



Images of quiet comfort

To visit David Chapman's exhibition at Melbourne's Powell Street gallery is to step into a private world of sweet, sweet content.

A world in which he has, by some gentle alchemy, transmuted the most commonplace scraps of landscape, garden and still life into the pure gold of unalloyed delight.

His paintings, at once delicate and intimate, are the result of a sensitive response to the natural and the ordinary. Such simple things as the rhythm of the days, the wonder of shadows creeping across some steps or the majesty of some cows grazing across a slope. 'The majesty of some cows.' How odd and improbable that looks when written down and how strong the temptation to drop it, but there is in these paintings a quiet dignity, an awe in the face of the visible world, which invests the most banal subjects with what can only, and again reluctantly, be described as a quasi-mystical intensity.

This heightened awareness is only possible to someone who has stepped aside from the pressures of ambition and the avant garde, someone who has traded the frenzy of getting to the top, for time to waste in his own way.

Consequently there is in these paintings a strange quiet, a tranquility and the comfort which immediately provokes in us a sympathetic response.

For all their joy and tenderness however, these paintings are neither sentimental nor anecdotal, they are freely jotted and immediate notations of the artist's intense awareness and pleasure in, not so much his physical surroundings, as his whole situation. Seismographic records, if you like, of what it is like to live quietly and happily, with your family, in the beautiful countryside of northern Tasmania.

His method of work is to flatten everything into a succession of shapes that make up both an irregular surface pattern and a recognisable subject world, which, oblivious of the constraints of traditional perspective, rises up the plane of the canvas in much the way of a Persian miniature.

These shapes are filled in with a rich and unpredictable juxtapositioning of colors. Far from being imitations of the local color, they are chosen to create an intricate harmony based on the feeling of the subject. Altogether a different thing.

Approached from the usual position of twentieth-century criticism that originality is everything, it would be easy to dismiss this exhibition as little more than a skilful antipodean variation on the French intimist painters of the early 1900s. But while they acknowledge their debt to Bonnard and Vuillard, they are not crushed by a slavish and mindless emulation.

Among all the painting exhibitions held during a year it is rare to find one that is so overflowing with pleasure in the act of painting or so responsive to the small things of the natural world.

These works are at once a celebration of being alive and a demonstration of the virtue of a philosophical detachment from the whips of desire and the scramble for what the world calls success.

*Graeme Sturgeon, 'Australian', May 1976
reviewing David Chapman's one-man exhibition*



DAVID CHAPMAN
PAINTINGS 1969—1979

My intention is to celebrate the things I see, that excite my desire to make a painting and to formulate for myself those principles which relate to my pictures.

David Chapman

All paintings are oil on canvas except nos. 18, 20 and 34 which are oil on board.

1	Yellow Interior <i>Private Collection</i>	1969
2	Fawkner Park, South Yarra <i>Private Collection</i>	1970
3	Posthumous Portrait of my Father <i>N.F.S.</i>	1969
4	My Wife in a Garden <i>N.F.S.</i>	1973
5	John Olsen Chooses his Colours	1978
6	Self Portrait with Sun Umbrella <i>Collection Beatrice Chapman</i>	1977
7	Southern Harbour	1975
8	Family Triptych <i>Collection Beatrice Chapman</i>	1976
9	One Man's Dream-Idyll	1979
10	Terrace and Garden — Winter	1975
11	Garden under the Western Tiers	1975
12	Steps to the Terrace	1976
13	Terrace, Fence and Pines	1976
14	Irises on a Book Shelf	1977
15	Breakfast Still Life	1977
16	Francis and Family (Shorthorns)	1978
17	Studio Work Table	1977
18	Path with a Garden Wall	1978
19	Spirit of the Valley — or Under the Western Tiers <i>Kindly loaned by Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery — Loan Collection</i>	1977
20	Four Wattles and the Tiers	1976
21	Three Pieces of Fruit	1977
22	Garden Landscape, Cressy	1977
23	Composition with House and Steps	1978
24	Spring Clouds, Cressy Valley <i>Kindly loaned by Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery — Loan Collection</i>	1977
25	The Road to Blackwood Creek	1977
26	Summer Heat with Cattle	1978
27	Trees in the Valley — Winter	1977
28	Light on Birch and Plum Trees	1979
29	Landscape with Billog Hills	1979

