

## Robert Boynes: Five Decades of Painting

PREVIEW 13 July 2017



Viewing Robert Boynes's paintings from the last five decades is like watching the joys and plagues of Western culture appear before our very eyes. Among the artist's many engagements, there are concerns with technology, pleasure, modernism, urban alienation, imperialism, capitalism and the environment. Simply put, it's the stuff of modern life. In acknowledgement of such a vast array of work, MAY SPACE is currently surveying a collection of the artist's paintings from the last fifty years.

The exhibition, aptly titled *Five Decades*, looks at the ongoing evolution of Boynes's work.

Beginning with the artist's early years in the 1960s and 1970s, the show considers Boynes's initial focus on neo-pop imagery, alongside the influence of the artist's travels abroad. An ongoing fascination with capitalism, and its various effects, also began to emerge during this time.

These interests paved the way for later explorations into Australian urban development, as well as a stylistic turn to oil painting. While Boynes eventually moved away from the clean lines of his early work (indeed some of the artist's later works look positively traumatised), the implicit feelings of anxiety, of wanting to interrogate modern life, remain persistent.

From here the exhibition moves to the imagery Boynes is most well known for; multi-layered cityscapes and snapshots of urban life. Many of these works begin from a photograph (some of which are taken by Boynes, while others are appropriated from various publications or the internet) and are manipulated with water and paint.

Not only is there juxtaposition between materials and colours, but there's also a slippage between movement and stasis. The paintings summon the perpetual busyness of modern life, while also privileging a quiet moment within this on-going continuum.

In some moments Boynes's work is overtly political and has a clear social point to make. At other times the artist's paintings slip more into abstraction, becoming quieter and more intuitive.

The works included in *Five Decades* were selected from Boynes's studio and includes paintings not previously shown in Australia. The exhibition also coincides with *Modern Times*, a survey show of Boynes's paintings since 2000, currently taking place at ANU Drill Hall Gallery in Canberra.

MAY SPACE  
Robert Boynes

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### Five Decades



TIARNEY MIEKUS

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