

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

HINTERLANDS

Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

28 June 2008 – 22 February 2009

EDUCATION KIT



Albert Tucker

Parrots in bush c. 1973

oil and mixed media on composition board

60.5 x 75.9 cm

Cbus Collection of Australian Art as advised by Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE

Purchased 1990

© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

INTRODUCTION TO *HINTERLANDS*

Albert Tucker is perhaps best known for his gritty social commentaries, his depictions of the anxious urban landscape of Melbourne and its inhabitants during World War II, and for his interests in the folklore and demonology of Australian history. However, he was also utterly preoccupied, for a period of fifteen to twenty years, with the character, textures and beauty of the Australian bush. This was by no means a phase restricted to landscape. Some of his most monumental narrative paintings were created during the 1960s and 1970s, together with the best of his inimitable explorers, intruders and fauns. Yet during this era Tucker tempered human reference in his paintings and he concentrated, with care and assiduity, on the landscapes of his experience and his memory, and the wildlife that inhabited them. For the first and only sustained time in his life Tucker created a body of work which was lyrical, almost romantic.

Tucker had begun painting Australian landscape themes while living in Italy (1952–56), relying on his memory of the topography and its distinctive forms and applying the techniques and aesthetics developed through his exposure to the technical progressions of international modernism. Tucker may have left Australia as a misunderstood artist absorbed with denunciations of a destructive culture engendered by war, but he returned with a new vision and understanding of his homeland, one developed almost entirely in his imagination.

While the paintings in this exhibition are indicative of only a small fraction of Tucker's output in the landscape genre after his return to Australia, the chief locales that occupied his interest are all represented. Tucker was primarily attracted to hinterlands: rural Hurstbridge, where he and Barbara Tucker lived for twenty years; the Dandenong Ranges on the outskirts of Melbourne; the Barmah Forest near Echuca in north west Victoria; the bush beyond the Gippsland coast in the state's south east; and Springbrook in the Gold Coast Hinterland, where the Tuckers purchased an acreage of rainforest in an act of environmental conservation. Tucker's vision of these landscapes is indexical to his immersion in them; the bush closes in, the colours and atmosphere are heightened, and his portrayals show a deep respect for nature.

Introduction written by Lesley Harding for the exhibition catalogue, *Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2008.



EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

4. When Tucker moved to a five-acre property in rural Hurstbridge, just outside of Melbourne, he built a residence with a studio on the second storey. What evidence is there in artworks such as *Bush 5* (1962) and *Trees I* (1964) that Tucker's studio at Hurstbridge was elevated above ground level?

5. Tucker preferred to work in his studio rather than *en plein air* (outdoors) and used images from his memory as well as those directly from the landscape to create his images. What evidence is there that *Parrots in bush* (c. 1973) is a studio painting and a combination of different settings?

6. Curator Lesley Harding states that Tucker's landscapes 'have a strong focus on the monumentality and beauty of tree life.' Discuss two works that support this commentary.

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

12. What are the similarities and differences between *Trees I* (1964) and (Springbrook waterfall) (1974)? Use a Venn diagram or the comparison table below to assist you.

Artwork comparison table – similarities and differences			
	Qualities unique to <i>Trees I</i> (1964)	Qualities unique to (Springbrook waterfall) (1974)	Similarities between the two artworks
Media			
Technique			
Style			
Subject matter			
Composition			
Colour			
Mood or meaning			

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

13. Choose your favourite work in the exhibition and write an extended visual analysis of it.

Extended visual analysis

Provide the main details of the artwork.

Artist: Albert Tucker

Title:

Date:

Medium:

Shade the Art elements bar graph relative to your chosen work.

Show the individual importance of each of the art elements in the artwork's overall composition (1 = Low importance, 10 = High importance).

Art elements

10									
9									
8									
7									
6									
5									
4									
3									
2									
1									
	Line	Tone	Form	Shape	Colour	Pattern	Scale	Texture	Space



EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

Describe the materials and techniques that Tucker has used to create the work.
Explain the way the media has been applied/handled.

What is the style of the work? Where do you see evidence of this?

What is the most striking or interesting aspect of the work? Why?

