DALE Hickey  LIFE IN A box

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FOREWORD

_Dale Hickey: Life in a box_ is an opportunity for the Potter to present the work of an artist whom many Victorians hold dear. For some, Dale Hickey is an epitome of diligence and persistence; an artist whose consistent and meticulous attention to the things that surround him stands as a model of artistic dedication. For others, he was a teacher of robust and idiosyncratic views; an artist who did what a great teacher does, authorise the experimental impulses of his students. For still others, Hickey is a somewhat enigmatic figure; a painter who managed to traverse the history of abstraction, minimalism, conceptualism as well as more conventional genres such as still life. In all, Hickey’s work appears simultaneously rigorous, human and challenging.

Our guest curator, Paul Zika, has brought his own challenging rigor to the exhibition. It grows out of a long-term research project documenting individual survey exhibitions of Australian artists after 1970. It is a project concerned with one of the fundamental paradoxes of recent Australian art; the relative invisibility of an artist’s oeuvre in an age in which the art market and information technology alike are booming. Zika and his research partners are redressing two blind spots in Australian art. First, many survey exhibitions have been staged but the record of them is patchy and difficult to access. Second, the parameters of the survey exhibition are rarely critically assessed. In this exhibition, Zika seeks to enhance the record of exhibition with a substantial catalogue and variety of distinctive interpretative essays. And, in presenting a thematic and highly reflective selection of works, he steps away from the usual foundations of biography and style.

The Potter is pleased to have worked with Paul Zika and a range of important research and institutional partners on this project including Jonathan Holmes, Maria Kunda and Jeff Malpas from the University of Tasmania; David Hansen and Craig Judd from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; and the Australian Research Council. Our enthusiasm for the project has been matched by generous public and private lenders, who have enabled us to present a remarkable range of works. We also thank the catalogue essayists commissioned by Paul Zika who have fired the opening salvos in what we hope will be an ongoing conversation on Hickey’s art.

Dr Chris McAuliffe
Director, the Ian Potter Museum of Art
Untitled 1986, 183 x 183 cm (cat. 20)
DALE HICKEY: LIFE IN A BOX
Paul Zika

Dale Hickey is constantly concerned with the evolution of the painted image—that translation from object to canvas that is elemental to painting. Apart from occasional forays into the landscape, these objects are drawn from his immediate domestic environment. This survey exhibition concentrates on paintings made since the early 1980s that focus on the immediate confines of the artist’s studio and the objects within it. There is a continual reworking and rearranging of a range of items—easel, trestle table, canvas, auto-tray and many smaller objects—presented frontally within a shallow stage-like space. Within these paintings there is an ambiguous play between the format of the actual stretcher and the depiction of a canvas within the studio onto that painted surface. At its most reductive a blank canvas becomes an illusionistic object, taking up most of the painting. Elsewhere a simple grid division on the surface is confused with the frame of the window. These beguiling shifts between object and image go beyond a sophisticated facility with visual vocabulary and the incorporation of various stylistic approaches. This original synthesis of the flat and illusionism sets up a dynamic confrontation with the viewer. While the objects are stacked back against the wall within a shallow space, we are given little breathing room; we are pulled head first into that space.

Dale Hickey’s paintings are normally untitled and produced in series; the window, the easel, the trestle, the blank canvas leaning or hanging. Up to three from each series have been selected for this survey, with only one displayed per room. This exhibition is configured to highlight shifts in pictorial space and the way in which the viewer is catapulted into an engagement with it. The works are punctuated with selected earlier works in which that frontality is pre-empted—as in the late 1960s reductive abstractions of domestic grids or the patterned Cottlesbridge landscapes—or alternatively there is a detailed analysis of conventional illusionism through the genre of the still-life tableau. This catalogue reflects some of the juxtapositions of the exhibition hang, but doesn’t attempt to reconstruct that physical experience.

The catalogue is intended to give a sense of a period and the position of painting within that time, rather than a personal history of the artist. There are however two aspects of Hickey’s life that do warrant particular attention here as they have not been dealt with in the existing substantial body of writing on the artist, and they do directly impact on his practice and career. In 1971, during the well-documented ‘conceptual’ phase after 1969 when he stopped painting, Hickey went to Europe and the United States of America. The trip became an important ‘retreat’—a period of doubt, contemplation and reflection—which lead to his returning to Australia recommitted to painting. John Stringer, who met Hickey in the process of assembling The Field exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968, had already moved to New York and provided accommodation for the artist and his family there, witnessing this important phase.

Both before and after this critical trip, Dale Hickey was an influential teacher and personality at Preston Institute of Technology at a time when there was a strong conceptual undercurrent within that institution. Dale fostered an ‘open’ classroom environment, not based on attitudes emerging from Paris or Düsseldorf, but on the writings of the English educator AS Neill. Anyone involved in teaching painting then who was also engaged in contemporary thinking had to constantly question the relevance of their discipline, and if they didn’t, their students would have—particularly in the hothouse that was Preston Tech (and subsequently Phillip Institute of Technology). The often ignored double role of artist-teacher is central to Hickey’s practice, and catalogue contributor Domenico de Clario was there as a young teacher alongside him.

While Chris McAuliffe has regularly written on the artist’s work he has also been a long-time chronicler, commentator and critic of Australian art. He is well qualified to locate Dale Hickey’s work within (and outside) the broader theoretical debates that have ebbed and flowed over the last forty years. On the other hand, John R Neeson’s journey as a painter has almost mirrored Hickey’s—moving from reductive abstraction to a highly rendered illusionism, coupled with extensive research on the genre of the still life. Stephen Haley provides the observations of a younger generation painter, seeing merit and relevance in Hickey’s work at a time when the discipline wasn’t considered cool and those seeking to persist with painting were searching for guiding lights.
Yellow 1993, 183 x 183 cm (cat. 30)
This exhibition is an outcome of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) in 2002. Having investigated the role that solo survey exhibitions played in the presentation of Australian art in public art museums over the past four decades, the research team of Jonathan Holmes, Paul Zika, Maria Kunda and Jeff Malpas (from the university), and David Hansen (from TMAG) set out to determine a suite of six solo survey shows that would be the focus and primary output of the research. In the protracted deliberations over choice and the multiple determinants that could be employed, the inclusion of a painter kept re-emerging in that mix; the discipline of painting seemed an integral element in providing an overview of artistic practice in Australia since 1970. We decided on Dale Hickey as much for his diverse, eclectic, and at times unorthodox approach, as his persistent inquiry. I have followed his work since The field exhibition (when I was a first-year painting student at RMIT) and the early Pinacotheca days (when the gallery was located in St Kilda), but I met Hickey for the first time only in February 2005.

I am indebted to the original research team with Brigita Ozolins and Philip Hutch as our research assistants; the team at the Ian Potter Museum of Art for taking on the realization of the project, particularly Bala Starr’s guidance and advice; and most importantly Dale Hickey’s and Rosemary Hickey’s support and patience.

Within the specific confines of his studio, Dale Hickey teaches us much about the language of picture making and the persistence of painting in the continuation of that exploration.

