

noel mckenna
NEWS OF THE SWIMMER
REACHES SHORE

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Ideas for paintings come to me from many different sources – newspapers, magazines, film, the net, my own photographs – pointless to mention them all, enough to say I can suffer from overload.

I save whatever things grab my eye and put them in boxes to look at when I get around to it.

An opportunity came to clean my studio to save myself from getting lost and the neighbours reporting me to Council as a fire hazard and as a result, I found some things I had forgotten about and decided to work them into a group of images for this show.

The title of this group of works comes from the book of the same name by New Zealand author Gregory O'Brien¹. Greg's book is a kind of a travel book with connections to art history, literature, architecture, music, memories and politics, merged together with his family living in the south of France for a few months.

It is the kind of book I can read many times because it is full of such interesting observations and hopefully this group of images will be half as interesting.

On a trip to Brisbane a few years back, a resident from a suburb I cannot remember, was having trouble getting council to approve the colour he wanted to paint his house. Out of desperation and anger, he painted it black and generated quite a bit of news coverage.

Flood picture is from a newspaper photograph but also comes out of my experience of the Brisbane flood of 1974. I lived quite near the Brisbane River and have very strong memories of the flood, seeing friends' houses under water.

I think memories trigger quite a few images for me. Hence a number of works about Queensland as well as New Zealand where I have made many trips over the past 15 or so years.

These works come out of boxes, boxes that when I went to go through them brought up some unexpected surprises. They are the sort of notes that one makes to pass the time which I then change into these things I call paintings which makes some sense of the world.

Noel McKenna
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1. NEWS OF THE SWIMMER REACHES SHORE by Gregory O'Brien. Published by Victoria University Press, New Zealand and Carcanet Press, UK, 2007