

# NOT TO BE MISSED

Our writers present the exhibitions across Australia and New Zealand that you won't want to miss in the coming months.

## ROBERT OWEN

### AFTERGLOW

31 July – 1 September 2018

ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne

In 1964, **Robert Owen** executed a small drawing. Small, at least, in terms of scale, but what it represented ended up being vast. Most of us have experienced some form of perfect lucidity, a sense that, admittedly momentarily, the world, or at least an aspect of it, makes perfect sense. Few of us have drawn that moment, and yet fewer have returned to it 54 years later and realised that this was the moment when a lifelong project had its genesis.

*One Finite Moment*, a drawing from Owen's diary from 1964, was essentially his first serious investigation into minimalist structures and magnificently maximalist conceptualism. It's only 16 by 22 centimetres in size, but it contains multitudes.

"1964 was also the year that I encountered **Giotto's Scrovegni's** chapel in Padua," says the artist. "This period in my life, living on Hydra, was the foundation for my abstraction – intuition at the early stage of my development – a moment of instant clarity."

But, this being Owen, it by no means stops there. He immediately launches into a discussion of **Gaston Bachelard's** 1932 paper *Intuition of the Instant*, the French philosopher's first metaphysical meditation on time and its moral implications. This is typical of Owen. His variegated explorations inevitably lead to discussions and references ranging from philosophy to hard science.

On the isle of Hydra where he executed *One Finite Moment*, Owen discussed everything from **Wilhelm Reich** to Zen Buddhism with the likes of authors **George Johnston**, **Jack Hirschman**, and poet/songwriter **Leonard Cohen**.



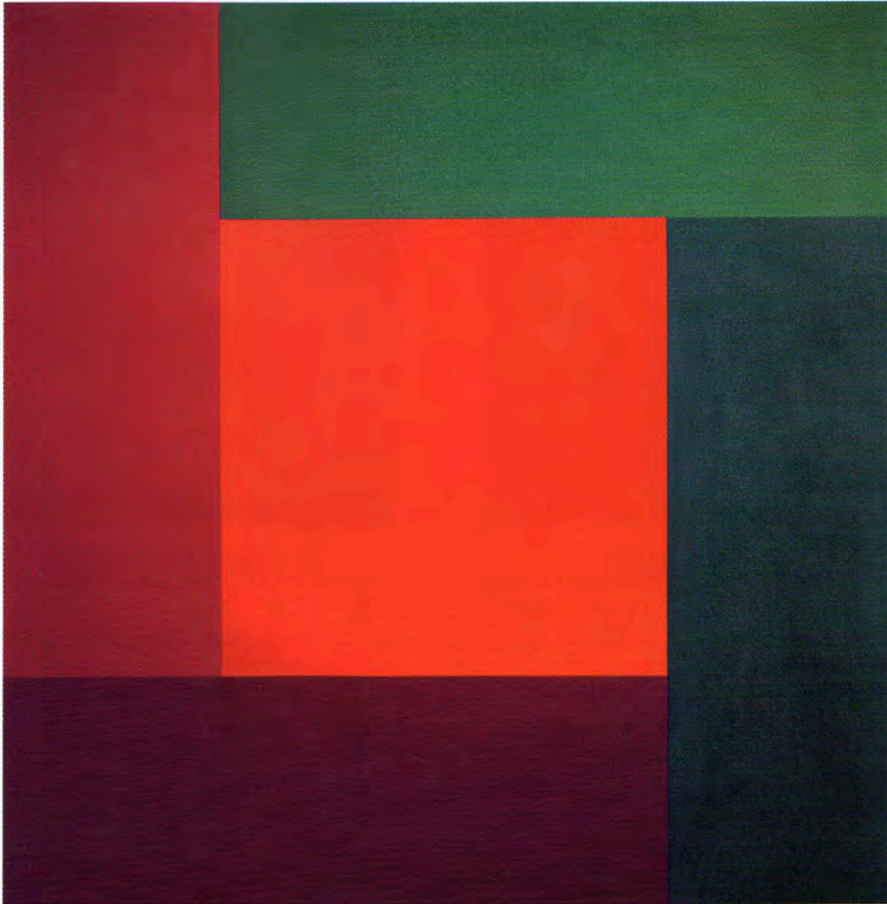






Robert Owen, *Nocturne*, 2006. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 249.5 x 167.5cm.





Above: Robert Owen, *Gleam #2*, 2016. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 122 x 122cm.  
Previous page: Installation view of Robert Owen's *Afterglow*, 2017–18, Latrobe Regional Gallery, Morwell.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND ARC ONE GALLERY, MELBOURNE.

Owen's employment in London as a studio assistant to British Constructivists **John Ernest** and **Anthony Hill** in the late 1960s was critical in the progression of his work. These artists shared a dedication to an abstract art that was non-illusionistic, using mathematical geometries to construct their relief forms.

But taking all of this information into different directions from his predecessors, Owen's explorations of space, light, colour and materiality via an ever-expanding oeuvre of chromatic painting, descriptive drawing and minimalistic sculpture suggests ongoing, but dramatically new, evaluations. As seen via his recent installation at the Latrobe Regional Gallery *Afterglow* – a variation of which will be shown at his representing gallery ARC ONE in August/September – where the walls quivered with preternatural light and vibrational frequencies, the permutations of this exploration are far from over. From little things – a small sketch executed on a Greek Island in the mid-1960s – big things grow.

Ashley Crawford