Night table 1990, 183 x 274 cm (cat. 26)

Guest curator Paul Zika is a Hobart-based artist and curator. He teaches painting at the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.
Passion 1993, 183 x 183 cm (cat. 29)
A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS QUIET ACHIEVER

Chris McAuliffe

It’s a commonplace of survey exhibitions that they declare what kind of artist the subject of the survey is. While this seems a natural enough thing to do, it can take the curators, writers and especially artists down some unusual paths. Overt declarations have the character of a branding strategy (‘master of colour’, ‘father of modernism’) or of a predictable style category (‘forgotten impressionist’, ‘rediscovered surrealist’). In Australia, where art writing is dominated by memoir, biography and press profile, a unique local variant combining art and personality has developed; ‘crabby expressionist’, ‘grumpy old landscapist’, ‘crotchety still-life painter’.

So (assuming for the moment that it’s a useful question to ask), what kind of artist is Dale Hickey? This survey exhibition shows him style-hopping; moving from the formality of geometric abstraction in the 1960s to an equally formal sequence of small still-life paintings in the 1970s. It shows a notable emotional cadence: a cluster of energetic, even lurid, landscapes in the 1980s gives way to a sustained series of spare, schematic diagrams of the artist’s workspace in the 1990s. The episodes in Hickey’s oeuvre don’t always appear to connect. The transitions aren’t smooth and the changes of direction seem abrupt. Hickey engages only briefly with some styles or projects, as if unwilling to commit for the long haul. This impression is exacerbated by what seem to be one-off occasions in his oeuvre: in 1969, an installation of fences in an art gallery; in 1970, a photo-conceptual work documenting 90 white walls; in the 1990s, pure monochromes that bob up among the kitchen-sink realist views of his studio.

As other essayists in this catalogue make clear, style categories have only limited use in establishing what kind of artist Hickey is. He took full advantage of the pluralism of the 1970s, which put paid to stylistic stability. As contemporary art dispensed with the idea of the ‘mainstream’, an artist’s style was whatever project or ‘piece’ she or he was working on at the time. The diversity of Hickey’s practice is one, albeit frustrating, indicator of his distinctiveness; he was among the first Australian artists to realise that a lifetime affiliation to a single style was no longer essential.

Without a consistent style to identify him, there’s been a tendency to define Hickey through his demeanour. What kind of artist is Dale Hickey? A big fellow; tall, strongly built. Somewhat reticent, given to monosyllabic conversation; the silent type. The paintings are bold but, like their maker, understated and somewhat enigmatic. Hinting at the tradition of the laconic Aussie bloke, such a characterisation seems plausible enough but it is not matched by reality. You might call Hickey an economical conversationalist but he’s no Sphinx.

A better clue to the kind of artist Hickey is can be found in the responses his art can evoke. Some years ago, at the opening of one of his exhibitions, I found myself standing with Hickey on the footpath outside the gallery. I think he needed a cigarette, I was leaving. In any case, it wasn’t a special audience, more a slight break in the general hubbub of proceedings. Another artist, leaving the gallery, made a bee-line for Hickey and said, ‘I just want you to know that I think it’s awful what you’ve done in there’. The artist stormed off, leaving Hickey with what might be called his trademark look on his face: a little blank, slightly perplexed, as if caught in mid-thought or on the verge of shrugging it all off. (Moments like that make it tempting to think that Hickey would have made a good Frenchman.)

The realisation that Hickey was the kind of artist who could upset other artists was striking, given the consistently unrhetorical character of his paintings. Simple, frontal, formal; they seem neither provocative nor declarative, they don’t appear to have the capacity to rock any boats. They are what they are and seem to say that the world (or at least, Hickey’s studio) is what it is. From what I could make out, the offended artist, whose own abstract paintings were of a transcendental ilk, had taken offence at a series of three large paintings hung in a row on one wall of the gallery. Each depicted a monochrome painting-within-a-painting propped against a studio wall; one red, one yellow, one blue. The primary colours of modernist abstraction, of Rodchenko, of Mondrian and, eventually, of Barnett Newman, who wryly summed up the challenge of modernism’s reductive credo with the phrase ‘Who’s afraid of red, yellow and blue?’.

The effrontery of Hickey’s paintings lay in their inglorious presentation of the ‘modernist project’; not transcendence but materiality, not spiritual transport but a job of work. Hickey is a thoroughly secular modernist. You might say that his paintings of paintings are an instance of what Derrida called mis-en-abîme; a nesting of boxes inside boxes that alludes to language’s vortex-like processes of internal reflection. Or you might just call them an exercise in dumb insolence; what you see is what you get, and you’re a fool if you waste your time looking for anything more.
Such effrontery shouldn’t have been too surprising in the 1990s. Hickey had shown a consistent scepticism towards any ambitious claims for painting. His abstract paintings of the 1960s, derived from patterns found in everyday domestic environments, rendered hard-edge modernism banal. At the time of his Fences installation, Hickey declared that painting was a poor substitute for the world, indeed that it had no cause to claim precedence over the world. 90 white walls boiled it all down to bald documentation; black and white photographs of blank walls, labelled and stored in a box. The world was just there and there was little art could do to go beyond it. Even his efforts at recovering a place (if not a purpose) for painting seem relatively disheartening; the cup paintings began as a component of a wider exploration of definition and representation. A painted cup was just one iteration of the idea of the Cup, to be presented on a par with photographs and dictionary definitions. The long campaign of studio paintings, commencing in the 1980s, seemed to perpetually defer the achievement of painting as such; they were mere paintings of the site of painting. Of course they were paintings but this jaded circularity—making paintings of paintings as a surrogate for the painting you’re not sure you can paint—was of a piece with the endgames of postmodernism.

In the art world, the popular vision of Hickey is of another kind of artist altogether; not a secular, sceptical artist but a devout, monastic one. The predominant motif of recent decades is the Spartan interior of the studio; a cell in which the artist meditates constantly on the job of the artist, the tools of the trade and, above all, the challenging and resistant surface of the canvas on an easel. Like a monk conforming to the rules of an order, Hickey passes each day according to a rigid and unworldly schedule, the sole focus of which is his devotional chores.

The inaccurate perception of Hickey as a silent and withdrawn man only serves to reinforce this vision. And, because of curious local circumstances, the signature works of his early career—the still lifes of the mid-1970s—lock it into place. Hickey’s still-life paintings openly acknowledge the precedent of the Italian master, Giorgio Morandi, whose cult status in Australia is inseparable from the question of what kind of Australian artist we want.

Robert Hughes set the pattern in 1970 when he wrote of Fred Williams’s Sherbrooke Forest paintings, ‘Looking at the delicate palisades of tree-trunks Williams painted between 1957 and 1960, one is reminded of Giorgio Morandi and his dusty bottles—a similar humility and fear of declaration breathes from Williams’s work: and the same exact control of form’. The connection between the Antipodean and the European makes only a passing reference to style, what counts is morality and personality. It is not a matter of an artist’s works ‘looking like’ Morandi’s, it’s more important that an artist have a Morandi-like disposition. Morandi appears to offer an appealing model of artistic character to Australian artists. He kept his distance from the art world and was not a ‘joiner’, only briefly affiliating with the scuola metafisica before withdrawing into his own interests. His reclusive diligence creates an image of the artist as an isolated striver, rather than a gregarious proponent of style and fashion. Morandi’s determined silence and rigorous self-criticism suggest an integrity achieved through withdrawal and reflection.

