

An abstract painting by John Loker. The left side is a dense, textured field of overlapping brushstrokes in various colors including red, green, blue, yellow, and pink. A vertical black line separates this from the right side, which features a prominent, vertical, bright green stem with several small, dark green, pointed protrusions. The background on the right is a mix of light pink and light blue, with some green shapes. A horizontal red brushstroke is visible at the bottom right.

JOHN LOKER

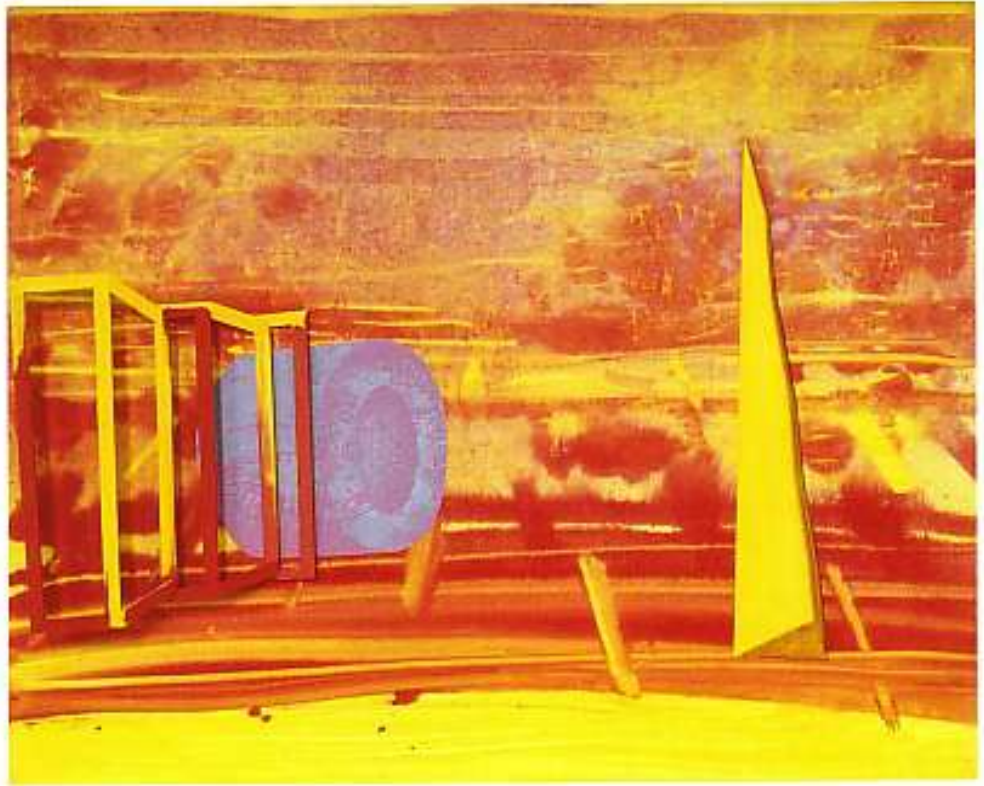
At the beginning of 1996 John Loker left East Anglia to undertake a 10-week trip across Australia. The new work contains the extraordinary fruits of this self-imposed 'culture shock' and voyage of discovery. As a personal response to a dramatic shift of surroundings the collection represents a remarkably high array of imagery. However, those already familiar with John Loker's work may be both surprised and gratified to discover just how effortlessly these exotic images have been integrated into his own personal landscape...and how they seem to form a perfectly logical stage in the journey that all true artists make, even those who never leave their home town.

Graham Vickers 1997

JOHN LOKER

16 January - 15 February 1998

Flowers East



Preview 1996
Mixed media on canvas
97 x 122 cms

Australia, February 1996:

To travel from Darwin in the North to Sydney on the East Coast is to leave the sticky, immobilising heat of the tropics for one of the most arid and deserted areas of the world. This journey - over 3000 miles of desert and bush, much of it off the familiar comfort of tarmac roads and at times over 350 miles from anything resembling civilisation, represented a considerable culture shock for a British abstract painter transplanted from the cold reality of a northern hemisphere winter.

