

# Debutantes: Joel Arthur

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Artists who leading gallerists have thrown their weight behind with a recent debut exhibition.

**Words:** Emma-Kate Wilson

Working predominantly with oil on canvas, but often exploring the expanse of different mediums such as alkyds, wax medium, marble dust and acrylics, Canberra-based artist **Joel Arthur** creates bodies of work in dialogue with one another – setting anchor points within each painting that oscillate between abstraction and landscapes.

Taking pictures of the world around him, Arthur seeks out artificial landscapes, such as city parks, that have a utopian feel. In this, his base of Canberra seems evocative, a city that lends itself to the ideas of constructed environments.

“Quite often, these park spaces are planted in a designed manner which lends to a sensation and tension that I want to translate to the paintings,” he says.

As the everyday seeps into Arthur’s oeuvre, the artist holds an interest in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century French painting, from Impressionism to Cubism. Similarly, he seeks out a sense of distortion, playing with his mediums and compositions to this effect, always aiming to push the artworks. “This pushing allows for a surprise in each painting which provides me with excitement and interest to continue painting,” he says.

After studying at the Australian National University School of Art, Canberra in 2014, Arthur undertook a six-month residency at Canberra Contemporary Art Space in 2015 and is currently practising at Australian National Capital Artists (ANCA). In 2022, he received a grant from ArtsACT, allowing him unlimited time to paint in the studio.

Arthur’s first solo exhibition at Gallery 9, Sydney, *A Landscape to Build On*, 2022, came together after discussions with Gallery 9 director **Allan Cooley** in July 2022. “Joel had built a body of work during Covid which had clear structure and was progressive in its development,” says Cooley. “He constantly challenges his practice by inventing new imagery and techniques, including introducing abstract elements in the landscape genre.”

*Featured image above: Joel Arthur, Behind the Casino, 2022. Oil, acrylic and alkyd on canvas, 153 x 183cm. Courtesy: the Artist and Gallery 9, Sydney.*

*Featured image below: Joel Arthur, Arena, 2022. Oil, acrylic and alkyd on canvas, 153 x 183cm. Courtesy: the Artist and Gallery 9, Sydney.*

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