30	Under Clouded Mountains	1978
31	Sunroom Still Life	1979
32	Red Still Life with Flowers in a Pottery Jug	1979
33	Still Life with an Upturned Bowl	1978
34	Path Through the Gums	1979
35	Path to the Mountains	1979
36	The Last of the Big Gums	1979
37	Diana <i>Private Collection</i>	1976-77
38	Seated Nude on a Verandah (Lorraine)	1978
39	Garden Nude (Lorraine)	1978
40	Connorville Big Hill with an Artist Painting	1978
41	Billop Bluff and the Land Cruiser	1978
42	Through the Trees Towards the Den	1978
43	Slanting Tree, Eastfield	1977
44	Cressy Driveway, Spring	1977-78
45	The Edge of the Terrace	1979
46	Salad Still Life	1979
47	Cressy Landscape	1979
48	Statice Flowers	1979
49	Bracknell from the Hermitage	1979
50	Table and Chairs near a Balustrade	1979
51	Fruit and Bottles	1978
52	Small View of Sandy Bay	1979
53	The Derwent from St Canice Avenue	1979
54	Gladioli in a Milk Bottle	1979
55	Down on the Clearing	1979
56	Towards Poatina	1978
57	The Corner of the House	1978
58	Western View	1978
59	Dry's Bluff through the Trees	1978
60	Trees against the Tiers (1)	1978
61	Trees against the Tiers (2)	1978
62	A Painting in a Painting	1978
63	Trees in a Paddock	1978
64	Dark Afternoon, Sandy Bay	1978
65	In the Garden	1977-78



13-9-74

Except for nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 19, 24, 37 the paintings are available for purchase through Marjorie Hill, Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart, phone 23 7034.

Biographical details

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| 1927 | Born Ballarat, Victoria |
| 1930 | Moved to Launceston |
| 1939 | Moved to Hobart |
| 1946—47 | Studied evening classes Hobart Technical College under Jack Carington Smith whilst attending University full time |
| 1947 | November, moved to Melbourne |
| 1948—49 | Studied evening classes Royal Melbourne Technical College under Alan Warren and National Gallery Art School evening classes |
| 1953 | Two terms study under George Bell, Melbourne |
| 1960—64 | Lived Albury, N.S.W. |
| 1968 | In Europe with wife and three daughters |
| 1969 | Established Chapman Powell Street Gallery |
| 1971 | Guest One-Man Exhibition Lyceum Club, Melbourne |
| 1973 | Participated 'Australians in France' Exhibition, McClelland Regional Gallery, Victoria, organized by Carl Andrew. |
| 1974 | December, retired as Director, Chapman Powell Street Gallery |
| 1975 | January, moved to Cressy, Tasmania, devoting full time to painting |
| 1976 | One-Man Exhibition Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne |
| 1977 | One-Man Exhibition Salamanca Gallery, Hobart |
| 1977 | Guest One-Man Exhibition Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston |
| 1977 | March-August, Travelled Europe and United States |
| 1977 | Member Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board |
| 1978 | One-Man Exhibition Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne |
| 1978 | July-August, painted, Hienghene, New Caledonia |

In the Collection of

LaTrobe University, Melbourne

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
(Loan Collection)

The University of Tasmania

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (Loan Collection)

National Bank Collection

Collection Mallesons Ltd

Private Collections

DAVID CHAPMAN
PAINTINGS 1969—1979

A Survey Exhibition

organized by the Fine Arts Committee
University of Tasmania

5th to 23rd June 1979
Fine Arts Gallery University Centre
Monday-Friday 10—4 Saturday 10—12