CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION BY KIT MESSHAM-MUIR 1
FOREWORD BY MARK WIDDUP 2
ABORIGINAL STOCKMAN 3
MAN WEARING NED'S AURA 5
YOUNG ANZAC 7
STOCKHORSE IN THE FAR NORTH 9
YOUNG ABORIGINAL STOCKMAN 11
STEVE WAUGH 13
DON BRAHMAN 15
LEBANESE GIRL 17
ELVIS 19
SHE WORE BLUE AND A LONG FACE 21
THE ACTOR WILLIAM DEFOE 23
JONNY ROTTEN 25
VIETNAM VET PLAYING GUITAR 27
MORRIE WEDDING AT 45 DEGREES 29
SYDNEY DAY MARDI GRA 31
GIRL IN BATH 33
WHEAT FARMER 35
YOUNG JACKARDO WITH PET KANGAROO 37
THE DONKEY AND THE AZURE 39
HOW DO YOU TALK TO THE PRETTIEST GIRLS 41
BLUE BULL 43
PORTRAIT OF KATRINA 45
THE BIRD PLAYED IN THE BUSHES OF THE MEH 47
ROAD TO KAPUTAR—MIRVANA 49
ELEPHANT 51
BLUEY 53
STRONG LIKE THE MOUNTAIN 55
SHRIEK 57
ROAD TO KAPUTAR—RUIN 59
MOUNTAIN DAM 61
THE HANDS OF DEFEAT 63
PSYCHEDELIC BULLS 65
YOUNG FOAL 67
PERFECT BUNCH 69
RED CAPPED ROBBIN 71
CONTACT DETAILS 73
These two concurrent exhibitions, *Purely Visual* by James Kearns and *Trading Places* by Nick Osmond, bring together new work by two artists who are in many respects very different, yet for which there is some interesting common ground in the works they present together here.

Nick Osmond’s work resonates with the paintings of Marlena Dumas, Peter Doig, and perhaps George Condo and Francis Bacon. Like many of Dumas’ portraits, these faces bear partial resemblances to faces we know — celebrities, friends, archetypes. Similar to Bacon, Osmond fragments and distorts, to sometimes blur the boundaries of figure and ground, subject and object. The rendering of the paint is loose to the point of semi-abstraction, so the presence of paint and painterly technique is immanent in each work, yet there is a softness to each figure, a vulnerability that is fixed often to the eyes of the subjects.

An abstracted motif of Ned Kelly’s armoured headgear appears in two of these works, rendered in calligraphic style, flat and black, sitting on the picture plane of the canvas’s surface, or as a green pillar-box form. The reference to Ned Kelly and the abstraction of his armour evoke Sidney Nolan’s famous series of paintings from the 1940s. However, in the context of the works presented here, such as *Viet Nam, Yet Playing Guitar*, 2016, and *Wheat Farmer*, 2016, Kelly’s armour situates the broader body of works collected here within a specifically Australian context. Along with Aboriginal Stockman and Australian Troops Vietnam, Osmond depicts archetypes of a tough and rugged Australia.

James Kearns similarly draws upon archetypal iconography — birds, bulls, a fighter, a rugged landscape. And like Osmond the definition of his subjects is nearly lost in the looseness of Kearns’ semi-abstracted rendering. The bird at the centre of Kearns’ *The Bird Played in the Bushes of the Mehi, 2016*, is echoed in the marks that suggest the tree and the background. To the left of the bird a roughly rendered twig reverberates with the line of the bird’s back, while to the right the form of its tail repeats across the lower portion of the image. The bird itself almost disappears.

Although only one bull appears in this current exhibition, they are a recurring image in much of Kearns’ work. We can draw an obvious line from Picasso’s recurring use of the bull as motif, but Kearns’ bulls are very different. These images of bulls immediately evoke a kind of raw and particular masculine strength. Kearns’ bulls are muscular beasts, charged with potential energy and danger; yet in Kearns’ paintings their lines and tones are often broken and fragmented, diminishing the sense of power we might immediately perceive with that of defenclessness. Similar to the rendering of vulnerability in Osmond’s figures, Kearns’ paintings often create a tension between their expressive technique and the subjects they depict.

