

**Dennis Passalick**

Working drawings for  
*Landscape, A View of Maryborough*, 1986

**An odyssey: making the painting “*Landscape, A View of Maryborough*” 1986  
173 cm x 427 cm**

The artist Dennis Passalick’s determination to make “an honest, faithful, loving portrait of his home town” sustained a 13 year odyssey. Sixty drawings, painting studies and ensembles are embodied in the painting.

They will be exhibited for the first time at Watson Place Gallery in Watson Place (behind the Regent Theatre just off Flinders Lane) Melbourne from Saturday 5 June to 26 June 2004.

**Dennis Passalick** has said this about making the drawings:

“I wanted to do an honest, faithful, loving portrait of my hometown, where I grew up. An overall view into all my favourite places.

My drawing is all about my looking. I always draw in the field, morning, noon or night, cold, wet, hot or dry. To find those essentials. The initial drawing was an overview. From the tower. That was the only way I could get the work started. I started visiting some of my favourite places, where I grew up. And I set about doing all those individual studies of the actual tower itself. Fire tower, grandstand, band rotunda, haystacks.

The favourite places were where I grew up as a kid, you know, where the imagination was. From morning, noon to night they were visited, either socially or by wanting to visit them to play as kids or later on to canoodle around, lovers’ spots; mysterious spots. When I was drawing these things I would be constantly interrupted by these memories whether I was doing “nocturnals” or “early mornings” on a frosty morning or whatever.

When I started drawing, I also experimented with the direction the work was taking; of what I would actually use in the final work. And when I had enough information to work with, I brought it back into the studio. Only then I started bringing the main elements through and started putting things together into what I call the colour studies of how I wanted things to come together. Like, an overview of bits and pieces which weren't so prominent, but are actually in the work. Like the surrounds of the lake.

When I worked on the colour studies, I worked from my drawings. That is when I started taking the major elements and started working with them. And then I brought all of that through into what I call, a final ensemble.

I was always going back to the original drawings when I was working on the painting. To see if the essence of the work was still there. And that the life force was flowing through.

Now when you see the show of drawings and major studies for the final work at Watson Place Gallery on 5 June, you will see the essentials for the final composition."

**Peter Corrigan** the distinguished architect, bought *Landscape, A View of Maryborough* when it was exhibited at Bruce Pollard's Pinacotheca Gallery in 1987. The monumental work, respected as a source of nourishment, has hung in Peter's architectural studio ever since (other than when it was included in the visual arts program of Barry Kosky's 1996 Adelaide Festival of Arts).

On meeting with the artist for the first time on 29 April 2004, Peter Corrigan said of the painting :

"What interests me is the idea of a generic alphabet of regional architecture; of a rural Victorian architecture, a type of generic surreal world of the architecture of our country towns. This painting is a place of memory and so seemed to me a most remarkably poignant expression of built form. I see here, the dreams of [not] simply the artist's childhood, but generations upon generations of rural Victorian kids. Who play football. Who play musical instruments. Who just hang out. The use of water struck me as old as Giotto. We have the hills. The startling sunsets. The golden sky. Can Victoria be so promising? Is there heaven out there? There is here a classical painterly strategy, which I admire. It is not trapped into renaissance rigidity. It is a perspective that the painter himself has brought to the situation and resolved in his own right.

This (painting) is a source of nourishment. It is not mere décor. The painting is an important idea, it describes the way Australia was built, and values that result. The bandstand in the foreground offers a sense of celebration or public ritual.

What we have here is a dreamworld that we inhabit ourselves. Australians have come into the country and built. They have built clumsy, they have built awkward, they have built difficult, they have built out of synch with the landscape, they have built for rude habitation. I see *A View of Maryborough* as a highly politically charged painting."

When *Landscape, A View of Maryborough* was exhibited, **Gary Catalano** then reviewing for *The Age*, said (8 July 1987):

"Dennis Passalick seems a genuine discovery. .... the best of his paintings is surely '*Landscape, View of Maryborough*'. With its trimly painted towers, rotundas and grandstands dotted about that manicured expanse of green, this landscape has the eerie and somewhat unreal quality of an architectural model of a town."

**Robert Rooney**, then the reviewer for the *Weekend Australian* said (18-19 July 1987)

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“Passalick’s paintings are very large and filled with a non-abysmal type of golden glow which emanates from countless long yellow and orange brush-strokes. *Landscape, A View of Maryborough* is a painting of cinemascope proportions, in which the unreality of an observed scene is heightened by the ambiguous scale of the rotunda, towers and neatly scattered buildings in the green distance.”

Passalick’s work has a strong environmental sensibility and insight into the behaviour of both native fauna and animals of the farmyard complementing autobiographical themes. Mystery overlays it all. Influences include Rousseau, Poussin, Vermeer, Chardin, Seurat, van Gogh and Tiepolo.

**Passalick paintings are in the collections of:**

City of Ballarat Fine Art Gallery  
Warrnambool Art Gallery  
Shepparton Art Gallery  
Riddoch Art Gallery, Mt Gambier  
Horsham Art Gallery  
Smorgon Collection  
Ansett Collection  
Private Collections