With watercolours and paper I tried to assemble an immediate response to this confusion. Firstly, there was the sheer vastness of a landscape that had nothing to contain it. Then the beauty which was hard and real. More surprisingly there was its unexpected variety: how did such a potentially tedious landscape find itself the means to constantly change and surprise? Working directly from this landscape, I soon became aware of some of its less welcome elements: the bush fly (which effectively limited working to the period from dawn to the first warmth of the sun), the thorny seedpods like miniature land mines and the spinifex grasses with their sharp pointed spiny leaves. Even the soft looking blue-green bushes revealed themselves, on closer inspection, to be no more welcoming back than the back of an echidna.

In its vastness that illimitable landscape - better say 'earthscape' - precisely because of the lack of visual barriers, led to a heightened awareness of the immediate. Of course there are barriers, and harsh ones: the spinifex, the heat, and the flies, all conspire to isolate the traveller. Inside my fly-net, a heightened awareness of discomfort - of touch, smell, heat, thirst - gave me a blend of raw experiences for which National Geographic photographers had never prepared me.

This then was my simple and immediate response to the Australian landscape, a response that was physical and emotional rather than thoughtful. Which of the images I was creating might later assume importance (to be used or reworked, or stored as visual reference) was a question to be addressed in the future. For now it was enough to be there.

East Anglia, UK, May 1996:

Assessing the spoils of any trip is always an evocative experience, and sometimes surprising one. Here was a pile of 'travelling' watercolours, drawings and photographs all reflecting the heady confusion of a ten week journey. It included two photographs taken at William Creek, a township of some 14 people. The subject matter - the remains of some rocket stages which had landed in the desert nearby - had not seemed particularly important at the time, but in retrospect these derelict monuments seemed charged with possibilities. Now mounted on a crude plinth of railway sleepers (themselves relics of the long defunct Ghan railway) they could have been huge dustbins, except these were no receptacles for trash - they were trash. What

is more, they were trash on a grand scale, the giant-sized litter of an abandoned space venture.

I kept returning to these compelling objects in subsequent work. At first they seemed to have no direct role within the images that had started to develop; certainly not the watercolours which were more about my presence in the landscape than about the landscape itself. These objects remained a distinctly separate entry in the catalogue of my experience, but their possibilities persisted.

Returning to the studio after a long absence is always difficult, since even work already completed is re-evaluated. The broad direction of my values remain, but new, half-formed ideas begin to impose themselves upon the established language. Objects featured in my paintings have always, to some extent, taken on a life of their own and affected the paintings evolution. The ambiguities and implied meanings of certain objects can become part of the stimuli which define the form, colour and feeling of the eventual piece. In this way the rocket stage wreckage began to take on added resonance, the inherent violence of these large by-products of technology crashing to earth, contrasting with their benign sculptural appearance as they stand innocently displayed in the sunshine. Their resemblance to massive dustbins remained highly evocative and so did another irony of their appearance: these miniscule dots in the vast red expanse of the Australian desert had been part of our endeavours to leave the planet. Then again, perhaps they were nothing more than an example of 'litter on a grand scale', as a local inhabitant had remarked in the bar. In any event they were now invading my work, as was the whole journey and its constantly vivid changing landscape.

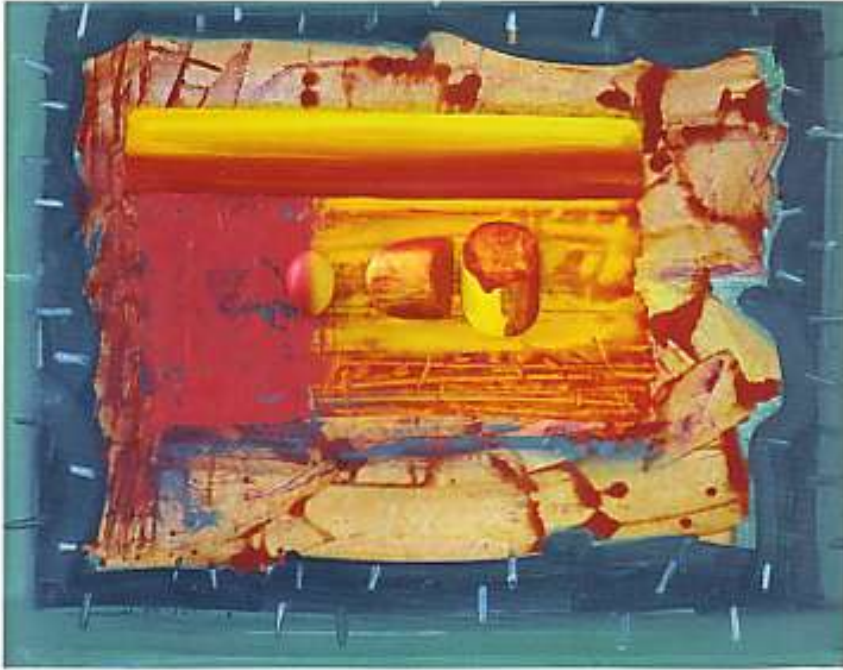
It is wonderfully easy to travel, to live through and to absorb the richness of a new experience. Absorption is one thing, making sense of the process is another. Back in the studio the experience needs to be rationalised. Was the journey simply the acquisition of more subject matter, a new fund of content? Or was it a new influence?