Australian artists have always been suspicious of the hustler and the big-noter. Deliberately planted signposts, such as manifestos or a signature-style, have been regarded as artificial declarations of an artist’s presence. What kind of artist is Dale Hickey? The dominant themes in critical response to Hickey’s art bear a strong family resemblance to those applied earlier to Morandi: monastic isolation, independence from styles and trends, classicism, sobriety, formality of structure, lack of rhetoric and allusions to the ontological qualities of his paintings. These qualities might be observed in a painting but they are attributed to the artist, constructing him as a moral type; honest, unprepossessing, quietly committed. As Hughes perceptively notes, the ideal kind of Australian artist is one who, like Morandi, stands out by standing out of the limelight.

Such is the discourse surrounding Hickey—sceptical iconoclast, laconic outsider, moral journeyman—much of it driven by a desire for a type of artist rather than by reflection on his art as such. As other writers in this catalogue demonstrate, there is considerable density to his practice which is best addressed by setting aside our fixation with personality. For my own part, this exhibition shows Hickey’s remarkable attention to the interplay of interior and exterior, to the boundary between the studio and the world. There is a different kind of morality at work here. It’s of the kind that Georges Bataille identified when, writing of Manet, he noted that ‘painting becomes the art of wrestling objects, and the images of objects, from a world that has surrendered to bourgeois torpor’. Hickey’s contemplative withdrawal is the foundation of such a recovery; a confidence in the presence of the studio, allied with a confidence in the artist’s capacity to represent it, is a harbinger of a full experience of the larger world.

2 Georges Bataille, Manet, Skira, Lausanne, 1955, p. 58.
Homage to Morandi 1975, 22.5 x 30 cm (cat. 10)
Cup painting 1973, 32.8 x 32.8 cm (cat. 4)
ON THREE DECADES ON
John R Neeson

In 1973 Dale Hickey exhibited the now legendary cup series at Pinacotheca, Richmond, and brought the still life, painted from observation, into the discourse surrounding contemporary painting in Melbourne. In 1976 he was interviewed by Bruce Pollard, then director of Pinacotheca, about the works, their significance for him as a painter and the broader context in which they existed.

BRUCE POLLARD: Were there any experiences overseas that led to painting in a realistic manner?
DALE HICKEY: I don’t think so.
POLLARD: But Jim Doolin was doing still-lives.
HICKEY: I think that’s unconnected, it’s only much later that I started looking at still-life as still-life. Those cups really came out of a much more intellectual thing.
POLLARD: Like what?
HICKEY: Like John Cage’s anecdotes about his life which are just mundane, very straightforward observances and experiences. Some of the work I did before I went away was about stating the obvious.

Still, the cups were a pertinent comment upon a prevailing aesthetic regime affecting painting locally, nationally and internationally and were also to prove significant in the subsequent development of Hickey’s oeuvre. They stand in direct opposition to what had become one set of more or less universally sanctioned regulations for painting.

The works are physically small in scale (but represent a fragment of a larger space). Each cup is interpreted dispassionately (without the embellishment of speculative iconography or narrative).

POLLARD: Why cups?
HICKEY: ... I think the three of us [Hickey and Pinacotheca co-exhibitors Simon Klose and Robert Rooney] were reacting to the gross emotions that people put forward about things in the guise of art, and by making things as matter-of-fact and bland as possible, we thought there was a point to be made.

Each cup was painted from observation (not from a photographic source).

POLLARD: Have you ever worked from photographs?
HICKEY: No ... it seems pointless. If it is merely going through the dumb process of inch by inch putting down that photograph. It is an act of denial. It is an act of non-commitment...

The works are executed in oil paint with brushes, which requires skilful manipulation of paint (rather than a mere demonstration of the physical idiosyncrasies of acrylic paint).

HICKEY: ... I started painting cups because I was thinking that this was another kind of information about cups. Once I started painting cups I got involved with the sensual quality of paint and the technical problems of painting ...
POLLARD: Are the skill judgements that people make about realist paintings any sort of barrier?
HICKEY: I think they ingratiate themselves more immediately because people can look at skills and things. Except, in my case I don’t think the skills ever come across as being that great. People always see an awkwardness and stiffness in them.

Although figurative, the works reinforced the painter’s commitment to a minimalist aesthetic.

HICKEY: I see minimal art as the end of a cycle ... Allan Kaprow said a few years ago that art died around 1970. To un-art is to begin to experience again without the art filter. Painters who witnessed the death of art were freed to paint anything.

Their composition is frontal and symmetrical, each cup centred within the square canvas (still an atypical format for the majority of paintings). The remaining area of the canvas represents a virtually white tabletop and wall.

HICKEY: ... I wanted to make them a little more real than the transposition of appearance would allow. For instance, if one was looking at cups as a naturalist they occupy space and atmosphere, which they tend not to in those paintings, except for one or two. There’s a certain hardness, atmosphere, relatively speaking, has been squeezed out of them. Also you will notice that handles have been left off and things like that, and the shadows behind the cups are just rectilinear areas, which is a deliberate distortion to make the plane they are standing on seem more defined. Every means is used to give them a sense of being there, to make them more concrete than you actually see them. In that sense they are surrealistic, super-real, surreal because one is trying to get back to cupness which can only be imagined. It’s a dream image.

The Cup painting (1973, opposite) in this exhibition is white and subtly modeled (its siblings varied in shape and colour); it’s the robust kind used in canteens.

HICKEY: ... I wanted to paint a white cup on a white background because of my interest in clichés, because I was involved in re-discovering painting and the subtlety of painting. One of the oldest exercises that painting teachers give beginning students is to paint a white cup against a white background because of the subtlety of colour involved.
One suspects that Hickey, Klose and Rooney were also taking advantage of the expectations of their audience by exhibiting paintings only twelve inches square within the vast space of Pinacotheca, a gallery that easily and frequently accommodated large-scale paintings. All three artists had utilized actual space as an element in works that were precursors to contemporary ‘installation’ in its least commodified form.

Dale Hickey continued to involve himself with still life after 1973 with representations of single objects as well as seemingly casual collections of relatively mundane subject matter. This included more or less spherical fruit, open cans, sauce bottles, cups and mugs, boxes and cartons. Some of these images recur emblematically in later works, as does the single artificial light source that illuminates ensembles of forms. In Untitled (1986, illus. p. 4), this light source appears as a small circle of warm colour at the centre-top periphery of the painting.

Homage to Morandi (illus. p. 11) dates from 1975, and demonstrates deference to the Bologna painter’s mastery of tension between form and void in resolute, small-scale still lifes. In Hickey’s subsequent series of works, ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ are virtually interchangeable and this spatial egalitarianism is often achieved by means more usually associated with the reductive, non-figurative, lexicon.

HICKEY: ... I can’t see painting as anything other than putting shapes and things together, and trying to unlock some sort of thing that’s waiting to be revealed. I don’t think it has anything to do with whether it is abstract or realistic. I’m a realist in that just about everything I have ever done has been related to some image that I have seen or imagined.

Still life is fundamentally a studio-based genre that enables the scrutiny of arrangements of static forms over an extended period of time. Generally the still-life painter is an acute observer, translating what is seen into the syntax of representational painting, central to which is the concept of the picture plane. It’s not surprising that the still life has been associated with significant analysis of the picture plane, most obviously through early Cubist paintings, in which it was the ubiquitous genre. This is not to ignore, among many others, Cézanne’s apocryphal musings upon the surfaces of withering apples or Sánchez Cotán’s cucumber attempting flagrant protrusion into the reality of the observer’s space. This space (and its light source), is insinuated into many of Dale Hickey’s paintings via surfaces that are painted gloss and reflective.

