

# GRAEME PEEBLES

## *A Survey of Mezzotints 1979 - 2019*

### MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition Dates: 20 August - 8 September 2019  
28 Derby Street Collingwood VIC 3066  
Open 7 days 10am to 6pm

Artist Talk: 2pm Saturday 24 August 2019

Shortly after he finished university, Graeme Peebles found himself in Europe on a Churchill Fellowship, where he immersed himself in the works of great European Masters while embracing the *joie de vivre* of a young man overseas. European art and history continues to influence Graeme's work. Earlier prints often contain direct references, but even when his work turned to local landscapes and subjects, a European sensibility was still very much evident. In Graeme's Eucumbene landscapes and cloudscapes, he evokes John Martin's surreal, apocalyptic skies.

Graeme has long-held concerns about the impact of humans on the environment. These views rose in prominence in the 1980s when he moved to Point Lonsdale and began incorporating flotsam in his imagery. A few of Graeme's recent prints have addressed the issue more directly, particularly through his depiction of plastic waste and its devastating effects on marine ecosystems.

In other recent works Graeme references cave paintings dating back some 10,000 years, including *Cave of Swimmers* in Libya. He introduces contemporary symbols such as 'no swimming' icons from beach signs, linking the past to the present in the context of international flashpoints around refugees and asylum seekers, and the global impact of climate change.

The cave paintings were made in spaces that were familiar to their creators, although we can only speculate on their meaning. Ancient shell middens accompany some painting sites – signs of ongoing habitation and evidence of a sense of home. Graeme told me that, at some locales, pigment has been found in abalone and clam shells, indicating that these robust, non-cellular exoskeletons were ancient vessels for an artist's ink. Plastic is probably the only material created by a creature on this planet that could outlast these shells.

Graeme, too, has used abalone shells as inkwells. He works on his copper plates in his living room on a 1950s Formica kitchen table where he has a small assortment of tools, some of which he has used for so long that they may as well be a part of his hand. There is a humility about Graeme's methodology. Save the radio that sometimes plays in the background, an occasional interruption from the dog, a phone call, or a visitor stopping by, he works in solitude. While Graeme is quiet by nature, his artworks speak volumes. - Gordon Craig, Writer, Curator and Artist, 2019

*A Survey of Mezzotints 1979 - 2019* is current until 8 September 2019.

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