



Ian Friend  
*Tidal (Moreton Bay) #4*  
 Casein, Pigment, Gouache, Crayon  
 76 x 112 cm  
 2005



Ian Friend  
*Tidal (Moreton Bay) #5*  
 Casein, Pigment, Gouache, Crayon  
 76 x 112 cm  
 2005

In 2005 the Redcliffe City Art Gallery established the *Kippa-Ring Village Artist in Residence and Mentoring Program*. This program was made possible by the generous support and sponsorship by the Marchant family through their business operations at the Kippa Ring Village.

The program progressed through a partnership arrangement between the Redcliffe City Art Gallery, the Kippa-Ring Village and the Redcliffe State High School's Studio Red.

This exhibition titled *Tidal* is the culmination of a six month sponsored artist in residency program undertaken by Ian Friend and four mentorees - Cynthia Howard, Gabriella Szablewska, Roxanne Simon and Lexie Keffe.

The program was comprised of two modules. The first was the Artist in Residency Program. For this module Ian Friend was engaged to produce art works that had a direct relationship to Redcliffe and the City's Art Collection. This module was delivered in association with providing support in art education to students at the Redcliffe State High School.

The second module comprised a Mentoring Program. It provided four stipends to emerging artists and was targeted at young artists who may not have had access to higher education institutions. Each artist was provided with the opportunity to work with Ian Friend to learn and develop new practical skills whilst broadening the conceptual basis of their current art practice.

By providing a framework which fostered interaction between Ian Friend and each of the mentorees, a creative dialogue developed; this encouraged each of the participants to take new risks and investigate fresh approaches to their art. It also resulted in new ways of artistically looking at Redcliffe with the result that the *Kippa-Ring Village Artist in Residence and Mentoring Program* resulted in a series of art works that provided an opportunity to broaden our understanding of Redcliffe.

**Image Cover**

Ian Friend  
*Tidal (Moreton Bay) #1*  
 Casein, Pigment, Gouache, Crayon  
 76 x 112 cm  
 2005

All Photography by Joachim Froese

Ian Friend is represented in Queensland by Andrew Baker Art Dealer



Exhibition dates 17th March - 2nd April

**Redcliffe City Art Gallery**

Redcliffe City Council Library / Gallery Complex  
 470-476 Oxley Avenue  
 Redcliffe Q 4020  
 Monday - Saturday 10am - 4pm  
 Admission FREE  
 Telephone: 07 3283 0415  
 RCC@redcliffe.qld.gov.au  
 www.redcliffe.qld.gov.au



Kippa Ring Village Shopping Centre artists in residence program

**Tidal**  
 17th March - 2nd April 2006

Ian Friend  
 Cynthia Howard  
 Lexie Keffe  
 Roxanne Simon  
 Gabriella Szablewska

**Redcliffe City Art Gallery**

## Drifting Ian Friend's encounter with Redcliffe

The dictionary definition of the word "drift" is: 'To move as driven or borne along by a current...To drive or carry along, as by a current of water or air.'<sup>1</sup> It is an apt term when encountering the watercolour and ink drawings of Ian Friend, for if you linger with them and let mundane thoughts slip away they can allow the imagination to take over.

### On the face of it

Friend works doggedly and consistently in contexts that alternate between a formal studio set-up in Brisbane and the table of a small metropolitan apartment in Canberra. More recently, a stash of arches paper, black ink and white gouache, the yellow ochre and Bellini-blue pigments (additions of the past two years), have been transported to another space. As artist-in-residence at Redcliffe City Art Gallery during 2005, he has occupied a studio at Redcliffe's high school some 40 minutes drive from Queensland's capital. Here the artist produced a group of large-scale drawings and also mentored four young artists from the area. In conversation, Friend explains,

**'my childhood was spent in Eastbourne, a Channel town in England, and I have vivid memories of being brought up by the sea. When I first moved to Melbourne I lived in St Kilda which was a bay-side suburb and therefore I felt a natural connection with Redcliffe'.<sup>2</sup>**

Although Friend's signature style is still strongly evident in these recent works – the fields of dark washes, white veil-like surfaces and amorphous forms punctuated with ovals mapped through with finely drawn pathways – there are noticeable shifts. In approaching the Redcliffe drawings suite, he said, 'I wasn't going to change my way of working but I tried to address a sense of locale...this early settlement in Queensland with its relationship to the sea and to Moreton Island. From the start I incorporated certain symbols which to me were representative of being in Redcliffe. I came in at a tangent – that is not to paint pelicans or boats – but to actually deal with some of the sub-structure which constitutes the bay.'