The observer’s space was initially that of the painter (the first observer), and generally the painter’s studio. In Italian, the word studio is both a verb (to study, research and contemplate) and a noun (the place where these activities take place). For three decades the studio space and what takes place within it have determined the form and the content of Dale Hickey’s paintings. Still-life vignettes inevitably reoccur within representations of his various studio interiors.

The consistency of Hickey’s endeavors is also confirmed by works in series subsequent to the cups, which elaborate the pictorial preoccupations they signaled in 1973. These paintings, though larger in scale, are usually square, close to square, or rectangles with a low vertical orientation (the lateral rectangle associated with landscape eschewed in favour of less spatially evocative formats). The pictorial elements in their composition are represented frontally and located upon logical subdivisions of the major format shape.

These elements become increasingly iconic and simultaneously figurative and reductive; in short, minimal representations. For example, in Hickey’s paintings since 2004, ‘window’ is signified by vertical and horizontal mullions creating four panes, and ‘painting’ by lines corresponding to the cross-bracing on the reverse side of a stretched canvas. Cursory observation might render these as interchangeable emblems. However, they are differentiated by the pictorial and illusionist idiosyncrasies of colour and colour relationships.

In his 1976 interview with Bruce Pollard, Dale Hickey talks of colour observed in the landscape. Since then his use of colour has become more cerebral and studio based, which has enabled him to maintain the egalitarian picture plane. Formal and rational use of colour is rare in Australian figurative painting, but Dale Hickey is a leading protagonist. And certainly the still life, or the contemplative attitude generally associated with still-life painting, remains intrinsic to his practice.

1 ‘An interview with Dale Hickey’, Arts Melbourne & Art Almanac, vol. 1, no. 1, 1976, pp. 21–30. My thanks go to Bruce Pollard for permission to reproduce extracts from this interview. Thanks also to Meredith Rogers, then assistant director at the Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne University Union, for the date of publication.

Dr John R Neeson is an artist, and sometime writer and curator. He currently teaches visual arts at the Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE, Melbourne.
Untitled 2005, 198.3 x 167.8 cm (cat. 34)
... wyth orto trey 1988, 183 x 244 cm (cat. 24)
IS THERE A SOUL?

Domenico de Clario

I have had a year or more to think about this, about writing something for this catalogue. Something about Dale Hickey the teacher, the artist, something about the key figure that defined Preston Tech’s leadership role in art education in the late 1960s as a radical ‘conceptual experiment’. This ‘experiment’ began in 1969 inside an old factory in Preston’s High Street, a working-class industrial area in then outer Melbourne. From 1972 it continued inside a brand spanking new brick-and-concrete three-storey building set among the cow paddocks and daisy fields of Bundoora, way beyond the then outer limits of Melbourne’s suburbia and the home for the newly founded Preston Institute of Technology. I didn’t know much about what had happened at High Street’s Preston Tech except for fragments and impressions picked up from those young artists and students who had either studied or taught there.

I knew that Robert Hunter, Nick Mourtzakis, John Balsaitis, Robert Rooney, John Nixon, Bill Anderson, Joseph de Lutiis, Paul Boston and many, many others, had enrolled in the Preston Tech program. Among them was also Cesare. I can’t remember his surname, but he had a great leap and strong hands and won the goal-kicking award a couple of years in a row playing at full-forward for St Brigid’s in the YCW Football League. I played on a forward-flank in the same team and we had a good understanding. He was a young man of few words, not that we ever said much in those days to anyone. But he did, on one occasion, tell me in a few muttered words how much he enjoyed studying art with Dale Hickey at Preston Tech. I couldn’t believe my ears. He studied art! I didn’t know who Dale Hickey was then but to my mind his studying art immediately explained the nature of his unorthodoxy, his uncanny movements and his timing on and off the ball. After that I’d always look for his lead first whenever I got my hands on the ball. And I’d deliver it nice and easy into the chest. This Dale Hickey must have been some kind of excellent footy coach! But all that is another story; in terms of Preston Tech the connection with Cesare facilitated a sense of it as an open place, a space in which I imagined time might be a friend and where you weren’t expected to prove anything you didn’t believe in. I have since come to think that perhaps my then innocent view of the world may actually have been correct. Certainly the artists I have named above and numberless others who journeyed some of the way with us through the twenty-year long metamorphosis between the raw genuineness of the late 1960s Preston Tech and the wizened mid-1990s Phillip Institute, critically paralysed by the ‘amalgamation’ with RMIT, are all still characterised by a fierce independence and a keen intellect. But how was this vigorous spirit of inquiry and independence nurtured? Through fearlessly confronting young students with their own vulnerability, believing that such confrontations could lead directly to a quantum leap of both confidence and insight on their part; through encouraging an incessant inquiry into what at that time constituted an art practice, at the delicate juncture between a tradition that extended back into the furthest reaches of the past and an horizon newly emptied of possibilities. This approach, and I’ve not shared this with anyone, might have been the direct result of a translation—by the visionary Australian artist who is the subject of this essay—of the Zen master’s blow, that unexpected confrontation that shatters one’s tranquil view of the world and can lead directly to satori. In early January 1973 I was appointed tutor in the School of Art at Preston Institute of Technology where I remained until my resignation in 1997. Through my first year I shared an office with Dale and, though Brian Seidel was the administrative head of the school, Dale Hickey was undoubtedly its spirit. This was generated directly by Dale’s approach to his practice and disseminated to others through his teaching. He had provided the intellectual impetus for an entirely new course structure and as a corollary the context in which a stimulating, sometimes confronting teaching practice could take place. Dale appeared to hold within his physical presence and through the spoken word some secret about contemporary life that somehow seemed very important to the rest of us, or at least highly desirable. Some pretended not to care, others hung off his every word. But to my mind Dale’s great gift was his enormously understated sensitivity and insight into various human dynamics. This keen awareness of what motivated people (beyond an unerring eye and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of art) was often blunted, perhaps even purposely masked by a cynical humour and an extremely keen intellect. His razor-sharp observations and willingness to engage in intense dialogue, not just about the evidence of art as the residue of a particular process, but more keenly of that process itself, made him the centre of the centrifugal force that for a period of about fifteen years (roughly from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s) was the Preston Institute, undoubtedly the effective turning point for whatever edge Melbourne could muster at that time. During this period the school’s staff included Charles Merewether, Elizabeth Cross, Peter Kennedy, Anne Stephen, Terry Smith, Nick Mourtzakis, David Tolley (who in many ways drove the peculiar spirit of the place with Dale), Winston Thomas, Peter D Cole, Betty Churcher (later to become the head), Ian Lobb, Danny Moynihan, Joseph de Lutiis, Micky Allen, Les
Walking, Virginia Coventry, Tom McCullough, filmmakers Bert Deling and Rod Bishop, John Scurry, Normana Wight, Henry Talbot, Mike Brown and Peter Booth among many others. This explosive mix of extremely engaged personalities provided a seemingly irresistible learning context for both students and staff. At the centre of it all was Dale, outwitting, outmanoeuvring and out-painting everyone in sight. This was done by firstly identifying issues that no-one else had as yet even gotten to; then as soon as the pack had caught up, he would double back and utterly (and utterly convincingly) change position so that he always managed to occupy the opposite shore from where most others were now ensconced. For those who wanted or needed to compete with him it must have been absolutely shattering. I was too young and too in awe of Dale to even contemplate competition. We shared a love of Giorgio Morandi’s later paintings and drawings and for the unforgiving nature of physical contact sports, even for the absence of words until sudden and succinct eloquence was required. There are a few things I shall never forget about Dale, and I am most grateful for many I cannot even identify. I can remember these: the way he was able to convey his admiration for an artist’s integrity, which is what mattered to him above all. Integrity can be a loose term and I still cannot properly describe how he managed this; it was probably something to do with what wasn’t said. For example when Robert Irwin came to Melbourne during this period to speak at the National Gallery of Victoria and to meet local artists Dale’s quiet focus on certain aspects of Irwin’s work and his ability to listen and engage Irwin in absorbing debates eloquently endorsed both the American artist’s unremitting approach to his own practice as well as Dale’s. Again more than Irwin’s work, more even than what Irwin said, it was what he was prepared to risk that Dale recognized as being of great significance. Dale’s love of anonymity struck me, as did his devotion to an Australian quintessence (a seemingly calculated distancing from emotion, lying in wait all the while as a kind of awesome undertow of feeling would inevitably swell up in the work itself) that could never be spelled out, yet burned incessantly within his own work. I greatly admired his genuine desire to help students resolve issues that had seemingly stopped them from moving forward; they clearly felt his commitment to resolve each particular riddle in his usual genially understated manner. He would often walk into the painting studio office early on a Monday morning articulating an ingeniously insightful solution to a particular student’s problem he had been considering over the previous weekend and at times over a number of weeks. He would inevitably be proven right and the solution was often a very simple one, located right at the core of each student’s approach. In my own work since then, both as artist and academic, Dale’s example is never far from my mind. I like to think that the heat generated by his engaged presence through those early years of discovery, both in terms of how he approached art education and how he lived his life as a committed artist, still informs how I address my various responsibilities. There is a story often recited lovingly by those of us whose admiration and affection for Dale has never dimmed. It beautifully describes Dale’s ability to incisively address a burning issue through using the vernacular in the satori way, in one move both answering the question eloquently and disarming any possible comeback through reverberating the core of the issue beyond answer. One day Joseph de Lutiis happened to be chatting with some students in the Phillip Institute’s painting studio about the metaphysical in art, the nature of the soul and other preoccupations. One of them, in a rather exasperated tone, asked with some urgency, ‘Well, Joseph, is there a soul?’. Overhearing this from his office and without missing a beat, Dale immediately answered in a loud but firm voice over the plasterboard partitions: ‘Yeah, an arsehole ...’.

