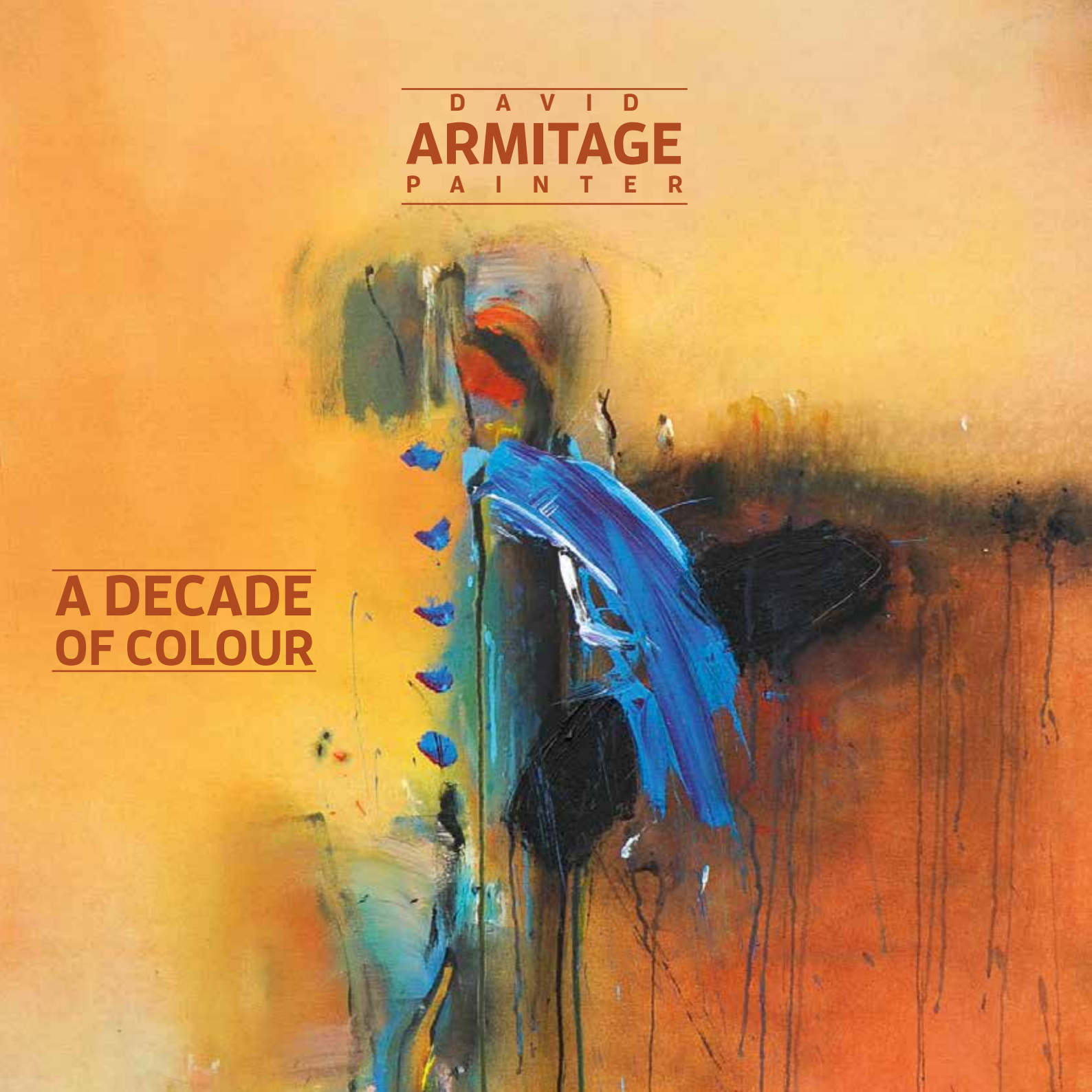

D A V I D
ARMITAGE
P A I N T E R

**A DECADE
OF COLOUR**



"I've long been an admirer of David Armitage's work, but his most recent paintings reveal an astonishing new development and level of sophistication. It's as if he has suddenly found a new voice. Having been unjustly ignored by the London art establishment for many years, perhaps they will now sit up and take notice. If you believe, as the Chinese do, that you can't be a really good painter until you are sixty, then David Armitage has truly come of age.

His paintings abound in multiple references, some already known, such as the work of John Hoyland and the Australians Fred Williams and the later work of Sydney Nolan. There is a distinct feel for the Australian landscape in many of the works, where tiny strokes evoke enigmatic and ambivalent happenings in an eerie landscape.

“ . . . there is no doubt in my mind that he is a supreme colourist . . . ”

But there is also something new and different happening, where the exotic hot dryness of the furnace is mixed in with dribbling rivulets raining down in the mist of improbable hues, no doubt springing out of this Tasmanian's experience of his homeland and other Pacific islands.

His paintings have a distinct originality which shines through and there is no doubt in my mind that he is a supreme colourist making his own unique contribution for our enjoyment."

Phillip King, Sculptor and Past President of the Royal Academy





The works contained in this catalogue have been produced over the last four years but represent a culmination of all that has gone before. This process has been accelerated by a recent return visit to Australia and New Zealand. Apart from the diverse beauty of the countries themselves, it also involved the rediscovery of their magnificent collections of ethnic art and the art of the Pacific region generally.

Far from denying the range of "subjects" contained herein, the diversity of them is wholly intended. What's common to them all is that they are fashioned by the same style together with a lifelong passion for colour and colour relationships.

I listen to music as I paint; I love the musical space as it breathes and floats. At times the equivalent can be rather like painting on the sky or painting on water, keeping company with Sibelius and Ligeti or inspired by the sublime music of Schubert.

