Baroda, India, and Gallery Chemould, Bombay  
*Stem*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney  
1994 *The open line part 2*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
*Pillars of salt*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney  
1993 *The city submerged*, Monash Studios, Melbourne  
*Journal entries*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
*The open line*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
1992 *365 days*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne, and Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
*Paintings*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney  
1991 *Paintings*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
*Recent works*, Photospace Gallery, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University  
*Reworking the notes—photographs*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane, and Realities Gallery, Melbourne  
1990 *Paintings and drawings*, Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York  
1989 *Local sums—paintings*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne  
*Paintings 1986–1989*, DC Art, Sydney  
*Working the notes*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth  
*Working the notes (part 2)*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane  
1987 *Household names, words on lips*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne  
1986 *Paintings and works on paper*, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney, and Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth  
1985 *Recent paintings and drawings*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne  
1984 *Works on paper*, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney  
1983 *Paintings, constructions and works on paper*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne  
1980 *Whatever happened to me?* (with Peter Ellis), Drummond Street Gallery, Melbourne  
1978 *Crisis drawings* (with Peter Ellis), RMIT Faculty Gallery, Melbourne

## Selected group exhibitions

- 2005 *Fireworks: tracing the incendiary in Australian art*, Artspace McKay, Queensland  
*People's choice*, Wollongong City Gallery  
2004 *Sticks and stones*, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, Launceston  
2003 *Love letter to China: Drawings by 35 Australian artists*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, and Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing  
*Other worlds: Images of fantasy and fiction*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, and tour  
*See here now: the Vizard Foundation Art Collection of the 1990s*, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne  
2002 *Nick Cave: the good son*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria  
*Nocturne: Images of night and darkness from colonial to contemporary*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria  
*Transit narratives*, Centro per le Arti Visive 'Le Venezie', Treviso, Italy  
2001 *Imaging identity and place*, Grafton Regional Gallery and tour  
2000 *Terra Australis*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
1999 *Telling tales*, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria  
1998 *Decalogue—a decade of Australian printmaking 1987–97*, Seoul Metropolitan Museum of Art  
1997 *The Chandler Coventry Collection*, Drill Hall Gallery, Australian National University, Canberra  
*The John McCaughey memorial art prize*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
1994 *Art Asia*, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre  
*Sulman prize exhibition*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
1993 *Art Asia*, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre  
*Australian perspecta 1993*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
*First Asia-Pacific triennial of contemporary art*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
1992 *Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation touring exhibition*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, and tour  
1991 *Domino 1: collaborations between artists*, Ian Potter Gallery, the University of Melbourne Museum of Art  
*Ellipses*, 13 Verity Street, Melbourne  
*Sites*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
1990 *Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation touring exhibition*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, and tour  
*Nomadic*, Sullivant Hall, Ohio State University, Columbus  
*Visiting artists*, Hopkins Hall Gallery, College of Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus  
1989 *The ICI Collection of Contemporary Art*, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and tour  
*The intimate object*, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne  
*Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation touring exhibition*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and tour  
*Re: creation/re-creation: the art of copying 19th & 20th centuries*, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
1988 *Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation touring exhibition*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and tour  
*The new generation 1983–1988*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra  
1987 *Backlash: the Australian drawing revival 1976–1986*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
*Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation touring exhibition*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, and tour  
1985 *Figure, fantasy, fetish*, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne  
1981 *Animals and animism in Australian art*, RMIT Faculty Gallery, Melbourne



#### Selected collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Artbank  
Australian National University, Canberra  
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Victoria  
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, New South Wales  
Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria  
Burnie Regional Art Gallery, Tasmania  
City of Glen Eira, Melbourne  
City of Port Phillip, Melbourne  
Curtin University, Perth  
Deakin University, Victoria  
Geelong Gallery, Victoria  
Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise, Queensland  
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne  
Latrobe Valley Arts Centre, Morwell, Victoria  
Monash Medical Centre, Melbourne  
Monash University, Melbourne  
Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Newcastle Region Art Gallery, New South Wales  
Northern Territory University, Darwin  
Parliament House, Canberra  
Print Council of Australia, Melbourne  
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston  
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
Shire of Diamond Valley, Victoria  
St Leonard's College, Melbourne  
Tamworth City Gallery, New South Wales  
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba  
University of Tasmania, Hobart  
Victoria University, Melbourne  
Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, New South Wales  
Warnambool Art Gallery, Victoria  
Wesley College, Melbourne  
Wollongong City Gallery, New South Wales

