

# *Fred Williams – 1974*

Curated by Anthony Fitzpatrick  
2 December 2017 to 11 February 2018



Fred Williams, *Lilydale Triptych I* 1974, oil on canvas, overall: 105 x 272.5 cm  
TarraWarra Museum of Art collection, Gift of Eva Besen AO and Marc Besen AO  
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2008, © Estate of Fred Williams

Work from a single year in the career of one of Australia's most important landscape artists, Fred Williams, will be featured in an exhibition at TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2 December 2017 to 11 February 2018.

***Fred Williams – 1974***, curated by Anthony Fitzpatrick, highlights a significant year in which Williams explored a new method of painting, and a new palette.

“In the early 1970s, Williams broke with his traditional working method of painting gouaches when working outdoors, trialling a new method of painting oil sketches *en plein air*. Seeking to renew and deepen his relationship to the environment, the artist undertook numerous field trips to a variety of locations around the outskirts of Melbourne, where his acute observations were translated directly onto canvas with a sense of spontaneity and immediacy.

“At the same time Williams was exploring a new palette, invigorating his work with a greater level of expressiveness in both the range of colour and the handling of the paint.

“Beginning with the large-scale work *Lilydale Triptych I* (1974) in the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection, this exhibition brings together several paintings from 1974, a period in which these new

approaches coalesced and found full expression. Patrick McCaughey describes 1974 as ‘one of the most turbulent and productive years Williams had ever known’.

“The exhibition also brings to the fore a significant new element which was a notable aspect of a number of paintings produced in this highly productive and innovative twelve months – the presence of human intervention in the landscape. Far from incidental features, built forms such as electricity pylons, roads, trains, quarries and buildings, are important devices in structuring these compositions.

“Shown together in the North Gallery of TarraWarra Museum of Art and in direct proximity to views of the multi-layered landscape of the Yarra Valley, the selection of oils in *Fred Williams – 1974* provides an opportunity to reconsider this dynamic and adventurous period of transition in the artist’s ongoing project to apprehend the unique, experiential qualities of the Australian landscape,” Mr Fitzpatrick said.

Having chosen not to exhibit commercially for several years it is perhaps unsurprising that when the artist first exhibited some of these works in *Recent paintings 1974* at Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney in April 1975 and a month later at University Gallery in Melbourne, they were met by critics with a mixture of astonishment and admiration. The following astute observations by Margaret Plant highlight the strength of the reaction precipitated by Williams’s daring new paintings: ‘In the 1975 exhibition, Williams dissipated the tenets of careful geometry and substituted a rougher one. He has dislocated his characteristic colour scheme and, by implication, criticised his own previous careful touch ... In so challenging the premises of his own art, Williams has ... made a conscious effort to expand his own sense of his work ... I see his rebellion as a rare and important example of an Australian artist, able to undo the safety net of his art: to paint dangerously.’

Fred Williams is widely acknowledged as one of this country’s most important artists and his works are credited with transforming our perception of the Australian landscape. His depiction of the Australian landscape encompasses both the broad perspective of the panoramic vista and intimate observations of the natural world.

During his lifetime, Williams’s works found acclaim both here and overseas and in 1977 he was the first Australian artist to hold a solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, exhibiting 40 gouaches from over a decade of his practice.

Since his untimely death his works have continued to be widely exhibited nationally and internationally including a major exhibition at the British Museum in 2003. Williams’s work is represented in the National Gallery of Australia and all State galleries and major regional galleries as well as many other significant public and private collections in Australia. His work is also represented internationally in the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection and MOMA in New York, and the British Museum, the Tate and the Victoria & Albert Museum collection in London.

This exhibition is supported by major exhibition partner The Balnaves Foundation.

This exhibition will be shown concurrently with *Rosemary Laing*, curated by Victoria Lynn, the first large scale exhibition of Laing’s work in Victoria. Building on one of the key exhibition themes at TarraWarra Museum of Art, this exhibition focuses on Laing’s interest in the exchange between art, place and ideas.

# MEDIA RELEASE

October 18, 2017

TARRAWARRA  
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Neil Balnaves AO, Founder of The Balnaves Foundation said, "The exhibitions *Fred Williams – 1974* and *Rosemary Laing* will be the third year that The Balnaves Foundation have supported the TarraWarra Museum of Art to deliver exhibitions of note by Australian artists. The Foundation is proud to partner in these major endeavours, providing vital opportunities for important Australian artists to be showcased, whilst providing art lovers – including inner-regional audiences – access to outstanding arts experiences."

**ENDS.**

**To arrange an interview with Anthony Fitzpatrick and for supply of images please contact:**

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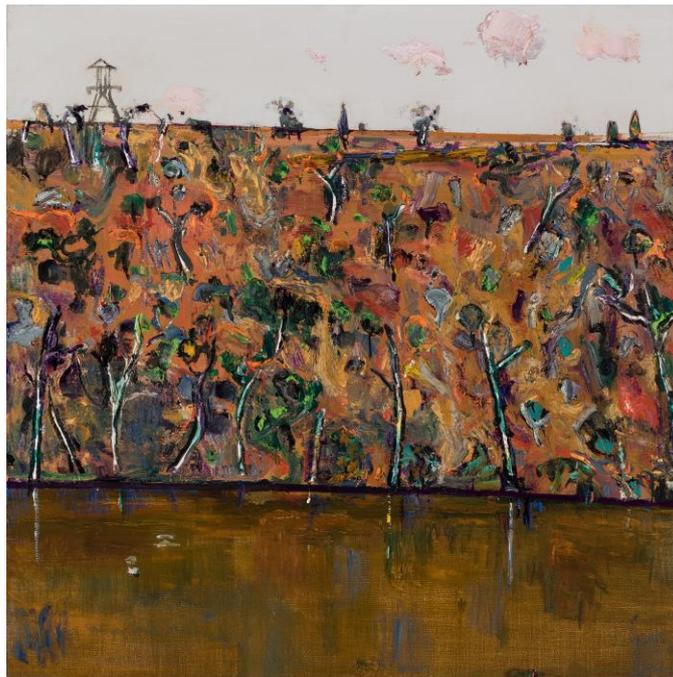
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**T +61 (0)3 5957 3100** <http://www.twma.com.au/exhibition/fred-williams-1974/>

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am to 5pm. Open all public holidays except Christmas Day.

Open 7 days a week from Boxing Day to Australia Day.

Exhibition Admission: \$12.00 Adults; \$10.00 Seniors; \$8.00 Pensioners and Students; Children 12 and under free.



Fred Williams, *The Yarra, Studley Park* 1974, oil on canvas, 76 x 76.2 cm  
Private collection © Estate of Fred Williams

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