1 ‘Betty Churcher was eventually to replace Brian Seidel as its head, and argued that its reputation for radicalism had been “based on a determination to break away from a traditional mould of education” [quotation from Sandy Kirby and Rod Bishop, Preston to Phillip: A survey, 10 years of art education, PIT Press, Bundoora, Vic., 1982] which allowed students to move freely between art disciplines once considered as air-tight compartments. What was most radical, however, was that its carefully selected students were permitted to study anything they liked, provided that it could be defined as art.’ Quoted from Richard Haese, Permanent revolution: Mike Brown and the Australian avant-garde 1953–1997, forthcoming book to be published by Melbourne University Press.

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Untitled 1986, 182 x 182 cm (cat. 21)
Untitled 1967–68, 172.6 x 172.6 cm (cat. 1)
I first recall seeing Dale Hickey's work at the Art Gallery of South Australia when he was invited to participate in the Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship in 1966. His large, assertive canvases were filled with complex mazes of serpentine forms, bright colours and raw energetic brushwork, with visceral qualities which were not only reminiscent of the work of the Scottish artist Alan Davie but also presaged the early expressive works of Paul Partos. The line-up for this prestigious show included John Firth-Smith, Neville Matthews, Rodney Milgate, Emanuel Raft, Jan Senbergs, Michael Taylor and Tony Woods, but unfortunately Hickey's paintings did not survive the subsequent rigorous editing—which has caused the artist frequently to repaint or destroy unsold works.

It was then a couple of years before I recall actually meeting the artist in person, when my colleague Brian Finemore and I were selecting artists for The field (which inaugurated the temporary exhibitions space at the new National Gallery of Victoria in 1968). His work had changed quite dramatically to canvases that remained large but were dramatically simplified and void in design. Hickey was already acknowledged as a leader among his peers, so Brian Finemore and I were unanimous that he be represented by two works including the iconic Untitled (opposite), 1967–68, which immediately entered the gallery's permanent collection. The pattern, geometry and a sense of toughness in Hickey's work reflected his admiration for the paintings of his friend James Doolin who was Melbourne's first authentic link with the hard-edge abstraction then flourishing in New York. Though Doolin had already returned to the United States before The field was organised, his influence among the vanguard was legendary not only in Melbourne but also in Sydney due to the efforts of Central Street Gallery.

Unlike Doolin's work, however, which was unequivocally flat and two-dimensional, Hickey's regular symmetrical designs from the late 1960s frequently had implications of shallow depth. Cleverly articulated by shading that infers convex and concave blocks, Hickey's canvases have a hypnotic ambiguity that has withstand the test of time and made them classics of the era. A number of canvases (such as a 1968 diptych in the Art Gallery of Western Australia's collection) unmistakably emulated the palings of backyard wooden fences that were so stereotypical of Melbourne suburbia. Hickey's ironic work in this vein was climaxied by his 1969 show at Pinacotheca, where fences of unpainted

slatted wood were built like panelling around the walls of Bruce Pollard's St Kilda premises. To suit the gallery's three separate rooms, the artist chose fences of three different heights—the first only knee-high, the second intermediate and the third about chin level. This show made a profound impression on me, and I recall it as a landmark not only in Hickey's career but also for Melbourne in general by successfully fusing the minimal and serial works we knew only from publications with something authentically local. It also was a clear indication that Hickey was already influenced by conceptual art and questioning the validity of illusionism prior to travelling overseas.

My next and probably most significant contact with the artist came early in the 1970s, after a break of several years and following my move to the United States. This memorable encounter was on a more personal and fraternal level when Dale and Rosemary Hickey actually stayed with us in Brooklyn during their visit to New York. While they had initially intended to stay with Robert and Kerry Jacks, who (like Patrick and Winsome McCaughey) had found their way to Manhattan some years in advance of me, Brooklyn provided a relaxed environment that suited the Hickeys better. Because our wives were already on good terms from Melbourne days and the two Hickey children were only marginally younger than our tribe of three, it was a comfortable and convenient match that resulted in a memorable summer. Five small blond children were a welcome novelty among the predominantly black passengers on the subway on the way to terrific excursions in Washington Square or Prospect Park, but there were also the thrills of playing on the street or relaxing in the leafy arbour of our roof terrace. Dale has always had a great feeling for environment, and though these nitty gritty experiences are not directly reflected in specific paintings they are very much in tune with the fibre of his work.

Though it was easy to gain access to Clement Greenberg and his circle, the celebrated critic was by then viewed as conservative and reactionary by most of the Australian vanguard. Like other New York residents including Paul Partos and Nigel Lendon, Hickey was interested in the work of both Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden who already were something of legends in Melbourne due to their acceptance among Art & Language artists in New York.
Like any artistic revolution, conceptual art was quite militant in seeking converts and its most obvious influence was the rejection of painting. Despite my admiration for Ian Burn, he was a serious intellectual whose austere views about art I did not always share. Furthermore, as assistant director of the International Program at the Museum of Modern Art, I could not avoid being identified as an agent of cultural imperialism. Vacationing with his family, Dale of course did not have access to studio facilities during this stay, but equally the climate he encountered was simply not conducive to painting. New York as a consequence marks the eclipse of Hickey’s initial abstract phase and though it is an exaggeration to refer to this rupture as a crisis, the art of both Partos and Lendon experienced a similar rigorous cleansing and reorientation during the same period.

