

Wilma Tabacco / Aqua Alta

July 30 – September 10, 2023

Wilma Tabacco was born in the province of L'Aquila, Italy and has lived in Australia since childhood. She received a Bachelor of Commerce from Melbourne University in 1972 and Diploma of Education in 1973. In 1979 she undertook a Diploma of Fine Art at Phillip Institute, Melbourne and whilst lecturing in painting and drawing at the University of Melbourne, continued studies at RMIT University where she completed a Master of Arts in 1995 and a PhD in 2006. Wilma has lectured variously in painting, drawing and printmaking at the University of Melbourne, Canberra School of Arts and at RMIT as part of the international programme in Hong Kong and in Melbourne.

She has received several grants from the Australia Council Visual Arts and Craft Board including a studio residency in Italy, and has also worked and exhibited in Seoul as the recipient of an Asialink residency in Korea. In 2011 she, together with Dr Irene Barberis, established Langford120, a contemporary gallery space that closed in 2018 but still initiates occasional projects.

In 2018 Wilma commenced conducting workshops in colour and composition for The Art Room, Footscray. She also presented several Zoom lectures on abstract art and art interpretation.

Wilma has presented 46 solo exhibitions since 1988, in Australia, Italy and Korea and participated in over 240 group exhibitions, including *Parallel Visions*, Co.As.It (Museo Italiano), Carlton, (2020) *Geometries*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2019), *The Great Sea*, Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie, NSW (2018), *Abstraction: celebrating Australian women abstract artists*, Geelong Gallery, Victoria, Tweed Heads Regional Gallery, NSW, Cairns Regional Gallery, Qld, Newcastle Regional Gallery, (2017-18), NSW, *Contemporary Australian Drawing 3*, New York Studio School, New York, *Crossing the Line: Drawing in the Middle East*, Tashkeel Gallery, Dubai, *NONOBJECTIVE – present*, Langford120, Melbourne, *Contemporary Australian Drawing 2*, Wimbledon SPACE, London, Melbourne, *Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize 09*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria, *Drawing of the World/World of Drawing*, Museum of Art, Seoul National University, Korea, *Regards Croises: Australie – France*, Espace Beaurepaire, Paris, France, *Good Vibrations*, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, *Painted Spaces*, Rice-Talbert Museum, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, New Gallery, New Zealand, ACCA, Melbourne, *People of Australia-Richness in Diversity: Identity Art*, Australian Museum, Sydney & touring Asia, Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand & South Korea (1999); *Works on Paper*, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea, *Propositions Australiennes*, Galerie Luc

Queyrel, Paris, France, *Patterning*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manila; Regional Philippines tour, Jakarta, Indonesia; Canberra School of Art Gallery, Silpakorn University Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand, Singapore Art Museum, *James McCaughey Memorial Prize*, National Gallery of Victoria, *Il Disegno Ritrovato*, Salone San Francesco, Como, Italy, *Rediscovery: Australian Artists in Europe, 1982-92*, World Expo, Seville, Spain.

Her works are included in many national and state collections including NGA, NGV, MOMA at Heide, Artbank, private collections in Australia, U.S.A. and Europe.

Her work has been reviewed comprehensively including, <http://www.theage.com.au/act-news/canberra-life/review-of-wilma-tabacco-scylla-and-charybdis-at-nancy-sever-gallery-20160317-gni1dk.html> and 2013: J. McKenzie, <http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/wilma-tabacco-gilt-edge>, *Gilt Edge*, Catalogue essay, Sophia Errey. Publications and reviews include: B. Ferrara, 'Cercare nell'arte ciò che non si vede', *Il Globo*, January 7, 2021, P. McKay & E. Buttrose, 'Geometries', *Artlines*, QAG, 2019, Janet Mckenzie, *Contemporary Australian Drawing, Volume 1*, Palgrave Macmillan, Melbourne, 2012, R Nelson, 'Geometric Gems with Kinetic Jives', *The Age*, February 8, 2012, Soo-Hong Jhang, *Drawing of the World/World of Drawing*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Art, Seoul National University, 2009, G G Hubbard, 'Arte, cultura, identità, simbolismo e creatività', *Il Globo*, July 20, 2009, S Grishin, 'Discipline and chaos', *Canberra Times*, August 24, 2009, S Grishin, 'Colourful sweeps', *Canberra Times*, November 23, 2007, C. Green, Artforum International (1992), *Art Now: Contemporary Art Post-1970*, (1996).

