List of Works

1. **The Suburban Pavilion,** 1981
(**Detail** of Technical Manifesto of Town Planning)
Oil and enamel on canvas board.
15.3 x 20.5
Collection of the artist

2. **The Amphitheatre,** 1982
(**Detail** of Technical Manifesto of Town Planning)
Oil on canvas board
15.5 x 20.5 (diptych)
Collection of the artist.

3. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1982
Oil on canvas board
15.5 x 30.5
Private collection, Canberra

4. **Monument,** 1983
Plasticine
10.5 x 5.5 x 5.7
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

5. **The Reichstag,** 1983
Oil on canvas board
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

6. **Doric Fragment,** 1983
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

7. **Tomb**
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

8. **The Temple Of Apollo at Didyma near Miletus,** 1983
Oil on paper
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Private collection, Canberra.

9. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas
61.2 x 76
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

10. **The Temple Of The Great Goddess Diana At Ephesus,** 1983
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Private collection, Canberra

11. **Nocturnal Composition,** 1983
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13. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas
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Private collection, Canberra

14. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas
45.9 x 61
Private collection, Canberra

15. **Dipteral Temple,** 1982
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Private collection, Canberra

16. **Peripteral Temple,** 1982
Oil on paper
Private collection, Canberra

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Oil on paper
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Private collection, Sydney

18. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

19. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1984
Oil on canvas
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Collection of Imants Tillers and Jenny Slatyer

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Oil on canvas
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21. **Two Landscape Paintings and a Print of Boulée's Project for the Church of the Madeleine,** 1984
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25 x 35
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

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Etching ink on paper
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Oil on canvas
25 x 35
Michell Endowment 1985, National Gallery of Victoria

23. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas
30.4 x 76
Collection Naomi Cass, Melbourne

24. **Third Style, Third Rome,** 1985
(Two Views of the Palace of Italian Civilisation and a Design for a Mural Painting)
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Oil on canvas
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

25. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas board
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

26. **Landscape,** 1984
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

27. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas board
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

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29. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas board
18.2 x 24 (oval)
Collection of Ashley Crawford, Melbourne

30. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas board
20.4 x 25.5
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

31. **Landscape Painting,** 1984
Oil on canvas board
13 x 18
Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

32. **Landscape Painting**
Oil on canvas board
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Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley 9

33. **Design for a Stained Glass Window,** 1983
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Collection of the artist

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Collection of John Nixon, Melbourne

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Oil on canvas board
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Private collection, Canberra

39. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas board
20.3 x 25.4
Private collection, Canberra

40. **Sacro-Idyllic Landscape,** 1983
Oil on canvas board
20.3 x 25.4
Private collection, Canberra

CATALOGUE NOTES

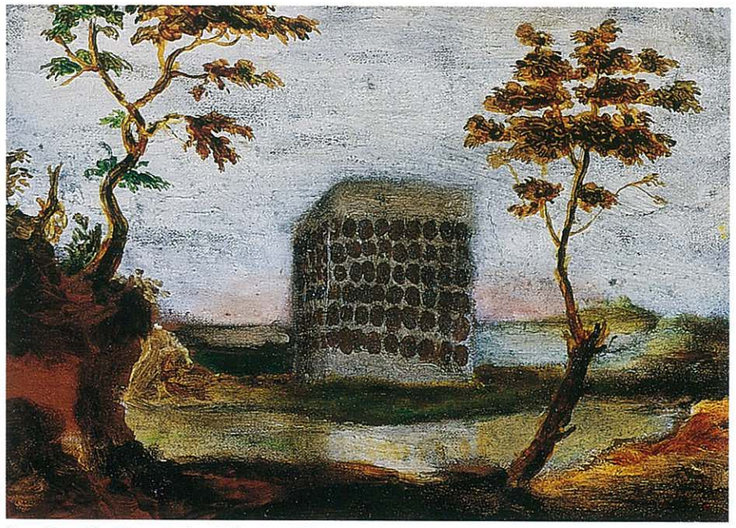
All measurements are in centimetres, height before width before depth. Measurements of works are as seen and catalogue details are recorded as seen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

