

bbq

Stephen Brameld & Jay Staples



Yallingup 2025
Oil, acrylic on board
122cm x 120cm

**Lennox
St. Gallery**

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A Precarious Edge

The letters bee bee and queue – B B Q – (we assume an abbreviation of the word barbecue) evoke a communal gathering, a hot plate where anything goes, and everyone's welcome. Describing their studio, perched at the top of a hill in Fremantle, and how most of this body of work was made outdoors, I can feel hot evenings, a thick air charged with the smell of pine needles and wood smoke. Nobody BBQ's alone. These paintings welcome you with open arms. However these singular letters remind me that things are what we make them. Perhaps this initialism can stand for anything -

- a Brilliant Broken Question?
- or Beginning, Brazenly, Quizzically?
- a Blazing, Blinding, Quandary?
- or a Big, Brave Quack.

Words are just words are just words, as marks are just marks are just marks – we give them the meaning we want to make from them.

In our conversation earlier this month, Stephen and Jay suggest that “the paintings aren't always what they seem”. As a painter myself, whose work also occupies a space between representation and abstraction, I have echoed this sentiment – wishing for the work to remain open, without a fixed message. Perhaps it is in this openness, in the primacy of process over destination, that meaning resides. The painting has no message – and the message is the painting.

In the habitual search for representation I glimpse fish, a boot, a hook, a musical note – yet the images resist categorisation, teetering between the actual and the abstract. If the titles act as clues, I'm left wondering where a 'tobacco axe' comes from and what makes 'Yallingup' feel like “Yallingup”. For Stephen and Jay, these paintings hold specific associations tethered to particular places and moments in time, yet they avoid anything overtly obvious. It is this elusive and somewhat magical ability to hold a multitude of meanings that makes me love painting so much. Particularly in this work there is a looseness that leaves ample space for the viewer to bring themselves to the party.

There is an anti-preciousness to these paintings – certainly not a lack of care – that emerges through a deep sense of resourcefulness, both materially and in approach. Much of the practice is guided by intuition, by a kind of rhythmic spontaneity. Surfaces are cut through and chopped up with a jigsaw, pigments are eked out, muck is scraped back – everything kept in circulation. Past lives of materials remain present, layers built up like new skins. The image is composed and curated through the accumulated history of the artist's own visual language. This material and conceptual resourcefulness extends into an anti-hierarchical sensibility: every mark, every material, every surface is treated as equal. Acts of recycling and renewal are not just practical but generative – a way of giving new life to old forms and ideas.



There is typically something solitary, and dare I say lonely, about being a painter. Stephen and Jay defy this trope. Here we witness two minds and four hands working together; an ongoing and relentless conversation quietly unfolding on the surface. I sense a practice fuelled by a shared obsession and preoccupation with marks, colour, intuition, listening, responding in real time; and how this consuming and meandering conversation has the potential to alleviate the burden of mark making. Through this improvisation, there is a persistent energy that knows when to rest and when to cut loose.

Working in this way requires a bravery, a courage, an endless curiosity for the potential of the medium and its capacity to inherently and intrinsically hold meaning. A commitment to following a line and knowing its limits, of not knowing its destination but trusting it will arrive. A confidence in knowing when to conceal and when to reveal. A faith in the non linear, the unresolved, and most importantly in each other. A dedication to stumbling along a precarious edge and knowing there's no good way to fall.

Georgia Spain



Hot Plate 2025
Oil, acrylic, pigment, on board and fabric
100cm x 152cm



Flounder Blue 2025
Pigment, acrylic, oil on board
118cm x 45cm



Flounder Copper 2025
Pigment, acrylic, oil on board
118cm x 45cm



Barbecue 2024
Acrylic, pigment, oil on board
122cm x 244cm



Abalone 2025
Oil, acrylic, pigment on board
152cm x 61cm



Porterhouse 2025
Oil, acrylic, pigment, canvas on board
92cm x 122cm



Tobacco Axe 2025
Oil, acrylic, pigment on board
81cm x 148cm



Four Figures 2025
Oil, acrylic, pigment, enamel on board
119cm x 184cm