



SAM FOLEY PASSAGE OF A SHADOW

PASSAGE OF A SHADOW – SAM FOLEY

By Peter Entwisle

Sam Foley has taken a new direction. Known for his large, atmospheric studies of urban landscape, including urban parkland, his oil paintings have captured the pregnant stillness of sunlit glades in the Town Belt and the quiet of the blacktop at evening where roads run ominously under trees.

The images are empty. A parked car is a rarity. A streetlight glowing in the dusk reminds us pedestrians come this way. Yet Foley's images have been full of their absence. We are very aware people have passed and may come again. His work has mined this aspect of visual experience but now he takes the process further.

A large oil painting *Intersection Warrender St and Queens Drive* shows that crossroads with Foley's usual, haunting detail. But as we look we notice a light glowing, apparently becoming more intense – or is that an illusion? But then a ghostly car drives through the scene and we hear its passage. The image settles back to stillness and silence. Then another vehicle passes by.

Foley has made a film which has been digitally projected onto the painting. The fit and illusion are complete. The static oil painting is animated by the passage of the vehicle. After the surprise of experiencing this combination of imagery it all seems perfectly natural. Foley's paintings are so suggestive of presences before and after the moment this merely extends them.



Track, Ross Creek Reserve, Oil on canvas 200 x 118cm



Intersection, Serpentine Ave and Canongate Road, Oil on canvas, 160 x 120cm

Has this been done before? Probably. But the works are technically innovative in their combination of media, their skilful intermingling of the static and dynamic.

It was said of Monet “He was only an eye. But what an eye!” As a summary of Impressionism this compression leaves out the transition from narrative – every picture tells a story – to observation, which in Monet’s case was focussed on light. Foley is similarly engaged with the processes of seeing and picture-making and how you render complex experience.

Visual perception is conditioned by memory and imagination. We don’t just see things; we remember them and have anxieties and expectations about how they will be. This makes seeing fraught. Foley re-creates that and fleshes it out with his ghostly, moving phenomena.

Some of this is observation. It represents what actually happened at the site while the artist waited with his camera. Some of it is staged, the interventions

being contrived by Foley. All of it registers as completely ordinary, yet disturbing.

The twilight scenes are most obviously settings for menace. Rightly or wrongly we associate the dark with a propensity for evil. Objectively a car passing by in the dusk is more likely to accidentally hit us so our heightened awareness of danger is perhaps not misplaced in such conditions. But the sun filled Stairs, Ross Creek Reserve and Track off Wallace Street are strangely troubling. Because they are light they should be benign, yet they are not, entirely.

In Stairs... the projected imagery reflects changing light conditions and we hear birdsong. What could be menacing in that? Yet the painting brings to mind reports of urban violence, people assaulted or killed in the course of a morning’s jog, their remains barely disguised beneath a skiff of leaves. In Track off Wallace Street the projected imagery does show people passing by, without incident, but the potential for misadventure is palpable.





Stairs, Ross Creek Reserve, Oil on canvas, 200cm x 118cm



Intersection, Serpentine Ave and Maori Rd, Oil on canvas, 200 x 118cm

Despite these resonances it would be wrong to see Foley only as a master of the sinister, an artist who cleverly sends chills up our spines. The subliminal menace and violence of his imagery is balanced by its conjuring of quiet and peace in a precise simulacrum of experience. His paintings and their interventions register also as attractive idylls shifting from that to the other in the course of sustained observation.

Their scale and precision grasp the viewer's attention. Their detail holds it and their emotional complexity then sets to work. The effect of the moving imagery is to heighten this and to extrapolate it through time. To a remarkable extent the works reflect our experience of viewing the same scene in differing moods. It is very different from the effect of much painting, which is to capture one mood - through a motif - and to hold it, forever transfixed.

Foley's dynamic moodscapes are local in that you can precisely identify the places they depict, in fact their titles tell you exactly where to find them. And yet they are

effectively universal. True, their street furniture, costume and vehicles place them inarguably in the recent western world. Similarly Pissarro's street scenes are unmistakably French of the 19th century. Yet just as Pissarro's Parisian images are really about the scatter of light under urban conditions and could as effectively have been painted in Pittsburgh, so Foley's settings might be anywhere from Los Angeles to London.

The most specific thing about them is their urban unease, the sense that in a city, perhaps especially in its most peaceful environments, we are in places of ambivalent mood. Perhaps people have never felt entirely safe in urban parklands - there were footpads on Hampstead Heath in the 19th century. But it is an aspect of early 21st century life that we are sharply aware of the ambivalence, even as we enjoy the surroundings.

These are images which capture a very contemporary experience.



Intersection, Littlebourne Rd and Queens Drive
Oil on canvas 160 x 112cm



Turnstile, Ross Creek Reserve
Oil on canvas 160 x 107cm



Intersection, Wallace St and Queens Drive
Oil on canvas 200 x 118cm



Intersection Lachlan Ave and Queens Drive
Oil on canvas 252 x 149 cm

SAM FOLEY

POB: Wellington, New Zealand

DATE: 31/5/1977

QUALIFICATIONS:

Tertiary level: 1995-1998, Bachelor of Fine Art,
Otago School of Art, Dunedin

Bursary level: 1993, Painting (A), Printmaking (A), Art History (B),
Graphics and Design (B), English (B)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2008- *Passage of a Shadow*, Temple Gallery, Dunedin
2007- *Sanctum Viridis*, Whitespace, Ak
2006- *Green Belt*, Soho Galleries, Sydney, Aus
2005- *The Green Belt*, Temple Gallery, Dunedin
2004- *The Litoral Tourist*, SoHo Galleries Sydney
2001- *Tracing The Remains*, Grantham Galleries, Auckland
2000- *New Works*, Chiaroscuro Gallery, Auckland
1999- *Sanctuary*, Chiaroscuro Gallery, Auckland