Especially scorned by the conceptual vanguard was the rival contemporary movement usually known as new realism or photo-realism with its focus on the commonplace, commercial and banal. Realism has a strong and unbroken artistic legacy in the United States that commenced during the nineteenth century and to a degree reflects frontier tastes. Its early manifestations included not only the accomplished academic compositions of Thomas Eakins and journalistic commentaries of Winslow Homer but also small illusionary still-life canvases by John Peto and William Harnett. Artists of the Ash Can School early in the twentieth century who focused on urban neighbourhoods were followed by robust painters such as George Bellows and Edward Hopper. Although realism subsequently became somewhat conservative in the popular illustrations of Norman Rockwell and the nostalgic rural works of Andrew Wyeth, it simultaneously adopted progressive and innovative guises with Pop art. Dale consequently was quite aware of the relevance of realism to American culture well before his next stop in California.

While most New Yorkers regarded Los Angeles as an artistic backwater, contact with his pal James Doolin provided a more upbeat and positive artistic climate for Hickey. Not long after his return from Australia, Doolin provided a more upbeat and positive artistic climate for Hickey. Not long after his return from Australia, Doolin finished with reductive abstraction and by the dawn of the 1970s was teaching himself new ways into representational painting. A portrait of Dale Hickey from this era shows Doolin in the early stages of struggling with the rigours of representation—with which he subsequently became very adept.

In physical and cultural terms the West Coast still has numerous affinities with Australia; the relaxed attitudes, hedonistic climate and independent figurative tradition in painting provided a welcome antidote to the highly introspective and competitive scene on the East Coast.

Doolin’s struggle to reinvent himself and simultaneously discover something specifically Californian—keyed to sensation rather than analytical theory—was obviously an inspiration to Hickey. The diminutive canvases of humble cups and mugs produced after his return to Melbourne in 1973 are preoccupied with savouring the transient present; their joyous appreciation of humble commonplace and uncomplicated phenomena confirms Hickey’s admiration of paintings of cakes and pastries by the Californian artist Wayne Thiebaud. He was obviously at home with the climate of irony, liberality and independence found in funky West Coast figuration.

Doolin’s canvases from the early 1970s emphasise specifically local phenomenon and extol in particular qualities of light, atmosphere and terrain unique to California. Because of their modest scale and introspective focus, Doolin’s arid landscapes have an obvious correlation with the size and subjects of paintings by Hickey from the same period that celebrate the Australian vernacular. Like Doolin, he painted on a small scale to develop fresh skills in representation. Though their small sizes went against prevailing fashion, such paintings acknowledge the power and intensity intrinsic to work by European masters such as Giorgio Morandi, Paul Klee and Kurt Schwitters and even Americans such as Pinkham Ryder. Hickey’s paintings also recall periods in Australian art when small works played a crucial role—not only the famed 9 by 5 inch cedar cigar box lids of the Impressionist period which enabled Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder to capture their experiences directly from nature, but also the small evocative tonal canvases of Clarice Beckett. Surrounded by nature at Eltham, it was easy for Hickey to empathise with such traditions of outdoor painting. While Doolin’s example was obviously a confirmation of urban currents already present in Hickey’s earlier paintings, it sparked a continuity that has remained consistent in the focus throughout his subsequent work.

John Stringer was curator of the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, from 1992 until his sudden death at the age of seventy in November 2007.
Five kinds of religion 1983, 203.3 x 244 cm (cat. 16)
Opus 86/3 1986, 183 x 183 cm (cat. 17)
Night window 1982–83. 244 x 203.5 cm (cat. 15)
Cottlesbridge landscape 1980, 244 x 198 cm (cat. 12)
DEEP FLAT: THE PAINTINGS OF DALE HICKEY

Stephen Haley

Although minimalist, hard-edged, late-modernist painting definitively arrived in Melbourne with 1968’s *The field* exhibition, the distance to the outer suburbs was a far greater journey covering more hostile terrain. Hailing from those suburbs, my personal experience of this art (or any art) was very limited, but I kept my eye out and over the years often stumbled upon the work of Dale Hickey. Many accidental encounters could be recounted, but a central experience was seeing Hickey’s *Untitled* ([illus. p. 20]), 1967–68, in the National Gallery of Victoria’s collection. I was not yet an artist so the work was seen with the innocence and openness that the ignorant enthusiast so richly possesses. I was confounded. I did not know what I was looking at—a flat surface pattern or a low relief space. From its apparent simplicity arose a complexity that defied my powers of analysis and produced a most agreeable dumbness and intoxication. This spell of art, where an object may be witnessed in suspension—as pure sensation in all its giddying wonder—is a feeling only fully felt in defiance of analysis and is therefore rarely recovered by the jaded professional. Yet even now, years later, with countless exhibitions made and seen, this particular painting with its pattern of shades and unlikely colours, still catches my breath and befuddles expectation and reason. That is impressive.

Around 1992, at a party after an opening, waiting at the bar, I found myself crushed against Dale Hickey’s then art dealer. Seizing the opportunity, I began to enumerate my, and my peers’, rambling enthusiasm for the artist’s oeuvre. I had always admired Hickey’s sharp, flat and hard-edged painting style, I said. Boldly coloured paintings that seemed harmonious and stately. Canvases always distinguished by not being default modern Australian painting—figurative expressionism—but more intellectual, even philosophical. These were paintings of ideas that were not subservient to ideas. The works did not simply illustrate theories, or pre-existing narratives, but contemplated the conceptual aspects of vision—the operations of perception and representation. In the late 1970s and very early 1980s Hickey took the most hackneyed cliché of Australian painting—landscape—and made it interesting. Rendered in startling colours and stressing verticality and flatness, the landscape became an examination of the representational modes by which actual space is depicted. In so doing, these works prefigured an analytic shift pivotal to the postmodern period, with its self-reflexive re-examination of the landscape genre. Moreover, I ventured, his works had always been of the Now. They pictured immediate space—from suburban fences to studio interiors—with a serious and sustained eye. At the end of our drunken chat, the dealer confided to me, finger to nose, that ‘Dale Hickey will be the painter of the 1990s’.

Now, superficially, this prediction did not really bear out. Hickey’s did not exactly become a *cause célèbre*. Yet I think the dealer was right. While painting itself was critically disregarded for most of the period, it nevertheless continued unabated and Hickey’s influence remained subtle and persistent. More importantly, the key concerns of Hickey’s work have become increasingly more pertinent to us in the contemporary era.

Paul Zika asked me to write about Hickey’s influence on a younger generation of artists who emerged around the 1990s. This is not easy without generally addressing that period and where Hickey’s work was positioned. Additionally, for artists, influence is rarely direct, often oblique, selective, multifarious, and regularly determined after the fact by other commentators. What makes an artist’s work live for the next, or following generations, is routinely a misrecognition—a recognition of elements either incidental to the artist’s intentions, or entirely unintended. What follows then is an attempt to honour both the intention and the misapplication.

