

ARTISTS
DOSSIER



POETIC LOGIC



1.

Denise Green is feeling a little panicked. After 40 years in her Tribeca studio, the Melbourne-born painter is moving, forced out by Manhattan's ongoing redevelopment boom. A *New Yorker* since 1969, when she relocated from Paris, Green has witnessed the city's changing fortunes – she lived through the dangerous grime of seventies Soho and saw the collapse of both towers on 9/11 – along with the wax and wane of serious painting.

"Panicked but exhilarated," she corrects, and noting the efflorescence of museum exhibitions devoted to contemporary painting along with the buzz around the New York-Brooklyn painting scene, she adds: "I hear a lot of people say it's a good time for painting." Green recently returned from a European trip where she met with curators and dealers. After several shows in Germany and Italy in 2015, her work will be included in Belgium's Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens' Biennale of Painting later this year. She also revisited the Ardennes, site of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, and an important inspiration for a body of recent work that incorporates photography. And, in addition to finessing the details of a new studio while packing up an old one, she is also preparing for an exhibition at Sydney's Gallery 9 along with 2016 and 2017 shows at the University of Queensland Art Museum and at Heide Museum of Modern Art. With all this activity

she admits: "I feel odd. In the 1980s I'd spend all day painting ... and now, that's changed. I certainly paint but I have so many other distractions."

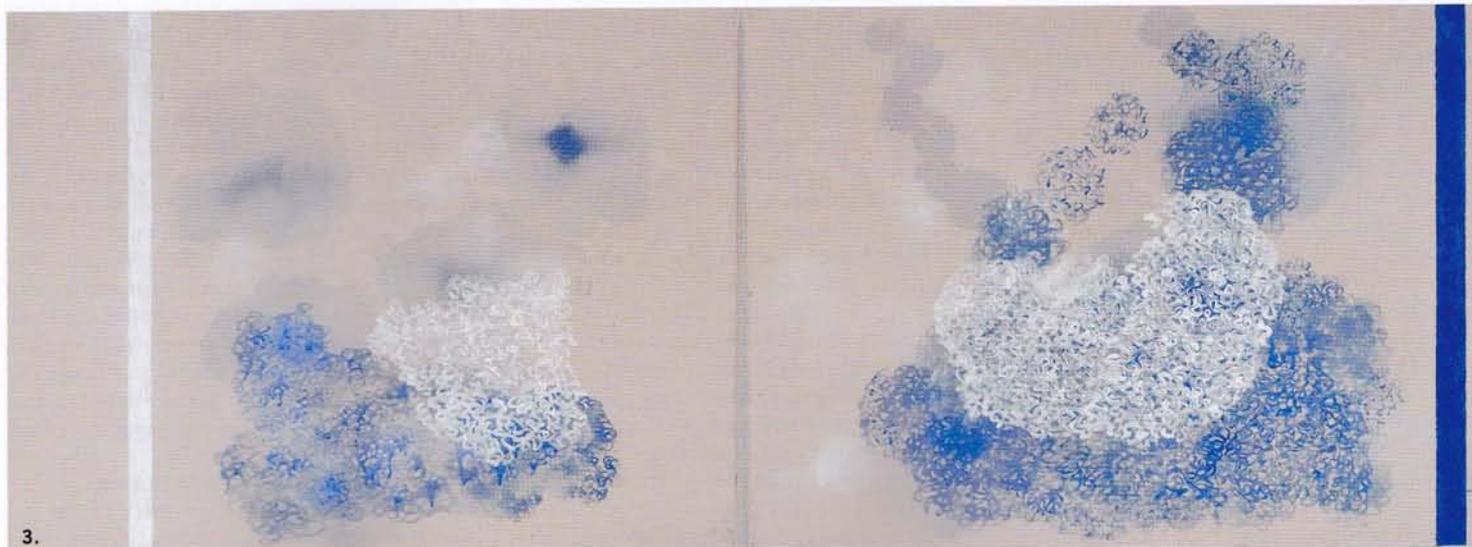
Green's work first gained critical attention when it was included in two 1978 exhibitions, the Guggenheim's *Young American Artists* and the Whitney's *New Image Painting*. Her simplified forms against monochrome backgrounds displayed a painterly intelligence aware of minimalism and conceptualism. At the same time these forms carried a density of meaning – opaque, personal, resonant – that owed much to Green's graduate studies with **Mark Rothko**. As she put it in an interview for the Guggenheim exhibition catalogue, the images function like "vessels which carry emotions and ideas". Over the decades Green has retained this format while developing a repertoire of shapes that could be called her own – among them the amphora, the house, the fan – and she remains committed to the expressive possibilities of abstract painting. Her goal is not simply formal; she aims to create work capable of encapsulating emotional

1. // Denise Green, *Into Stillness*, 2014. Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 118 x 131cm.