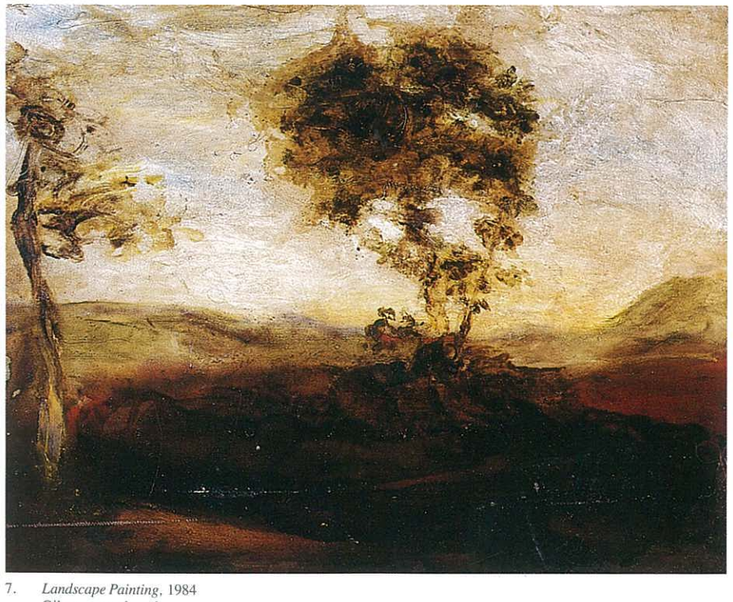
The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art would like to thank Tony Clark for his help and enthusiasm during the preparation of the exhibition, Terry Hogan for his support and assistance, and all the private lenders who have so willingly co-operated.
Special thanks are due to All Graphic Industries for their generosity in the production and printing of the colour plates for this catalogue.

TONY CLARK

May 22nd – June 9th, 1985



9. *View of the Palace of Italian Civilisation,* 1985
(detail of Third Style, Third Rome)
Oil on canvas
25.2 x 35.5



7. *Landscape Painting,* 1984
Oil on canvas board
41 x 50.7

The A.C.C.A is supported by the Ministry for the Arts and the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council.

1. Tony Clark
Temple, 1982
Mixed media
7 x 9 x 7

THE WORLD WE DESERVE

ON BEING confronted with a group of works by Tony Clark, a viewer – uninitiated in the theories and processes of Post-Modernist art – may feel a genuine sense of confusion about what it is he or she is seeing.

Some clues will emerge through a process of identification of the phases in the artist's relatively short career, and in seeing how these are woven into the circumstances of his life and still others through an analysis of the theoretical position at which he has arrived.

When he was just six years old, Tony Clark's parents left Canberra for the UK and a year or so later settled permanently in Rome, where they still reside. Both were enthusiastic amateur historians and spent much of their free time during the first four or five years in Italy – at least until their next child was born – travelling widely in the Italian countryside and in Europe generally in order to visit the ancient sites and ruins of classical antiquity. They were accompanied on these journeys by their, at that time, only child, who quickly developed his own, somewhat precocious, interest in historical things: interests which were to remain strong at least until the onset of adolescence, when they inevitably gave way to the seductiveness of the 'swinging sixties', the Beatles, psychedelia, Oz magazine and a longing for all things bright and British.

At the age of sixteen, Clark was therefore delighted to be moved back to the UK to attend what he has called a "slightly radical" alternative boarding school in Surrey. There, in the company of like-minded peers, he developed a carefully cultivated "gothic eccentricity", a passion for playing pop music and, through the encouragement of one of his ex-teachers with whom he still corresponded in Italy, a thirst for devouring classical literature. Although he had a fondness for a certain kind of drawing (he refers to them as "grotesqueries", in the Oz manner) and had become interested in printmaking, he acknowledges only a peripheral involvement with art at this time.