#### Grants, awards and residencies

2005	Grant, Arts Victoria
	Grant, Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council
2004	Blackfriars Trust Acquisitive Drawing Award, Coolac, New South Wales
	Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award, Grafton Regional Gallery, New South Wales
2002	Residency, Bundanon Artists Centre, New South Wales
1999	Grant, Australian Research Council
1998	Grant, Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council
1997	Visiting artist/professor, Hong Ik University, Seoul
1996	Residency, Baroda, India (Fire and Life project, Asialink)
1992	Creative Arts Fellowship, Australia Council
1991	Residency, Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra
1990	Residency, Department of Art, College of Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus
1989	Residency, Greene Street Studio, New York (Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council)
1982	Residency, Fintona Girls School, Melbourne
1981	Residency, Ivanhoe Girls Grammar, Melbourne

Jon Cattapan is represented  
by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne;  
Kaliman Gallery, Sydney; and  
Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# Bibliography

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- Contemporary Australian collage and its origins*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1990.
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## Exhibition catalogues

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- Bull, G, *Cloudbusting*, Canberra School of Art, Australian National Gallery, 1993.
- Carroll, A, *Irony, humour & dissent: recent Australian drawings*, Manly Art Gallery & Museum, NSW, 1989.
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- Chapman, C, *The open line*, Bellas Gallery, Brisbane, 1993.
- Conomos, J, *Jon Cattapan: figure: ground*, Kaliman Gallery, Paddington, NSW, 2002.
- Ewington, J & R Nelson, *Jon Cattapan: journal entries*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 1993.
- First Asia-Pacific triennial of contemporary art*, Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, 1993.
- Fitzpatrick, D, *Pillars of salt*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney, 1994.
- Gates, M, *Re: creation/re-creation: the art of copying 19th & 20th centuries*, Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Vic., 1989.
- Domino 1: collaborations between artists*, the University of Melbourne Museum of Art, 1992.
- Gott, T, *Backlash: the Australian drawing revival 1976–1986*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1986.
- Holmes, J, *Transit narratives*, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane, 2002.
- ICI Contemporary Art Collection*, ICI, Melbourne, 1989.
- King, N & C McAuliffe, *Jon Cattapan: 365 days*, Realities Gallery, Melbourne, 1992.
- King, N, *Fire and life*, *Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair*, Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Vic., 1997.
- Kronenberg, S, *Constructed city*, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1995.
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- Lynn, V, *Australian perspecta 1993*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1993.
- May, A, *Collection in context: Jon Cattapan*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Vic., 1996.
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- North, I, *Expanse, aboriginalities, spatialities and the politics of ecstasy*, University of South Australia Art Museum, Adelaide, 1998.
- Runnegar, B, *Real time: artists using digital technology*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 1993.
- Stanhope, Z, *Graphic*, Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Vic., 1998.
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- White, T, *Jon Cattapan: line culture*, Kaliman Gallery, Paddington, NSW, 2004.
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- Animals and animism in Australian art and other essays*, Fine Art Department, RMIT, Melbourne, 1981.

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# Catalogue of works in the exhibition

Dimensions are given as height before width. For artworks with multiple components, sets of dimensions are listed in order from the upper left corner of the installation, from left to right and top to bottom. All works by Jon Cattapan except where otherwise noted