2. // Denise Green, *Anchor / Blue Subjectivity*, 2014. Acrylic and pencil on canvas, diptych, 91.5 x 254cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GALLERY 9, SYDNEY

"MY FIRST IDEAS ABOUT ART WERE SHAPED IN AUSTRALIA AND THAT REMAINS PART OF MY IDENTITY, A REALLY IMPORTANT PART." DENISE GREEN



3.



states. Reviewing her solo show at Sundaram Tagore Gallery last year, **David Cohen**, the New York critic/curator and founder of *artcritical.com* noted the continuity of Green's longstanding interest in the visual sign, memory and representation and how this had led her into "highly subjective, often symbolist pathways" obedient to "a poetic logic".

Through the 1980s Green maintained a regular schedule of shows in Australia and the United States, while two residencies in India would prove hugely important to her thinking. As the decade turned, Green intuited a shift in the support system for painting in New York with the dominance of photo-based theoretical work on the one hand, and the perturbations of the globalising art market on the other. She began actively seeking a European audience while developing a critical apparatus for her own work and abstract painting more generally. In a range of essays, and eventually a 2005 book, *Metonymy in Contemporary Art: A New Paradigm*, she combined art-critical and philosophical approaches from European and non-Western traditions in order to understand painting as a fusion of inner states, or subjectivity, and outer form. Her European outreach bore fruit. A retrospective organised by New York's MoMA PS1 in 1999 toured half a dozen European venues.

Despite Green's long tenure in New York, Australia remains important to her self-identity and her

thinking. She explains: "My first ideas about art were shaped in Australia and that remains part of my identity, a really important part." In *Denise Green: An Artist's Odyssey* (2012), a multi-authored biography, she recalls **Daniel Thomas** taking her to Ku-ring-gai Chase outside Sydney to see Indigenous rock art on her first return trip and realising "something is happening here that's not happening in contemporary western art". Her time in India strengthened this connection, particularly as she developed her own arguments about abstraction and inner states. "When I re-discovered the rock engravings at Ku-ring-gai, I knew that I had absorbed something from Aboriginal art. I only figured out what that something was beginning in 1987 after my residencies in India. I don't see myself as a European with an enlightenment tradition, but in an Eastern tradition, a philosophical tradition in India that could be extended to abstract art."

Green has produced suites of paintings prompted by trauma – the 9/11 attack, the death of her mother, the Allied bombing of Dresden – and in her quest for an appropriately resonant formal vocabulary she recently began incorporating photography with painting and drawing. Several of these photocollages, where Green modifies the photograph through layered vertical strips of abstract drawing, will be on view in her forthcoming exhibition at Sydney's Gallery 9, along with paintings using her

familiar fan motifs. *Bendigo Light* and *Bendigo Trees* acknowledge a part of Victoria Green remembers travelling through by train as a child; formally they recall views through railway carriage windows and their dissolution in reflection. In *Saar Elegy Loop*, a photograph of the eponymous German river loop is flanked by abstract drawings that can suggest aerial bombardment; the area's fate in World War II.

This interest in intergenerational trauma fuels Green's most recent, ongoing body of work where she uses contemporary photographs of the Ardennes. Although their battleground history is now invisible, Green is drawn to them for what might be called their immanent meaning. On her recent European trip she revisited the Ardennes site with a familiar guide who showed her the remnants of the Siegfried Line, the infamous system of German fortification that she tells me is disappearing from the landscape. What she will make of these photographs remains to be seen, but their resonance in the current climate of European border battles is clear. As "vessels which carry emotions and ideas," photographs are both more and less precise than a painted image but worked through Green's hands, they may become part of abstraction's fusion of inner states and outer form.

NEW WORKS FROM DENISE GREEN WILL BE EXHIBITED AT GALLERY 9, SYDNEY, FROM 6-30 APR 2016.