There are, however, two things which may now be seen to have been of importance – the first is his excitement at reading books on Dada and Marcel Duchamp and a Gregory Battcock article on Andy Warhol and the second is his first trip to New York in 1972, where he went almost every day to the Museum of Modern Art. These, then, were the circumstances on which Clark cut his conceptual teeth and was confronted for the first time with concepts which were central to Late Modernism.

At the University of Reading he studied Italian and Art History (although, according to the artist, without much real involvement with the latter[1]) and again, but for one brief flirtation with the idea of pursuing some conceptual mode of art practice, his interests were largely dominated by music: so much so that he now feels that, had he remained in England, he would almost certainly have become a musician.

By 1976, however, he had taken his degree (in History of Art and Architecture) and had made a decision to travel for a period of time to Australia.

Withing a short time of his arrival in Sydney, he had met up and moved in with the artist, Martin Sharp (ex Oz magazine and one of Clark's schoolboy heroes) who rapidly introduced him to his wide circle of artist friends under whose influence Clark began to give serious consideration to the notion of becoming a practising artist.

Clark cites this period as important because it demystified– something he considers a necessary process in order for him to proceed towards involvement – the notion of what being a practising artist was about. Also the academic/intellectual side of him, which has always instinctively felt the need for a theoretical framework within which to operate, immediately identified with the various approaches to art-making which were being taken up by the Sydney group.

They were – as, of course, were many other Australian artists of their generation – in the process of searching for some more cerebral formula which might liberate them from the tradition of 'fine painting' and all of its guilty implications: the tradition which had been stopped in its tracks by Duchamp and Warhol, thereby leaving at least two generations of artists out on a limb to think about the proposition that the only kind of art which might have any validity was that which took an inside critical view of the activity itself. This period, then, was an important one for Clark in that it consolidated his view and it is imperative to the understanding of his current work that the observer realizes that that view remains for the moment fundamentally unchanged.

Clark would not wish to accept the alternative position that there has always been, and may still be, an *unbroken* continuity of 'quality painting'. For him the magnitude of the Duchampian rupture, with its implications for reversing the order of things (which for Clark's generation was probably as much social as it was artistic), was immense and irrevocable. It was the discovery of this view which had originally aroused his interest in art and it is his continuing adherence to it which has been a vital strand in the formation of his present complex position. Others we shall come to shortly.

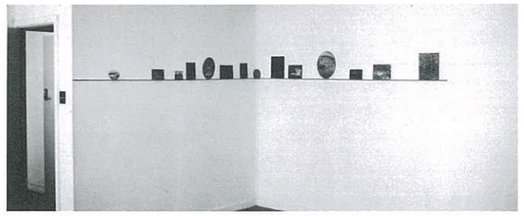
The Sydney artists, Sharp, Richard Liney, Peter Kingston and others, were involved in strategies mostly to do with the quotation and treatment of aspects of popular culture. 'Collecting' – although an activity in itself not new to Clark – was important and a variety of technical means, such as

2. *The Suburban Pavilion*, 1981
(detail of Technical Manifesto of Town Planning)
Oil and enamel on canvas board
15.3 x 20.5

colour Xerox, to achieve a 'hands off', anti-humanist stance were a way of perhaps doing something which did not go too much against the grain or compromise too many of the principles which were held dear.

It is interesting to note that Clark's own efforts in this direction during this time involved the use of fifties marbled laminex panels superimposed with images of classical sculpture, such as the Laocoön. He also acknowledges Richard Liney – with his particular passion for fifties architecture – as instrumental in awakening something in him which would eventually lead to a whole re-evaluation, expansion and activation of his own background involvement with architecture – both from the standpoint of his degree and his experience of growing up in Italy.

However, within six months of living in Sydney, he began to feel a certain restlessness and, in January 1977, he arrived in Melbourne. Within a short time he had met Melbourne artist, John Nixon, who was then setting up his gallery, Art Projects, in the city: less of a gallery, in fact, than a temple of ideological purity – a kind of production/exhibition space set up in opposition to the traditional model.



