

# S O F I T E L

## MELBOURNE ON COLLINS

### Tim Johnson – *CREED, 2021*

In association with Tolarno Galleries, Sofitel Melbourne On Collins is delighted to present *CREED*, paintings by Tim Johnson. A distinguished senior Australian artist whose career started in the late 1960s, his artistic practices have seen him explore conceptual and performance art, live music, photography and decades of dynamic painting for which he is largely known.

In the early 1980s, with a dedicated focus on painting, Johnson spent time learning from and collaborating with Aboriginal artists from the Pintupi, Warlpiri and Anmatyerr communities at Papunya in the Western Desert – a profoundly influential period in his artistic development. Since that time his work has drawn on a wide range of cultural references, combining iconography from Aboriginal, Buddhist and east Asian sources alongside his own unique personal imagery. The exploration of artistic and spiritual journeys across cultures and communities at Papunya in the Western Desert was a watershed moment, a period of great development in both the artist's painting and artistic outlook.

Johnson's work draws on a diverse range of eclectic cultural references, combining iconography and various motifs from Aboriginal, Buddhist and east Asian, native American sources alongside his own unique personal imagery of such things as UFOs, views of his native Sydney and his family in an exploration of artistic and spiritual connections across cultures.

These four paintings, *Thredbo Valley*, *Lake Julius*, *Imaging* and *Green Mt Meru* use four slightly different styles all of which I've been developing since I began to use dots.

I was reading a thread on Reddit about "the strangest place you've ever been to" when I remembered Lake Julius and this story. I was at an artists's camp at Lake Julius near Mount Isa in Queensland in 1994. Tracey Moffatt was showing her film "Bedevil" (1993) and I went out to make myself a cup of coffee during the screening. There was a table with an urn, coffee, milk and sugar. When I went to drink it the coffee tasted like blood. I took a look at it and it was blood, thick and red in colour. I couldn't drink it and tipped it out. I rinsed the cup and made another cup repeating the process. This time I got a normal cup of coffee and I went back in to watch the rest of the film. At the time I was rather spooked by this and thought it might have been a supernatural event connected to the film. A few days later after the artists' camp we were giving public talks at an art gallery in Mackay when a woman in the audience asked me if anything strange had happened to me at Lake Julius. I said "Well actually yes, something strange did happen, but I don't want to tell you because you'll think I'm crazy". After the talks she came up to me and asked me to tell her what it was. So I told her about the cup of blood. "Do you know why?" she asked. "It was because Lake Julius was the site of an Aboriginal massacre in the 19th century and lots of strange things have happened there." An Aboriginal tribe called the Kalkadoon were massacred there in 1884.

After recording this experience on Reddit I went back to the painting and realised that I'd included a shape that was reminiscent of this cup of blood in the lower centre of the painting and off to the left Lake Julius. Of course there are also many other images in the painting, some are Buddhist and others are from photos I took at Papunya and Kintore when I used to visit the community there.

*Thredbo Valley* uses dots to construct an image of the Thredbo River running through the surrounding mountainous landscape. This image comes from a photo of my brother fly fishing for trout in the river

and the dots are applied with a "pointillist" technique to represent the landscape. In a sense they are digital and do not reference Papunya painting which basically uses dots as an abstract mnemonic to represent part of a narrative, usually an aerial view of "country" with a specifically spiritual and sometimes sacred meaning.

Recently I found an interesting quote from Dr Robert Farris Thompson, a Yale professor whose book *Flash of the Spirit* made a huge impression on Basquiat. This quote expresses what I am trying to do in the third painting *Imaging*. In a recent interview on Sotheby's website 15/6/2020, talking about Basquiat, he says "If you keep doing something like a ritual, like a sacred ritual, it just qualifies itself and polishes itself and gets better and better until BAM!". When I paint I accumulate imagery from many sources, Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism, Chinese embroidery, photographs taken at Papunya, ufology and various western art styles and I am repeating a process I have been using for years. The repetitive aspect of the painting process is like a ritual that together with the subject matter creates something like a creed, i.e., a set of beliefs.

*Green Mt Meru* also uses the approach of accumulating familiar subjects until something that is more than the parts emerges. But by starting with a silk screened image of Mt Meru, the mythological Buddhist (and Hindu) centre of the world (and also by proxy of the body and the universe), a more focussed set of meanings emerge, surrounded by a sea of small white dots.

Tim Johnson, October 2021.

Tim Johnson is represented in Melbourne by **Tolarno Galleries**.

Website: [www.tolarnogalleries.com](http://www.tolarnogalleries.com)

Instagram: @tolarno

Facebook: Tolarno Galleries Melbourne

## **GLOBAL ART PROJECTS.**

*The exhibition program at Sofitel Melbourne On Collins is curated by Global Art Projects.*

*Website: [www.gap.net.au](http://www.gap.net.au)*

*Instagram: [@globalartprojectsmelbourne](https://www.instagram.com/globalartprojectsmelbourne)*

## Tim Johnson – *CREED*, 2021

### LIST OF WORKS

Tim Johnson is represented in most state, national, corporate and private art collections here in Australia and overseas. His work is highly sought and he is represented in Melbourne by **Tolarno Galleries**.



***Thredbo Valley***, 2021

183 x 244cm  
Acrylic on linen  
\$27,500



***Lake Julius***, 2021

183 x 244cm  
Acrylic on linen  
\$27,500



***Imaging***, 2021

183 x 244cm  
Acrylic on linen  
\$27,500



***Green Mt Meru***, 2020

183 x 244cm  
Acrylic on linen  
\$27,500

***All works are for sale. Price is inclusive of GST.***

***To purchase a work please contact Reception or Concierge in the Lobby, Level 1.***