BENDIGO MOUNT



4.

SCOTT MILLINGTON
Gallery Manager, Gallery 9

In the last few years, Scott Millington has been involved in the selection of art for the exhibition 'The Art of the Bendigo' at Gallery 9. He has been particularly impressed by the work of Denise Green, who has been exhibiting at Gallery 9 since 2011. Scott Millington has been particularly impressed by the work of Denise Green, who has been exhibiting at Gallery 9 since 2011.

3. // Denise Green, *Saar Elegy: Loop*, 2014. Three works on paper; one photograph, 75 x 188cm.

4. // Denise Green, *Bendigo Trees*, 2015. One photograph and five drawings, 45.7 x 66cm.

5. // Denise Green, *Bendigo Light*, 2015. One photograph and seven drawings, 43.5 x 104cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GALLERY 9, SYDNEY



5.

SCOTT MILLINGTON
Gallery manager, Gallery 9

It has been six years since **Denise Green** exhibited in a solo exhibition in Sydney and Gallery 9 Manager **Scott Millington** has high expectations for her upcoming show. "Since the late 1970s, Denise has had 14 solo shows in commercial galleries in Sydney and each of these exhibitions have allowed her to cultivate a network of collectors who have an ongoing interest in her work," he says. "This is Denise's first show at Gallery 9 and we are delighted to present new developments in her work [through] her recent series of collages, which incorporates photographic as well as drawn elements. We anticipate a very positive response.'

Having achieved success exhibiting both nationally and internationally, Green's work is a drawcard for collectors. Millington comments: "Wisely, many collectors seek to acquire work by artists who have achieved important recognition

and who have an active exhibition schedule. The inclusion of Denise's work in an exhibition at the Palazzo Grimani Museum, one of the venues of the 2015 Venice Biennale, resulted in sales to first-time collectors. During the last decade Denise has continued to develop an international audience for her work, primarily through major exhibitions in museums. These exhibitions, especially in Australia and Europe, have led to gallery representation, which has resulted in increased demand for her work and important sales." With work in public collections across Australia and throughout Europe and America, Green commands a busy exhibition schedule, which included solo exhibitions in Germany, New York and Bendigo in 2015, and will include shows in Queensland and Victoria in 2016.

Naomi Gall

6. // Denise Green,
In Dialogue With Stillness,
2015. Acrylic and pencil
on canvas, 91.5 x 160cm.

7. // Denise Green,
Infra-structure, 2016. Acrylic
on canvas, 122 x 173cm.