3. Tony Clark
Technical Manifesto of Town Planning, 1982
Installation, Art Projects, Melbourne

Clark's own association with this enterprise and with the artists who were involved was also a crucial factor in his development. Intially, however, it was to do with his still lively interest in music.

Again, excited by anything which held within it the possibility of inverting the normal process of production, he collaborated with Nixon and others on a series of Anti-Music tapes[2], which in turn led on to the manufacture of elaborate, highly imaginative taped 'operas' with librettos written by Clark, often in other languages – German, Latin etc – and based on the complex combination of historic and literary themes[3]. These 'operas' inevitably contained all the elements of Duchamp, pop and the other ingredients which were important to him at the time.

Because the Anti-Music tapes were part of the shows at Art Projects, Clark's input therefore provided him with an initiation into the notion of exhibiting. It was a comfortable and natural context in which he might eventually exhibit other art works without thinking too much about it.

Following this involvement, Clark began to take account of the collective realization which was taking place everywhere that the anti art-as-object movement had 'arrived': that its general use of non fine-art media had taken its place in the scheme of things and, as a natural consequence of the action/reaction syndrome which seems to have been built in to the modus operandi of Late Modernism, that the time had possibly arrived to reconsider the role of painting as an alternative and more private means of operating, still within the non-humanistic arena – a kind of painting which would be 'without quality', a wretched painting, an 'anti-painting' which could be "as blank and as dumb" as a Xeroxed image and which would still run counter to the traditional notion of sensuous painting as 'fine-art' object.

The circumstances of Clark's way of life at this time also contributed substantially to the nature of the first paintings he produced. As we have seen, most of it has been lived in temporary circumstances – a series of dormitories, shared digs and scruffy hotel rooms, which in themselves add up to a kind of anti-lifestyle which denies the art of the carefully composed interior and the arrangement of 'beautiful art objects'. These spaces contain a total confusion of paraphernalia which muddle together the bare necessities and detritus of domestic existence, countless small objects (fig. 1) which Clark has either collected or made, his music tapes and his many books with their somewhat contradictory images of classical architecture and art works of great beauty. Into this he now brings tubes of paint and small canvas boards.

The first paintings are therefore scaled to these rooms and because, like De Chirico, Clark is a collector of his own work he means it to reside finally in a domestic space. It is part of his stance against that aspect of Modernism which saw a production line of large-scale and impersonal works which were made to be shown in the voluminous and brutalist white box.

In his adoption of an anti-art stance, Clark also used the same makeshift, circumstantial and anti-means of production which were reflected in the tacky untidiness of his immediate environment. The tools were anything which might be at hand; the desired objective, the anti-technique and the ground rule 'anything-goes'. *The Suburban Pavilion,* 1981, (fig. 2) is an example. The pillars of the temple image are applied with a cake decorator. In other works there are scratches, finger marks, hairs – somewhere, even a piece of spaghetti.

Clark's natural choice of imagery for these works was that of architecture: natural because it had been a concurrent developing interest and because it allowed Clark to reconnect with his personal past. There are, however, other strands to this interest which we now need to look at in order to fully understand the position from which these and subsequent works come.

By now, as I have said, Clark's wide-ranging passion for architecture and all its ubiquitous styles has matured and with it his interest in the work and writings of those contemporary architects who are at the forefront of the Modernist/Post-Modernist debate – much of which has helped trigger similar debate about the issues as they relate to contemporary art. Tony Clark must be credited with having introduced the polemic of this debate to other artists in the Melbourne community. Certainly in his case the paradoxical stance of Post-Modernism is one which has been of primary importance in adding further dimensions to his own aesthetic.

