

PETER BOGGS

City walk, 2024

City walk is a small painting that draws you close to examine its detail. It portrays a scene reminiscent of Italian townships, its low light, shadow, and opaque surface evoking a brooding sensibility that is somehow familiar. Compositionally we are drawn onto the narrow path, between large shadowy trees on one side and buildings on the other. A doorway and a narrow lane overlook the path, but these potential openings are dark and closed, vertical slots that preclude access. The shadows fall horizontally, adding to the sense of stasis; there is no visible exit point from where we may dwell in the shadows under grainy light.

It is the only painting in Peter Boggs' exhibition *The memory of place* that occludes the sky altogether, which adds to the tension holding us tightly to a delicately painted surface, waiting. The colours are muted, lines soft, their depths built with thin layers, intuited as much as seen. Soft light paints age-textured walls of the buildings in pale apricot where sunlight penetrates, offering a sense of potential revelation. Inspired by a remembered shadow, its truncated view hovers, containment built over instinctive geometry and thin layers of colour. Its evocation of something felt and known remains powerful in the memory.

Light is Boggs' first subject, and his oeuvre has explored its possible variations for decades with his sights focused on Italy, specifically his muse, the 16th century Boboli Gardens in Florence. He has used this motif to inspire metaphor: the formality, themes and geometry of the gardens, the structure over which a

romantic and melancholic atmospheric generates an elusive narrative that reaches toward a viewer's fundamental human desire to know its truth. For Boggs though, "I have never wanted to understand what I do. It's built around the fleeting nature of memory. The only thing I truly aim for is balance and harmony in my work – a natural order of things."

Time is held within the brushstrokes, and meaning suspended in a place where nature and culture frame an absent human presence. Boggs' work has been compared to the Italian Macchiaioli whose placement of light and shadow captured their subjects. In *City walk* his method is tightly distilled, conveying an oblique aloneness. The viewer is a witness, their own experience brought to bear in this place where meaning is assigned by personal sensibilities and individual truths.

City walk avoids specific markers of place to open to a more universal space, its soft focus reaching to a dreamscape that we respond to emotionally, for some reaching to European heritage and others a more romantic connection. Boggs is compelled by these painted explorations for reasons that remain as enigmatic as the images he makes.

The composition and execution of *City walk* is ostensibly simple but it opens into the novelistic possibilities of this place in the psyche. There is a sense of disquiet that teases the imagination. The hidden places in this townscape resonate beyond the surface tension well beyond the dimensions of its frame.

LOUISE MARTIN-CHEW

"I have never wanted to understand what I do. It's built around the fleeting nature of memory. The only thing I truly aim for is balance and harmony in my work – a natural order of things." Peter Boggs

Peter Boggs, *City walk*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 40 x 40cm. \$8,500

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND BEAVER GALLERIES, NGAMBRI AND NGOUNNWA, COUNTRY/CANBERRA.