What is Tucker communicating to the viewer about the Australian landscape?

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

COMMENTARIES

Tucker on Tucker

I was an urban Australian but I would make a qualification that even as an urban Australian one did feel the land behind ... these overtones and undertones of the hinterland ...

Albert Tucker in conversation with PMT Sheldon-Williams, radio broadcast transcript, London, 23 January 1969, Albert Tucker Archive, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, p. 5.

... I am painting Australia for the first time in my life. And what's more enjoying it – that zeroed in feeling. It's becoming necessary for me to be back for a while at least for raw material.

Albert Tucker, letter to John and Sunday Reed, Rome, 20 January 1956, copy in Tucker papers, private collection, Melbourne.

... I'd been away long enough to be suffering acute bouts of nostalgia and I was getting all these memory images of Australia – and oddly enough not so much specific imagery, but in images of texture and colour and light and all that kind of thing that's very Australian, very rough textures.

Albert Tucker in interview with Barbara Blackman, 14 July 1988, Oral History Program, TRC 2298, National Library of Australia, Canberra, tape 5 side A.

The Australian bush was very powerful and almost a shock after not seeing it for so many years. It gripped my imagination, being so full of wonderful colours and wildlife – I'd forgotten the freedom you have in it.

Albert Tucker quoted in Susan McCulloch-Uehlin, 'The final word', *The Weekend Australian*, 30 – 31 October 1990, p. 8.

I started painting gum trees when they were extremely unpopular. They were regarded as an academic idea to be avoided at all costs.

Albert Tucker in interview with James Gleeson, Hurstbridge, 2 May 1979, Albert Tucker Archive, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, p. 28.

I had twenty years in Hurstbridge among the trees and birds which was good as far as it went, but it went on a bit too long. I was very lonely, and I was getting this terrific yen to be among people and buildings. I had built up a terrific sense of deprivation at Hurstbridge, almost without being aware of it.

Lily Brett, 'The inspired and inspiring Albert Tucker', *POL International*, March 1985, p. 109.

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

POST-VISIT RESEARCH

- Compare Tucker's landscapes with those of the Heidelberg School artists, such as Frederick McCubbin and Arthur Streeton.
- Compare Tucker's landscape works from the 1960s and 1970s with those of Fred Williams from the same period.
- Compare Tucker's landscapes with those of Indigenous Australian artists, such as Emily Kngwarray and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri.
- Compare Tucker's landscapes with those of European artists, such as Claude Monet or Joseph Mallord William Turner. What do you believe to be the qualities that define the Australian landscape? How does the Australian environment differ from the European environment?
- Tucker moved away from rural Hurstbridge to inner city St Kilda in 1980. Research the changes his work underwent during this period.

CREATING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

- Create a landscape painting based on your local environment. Observe and document the shapes, colours and textures of the trees in your specific area. Work *en plein air* or from a recent photograph.
- Create an abstract work by painting a close-up of a tree. Choose a tree that is very textured or has interesting coloured or patterned bark. You may like to make a viewfinder from a piece of cardboard and use it to crop an area of the landscape.
- Create a landscape by painting from a heightened viewpoint, such as the second storey of a building or from a watchtower.
- Experiment with impasto effects by mixing acrylic paint and PVA glue. Use a support such as canvas, board or heavy card so that the work remains stable. Ensure that you wash your brushes thoroughly after you have finished.
- Collect a range of natural materials, such as leaves and bark, and create a landscape collage.
- Paint the same landscape in three different media: acrylic paint, watercolour and collage. Document the different effects you were able to achieve.