To attempt a detailed discussion, or even a succinct definition, of this stance is beyond the scope of this essay. The interested reader may best be referred to the writings of Charles Jencks. However, a brief mention of some of the points in the introduction to his work, 'The Language of Post-Modern Architecture', will suffice to describe its general character. Post-Modernism, according to Jencks, is characterized by a movement towards regional and traditional sources, the desire to live across time in more than one dimension, the wish to explore the universal language of architecture, as well as be part of a larger, richer civilization and even – as in the case of the work of architects Leon Krier and Quinlan Terry – the notion of a lyrical investigation of the past can be made without necessarily falling into pastiche.

4. Bartolomeo Neroni (attributed)
A Street in Siena behind a Proscenium Arch, 1560
Pen and ink on paper
27.9 x 38

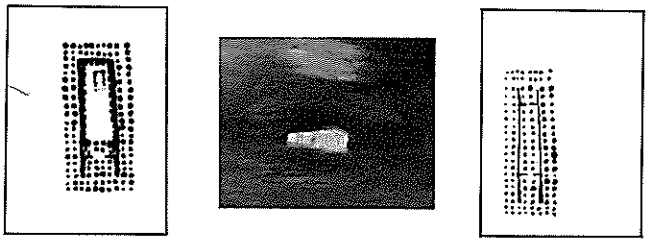
Jencks also summarises its polemic thus:

> ''Post-Modernists are still partly Modern in terms of sensibility and the use of current technology. These points lead immediately to what must be obvious to everyone: the style is hybrid, doubly coded, based on fundamental dualities. Sometimes it stems from juxtaposition of new and old…; sometimes it is based on the amusing inversion of the old…and nearly always it has something strange

about it. In short, a highly developed taste for paradox is characteristic of our time and sensibility.[4]"

But if there is one architect whose ideas had a particular bearing on Clark's own, it is the Italian, Aldo Rossi and, again, it is important before proceeding to analyse briefly those aspects of Rossi's position which have profoundly influenced or been in some ways similar to Clark's.

Firstly, there is Rossi's belief in the need for an authoritative theoretical framework from which to operate. Secondly, his further belief that architecture is an activity based on a framework of logical and classical principles and that its practice should be concerned with creating images which are both internally consistent and externally appropriate to the wider body of theory: a



5. *The Temple of Apollo at Didyma near Miletus*, 1983
Oil on paper
81 x 61

Sacro-Idyllic Landscape, 1983
Oil on canvas
61.2 x 76

The Temple of the Great Goddes Diana at Ephesus, 1983
Oil on paper
81 x 61

framework which culminates in what he sees as the primary concerns of architecture – the theme of the City, the theme of History and the theme of the Monument. Finally, there is the importance Rossi attaches to typology – the concept which allows him to recover the notion of the monument and the memory of the form of the city.

It will now be abundantly obvious that there are aspects of all this which might neatly serve as a Clarkian manifesto to accompany the current exhibition and that the development of his interest in such matters has been fuelled by his trips home over the years to Italy where architecture and, in particular, the work of Rossi have been of paramount importance. But to return now along this long tangent to the subject of Clark's own recent development and the lead-up to the works in the exhibition.

John Nixon must be credited for recognizing the idiosyncratic qualities of these early paintings and the issues which Clark was beginning to explore in them. He subsequently invited the artist to show them at Art Projects, but having accepted the invitation, Clark later decided to embark on a further series of works which he wished to show in their stead.

The resulting exhibition in 1982 was a group of small, variously sized and shaped canvas boards to which he gave the single title *Technical Manifesto of Town Planning* (fig. 3). Clark has said of this work: "The format was derived from Renaissance images of the City, or specifically from stage designs of that period (fig. 4). It was meant to be seen as a 'Scena Tragica' or as a proposal for an Anti-city made up of hostile or melancholy architectural ideas."

Technical Manifesto of Town Planning is perhaps in some ways related to Rossi's idea of the city as a locus of collective memory. It is the first of Clark's works which demonstrates his embracing of Post-Modern Classicism, both as a more profound theoretical basis from which to work and as a potentially rich territory for future exploration.