1. **Bananas 1977–78**  
oil and mixed media on canvas, board  
152.5 x 122.5 cm  
Collection of the artist
2. **The ochre mask 1982**  
mixed media and collage on paper  
116 x 80.5 cm  
Collection of the artist
3. **Sister 1984**  
oil on canvas  
155 x 217 cm  
Collection of the artist
4. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
5. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
6. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
7. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
8. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
9. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
10. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
11. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
12. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
13. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
14. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
15. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
16. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
17. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
18. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
19. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
20. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
21. **'Untitled' from 'Sister drawings' 1984**  
pencil on paper  
30.5 x 40 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of the artist
22. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Blue heart] 1984**  
fibre-tipped pen, pencil and oil pastel  
on paper  
18 x 21 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
23. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Does she like Lea] 1984**  
fibre-tipped pen, pencil and oil pastel  
on paper  
21.5 x 23 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
24. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Madame please] 1984**  
oil pastel, pencil and graphite  
on paper  
17.5 x 21 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
25. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Orange nude] 1984**  
oil pastel and crayon on paper  
18 x 22 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
26. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Portrait aeroplane] 1984**  
fibre-tipped pen and red ink stamp  
on paper  
18 x 24.5 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
27. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Portrait of Ellis] 1984**  
fibre-tipped pen and red ink stamp  
on paper  
18 x 24.5 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
28. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [The recliner] 1984**  
pen and ink on paper  
14.5 x 18 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
29. Jon Cattapan and Peter Ellis  
**Untitled [Two insects] 1984**  
oil pastel and crayon on paper  
17 x 22.5 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Peter Ellis, Melbourne
30. **Reactive study  
(with late night cigarettes) 1986**  
mixed media and collage on paper  
9 parts: 165 x 125 cm,  
each: 55 x 41.5 cm  
Collection of the artist
31. **A view from flat 3/42 Grey St 1987**  
oil on canvas  
152 x 213 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne
32. **Church alight (East Melbourne) 1988**  
oil on canvas  
10 parts: 183 x 289 cm;  
a: 183 x 151 cm, b–j each: 61 x 46 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
33. **Name and address 1988**  
oil on canvas  
183 x 213.7 cm  
National Gallery of Victoria,  
Melbourne  
Purchased through the Art  
Foundation of Victoria with the  
assistance of the Moët & Chandon  
Art Acquisition Fund, Governor, 1989
34. **Documentary  
(Melbourne as Rome) 1989**  
oil on canvas  
213 x 182 cm  
Collection of Mr and Mrs Warson,  
Melbourne
35. **Stack 1990**  
oil on canvas  
triptych: 152.5 x 76 cm; a: 43 x 38 cm,  
b: 45.5 x 60.5 cm, c: 56 x 76 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
36. **'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990**  
oil stick and oil pastel on paper  
triptych: 63 x 28.3 cm; a: 19 x 14 cm,  
b: 19 x 19.5 cm, c: 19 x 28.3 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
37. **'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990**  
watercolour on paper  
18.9 x 28.2 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
38. **'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990**  
watercolour and pastel on paper  
18.8 x 28.3 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
39. **'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990**  
watercolour and pastel on paper  
diptych: 25.8 x 37 cm;  
a: 25.8 x 17.6 cm, b: 25.8 x 17.8 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
40. **'Untitled' from 'Under New York' 1990**  
oil stick on paper  
triptych: 60 x 25.3 cm; a: 13 x 23 cm  
(irreg.), b: 19 x 25.3 cm,  
c: 19 x 25.3 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
41. **Dog day (Seep) 1991**  
oil on canvas  
198 x 168.8 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
42. **Double ellipse  
(from 'The city submerged') 1991**  
oil on canvas  
diptych: 50.6 x 85 cm,  
each: 50.6 x 40.3 cm (oval)  
Collection of the artist
43. **The city submerged no. 21 (Rising)  
1991–2006**  
oil and mixed media on canvas, glass  
25 parts: 650 x 350 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
44. **The bookbuilder 1992**  
oil on canvas  
triptych: 213 x 300 cm;  
a: 213 x 198 cm, b: 50 x 40 cm (oval),  
c: 50 x 40 cm (oval)  
Collection of Artbank