From the commencement of perspectival painting Leonardo da Vinci and Leon Battista Alberti endeavoured to metaphorically describe this novel mode of depiction. They fluctuated between the window and the mirror—between deep space and flat space, the naturalistic and the stylized, the immediate and the represented. But if there is an object that lies somewhere between a window and a mirror, it is the canvas. Dale Hickey’s work relentlessly interrogates the pictorial and conceptual heritage that underpins the contemporary picture plane. His work investigates the operation of pictorial space, perception and our modes of representing space. His ongoing series of studio interiors may also be read as interior psychological spaces, where the immateriality of consciousness renders objective phenomena as ephemeral and slippery. But it is the logic of pictorial space that remains primary in his work, and this I believe has been his most important influence on following generations of artists.
During the 1980s and 1990s postmodern period, however, the two triumphant tropes of Australian painting were quotation and appropriation. (Think: Imants Tillers, Juan Davila, Gordon Bennett.) Constructed from intertextual references self-consciously constructed to be ‘read’, these artworks ‘demonstrated’ theories that challenged the notion of originality and argued for the primacy of pre-existent texts or other discourses. (Think: Derrida, Foucault and other post-structuralists.) In doing so, these works were a return to narrative painting—albeit of a sort that argued against singularity in narrative—and they dismissed the Modernist tendency that insisted on pure visuality and a rejection of pre-existent narrative. Yet, despite the views ascribed to Clement Greenberg, few artists actually considered the canvas to be absolutely hermetic. Likewise, artists had always quoted, always appropriated; they just did not make a virtue of pointing to their quotation marks. Nonetheless, Hickey’s insistence on looking, rather than reading, was often misinterpreted as Modernist and contributed to his work’s critical disregard. And yet his approach was typical of the modern painter seeking an alternative visual logic capable of presenting contemporary conditions without resorting to narrative.

The perceptual tradition of modern painting looked closely at the sensation of phenomena and endeavoured to find a suitable means of representing the seen rather than the known. With Cubism came the recognition that vision is not pure but contaminated by memory, movement, time, space and pre-existing models of representation—hence the Cubists’ inclusion of newspaper headlines into the picture plane. This last trope prefigured a condition felt even more poignantly by the end of the twentieth century—the fact that prefabricated representations are now intrinsic to the visual field. As Jean Baudrillard argued, this has now reached a hyperreal point where the plane of experience is now virtually coextensive with the plane of representation.

We are surrounded by images, text and pre-existing theoretical structures that are as much a part of our perception as is actual space. (Think: screens, billboards, signs, SMS, video phones.) Even actual space, for the city dweller, is already reconfigured and reshaped according to rational, logical systems of organization. Quotation and appropriation also acknowledged this situation by representing charged images through the use of juxtaposition and collage. The effect was to stress the artifice of this condition, yet collage no longer has the resonance it did 100 years ago, for this condition is no longer artificial. In the West, we no longer live in a world where these things are experienced as juxtapositions or as disjunctions, we live in a world of simultaneity and simulation where the virtual and the actual are experienced as seamless and contiguous with the plane of consciousness. Hickey’s investigation into perception and representation, while not directed at describing these conditions, nevertheless finds an alternative, pictorial mode of representing the natural uncertainty of this state.

In his New paintings show held at John Buckley Fine Art in 2005, Hickey continued his preoccupation with studio interiors. Within these charged psychological spaces with their uniform black walls rectangular forms were arranged. Of varying colour and bisected by cruciform lines, these rectangles may have been canvases, or windows, or the backs of canvases, or mirrors, or even mirrors reflecting any of these things. The pictorial space of the paintings ceaselessly oscillates between flatness and depth. Objects slide, certainty shifts, we are drawn into depth only to walk into a wall. In Hickey’s picture plane, as in real life, what is actual, what is virtual, what is a codified representation, and what is ‘natural’ are all uncertain.

Although his work is not fundamentally concerned with issues of simulation and hyperreality, it is Hickey’s insistence on exploring perception and representation that makes the work so relevant to these issues. In the current era, we slip uncertainly between the virtual and the actual and both appear to us as co-mingled in perception. In this oscillating virtuality, Hickey’s canvases provide an evocative pictorial method to represent this condition of contemporary space and perceptual experience that avoids the literalism of quotation or appropriation. As the next generation of painters increasingly turns to a playful reinvestment in the pictorial—often rejecting the theoretical altogether—Hickey’s legacy also presents an avenue for visual exploration that does not abandon the intellect or claim a pictorial hermeticism.

Dr Stephen Haley is an artist and writer. He is currently a lecturer in visual art history and theory at the Victorian College of the Arts, the University of Melbourne.
Untitled 2004, 167.8 x 198.3 cm (cat. 33)
My lingo 1988, 183 x 244 cm (cat. 23)
Portrait of a yellow ruler 1999, 198.3 x 167.8 cm (cat. 31)
£ALE HICKEY

BIOGRAPHY & BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIOGRAPHY

Born Melbourne 1937, lives Lorne, Victoria

Education
1960  Trained Technical Teacher's Certificate, Technical Teachers' College, Melbourne
1959  Diploma of Art, Swinburne College of Technology, Melbourne

Teaching
1970–89  Lecturer/senior lecturer in painting, Phillip Institute of Technology (previously Preston Institute of Technology), Melbourne
1964–69  Lecturer in painting, Preston Institute of Technology, Melbourne
1961–63  Teacher in Victorian regional schools, Victorian Department of Education

Selected solo exhibitions
2005  Dale Hickey: new paintings, John Buckley Fine Art, Melbourne
2003  Dale Hickey: new paintings from the studio series, John Buckley Fine Art, Melbourne
1999  Dale Hickey: recent work, John Buckley Fine Art, Melbourne
1996  Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
1994  Dale Hickey, Anima Gallery, Adelaide
Dale Hickey: drawings, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: drawings, Annandale Galleries, Sydney
Dale Hickey: the void and other symbols (prints), the Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: the void and other symbols (paintings), Robert Lindsay at Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne
1991  Dale Hickey: one hundred drawings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: paintings and drawings, Garry Anderson Gallery, Sydney
Dale Hickey: paintings, Robert Steele Gallery, Adelaide
Dale Hickey: drawings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: recent works, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
Dale Hickey: paintings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
1988  Dale Hickey: paintings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: a retrospective exhibition, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Victoria; Monash University Gallery, Melbourne; Manly City Art Gallery, Sydney; Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane
1986  Dale Hickey: paintings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: paintings, Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
1985  Dale Hickey: paintings, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
1983  United Artists Gallery, Melbourne
Rex Irwin Art Dealer, Sydney
1980  Cottlesbridge landscape paintings, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne
1978  Works in progress: images of travel, Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1976  Project 15: Dale Hickey, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Dale Hickey: 1973–76, Pinacotheca, Melbourne
1973  Cup series (in conjunction with exhibitions by Simon Klose and Robert Rooney), Pinacotheca, Melbourne
1970  90 white walls, Pinacotheca, Melbourne
1969  Fences, Pinacotheca, Melbourne
1967  Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne
1964  Toorak Galleries, Melbourne