Future showings at Art Projects saw Clark exhibit works which further indicated his commitment to classicism to the exclusion of other styles of architecture. They also introduced Clark's realization of the 'plan' (which he refers to as "prints") and within that the 'temple', which he has described as "the bedrock architectural icon of Western culture".

The groups of paintings and prints which he executed in 1983 which have the general title of Homage to Classical Architecture (fig. 5) are key works in his development, in that they opened up for him a much wider framework of reference.

Classicism thus provided Clark with a ready-made set of ground rules within which there was infinite room to manoeuvre and a typology of painting 'styles' as well as subjects. It had now become evident that the syntax, form and apparatus of 'high culture' might be no less available for use in the critical examination of art activity than that of popular culture: a view he saw was neatly reinforced by the work of De Chirico, an artist whom Clark had long held in admiration. De Chirico, the heir to Piranesi, was the first 'modern' artist to turn his back on Modernism, seek inspiration in the past and use quotation as primary device. The latter part of his career continues the tradition of nostalgic or tragic retrospectivity. Clark views De Chirico's work as at once constructive, forward-looking and romantic.

Clark's subsequent works are now more refined, as he begins to look further into both the technical and academic aspects of the High, Post-Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-Classical styles. He produces a series of Neo-Classical landscapes based on textbook versions of the compositions of Claude (fig. 6 & 7) and Poussin [5] and includes his own blips and devices to make the niceties of traditional technique work against itself (fig. 8). Others he infuses with the atmospheric light and wistful romanticism of Constable and Corot, but accentuates the tonality and roughness of the technique to the point of offensiveness.

He experiments with canvas, oils and varnish, pouring the latter on to some areas of the surface like syrup, whilst leaving others blotched or dry. The allusion is to amateur painting and to the no-man's land between the authentic but badly ravaged object and the quickly manufactured fake[6]. It is what Clark calls "the St Kilda version of Classicism – the imperfectly grasped form of high culture".

6. Claude Lorrain
Landscape with Dancing Figures, 1648
Oil on canvas
150 x 200

None of this is refinement in the usual sense of the word, but rather a honing of those aspects of his paintings, through the inclusion of additional cross-references, which will accentuate their capacity to mediate between the past and the present.

The most recent works in this exhibition show Clark, after a recent trip to the Pompeian frescoes, already seeking new ground within this territory (fig. 9). We see him as a sort of time traveller in a machine devised, probably by Rossi – engineering by courtesy of Messrs Duchamp and Warhol – gathering the fragments of a classical universe, as he moves towards the notion of a total world.

Whilst there is no danger whatsoever that the Duchampian machinery will ever break down leaving the artist stranded in some time warp of the past, there are two possibilities which lead one to some interesting conjectures about his future work. One is that Clark may move into architecture per se – a fascinating prospect to say the least – and the other is to do with the romantic side of his dual nature: a duality which he shares with a number of his most admired and apparently iron-clad predecessors. Claude's inventiveness proceeded

always from his sensitivity and imagination, seeking in nature the luminous rather than the rational equivalent. Even Poussin in his late work drifted without apparently even knowing it into more seductive waters and in Aldo Rossi's recent work there is a more poetic vein which combines memory, autobiographical detail and individual creativity.

There are parallel aspects of Clark's recent work which would seem to indicate that he may yet inadvertently effect a remarriage between the cerebral vigour of contemporary art and the sensuous pleasure of traditional painting. As with any divorce, there must always be room for reconciliation.

He does acknowledge once having had a "flash" about the notion of "pure quality", which came to him during the showing of a detail of a painting by Titian that was part of a lecture to students studying art history.

Despite Clark's anti-art stance, many of his paintings have a decidedly romantic aspect in which ghost-like temples against swirls of infinite dark become poetic images that speak of a personal past – the childhood spent roaming, the half-remembered landscapes of classical antiquity or the entwined images of Fascist and ancient Rome.