45. **Woden waiting** 1992–93  
oil on canvas  
195 x 350 cm  
Vizard Foundation Art Collection  
of the 1990s, on loan to the Ian  
Potter Museum of Art,  
the University of Melbourne
46. **Fuse** 1994  
oil on canvas  
diptych: 213.7 x 223.5 cm;  
a: 51 x 41 cm (oval),  
b: 213.7 x 182.5 cm  
National Gallery of Australia,  
Canberra
47. **Skeletal** 1995  
oil on canvas  
diptych: 197.7 x 200 cm;  
a: 197.6 x 28.3 cm, b: 197.7 x 167.2 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales,  
Sydney  
Moët & Chandon Art Acquisition  
Fund 1995
48. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
37.8 x 27.8 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
49. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
29 x 28.5 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
50. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
38 x 28 cm (irreg.)  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
51. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
22.8 x 33 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
52. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
22.8 x 33 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
53. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
22.8 x 33 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
54. **'Untitled' from 'Life forms (Baroda)'**  
1996  
ink, watercolour and gouache  
on paper  
22.8 x 33 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
55. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
31.5 x 24.5 cm  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
56. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
33 x 24 cm  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
57. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
32.5 x 24.5 cm  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
58. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
33 x 23.5 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
59. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
32.5 x 24.5 cm  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
60. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda/**  
**Melbourne)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
38 x 28 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
61. Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair  
**Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda/**  
**Melbourne)**  
1996–97  
watercolour, ink and gouache on paper  
38 x 28 cm (irreg.)  
Collection of Jon Cattapan,  
Melbourne
62. **Life forms (Seoul)** 1997  
gouache on paper  
8 parts: 50.5 x 187 cm (framed),  
each: 28 x 19 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne
63. **Red system no. 1**  
**(The first deadly system)**  
1997–98  
oil on canvas  
198 x 167.5 cm  
Collection of the artist
64. **Red system no. 3**  
**(The third deadly system)**  
1998–2001  
oil on canvas  
198 x 167.5 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne
65. **The taking of Richmond** 1999  
oil on canvas  
168 x 198 cm  
Monash University Collection,  
Melbourne  
Monash University Museum of Art
66. **The fold** 2000  
oil on canvas  
198.5 x 168 cm  
Collection of the artist
67. Eugene Carchesio and Jon Cattapan  
**The Jon and Eugene drawings** 2001  
ink and watercolour on paper  
7 parts: overall dimensions variable,  
each: 36 x 26 cm  
Courtesy the artists and  
Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
68. **Curtain line (Australian crowd no. 2)**  
2001  
oil on canvas  
diptych: 180 x 360 cm,  
each: 180 x 180 cm  
Private collection, Sydney
69. **Carrying** 2002  
oil on canvas  
195 x 240 cm  
The Paul Eliadis Collection of  
Contemporary Art, Brisbane
70. **The group discusses** 2002  
oil on canvas  
195 x 275 cm  
Private collection, courtesy Kaliman  
Gallery, Sydney
71. **Untitled (Carbon group no. 3)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and  
pencil on paper  
50.5 x 66 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
72. **Untitled (Carbon group no. 6)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and  
pencil on paper  
50.5 x 66 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
73. **Untitled (Carbon group no. 10)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and  
pencil on paper  
50.5 x 66 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
74. **Untitled (Carbon group no. 18)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and  
pencil on paper  
50.5 x 66 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
75. **Untitled (Carbon group no. 19)** 2003  
alkyd modified oil paint and  
pencil on paper  
50.5 x 66 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
76. **Psychasthenia 101 (video)** 2005  
oil on canvas  
140 x 140 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane
77. **'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite'** 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper  
29.5 x 21 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
78. **'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite'** 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper  
29.5 x 21 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
79. **'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite'** 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper  
29.5 x 21 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
80. **'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite'** 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper  
29.5 x 21 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
81. **'Untitled' from 'Mogliano suite'** 2005  
watercolour and ink on paper  
29.5 x 21 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
82. **Possible histories: Keys Rd** 2006  
oil on canvas  
triptych: 165 x 490 cm,  
each: 165 x 150 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne; Kaliman Gallery, Sydney;  
and Bellas Milani Gallery, Brisbane

## The drowned world: Jon Cattapan, works and collaborations

Published by the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, on the occasion of the exhibition  
*The drowned world: Jon Cattapan, works and collaborations*, 13 May to 6 August 2006

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**Right**

Cat. 62 *Life forms* (Seoul) 1997

**Front cover**

Cat. 69 *Carrying* 2002

**Inside front cover**

Cat. 56 Jon Cattapan and Surendran Nair

*Untitled (Matter drawings, Baroda)* 1996–97

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