Selected group exhibitions
2007  Cross currents: focus on contemporary Australian art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
Full frontal: images from within the studio, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart
Snap freeze, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria
2004  Echo, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria
2002  Fieldwork: Australian art 1968–2002, the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne
Nocturne: images of night and darkness from colonial to contemporary, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery and Geelong Gallery, Victoria
Good vibrations: the legacy of Op art in Australia, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
1998 Material perfection: minimal art & its aftermath selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, Perth
1996 Black attack, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Dale Hickey: drawings, Annandale Galleries, Sydney
1995 Australian contemporary painting, Annandale Galleries, Sydney
1993 Off the wall/in the air: a seventies selection, Monash University Gallery and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
Freestyle: Australian art '60s to now, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1991 The face of Australia: the land & the people, the past & the present, the Australian Bicentennial Authority, national tour
From field to figuration: Australian art 1960–1986, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Monash University Collection: selected paintings and sculptures, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne
1989 Freestyle: Australian art '60s to now, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1988 The face of Australia: the land & the people, the past & the present, the Australian Bicentennial Authority, national tour
Australian contemporary painting, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1987 From field to figuration: Australian art 1960–1986, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Monash University Collection: selected paintings and sculptures, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne
Minimal art in Australia: a contemplative art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane
1986 Fears and scruples, University Gallery, the University of Melbourne
1985 Victoria: views by contemporary artists, Benalla Art Gallery, Victoria; Geelong Gallery, Victoria;
Castlemaine Art Gallery, Victoria
Victoria: views by contemporary artists, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1984 The field now, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Melbourne
1983 A Melbourne mood: cool contemporary art, National Gallery of Australia at Melville Hall, Australian National University, Canberra
A sunburnt country, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1982 Preston to Phillip: a survey, 10 years of art education, Reconnaissance Gallery, Melbourne
The Philip Morris Arts Grant: Australian art of the last ten years, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The seventies: Australian paintings and tapestries from the collection of National Australia Bank, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
1981 Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Aspects of new realism, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and Victorian tour
1978 Pemandangan alam dan Khayal: lukisan-lukisan Australia ditahun-tahun 1970an/Landscape and image: a selection of Australian art of the 1970s, Australian Gallery Directors Council and Department of Foreign Affairs, toured to Bandung, Yogyakarta and Jakarta, Indonesia
1977 Illusion and reality, National Gallery of Australia at Melville Hall, Australian National University, Canberra, and national tour
1976 Minimal art, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Australian realist painters, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
1975 The Australian landscape 1802–1975: a cultural exchange exhibition with China, Australia Council and Department of Foreign Affairs, Canberra, toured to Peking and Nanking, China
1974 Minimal, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne
1973 Recent Australian art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
1971 Four Pinacotheca artists using photography, Inhibodress Gallery, Sydney
Georges invitation art prize exhibition, Georges Gallery, Melbourne
1966 Helene Rubinstein travelling art scholarship, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Georges invitation art prize exhibition, Georges Gallery, Melbourne
1965 Young Melbourne painters, Gallery A, Sydney

Awards, grants, commissions, residencies
1991 Creative fellowship, Visual Arts/Craft Board, Australia Council
1987 Grant, Visual Arts/Craft Board, Australia Council
1986 Hugh Williamson Prize, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Victoria
1980 Cottesbridge landscape tapestry commission for the National Australia Bank through the Victorian Tapestry Workshop
1977 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, studio residency, University of Sydney
1975 Grant, Visual Arts Board, Australia Council
1974 Grant, Visual Arts Board, Australia Council
**Untitled** 1986, 18.3 x 18.3 cm (cat. 22)
DALE HICKEY: LIFE IN A BOX

Collections
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
Artbank
Australia Council
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Victoria
Geelong Gallery, Victoria
Hamilton Art Gallery, Victoria
Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth
Latrobe Regional Gallery, Morwell, Victoria
Latrobe University, Melbourne
Monash University, Melbourne
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
National Australia Bank
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Newcastle Region Art Gallery, New South Wales
PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
The University of Melbourne
Victorian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
Warrnambool Art Gallery, Victoria
Westpac, Sydney

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Cass, N, Fears and scruples, University Gallery, the University of Melbourne, 1986.
Finemore, B, Freedom from prejudice, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1977.
Holmes, J & P Zika, Full frontal: images from within the studio, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2007.
—— Dale Hickey: the void and other symbols, Robert Lindsay & Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, 1993.
Red triangle 1991, 182.8 x 182.8 cm (cat. 27)
McPhee, J, Black attack, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1996.
———, Material perfection: minimal art & its aftermath selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, Perth, 1998.

Journal and magazine articles and reviews

Newspaper articles and reviews
———, ‘Dale Hickey shows the art of teaching painting to swear’, The Age, 12 October 1988.
Lindsay, F, ‘“The field” shows worth of “The field”’, The Age, 9 September 1984.
Smith, B, ‘Young painter’s style is vigorous to point of brutality’, The Age, 26 August 1964.

Dale Hickey is represented by
John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne,
and Lister Gallery, Perth
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Additional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>1967–68</td>
<td>172.6 x 172.6 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Felton Bequest, 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>173.9 x 172.5 cm</td>
<td>Monash University Collection, Melbourne</td>
<td>Courtesy of Monash University Museum of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Group of cups</td>
<td>1972–73</td>
<td>32.6 x 32.6 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Private collection, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cup painting</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>32.8 x 32.8 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Purchased, 1982</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rosella sauce</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>32.6 x 32.6 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Gift of the Philip Morris Arts Grant 1982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>29.2 x 20.3 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Gift of the Philip Morris Arts Grant 1982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Eltham house</td>
<td>1973–74</td>
<td>23.5 x 25 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Collection of Rachelle King, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Still life with Nick’s tin</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>34.2 x 47.6 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Collection of Kathy Kostos, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Two apples and an orange</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>24.8 x 25.8 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Purchased, 1975</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Homage to Morandi</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>22.5 x 30 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Private collection, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Table with flat objects</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>25 x 37.5 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Private collection, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Cottlesbridge landscape</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>244 x 198 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne</td>
<td>Collection of Albert and Beverley Genser, Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Cottlesbridge landscape</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>244 x 198.6 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia, Canberra</td>
<td>Gift of the Philip Morris Arts Grant 1982</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Night window</td>
<td>1982–83</td>
<td>244 x 203.5 cm</td>
<td>Monash University Collection, Melbourne</td>
<td>Courtesy Monash University Museum of Art</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Five kinds of religion</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>203.3 x 244 cm</td>
<td>TarraWarra Museum of Art Collection, Healesville, Victoria</td>
<td>Gift of Eva and Marc Besen 2001</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Opus 86/3</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>183 x 183 cm</td>
<td>Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra</td>
<td>Department of Parliamentary Art Services, Canberra</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>183 x 183 cm</td>
<td>Ballarat Fine Art Gallery</td>
<td>Hugh Williamson Prize, 1986</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>183 x 183 cm</td>
<td>Collection of John Buckley, Melbourne</td>
<td>Collection of John Buckley, Melbourne</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>183 x 183 cm</td>
<td>The University of Melbourne Art Collection</td>
<td>Purchased, 1986</td>
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<td>Untitled</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>My lingo</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>183 x 244 cm</td>
<td>PricewaterhouseCoopers Collection, Melbourne</td>
<td>Courtesy the artist and John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne</td>
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<td>24.</td>
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<td>1988</td>
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Dimensions are given as height before width.
DALE HICKEY: LIFE IN A BOX
Guest curator: Paul Zika

Published by the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, on the occasion of the exhibition Dale Hickey: Life in a box, 13 February to 27 April 2008

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