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2007- Christmas Shows at Whitespace, Temple Gallery
and The Artists Room
2007- Seven, The Artists Room, Dunedin
2007- *The Melbourne Affordable Art Show*
2007- *Reprise*, Temple Gallery, Dn
2006- *Christmas Show*, Whitespace, Ak
2006- *Kings College Art Fair*, Ak
2006- *Works on Paper*, The Artists Room, Dn
2006- *Parklane Art Awards*, Artis Gallery, Ak
2006- *Flax Roots*, Ashburton Art Gallery
2006- *Large Art*, Cleveland Living Arts Centre, Dn
2005- *Christmas Show*, Rosslyn Gallery, Dn
2005- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn
2005- *A Group Show*, Dowling St Studios, Dn
2005- *Large Art*, Cleveland Living Arts Centre, Dn
2004- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn
2004- *The Sydney Affordable Art Show*
2004- *The Melbourne Affordable Art Show*
2004- *Large Art*, Cleveland Living Arts Centre, Dn
2003- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn
2003- *Summer Catalogue*, Milford Galleries, Dn
2002- *Private Art Showing*, University College, Dn
2002- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn
2002- *Group Exhibition*, Gallery 33, Wanaka
2001- *Eight Is Enough*, Cite Gallery, Auckland
2001- *Miniatures Exhibition*, Grantham Galleries
2001- *Cite Christmas Sell Out*, Cite Gallery, Ak
2001- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dunedin
2001- *One Year Later*, Cite Gallery, Auckland
2000- *Group Exhibition*, Cite Gallery, Auckland
2000- *Fine Art By Design*, Greenlane Event Centre, Auckland
1998- *Peep Show, a selected preview of fourth year painters*,
The Temple Gallery, Dn
1998- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn
1998- *Southland Young Contemporaries*, Invgi
1997- *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dn

PRIZES AND AWARDS:

2007- Merit Award (1st equal), *Parklane Art Awards*, Auckland
2006- Highly commended, Park Lane Art Awards Auckland
2005- The Downie Stewart Peoples Choice Award,
Cleveland Art Awards, Dunedin
2003- Peoples Choice Award, *Cleveland Art Awards*, Dunedin
1998- Merit Award, Oil on Canvas, *Southland Young
Contemporaries*, Invercargill
1994- Excellence in Painting, Excellence in Printmaking, Damlier
Club Prize for Best Overall Graphics and Design Student,
Merit in Art History – Logan Park High School, Dunedin

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2007 – 10 week research and development trip to Europe
2005- Technical Assistant, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
2003- Invitational Judge, Salmon Hall Art Competition
2001- Gallery Director, Cite Gallery, Ponsonby Rd, Auckland
2001- Artist in Residence, Diorama Painting,
Puzzling World, Wanaka
2000- Formative member of CITE Artists Collective,
Ponsonby, Auckland
1998- Visiting Artist, Logan Park High School, Dunedin,
New Zealand
1994- Art Department Technician, Logan Park
High School, Dunedin

COLLECTIONS:

Dunedin International Airport
Dunedin Public Hospital (loan from private collector)
Historic Places Trust of New South Wales, Australia
The Wallace Trust, Auckland
Central Library, University of Otago
University of Otago Office, Auckland
University College, University of Otago
Salmon Hall, University of Otago
Knox College, University of Otago
Private collections in NZ, Australia, and the U.S.A.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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2007- Nigel Benson, *Foley wins a prize*, June 28th
2007- T.J. McNamara, *The galleries: Spotlight on fanciful juggling
act*, NZ Herald, 16 May
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2007- Amy Richardson, *Curve Magazine*, issue 11, pg16
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Otago Daily Times, 21 Feb, p3
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Otago Daily Times, 25th Sept, pg19
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Otago Daily Times, 13 August, p17
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2005- James Dignan, *Framed – Critics select their best*,
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2005- Bridie Lonie, *"Great southern land"*, The Listener,
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2005- Richard Dingwall, *"Shifting images stand still..."*,
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public*, Otago Daily Times, Oct 26th
2005- *From industry to art*, Urbis, spring 2005, pg 154
2005- Ralph Body, *Sam Foley: The Green Belt*, The
Critic, Issue 11, 16th May, pg 47
2005- James Dignan, *Light touch the hallmark of Foley
and Beran*, Otago Daily Times, 5th May, pg 30
2005- ARTYFACTS, *Artist's Town Belt influence on
show*, Otago Daily Times, 28th May, pg 30?
2005- James Dignan, *Simple works impact in elegiac
display*, Otago Daily Times, April 7th, pg 30
2004- James Dignan, *Wide-ranging show of southern
talent*, Otago Daily Times, Oct 1st, pg19
2004- *Gallery goes big, very big*, Otago Daily Times,
Feb 5th, pg 23
2003- Jane Smith, *Art work admired*, Otago Daily Times, Oct 22nd
2003- Jane Smith, *Art works drift north*, Otago Daily
Times, Oct 11th
2002- T.J. McNamara, *What the critics say*,
The New Zealand Herald
2002- Victoria Warman, *Puzzling Passion*, North and South, May
2001- *Best Cite in Town*, Art News, Summer Issue
2001- Brenda Harwood, *Cleveland works on show*,
The Star, Oct 14
2001- Chris Johnston, *Toilet diorama set to turn a few heads*,
The Mirror, 9 Jan
2001- Dave Smith, *Mural latest il-loo-sion in a Puzzling Place*,
Otago Daily Times, 3 Jan
1999- T.J. Macnamara, *Spot the talent*, New Zealand Herald
1998- Nicola Much, *Painters' works exploring meaty
issues of art theory*, Otago Daily Times, 27th Oct