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

KEY ARTWORKS



Albert Tucker
Cockatoos, Barmah 1964
mixed media on hardboard
121.0 x 151.3 cm
Art Collection of National Australia Bank Limited
Purchased 1982
© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker

Trees I 1964

synthetic polymer paint, sand and bark on hardboard

91.3 x 120.8 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

On loan from Barbara Tucker 2006

© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker

Tree 1965

synthetic polymer paint and collage of gum leaves and bark on composition board

122.0 x 153.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1966

© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker

Parrots and ferns 1973

synthetic polymer paint and fern leaves on composition board

61.0 x 76.0 cm

Private collection, Melbourne

© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker
Bush 5 1962
oil on cardboard on composition board
24.2 x 36.4 cm
Bendigo Art Gallery Collection
Bequest of BS Andrew 1982
© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker

Parrots in bush c. 1973

oil and mixed media on composition board

60.5 x 75.9 cm

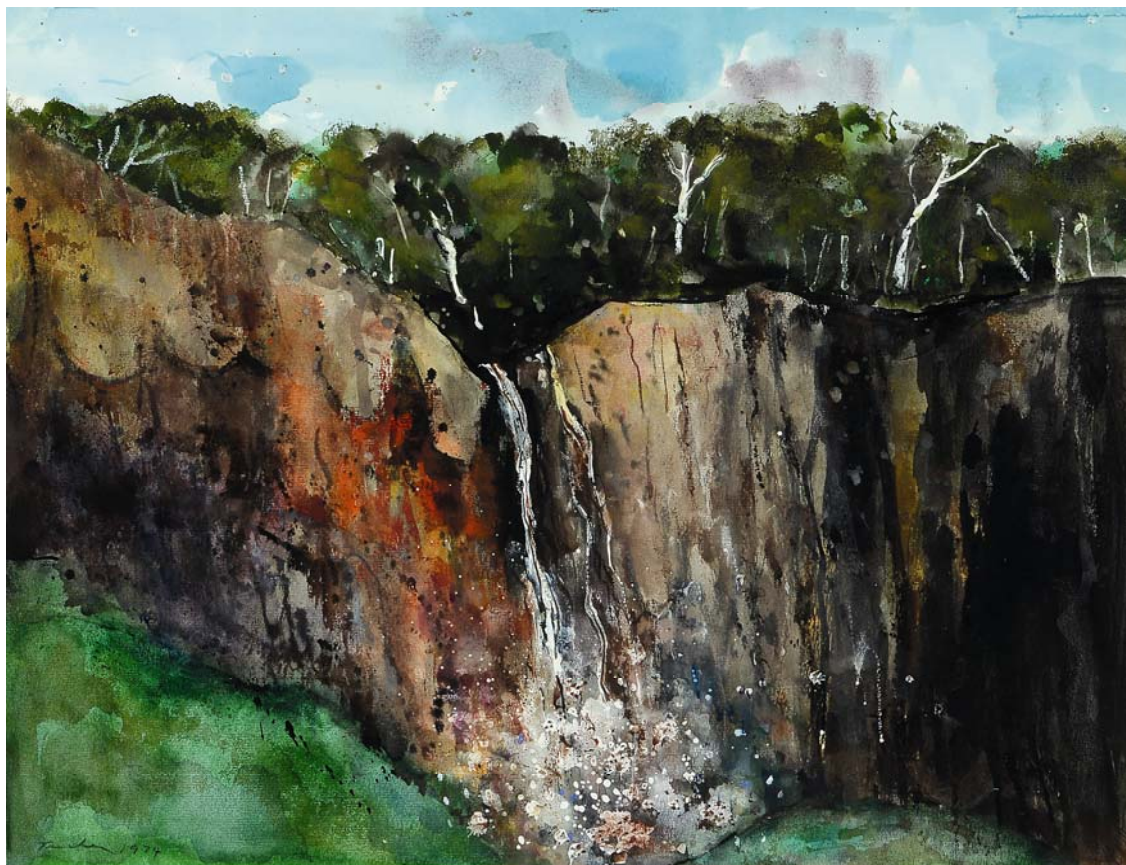
Cbus Collection of Australian Art as advised by Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE

Purchased 1990

© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975



Albert Tucker
(Springbrook waterfall) 1974
synthetic polymer paint, watercolour and chalk on paper
50.7 x 66.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
On loan from Barbara Tucker 2000
© Barbara Tucker

EDUCATION KIT

Hinterlands: Albert Tucker's landscapes 1960–1975

28 June 2008 – 22 February 2009

Written by Stephanie Karavasilis, Education Officer, Heide Museum of Modern Art

© Heide Museum of Modern Art, the artist and authors