COURTESY. THE ARTIST AND
GALLERY 9, SYDNEY



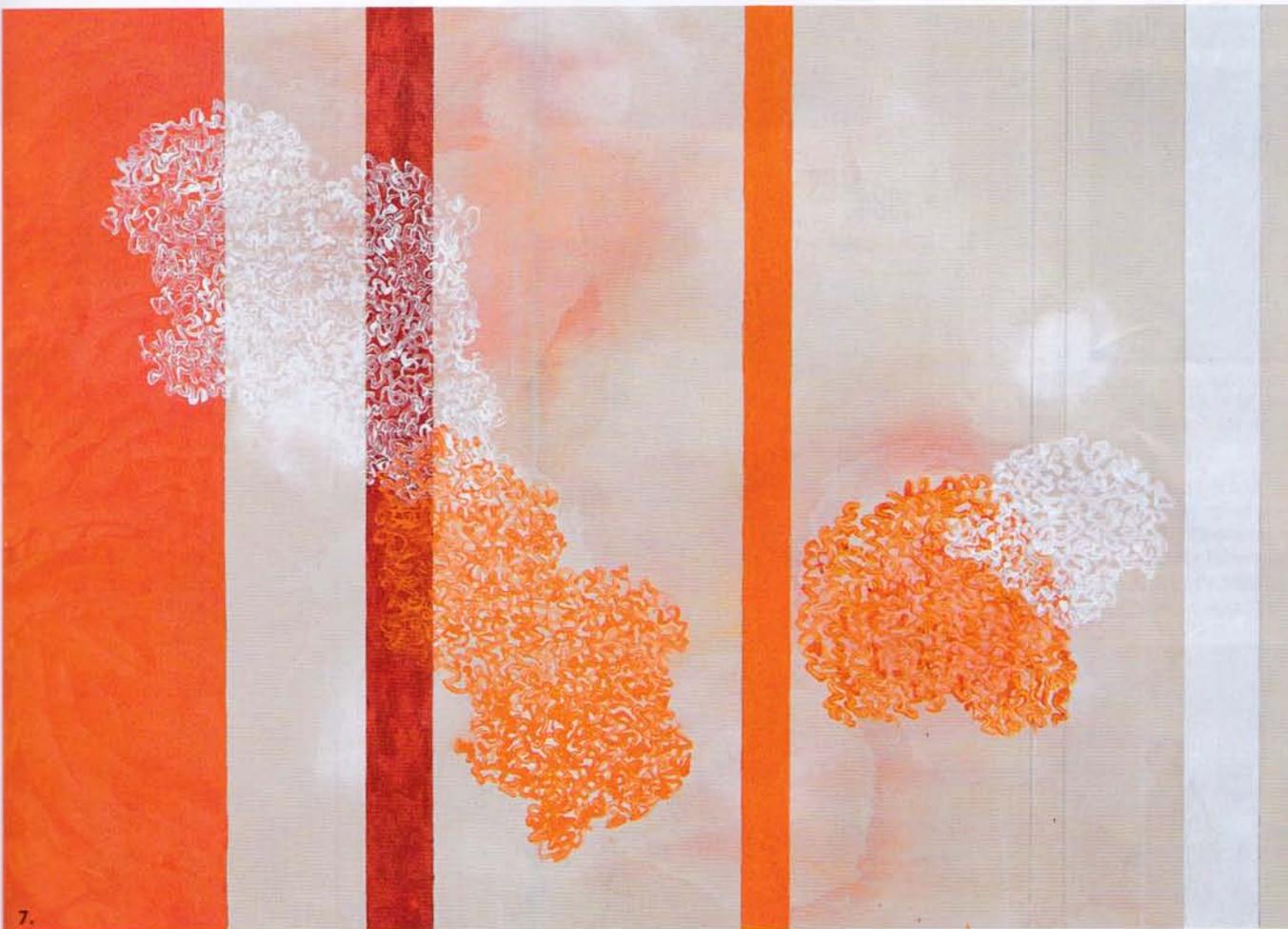
ROLAND MÖNIG
Art historian

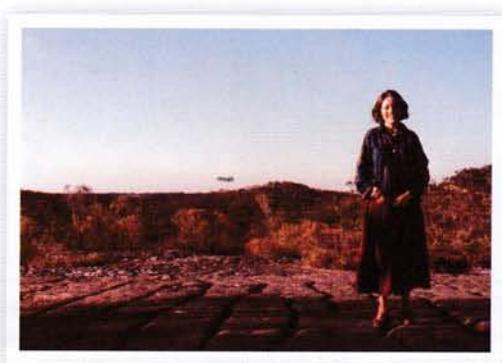
"I have been following **Denise Green's** work now since 2002. In 2006 I curated her solo show at the Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany. What impresses me about her painting is that it defies all firmly established terms and concepts. As simple and rational as her images might appear at first glance, their origin lies in the irrational, the unconscious and the preconscious. Green draws inspiration from empathy and participation and is entirely engrossed in the very situation that she's experiencing in the given moment. When she grasps a brush or a pencil, she ignores the boundaries between the self and the world, between subject and object. The result is a work that branches out like a rhizome in all directions, absorbing and conjoining ever-new aspects of reality – near and far, visible and

invisible, present and past – seeking similarities and correspondences without conditioning phenomena and the experiences they generate.

"Denise Green builds bridges between continents and cultures, through her life as well as through her art. In a globalised world, her work does not only embody the enormous possibilities which open up when you cross borders and change contexts. It does also testify to the ability of art to offer new frames of meaning that engulf and unite what is seemingly incompatible. For me, Denise Green's most recent works are very exciting, because they use photographic images in quite a peculiar way. I feel that this new approach refreshes her artistic practice in a stunning way. Let's see what will come of it!"