She has recorded interviews, videos and podcasts for radio, television and online platforms locally and overseas including: *Saluti dai Paesi Fantasma*, 2019, <https://vimeo.com/345871398>

Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie, May 2018, *The Great Sea*: <https://vimeo.com/album/5177988>

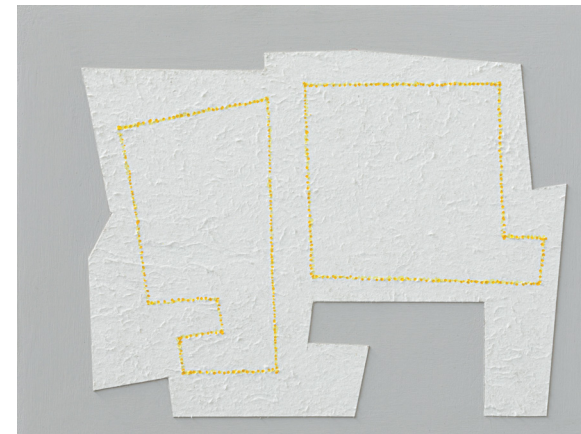
Out of Place <https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/2021-Victorian-Seniors-Festival-Reimagined/articles/Women-Arts-and-Activism-Episode-4>

Eleven exhibition catalogues have been published on her work.

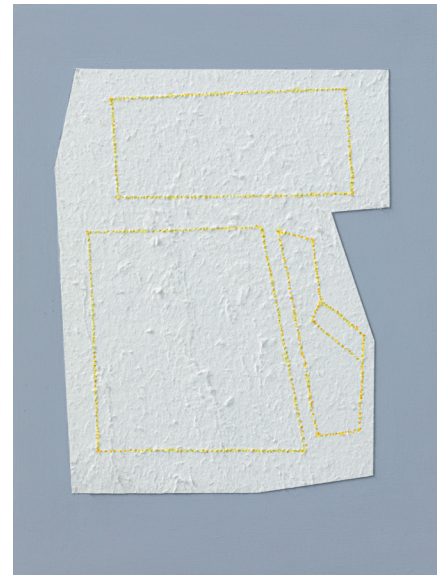
Wilma lives and works in Melbourne

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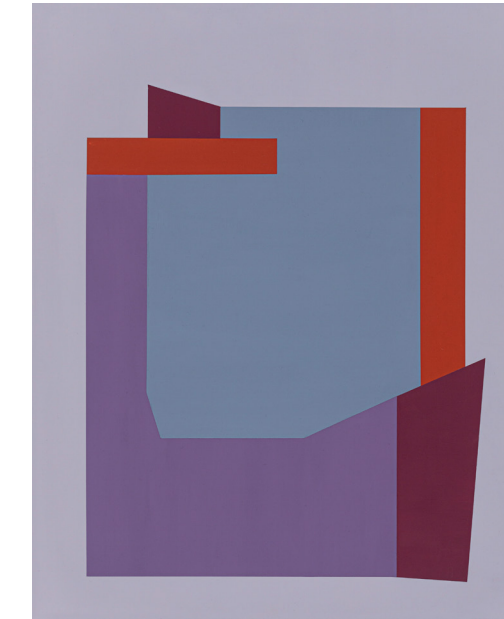
Wilma Tabacco
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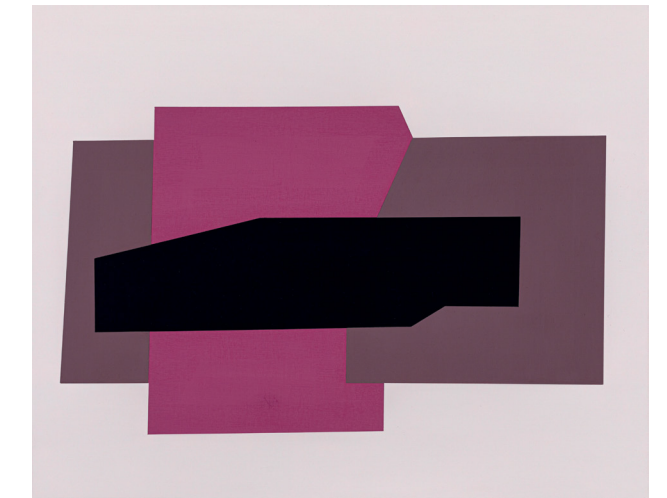
No Trace 1, 2023, acrylic, paper on wood panel, 22.5 x 30 cm



No Trace 5, 2023, acrylic, paper on wood panel, 30 x 22.5 cm



Aqua Alta 3, 2023, acrylic, pigment on wood panel, 50 x 40 cm



Aqua Alta 7, 2023, acrylic, pigment on wood panel, 40 x 50 cm

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Vittorio didn't say...

Like Jan Morris I too wonder why the monks of St. Jerome monastery in Carpaccio's painting, '...run in comical terror from the mildest of all possible lions;¹ Vittorio Carpaccio didn't say - or if he did, his words are now lost and no commentary seems available on the painting *St. Jerome and the Lion* that, after hundreds of years, still remains as part of a narrative sequence of Carpaccio's works in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni. The painting depicts a teasingly enigmatic narration that leaves much to the imagination.