All I can say is that like any good traveller, I took essentials with me, and chief among them was my understanding of the language of art. Everything I saw was mediated through my existing knowledge and so became part of the continuum of my painting. The trip proved as influential retrospectively as it did futuristically. In evidence of this there is a painting, executed prior to the trip (and since titled 'Preview'), which prefigured the whole journey. With its strong reds and yellows it contains a sense of heat, space and incident that was un-experienced when it was being created. Was this painting a starting point? Or has it assumed extra meanings in the light of the journey it now seems to pre-empt? It is hard to be certain. What I can affirm, though, is my belief that all experience has the potential to enrich the language of painting, but it is the act of using that language that generates 'Art'.

John Loker 1997

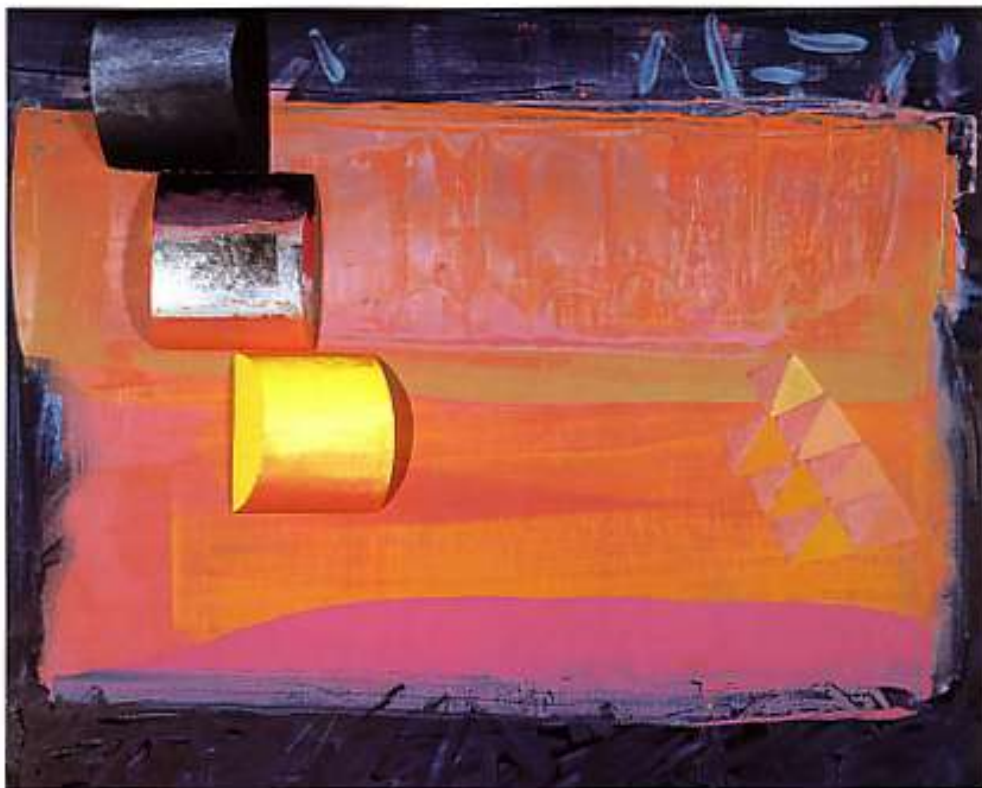


Central Discovery 1997
Mixed media on canvas
211 x 240.5 cms



Sunside 1997
Mixed media on paper
83 x 102 cms

Foreign Bodies 1997
Mixed media on paper
56 x 70 cms



Overdune 1997
Mixed media on paper
102 x 127 cms



Outback Trash 1997
Mixed media on canvas
104 x 132 cms



Hot Centre Findings 1997
Oil and wood on canvas
210 x 240.5 cms



Wilderness Junk 1997
Mixed media on paper
63 x 80 cms

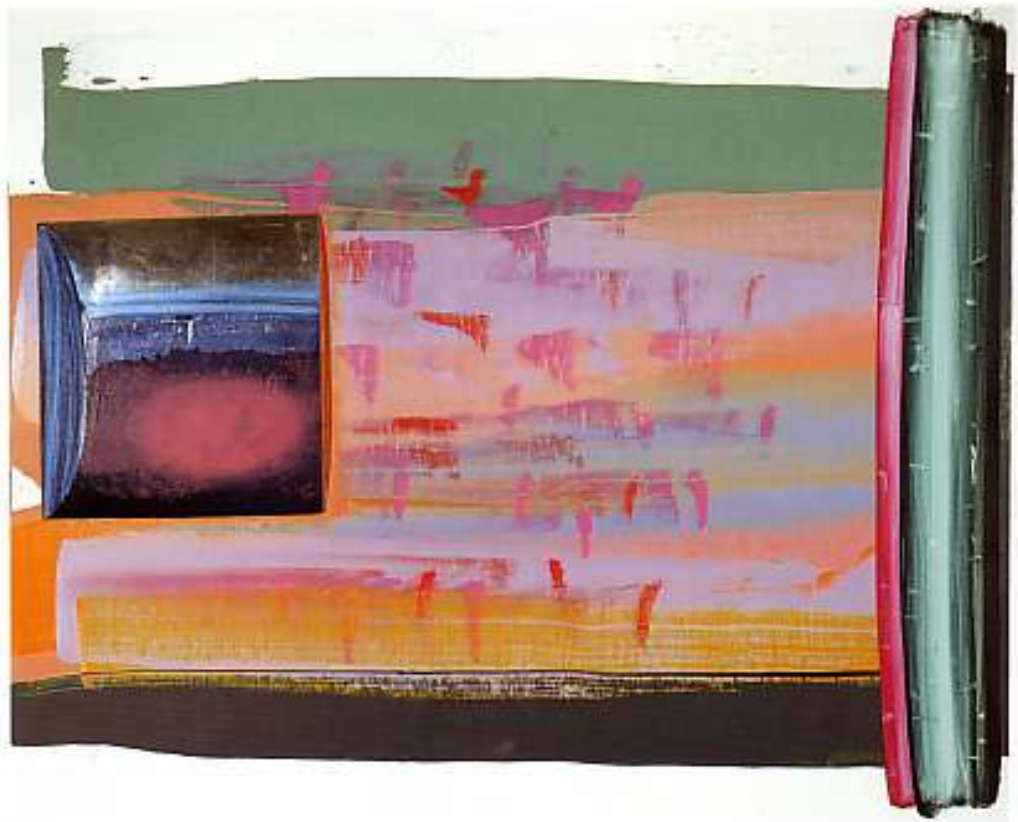
Red Centre Crossing 3 1997
Mixed media on paper
60 x 80 cms