He acquired boating and naval maps of the area which supplied a set of scientific formulas, such as consecutive lines denoting the sea's depth and symbols for channel markers. The maps gave an aerial perspective, not of Redcliffe as such but of the bay and water. The sole pointer to dry land is given in three of the drawings as a forked shape on the left edge of the sheet which stands as a jetty in an umbilical-like concordance. 'The other thing I did when I was up there, was go fishing, because it's just such a beautiful place to fish', he said, 'off Woody Point jetty, and off the bridge as well – and the more that I looked into the water the more I could see – like shoals of garfish and all of these movements that happen, things that are half seen – you see them very momentarily. The whole point about this series of works is that it focuses on little things but at the same time deals with a broader perspective.'

The activity of fishing is time-stilling as your eyes become attuned to shifting currents and the wax and wane of water levels. A flat and vast expanse, Moreton Bay empties at low tide, creating banks of mud-like sand with channels meandering through. It is not the place of travel posters but one that gratifies over time and close familiarity. Friend came to recognise the tidal process as akin to the way his drawings 'fill and empty the whole time'. His characteristic working method is slow, deliberate yet inventively capricious. The artist first builds up washes of pigment, leaving wayward drips, then abrasively scrubs parts of the surface before deliberately dousing the sheet with water. On drying, the softened, textured layers are added to by a seemingly random system of tensile lines and dense white forms. A palimpsest effect occurs as Friend refines his image, making the composition tauter in some sections, more sensuous in others.



Ian Friend  
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Ian Friend  
*Tidal (Moreton Bay) #3*  
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In the case of the Redcliffe works, opaque ovals have been replaced by minutely dotted graphite circles (to suggest spoil grounds) and rods which indicate the placement of channel markers for establishing the depth of water. From the shore, Friend would also watch the changing light on water from early morning to night, the way the sky dramatically heralds a passing squall and the motionless brilliance of stars. Not accidentally, four of the drawings have tonal registers that relate to the cycle of night and day.

### Beyond the surface

In the 2000s, Friend introduced natural ochres and lapis lazuli into his chiefly black and white palette. The colours were not randomly chosen. Ochre is the colour we associate with earth, with the dryness of the Australian continent. Lapis is the colour of the Virgin and of the heavens; symbolically, its preciousness is next only to gold. Even the duality of white and black in the hands of this artist is reconciled through indefinite boundaries. His drawings are nuanced, drifting terrains that work on us in both poetic and metaphysical ways. A membrane of white over darkness is a sublime visual sensation as is the substitute for blackened wash with luminous blue. Friend's Redcliffe works go deeper than mere appearances. 'No day was the same. The light, the showers coming through, all of that stuff connects, you know. There's a kind of regeneration in there the whole time – things empty out, things fill up, it's almost like a meditative experience; you sit still and observe.'

**Anne Kirker**  
Senior Curator (Special Projects)  
Queensland Art Gallery

<sup>1</sup> As defined by The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Friend in conversation with the author, 2 December 2005.

All other quotes are from this source.

**Ian Friend** was born in England in 1951. He has lived in Australia since 1985. Before emigrating, he taught at Chelsea School of Art and for several years was assistant curator in the Print Room at the Tate Gallery. In Australia, he taught again, firstly in Melbourne at the Victorian College of the Arts, then during most of the 1990s at the Tasmanian School of Art at Launceston. Afterwards, he moved with his partner Robyn Daw and their young son Dexter to Brisbane. There he was employed at the Queensland College of Art. For the past few years, Friend has devoted himself full-time to his art practice, dividing his time between Canberra (where Daw works at the National Gallery of Australia) and his studio in Brisbane. The artist has held solo exhibitions since 1978, among them, Ian Friend: The Oval Window, based on a sequence of poems by J.H. Prynne. It was held at the Brisbane City Gallery in mid 2002.