

BOROONDARA
ARTS



The Long Way

Kevin Chin

TOWN HALL GALLERY
WED 8 MAY – SUN 28 JUL 2024


BOROONDARA

EMBRACING THE IN-BETWEEN: THE PAINTINGS OF KEVIN CHIN

Stephanie Sacco, Town Hall Gallery Senior Curator

The paintings by artist Kevin Chin are not your everyday landscapes, although it might be easy to mistake them as such at first glance. Kevin's choice of medium - oils on Italian linen, a hallmark of Western painting - as well as his use of large scale, meticulous detail, harmonious colour palette and familiar subject matter draw viewers in with the promise of an aesthetically pleasing vista to look at. As a society, we place enormous value on the visual beauty of nature and have appreciated landscape painting as a genre for a very long time. We immediately understand the language of a landscape painting and we expect it to provide an experience of comfort and calm, a sense of wonder, or perhaps even a feeling of the sublime.



Kevin's paintings evoke all of these feelings, but also much more. Upon closer inspection, elements of the subject matter that are familiar to us are not quite as they seem. Horizon lines shift, mountain tops and trees are inverted, skies meld with seas, built structures slip away into oblivion. Pictorial elements are brought together in ways that disrupt our initial comprehension of what we are looking at - a full clothesline draped in front of a mountain range, pumpkins displayed on a shelf with no other man-made elements in sight, a tradesperson upon a ladder in an underground train station in the top left corner of a landscape where the sky "should" be. Although Kevin composes his paintings from fragments of real-world imagery taken during his global travels, they are assembled in a way which results in compositions that are gently but deliberately disorientating.



As Kevin explains, 'One of the first questions I commonly get asked about any painting is, 'Where is this?' One part of the painting might suggest a certain part of the world, whereas another might have strong cultural references from elsewhere. I intentionally bring these conflicting elements together to allude to the complex way we piece together our understanding of where we are in consciousness. Then I'll also throw in elements that are quite changed from the original source image, often regarding colour – as well as sections that are just pure paintwork that make direct reference to the constructed nature of the image. So ultimately, these are places that only truly exist in the imagination.'¹

The resulting paintings are reminiscent of dreams, where moments of our lives and experiences are brought together in complex, nuanced and sometimes fantastical ways that can confront and fascinate us. In some paintings, figures are present, and one cannot help but wonder if they know where they are or understand their predicament within the non-sensical landscape they are immersed in. This reflects the contemporary condition of perpetually feeling in-between places, of wandering throughout the world and the struggle to find a sense of fitting in.

The artist is also influenced by contemporary magic realist literature, a genre which poetically creates worlds that resemble our own but are slightly awry, and uses this as a lens to step outside ourselves and re-examine the way things are in the world. Kevin expands on this idea in his latest series of paintings titled *Mystic Meander*, which evokes the sense of a parallel dimension - the 'magical feeling you get out in nature that another world could be hiding in the crevices. In my imagination this could be accessed via a portal like the charged zone traversing mountain valleys, passing between twin trees, or following paths that lead to the sky.'²

By pushing the boundaries of the landscape painting genre in this way, Kevin asks his audience to consider different perspectives, question the dominant narratives and think about the pressing issues facing our society today. Infused in the detail of his works are clues



of concern about the current state of our world, from climate change, social isolation, globalisation and wealth inequality, to displacement, nationalism and global citizenship. These big issues and injustices, which are so often presented to us in loud, bold and frightening ways laced with anxiety and urgency, are instead alluded to in a gentle, quiet and calm manner that allows the viewer space to not only think, but perhaps more importantly, to feel. Kevin's paintings have a unique ability to simultaneously evoke a sense of both discomfort and comfort, the foreign and the familiar, dream and reality, encouraging us to take a moment to stand in and embrace the in-between.

¹. Dom Carter, "Kevin Chin explores hybrid notions of space in his massive, meticulous paintings", Creative Boom, accessed 26 March 2024, <https://www.creativeboom.com/features/kevin-chin/>

². Kevin Chin, email correspondence, 28 February 2024

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

EXHIBITION OPENING

Sat 11 May, 2pm–4pm

Join us for the official opening of 'The Long Way: Kevin Chin'.

Free, bookings essential.

EXHIBITION TOURS

Sat 11 May, 1pm–2pm

Sat 27 Jul, 1pm–2pm

Join us for a curator-led tour of 'The Long Way: Kevin Chin' and gain a deeper understanding of the artworks on display.

Free, bookings essential.

PAINTING WITH COLLAGE WORKSHOP

Tue 21 May, 6.30pm–8.30pm

Join artist Nicky Tsekouras and explore different approaches to using paper and other materials to create a landscape collage. Suitable for those new to collage or creatives looking to expand their skills.

Tickets \$60 / \$48 Conc

FANTASY LANDSCAPE ILLUSTRATION WORKSHOP

Tue 18 Jun, 6.30pm–8.30pm

Be inspired and explore different creative methods to make your own painted fantasy landscape. No previous experience required. Suitable for ages 16 years and above.

Tickets \$60 / \$48 Conc

CINEMA SESSION

Wed 19 Jun, 6pm–8.30pm

Join us for a screening of 'FLEE' detailing an unforgettable story of self-discovery and relentless will to survive.

All tickets \$10. This event has limited capacity.

For more information and to make a booking visit:
www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/arts

IMAGE CREDITS

Kevin Chin, 'Out Back', 2024, oil on Italian linen, 138 x 199cm, image courtesy of the artist, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne.

Kevin Chin, detail from 'So Inclined', 2024, oil on Italian linen, 138 x 199cm, image courtesy of the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney.

Kevin Chin, detail from 'Follow Forever', 2024, oil on Italian linen, 179 x 286cm, image courtesy of the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney. Commissioned by Town Hall Gallery.

Kevin Chin, detail from 'Hideaway', 2024, oil on Italian linen, 179 x 138cm, image courtesy of the artist and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney.

Kevin Chin, 'Tunnel Vision', 2021, oil on Italian linen, 138 x 199cm, Collection of Hannah Raisin and Will Heathcote, image courtesy of the artist.

OPENING HOURS

Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm

Sat, 12–4pm

Closed public holidays

HAWTHORN ARTS CENTRE

360 Burwood Road

Hawthorn, Victoria

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Town Hall Gallery is a member of the Public Galleries Association of Victoria. Town Hall Gallery participates in the Cultural Gifts Program.