I find places of pilgrimage and worship very powerful, no matter what the reason for their existence. Equally, Memento Mori has always fascinated painters. There are also references to churchyards: memorials where eventually the living tribute of flowers will die as well. Azrael – we will all meet her sooner or later. Of course death can be, and is, celebrated in the wonderful Festival of the Dead in Oaxaca, Mexico.

A childhood passion for the work of Francisco Goya and a parallel fascination and horror with the Spanish inquisition has never left me. The plight of the victims reverberates throughout history, never more so than now.

There are things that are also celebrated simply because they are what they are: prayer rugs and prayer flags; the great Pacific Ocean; fabulous tribal art; island landscapes; scorched earth (the seeming prerogative of a retreating army); and the Cerberus-like guardian figures from those wonderful Greek legends.

David Armitage 2015



Gethsemane 158 x 140cm



Transfigured Night 162 x 140cm



Auto da Fe 180 x 150cm



Landscape with Prayer Flags 140 x 153cm



Pacific Icon 184 x 165cm



Götterdämmerung 57 x 39cm



Opus 5. Requiem 198 x 370cm





Aurora 207 x 152cm



Holy Week, Gerona 170 x 132cm



A response to the age-old question: 'what do these paintings mean?' – or, put another way, 'can you turn these marks into words?' No, you can't. This is about as inane as doing Hamlet as a vast series of paintings once you have dumped the glorious words.

The answer to the question is best provided by way of a musical analogy. One can hear a piece of music (without words) and marvel at how wonderful, affecting and moving it can be. It tells you nothing about religion, sex, politics, the human condition or contemporary culture – or countless other things. The only thing it tells you is how wonderful it is.



Thus it is with paintings. They are self-contained worlds, which may (or may not) have anything to do with that which we inhabit. They are what they are, and engage because of this. The magic comes from the marks.

Four little words encapsulate art appreciation. 'Wow, look at that!'

To paraphrase another painter, 'The joy of painting and the response to it is a wonderful visual experience which can be re-visited time and again. Everything else is about everything else!'



Azrael 123 x 178cm



Landscape with shrine and prayer flags 178 x 131cm

The current series of works by one of the UK's leading colourists represents a new level of achievement for the artist. The success of these works lies in the cohesion achieved despite the artist's wide range of interests and preoccupations. Subjects range from shrines and prayer flags to medieval illuminations, ethnic art to music and on to much darker, more equivocal images. The result is a display of variety, spontaneity and shifting light. Yet it's overwhelmingly about one thing: colour.

The progress of his work reads like a spiritual travelogue.

Eric Buesnel, writer and critic

*'If a composer could say what he has to say in words,
he would not bother trying to say it in music'* **Gustav Mahler**



Calypto 145 x 154cm (large painting)

DAVID ARMITAGE

- 1943 Born Tasmania.
- 1960-65 Attended Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.
Lectured in life and portrait drawing in final year
Worked as scenic artist for theatre company.
- 1966 Travelled in Europe, married Ronda, a New Zealander.
- 1967-74 Exhibition's Officer at Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand. Curated national and international exhibitions.
Queen Elizabeth Arts Council Award, 1973. Painted full-time.
- 1974 Living and working in the UK.

Exhibitions

- 1968 - 1978 Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
- 1971 Palmerston North Art Gallery.
- 1973 Survey exhibition touring N.Z. public galleries
- 1988 Beldesign, Cambridge
- 1989 Quay Arts Centre, Newport; One One Nine Gallery, London
- 1992 ADT College, London
- 1993 Duncan Campbell Contemporary Art, London
- 1994 Christ Hospital, Horsham
- 1995 Atlantis, London
- 1996 Mitre Gallery, Chichester; The Maltings, Farnham; The Hawth Arts Centre, Crawley
- 1997 Windsor Arts Centre; Hanover Gallery, Liverpool; Seagate, Dundee; Star Gallery, Lewes; Mappin Gallery, Sheffield
- 1998 Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells.
- 1999 Rye Festival Artist
- 1999 Art 2000: Listening to Bruckner: Exhibition in Guildford Cathedral
- 2000 Bridgeview Office Complex, Aberdeen; Modern Artists Gallery, Oxon; Parkview Fine Paintings, Bristol; Bishop Phillpott Gallery, Truro
- 2003 Steading Gallery, near Kirkcudbright
- 2004 Modern Artists Gallery, Oxon.
- 2005 Trinity Arts Tunbridge Wells
- 2006 & 2008 The Designs Gallery, Castle Douglas

Group Exhibitions

- 1966-78 Many group exhibitions throughout New Zealand
- 1972 Bonython Gallery, Sydney
- 1975 New York; Young Artists 75
- 1991 John Gruzelier Modern and Contemporary Art, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Gardner Arts Centre, University of Sussex.
- 1998/9 Rye Gallery, Star Gallery, Lewes: Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.
- 2001 Sussex Artists, Abbeville Festival, France; Parkview Fine Paintings, Bristol
- 2002 Bettie Morton Gallery, Brixton; Duncan and Jordanstone College, Dundee:
- 2003 Australian High Commission, London
- 2008 Farleys Farm Gallery, Chiddingly, East Sussex
- 2009 Oxford Union debate on conceptual art
- 2010 Modern Artists Gallery, Oxon
- 2011 Farleys Farm Gallery, Chiddingly, East Sussex
- 2012 Gallery Gora, Montreal

Represented in public and private collections in New Zealand, Australia, Europe, United Kingdom and USA

CROSSOVER: A MILLENNIUM EXHIBITION

A major exhibition of David Armitage's work was mounted by the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery from December, 1999 until February 2000.

Image © Jim Holden



David Armitage

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Details of further forthcoming exhibitions can be found at www.davidarmitage.com