Red Centre Crossing 1997

Oil on canvas

240.5 x 270.3 cms



Desert Reclaim 1997
Mixed media on canvas
107 x 132 cms



Red Centre Crossing 2 1997

Oil on canvas

117 x 244 cms



Centre Debris 1997
Mixed media on canvas
160 x 175 cms



Spinifex 1997
Oil on canvas
211 x 240.5 cms

JOHN LOKER		1993	Flowers Eadst, London		Anniversary Show, Arnolfini		<i>Small is Beautiful: Food & Drink</i> , Hove Museum and Art Gallery
		1994	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Bristol		
1938	Born Leeds			1987	<i>Process and Product</i>		
1954-58	Studied Graphic Design at Bradford College of Art and Design	1995	Flowers Graphics, London		Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, Greater Manchester		<i>New Paintings</i> . Flowers East, London
1960-63	Studied Painting at the Royal College of Art	SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS			Whitegates, Bradford Festival Bradford		<i>Small is Beautiful Part XIV: Sex</i> , Flowers East at London Fields, London
1963	Awarded Abbey Minor Travelling Scholarship	1978	Het Landschap, Gemoentelijke Van Reekungalery, Apeldoorn, Holland		<i>Contemporary Artists</i> Cartwright Hall, Bradford	1997	<i>Angela Flowers Gallery 1997</i> , Flowers East at London Fields, London
SOLO EXHIBITIONS					<i>Small is Beautiful Part V</i> , Angela Flowers Gallery London		Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London
1969	Studio Exhibition, London		<i>Landscape to Land Art</i> , Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Hovikodden, Norway		<i>Passage West</i> , Angela Flowers Ireland, and Crawford Arts Centre Cork		<i>New Abstract Paintings</i> , Riverside Studios, London
1970	Horizontals and Drawings, Angela Flowers Gallery and ICA, London		John Moores Exhibition, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool	1988	<i>150 Years</i> , Royal College of Art, London		<i>Small is Beautiful Pasrt XV: Death</i> , Flowers East at London Fields, London
1973	Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1979	<i>Three Artists' Drawings</i> , Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		<i>Small is Beautiful Part VI</i> Flowers East, London		
1975	Studio Exhibition, London Park Square Gallery, Leeds		<i>Gallery Artists: Drawings and Prints</i> , Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1989	<i>Big Paintings</i> , Flowers East London	PUBLIC COLLECTIONS	
1978	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Sixth Bradford International Print Biennale, Bradford	1990	<i>Monoprints</i> , Flowers East London	Arts Council of Great Britain	
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam	1980	<i>Landscape, The Print-Maker's View</i> , Tate Gallery, London		<i>Angela Flowers 1990</i> , Barbican Centre, London	Arhtur Anderson & Co	
	Park Square Gallery, Leeds	1982	5 Via De Wetering Galerie, Stichting Beeldende Kunst, Helmond		Intergafik 90, Berlin, Germany	British Council	
1980	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		<i>Landscape Prints</i> , Brighton Polytechnic Gallery	1991	<i>Cubism</i> , Blackman Harvey London	Chase Manhattan Bank	
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		8th British International Print Biennale, Bradford		<i>Flowers West</i> , Watermans Brentford	Contemporary Art Society	
1981	Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol	1984	International Drawing Biennale, Rijeka, Yugoslavia	1992	<i>Angela Flowers Gallery 1991</i> , Flowers East, London	De Beers	
	Newlyn Orion, Newlyn		<i>Big Paintings</i> , Angela Flowers Gallery, London		<i>Recent Print Publications</i> , Flowers East, London	Department of the Environment	
	Bradford Cartwright Hall, Bradford		<i>A View From My Window</i> Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1993	The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London	Deutsche Bank AG, London	
	Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery, Newcastle		Fourth Biennale of European Graphic Art, Baden-Baden		10th Contemporary Art Society Art Market	Ferens Art Gallery Hull	
1982	Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1985	5th National Exhibition, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and touring		<i>Small is BeautifulPart XI: Homages</i> , Flowers East, London	Hunterian Collection, Glasgow	
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		Tolly Cobbold Eastern Arts	1994	<i>Royal Academy Summer Exhibition</i> , London (Winner of the Nordstern Award for Best Print)	Leeds City Art Gallery	
1983	Works on Paper 1970-1983, Angela Flowers Gallery, London		5th National Exhibition, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and touring		<i>Small is Beautiful Part XII: Night and Day</i> , Flowers East at London Fields, London	Manchester City Art Gallery	
1984	Galerie Du Monde, Honk Kong		<i>Small is Beautiful</i> , Angela Flowers Gallery, London		<i>The Twenty Fifth Anniversary Exhibition</i> , Flowers East at London Fields, London	Power Institute of Fine Art, Sydney	
1985	Angela Flowers Gallery, London	1986	9th British International Print Biennale, Bradford	1995	<i>British Abstract Art Part 1: Painting</i> , Flowers East London	Rugby City Art Gallery	
1986	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam		<i>Big Paintings</i> , Angela Flowers Gallery, London		<i>Small is Beautiful Part XIII: Food & Drink</i> , Flowers East, London	Tate Gallery	
1988	Studio Exhibition, London		4th European Print Biennale Baden-Baden and touring	1996	<i>British Abstract Art Part 3: Works on Paper</i> , Flowers East, London	Unilever	
1989	Angela Flowers Gallery, London		Side by Side, Contemporary British and Malaysian Art, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong			Van Reekungaler, Apeldoorn	
	Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam					Victoria and Albert Museum	
1990	Flowers East, London					Wakefield City Art Gallery	
1992	Crossover, Watermans Art Centre, Brentford					Worcester City Art Gallery	
	Monoprints, Flowers East, London						
	Chesil Gallery, Dorset						

Flowers East

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Flowers West

CONTEMPORARY ART

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