

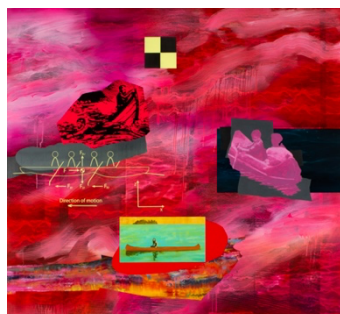
Waymarking/Painting/Undertow

“The migrant does not arrive once and for all but continues to arrive, each new situation demanding a new set of responses, almost a new identity,” observes Paul Carter in *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling, Language*. This perpetual arrival, an ongoing negotiation of self within shifting landscapes, lies at the heart of Neil Haddon's work.

In *Waymarking/Painting/Undertow*, Haddon delves into the legacies of his migration to lutruwita/Tasmania, weaving personal biography with complex negotiations of identity, belonging, and spatial relationships. For migrants, notions of place and belonging are often experienced as a perpetual state of flux; *I belong here but I also belong there*. In the realm of visual art, migratory aesthetics provide a lens through which to evoke these intricate dynamics. For Haddon, making paintings is a migratory practice that shifts and evolves. The aim is to create paintings that move through narratives of belonging and place, unsettling the histories of each.

Waymarking

This exhibition features references to paintings by Paul Gauguin, snippets of sentimental text by H.G. Wells (whose close friend George Gissing lived in the house where Haddon was born), and John Glover’s painting *A corroboree of natives in Mills Plains* from 1832. For Haddon, these



Learning to row, 2023

references serve as poignant way markers because he encountered the original painting or text at pivotal moments along his migratory journey from the United Kingdom through Spain to lutruwita/Tasmania. These fragmented images are interwoven with anecdotes and stories from Haddon's recollections of living in the UK and his life in Tasmania and are interspersed with further references to early colonial figure John Kelly. Kelly circumnavigated lutruwita/Tasmania in 1815, renaming places as he went. Two of his sons died in boating accidents on the Derwent River.

In Haddon’s work, waymarking is more than just signposting; it becomes a metaphor for navigating identity across physical and emotional landscapes. Each reference point in his paintings is part of a larger narrative. For example, the inclusion of Paul Gauguin nods to Gauguin's journeys and artistic evolution, while also reflecting Haddon's exploration of colonial modernism and cultural integration. In the painting *In Olden Times* (2024), Haddon's cut-up repainting uses desaturated colours and reversed tonal structure to unsettle and displace Gauguin’s celebrated painting *Mata Mua* (1892). A similar process has been applied to *On Mills Plains* (2024), in which Haddon reworks Glover’s original. In Haddon’s work, the distinctive looping bough of the Glover tree is abstracted and amplified across several paintings, becoming a compositional device and iconic symbol.



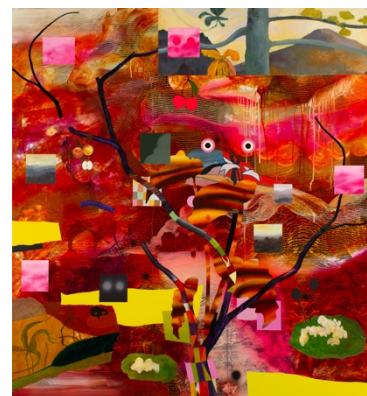
In olden times, 2024

In other paintings, such as *Nothing a human heart* (2024), H.G. Wells' sentimental text, linked to the house where Haddon was born, adds another layer of intimate history, connecting the personal with the universal.

Painting

Haddon's paintings are a complex visual record of these jostling references. His painting technique is wide-ranging and is executed in a profusion of different painterly applications and materials, ranging from slick, jewel-like enamel surfaces to impasto oil textures; from screen-printed backdrops to finely rendered detail. This sets up an intricate web of material tensions that speak to the fragmented nature of memory and identity. Just as migrants piece together their sense of self from disparate cultural and geographical influences, Haddon assembles his compositions from a diverse array of artistic elements. These landscapes of memory, association, and historical narrative are continually dissolving and reforming as the eye ranges over the differences, each viewing or new encounter with the work providing new insights.

This is clearly seen in the group of paintings collectively called *It's Difficult*, where diverse painting styles, an array of references, and highly saturated colours create strange new hybrid landscapes. These landscapes are neither the old place nor the new, but somewhere in between. The use of hard-edged abstraction alongside loose expression allows Haddon to convey both the clarity and ambiguity inherent in the migratory way of working. While some aspects of identity and experience may be sharply defined, others remain fluid and open to interpretation. The bold text elements in his work serve as declarative statements or reflections, grounding the viewer in specific moments or ideas, while the finely rendered figurative details invite closer inspection and contemplation.



It's Difficult (this Tasmanian landscape),
2023

Undertow



The weight of leaves, 2024

An undertow is a strong current beneath the surface of the water, moving in a different direction from the surface flow. Undertow suggests hidden depths and underlying themes. It implies that there are forces, emotions, or narratives at play beneath the surface of the paintings—subtle complexities or the darker, more introspective aspects of the artworks. Haddon asks, is nostalgic memory a form of undertow?

Neil Haddon's paintings offer insights into the intersections of migratory experiences with the fraught histories of lutruwita/Tasmania. They create a kind of landscape, but not a bucolic view of untroubled pastoral scenes; rather, they offer a view of a place out of place, still becoming, still being formed, whose geographies, mapping, and recordable views are still to be discovered.