Finally, I cannot resist adding a coda by Leon Krier who, with a complete absence of Post-Modern clichés, has made the most complete and consistent rejection of modern architecture which is yet available. On the back of a postcard which reproduces an image of a Claudian landscape, he writes to a friend: "This is the world that we deserve: it is after all quite a simple proposition compared to the efforts all our contemporaries go into in order to destroy all possibility of having it again. I am sad..."[7]

John Buckley
MELBOURNE. 1985

FOOTNOTES:

1. The one exception was his discovery of De Chirico on whom he did extensive research for a class paper.

2. Nixon, shortly after setting up Art Projects, moved to Brisbane to take over the directorship of the Institute of Modern Art. Much of the Anti-Music production was then carried out by means of a kind of correspondence.

3. Thomas Aquinas, Hitler etc. Out of which, in the case of the latter, came the emergence for the first time of his interest in the 'Fascist Aesthetic' – someting of which he was already aware through his long period of residence in Rome.

4. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 4th Edition, 1984. Rizzoli, New York.

5. "The essence of ideal landscape painting lay in the conjunction of two things: drawing from nature in the countryside round Rome (the Campagna), and the use of a certain set of pictorial conventions. These conventions might be applied in a variety of ways and with greater or lesser degrees of elaboration but, reduced to their simplest, they would produce a landscape composed as follows. The foreground would consist of a more or less flat plain, often with a stream running though it. To one side and generally rising the whole height of the picture there would be a tree or group of trees with spreading foliage, seen partly in shadow and silhouetted against the sky. On or towards the other side and set further back in space there would be a second group of smaller trees, balancing the first, often near some rising ground surmounted by a classical building." Michael Kitson, *The Age of Baroque*, London 1966.

6. But..."any restorer who treats the varnish only as a barrier between dirt and original paint is an incompetent, insensitive, ignorant ass, for every painter until the advent of Impressionism was likely to work on top of his varnish with glazes of colour or tone...with optical and chemical fusion it is impossible to disentangle glazes from the layers of varnish that sandwich them; moreover, all early varnishes were to some extent coloured, and most yellowed with age – factors well known to the painters and taken into account". Brian Sewell, 'How to ruin pictures', *The Spectator* 27 April 1985.

7. Colin Rowe, "The Revolt of the Senses' in *Architectural Design* 54, 7/8/84. Guest Edited by Demetri Porphyrios. p.8.

8. *Sacro-Idyllic Landscape*, 1984
Oil on canvas
30.5 x 40.5

TONY CLARK

Born Canberra, A.C.T., 1954.

Study:
1972-5 Reading University (B.A. Hons.).

Selected Individual Exhibitions:
1982 Art Projects.
1983 Art Projects.
Roslyn Oxley 9.

Selected Group Exhibitions:
1982 The Temple Of The Winds, **n**-space, Melbourne.
1983 Pirates & Mutineers, Roslyn Oxley 9, Sydney.
Love Among The Ruins, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne.
La Ciminiera, **n**-space, Sydney.
Art Projects, Melbourne.
1984 Art Projects, Melbourne.
Dreams & Nightmares, Roslyn Oxley 9, Sydney.
Architectura Picta, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne.
Show No Cowardice, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.
1985 Tower Hill And Its Artists, Warrnambool Art Gallery, Warrnambool.

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Vivienne Shark LeWitt,
"Love Among The Ruins", *Art & Text,* Winter, 1983.
Imants Tillers,
"Fear Of Texture", *Art & Text,* Winter, 1983.
Press No. 2, Art Projects, 1983.
Sue Cramer,
"Tony Clark, Classical Pop and Beyond", *Tension 5,* 1984.
Ashley Crawford,
"Architectura Picta", *On The Beach,* Spring, 1984.
"Fame", *Domus,* December, 1984.
Paul Taylor,
"Civilisation And Its Discontents", *Flash Art,* January, 1985.
Alex Selenitsch, Michael Anderson, Robyn McKenzie.
"Architectura Picta: Three Reviews".
Transition, April 1985, pp 21-27.

Public Collections:
Phillip Morris Collection, Canberra.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Awards:
Special Projects Grant, Visual Arts Board, 1983.