ARTIST: JAMES BROWN

ARTWORK: Hervey’s Range Diptych

James BROWN
b.1953 Australia

Hervey’s Range 1992
Encaustic on canvas
144 x 114 cm [each panel]

Donated by the Artist in 1992 to the James Cook University Art Collection, Photograph: Michael Marzik

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

At the time that James Brown created Hervey’s Range (1992) he was exploring the painting medium called encaustic painting. Brown’s approach to this medium was to mix oil paint with melted beeswax in a frying pan. His manner of working allowed for quick gestures. If he did not move quickly, the paint began to dry as the brush moved from the hot wax mixture in the pan to his canvas.

The process also allowed for an equally quick potential to layer colours and make alterations. More important to Brown, however, is that the wax-based medium took on the appearance and “feel” of skin that seemed to float above the canvas, even though the paint in reality was firmly attached to it.

This idea of the paint film being likened to physical skin underpins this painting. Brown’s vision of this portrayed landscape—as a screen of thin trees wedged amongst boulders—is all about seeing landscape as a skin or a veneer of superficial forest features underneath which lies the growing humus and burnt remnants of trees.

To capture his vision of landscape as a skin overlaying an internal support, Brown initially drew his subject in charcoal. This charcoal drawing signifies the landscape’s internal support—its grit and structure. He then overlaid this drawing with translucent encaustic colours. By intention, the charcoal drawing is left exposed through gaps in the encaustic layers of paint.

In short, Brown’s process in creating this painting mirrors his view of landscape as a system of internal structures supporting an outer layer of surface details.
QUESTIONS/DISCUSS

**Look** closely at the painting. Can you **locate** some of the underlying areas of charcoal that were initially laid down by the artist?

**Read** about the artwork and find what is meant by the term encaustic. **Explain** it here:

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**Compare** the encaustic process used by the artist in *Hervey's Range* (1992) with the oil painting process used in his other painting in the exhibition titled *Referencing Strang* (2011).

If you look at both paintings can you **describe** any difference in the type of paint marks that the artist has used?

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Celebrating Townsville EDUCATION RESOURCE for secondary students

The aim of this resource is to offer insights into the works of art featured in the exhibition. It is intended as a starting point for generating ideas, for encouraging student research, and as a basis for discussion during exhibition visits. The resource provides background information on the development of particular works, and offers focus questions and suggested activities. It can be used in a variety of ways, both for student groups, and for individual study and research.

Acknowledgment: Thank-you to the artists who provided a statement about their work to assist with the development of this resource.

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