Naomi Gall





1946

Born Melbourne, Australia

1970-1976

Completed MFA at Hunter College, New York. Studied under Mark Rothko and Ralph Humphrey

1976



1978

Participated in the *New Image Painting* exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the *Young American Artists: Exxon National Exhibition* at the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum



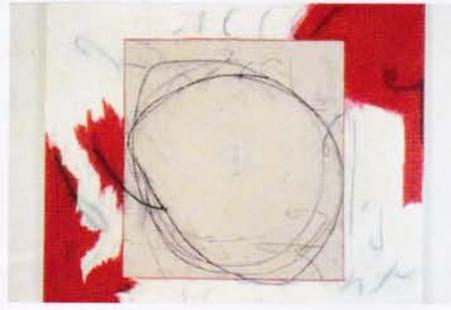
1985

First solo exhibition at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

1986



1984



1983

First solo exhibitions at Max Protetch Gallery, New York and Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne

1980

Project show at Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

1999

First solo exhibition at Sherman Galleries, Sydney

Touring retrospective launched at MoMA PS1, New York and toured to venues in the USA, Poland, Hungary, Austria and Germany

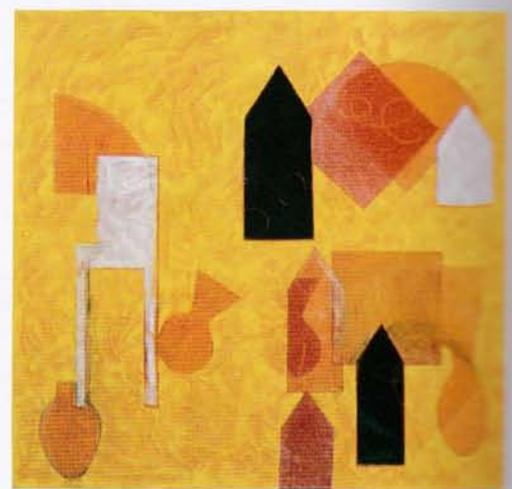
1986

Residency at the Sarabhai Foundation and on-site paper-making project at the Gandhi Ashram



2000

Retrospective launched at Brisbane City Gallery and travelled to Art Gallery of New South Wales





From left: Denise Green shortly after arriving in New York, 1974; in Manhattan loft with Mrs. Woo, 1976; visiting Ku-ring-gai park to see Aboriginal rock engravings, 1978; in India with husband Francis Claps, 1987; At the Guggenheim Museum, 1994; With husband Francis Claps at Orient, Long Island; in her Laight Street studio, New York, 1998; in her New York City studio, 2014.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST

2001



2005
First book, *Metonymy in Contemporary Art*, published by Macmillan in Australia and University of Minnesota Press

2007
Awarded Order of Australia for her work as a painter and author

2011



2010

First solo exhibition at Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York

2012

Second book, *An Artist's Odyssey*, published by Macmillan in Australia and University of Minnesota Press

2014

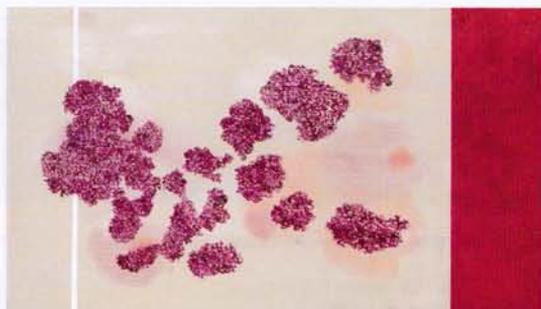
Trap, 1976, acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York



2016

First museum exhibition in Belgium at Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens.

Major survey show at UQ Museum, Brisbane



1976 // *Trap*. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

1978 // *Young American Artists: Exxon National Exhibition*, Guggenheim Museum, New York.

1984 // *Riau*. Oil stick and pencil on canvas. Collection of The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

1986 // *Surya Chandra 1*. Indian hand made paper, dyed, 66 x 84cm. Collection of The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Making hand made paper works at Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad.

2000 // *Ravenna*. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Paul M. Guest.

2001 // *Resonating: Denise Green: A 25 Year Survey of works from Australia and the United States* at The Art Gallery Of New South Wales, Sydney.

2007 // *Evanescence (Red)*. Pencil, wax crayon and acrylic on canvas, 183 x 366cm. Collection of The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

2011 // *Whistling Winds (for Mondrian)*. Acrylic and pencil on canvas, 203 x 306cm.

2014 // *Saar and Subjectivity, Section 4*, 2014. One work on paper; one photograph, 213 x 241cm.

2016 // *Denise Green, To be Read*, 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 172cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GALLERY 9, SYDNEY