Perhaps one exception to this tendency in this exhibition is Kearns’ portrait of Katrina Rumley, until recently the Director of the Moree Plains Gallery. Rumley’s impact on the northern New South Wales town of Moree, which is also where Kearns now lives, is long-reaching. Kearns’ portrait captures in Rumley’s face the kind of robustness it takes to get things done in a sometimes tough regional town like Moree. Here both Kearns and Osmond play interestingly with toughness and vulnerability, creating images that hold the tension between the two.
FORWARD BY MARK WIDDUP
Director Cooks Hill Galleries

Much is spoken, heard and observed when talking of the 'bush'. Its isolation, hardship and challenges but there is no lack of enthusiasm when you see these artists absorbed with their art and driven to another place with their art medium!

Kearns and Osmond are such that they are reliant on their art on many levels! Emotionally, a driving passion, solace or would we say an escape. Once there the magic begins.

James Kearns continues to explore more the animals than portraits with this exhibition. The paint application and the effects achieved give the artwork more energy and excitement and he understands the importance of space surrounding a focal point! He lives and loves the country, as such he expects much from it, it is all encompassing. Whilst growing up in the city his relationship with the bush is where his comfort lies. One day he takes me about 50 kms out of town to one of his favoured painting areas, what the country means to him! No doubt there are a few places he gains an awareness of his person! His observation of trees, river banks, colours, textures, birds, animals, sky, water and the earth itself all speak to him, driving him to paint. It's more than a recording of these experiences I see, but a raw emotion being the fire within his paintings.

Nick is powered with enthusiasm and a joy for life. On first meeting, albeit so brief, his passion flowed. I felt he had a vision, untamed and ready to explore the opportunities art was going to present to him.

An obvious 'people person' his art influence revolves around the figure and so often their character is revealed. Much of the stimulus for his subject matter is historical reference, old photos, a reading of history and a fascination for 'recognised' people and their personalities. He is keen to extract just the essence!

Nick has a fascination with Sidney Nolan, arguably our most famous Australian figure painter, who later became arguably our most internationally recognised Australian artist. He also captures the 'character'. However for me it's Nick's application of paint colour that adds to the energy within his figure painting.

His art is a breath of fresh air, often involving an innocence, whimsy and energy that is easy to identify with on some level. Like some of Nolan's art it possesses an understatement however with more colour and a subjective twist. As an undeveloped artist there is that 'x factor' that attracts! Will he get to the heights of Nolan? Probably not but Nick has an innocence and naive element in his art that draws upon sentimentality which is both attractive and immediately identifiable. Watch his career as I believe there will be some 'gems' in the years to come! I think there could be an 'Archibald' in the waiting.

For sales and commission orders, please contact the director

Mark Widdup.

Text or call 0418 492 259. 24/7.

TWO
TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR ART PURCHASE

1. CONTACT DETAILS All art sales will be invoiced. so please contact mail@cookshillgalleries.com and supply the name and address of the entity or person/s to be cited on the paperwork, with an email address and a mobile number.

2. THE DELIVERY ADDRESS Please supply contact name/s, mobile phone number and delivery instructions. Please advise of your preferred carrier and their contact names/phone. We can supply/offer carrier details also.

3. INSURANCE We recommend you supply your art purchase details to your 'contents insurer' prior to delivery after invoicing. The artwork becomes the responsibility of the buyer after it leaves the galleries premises (CHG).

CONTACT DETAILS

MARK WIDDUP
COOKS HILL GALLERIES
67 BULL ST
COOKS HILL NSW 2300
T 0418 492 259
WWW.COOKSHILLGALLERIES.COM.AU

CHG | COOKS HILL GALLERIES
EST. 1975