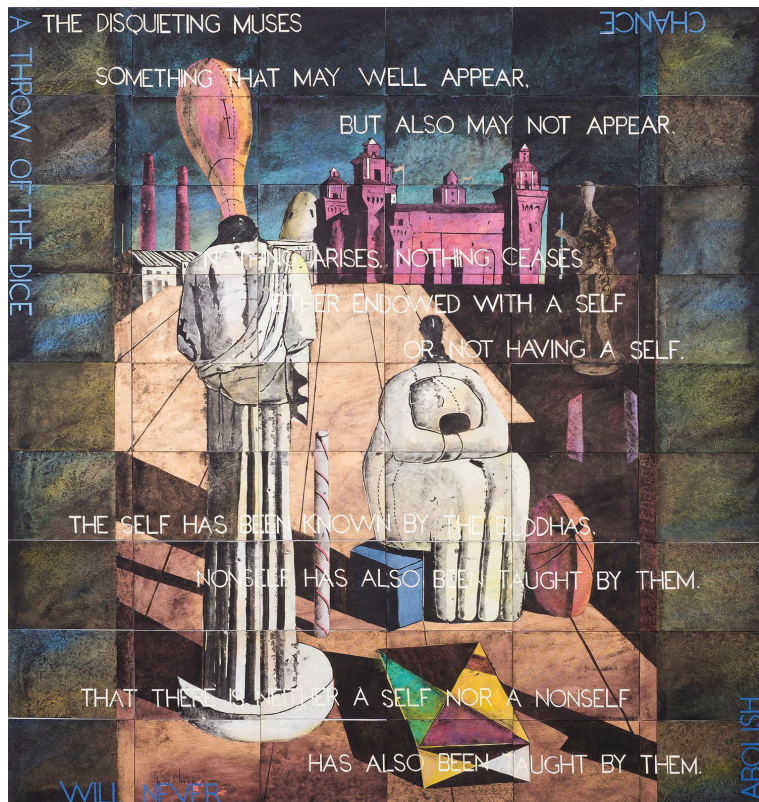


IMANTS TILLERS AFTER DE CHIRICO 27 MAY - 1 JULY

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In a relationship that transcends the usual definitions of *homage* and *influence*, Imants Tillers has maintained an intimacy with the work of Giorgio de Chirico over five decades. De Chirico was one of the first artists that Tillers' quoted in his magnum opus, the *Book of Power* (1981—ongoing), a systematic ledger of all of Tillers' work, completed in grids of his signature canvasboards. Indeed, art historian Wystan Curnow argues that in the "alternative model of art history posed by the *Book of Power*", it is none other than de Chirico who wins out as "the hero of the modern period".¹

This is the kind of re-writing of history that only artists can do. Tillers' interest in de Chirico is spurred on not only by the early so-called 'metaphysical' paintings that made him legendary amongst the early Surrealist artists, but also the once-controversial,

much reviled 'late' paintings. As Tillers writes, "Many thought his genius had mysteriously evaporated. What is called his 'late' period spans the period from about 1920 to his death in 1978, 58 years in which he was regarded as some kind of "turncoat" or "pariah" in the international art world". The difficult qualities of de Chirico's later work, including his habit of backdating and remaking exact versions of earlier work, are the keys to unlocking this recent series of paintings that centre on de Chirico's masterpiece from 1917, *The Disquieting Muses*.

A leading Australian artist for over 50 years, Imants Tillers has represented Australia at the Sao Paulo Bienal in 1975, documenta 7 in 1982, and the 42nd Venice Biennale in 1986. Major solo surveys of Tillers' work include Journey to Nowhere, Latvian Museum of Art, Riga (2018); Imants Tillers: works 1978-1988, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1988); Imants Tillers: 1930-1988, National Art Gallery, Wellington (1989); Diaspora, National Art Museum, Riga, Latvia (1993); Diaspora in Context, Pori Art Museum, Pori (1995); Towards Infinity: Works by Imants Tillers, Museum of Contemporary Art (MARCO) in Monterrey, Mexico (1999); and in 2006 a major retrospective of his work, Imants Tillers: one world many visions, was held at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Tillers has also exhibited in numerous important group exhibitions around the world, including An Australian Accent, PS1, New York (1984); Antipodean Currents, Guggenheim Museum, Soho (1995); Australian Perspecta (1981, 1987-89); The World Over/ Under Capricorn: Art in the Age of Globalisation, City Gallery, Wellington and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1996); the Biennale of Sydney (1979, 1986, 1988, and 2006); Kunst Nach Kunst (Art After Art), Neues Museum Weserburg, Germany (2003); Prism, Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo (2006); Australia, Royal Academy of Arts in London (2013); and Dreamings: Aboriginal Australian art meets de Chirico, Museo Carlo Bilotti in Rome (2014).

Tillers was the winner of the Art Gallery of New South Wales' Wynne Prize for landscape painting for two consecutive years (2012-2013). He has received numerous awards and commissions, such as the Osaka Triennale Prize (Gold in 1993, Bronze in 1996, and Silver in 2001), and the inaugural Beijing International Art Biennale Prize for Excellence (2003). Major commissions include: Written in water (hymn to Sydney), a major painting for the Commonwealth Bank Building in Martin Place, Sydney (2015); Avenue of Remembrance, a tapestry design for the Australian War Memorial commemorating the Centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli (2015); the Federation Pavilion, Centennial Park (1985-87); the Founding Donors Painting, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (1991); and two key sculptures for Sydney Olympic Park (2002). Tillers was a Trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 2001 to 2009. In 2005 he was awarded a Doctor of Letters honoris causa for 'his long and distinguished contribution to the field of arts', by the University of New South Wales. In 2018, Tillers was the subject of a new feature-length documentary, Thrown into the World, directed by Antra Cilinska.

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IMAGE: IMANTS TILLERS, *The disquieting muses (something that...)*, 2023, synthetic polymer paint and gouache on 54 canvasboards, nos. 113555-113608, 229 x 214 cm.

1. Wystan Curnow, *Imants Tillers and the 'Book of Power'* (Fine Art Publishing), 1997.