Jacobus de Voragine in his book *Legenda Sanctorum*² (written in the late 13th century known as *Golden Legend*) recounts how St. Jerome removed the thorns from a limping lion's paw and healed the wounds. The monks were terrified of the lion but Jerome treated it like a friend and guest.

Carpaccio's painted lion looks old, worn out, confused and forlorn. Maybe the wound (or the memory of it) from the thorns is still troubling it or maybe the thorn is yet to be removed and the lion is pleading for St Jerome's help. This seems likely. Or if they are escaping an 'off-stage' catastrophe then it might be begging to go with them - 'wait, I'm coming with you!' The lion in medieval paintings often symbolises prophecy and wisdom. It is also the symbol of Carpaccio's home: Venice.

The Aqua Alta is loved and hated - out come the gumboots again to wade through the deluge of water. Loved because it clears the canals of refuse but mostly hated because the high tides that bring the Adriatic Sea smashing into the lagoon cause havoc and destruction in the archipelago and the city.

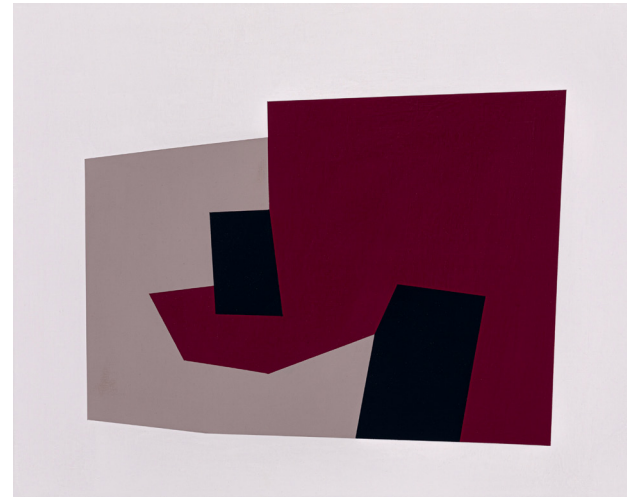
It is November 2022 and another of those dreaded inundations arrives to corrode stone, marble, paving, to discolour artworks, to flood piazzas and buildings. The newly completed MOSE (Moses) - barriers between the Adriatic and the Venice lagoon were raised on November 7 and again on November 21 during a storm surge of 185cm, the second highest since the great flood of 1966. The low lying areas around St Mark's basilica floods at 85cm but the authorities had decided to raise MOSE only when the level reaches 120cm. Transparent glass barriers have now been erected around the basilica: a barrier within a barrier.

We are on more solid ground (or are we?) in the *Campus Martius (Field of Mars)* on ancient Rome's Palatine Hill. Once military exercise and training ground for the Roman army and place of senatorial elections, it is still there, albeit unrecognisable as the honoured site of Mars, Roman god of war and agriculture. No trace of its original function now exists. Just as there is no, or little physical trace, of the many monasteries perched on so many of the tiny islands in the Venetian lagoon - ruins now, with some of the islands themselves under water.

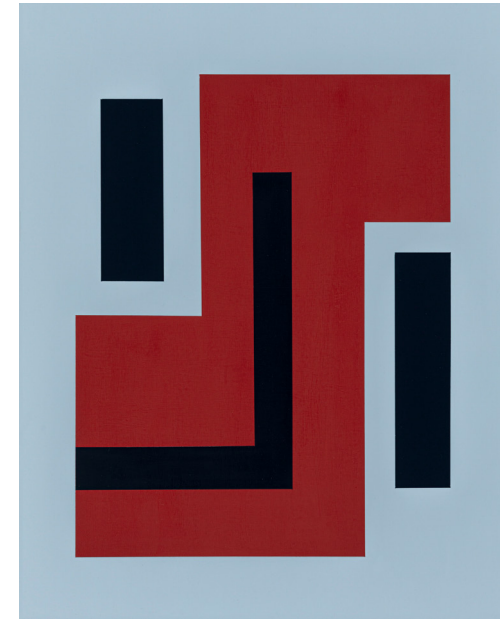
I like to think that Carpaccio's painting is prophetic: the monks and lion just part of the mass exodus of 70% of the Venetian population over the last 70 years (now at a mere 50,000 from a peak of 367,832 in 1968), fleeing the 30 million visitors who swarmed into the city to trample on their islands, *calle* and bridges in 2022.

I am happy to be able to enjoy Carpaccio's painting, the fleeing monks, the limping lion, without any words to instruct and direct my understanding.

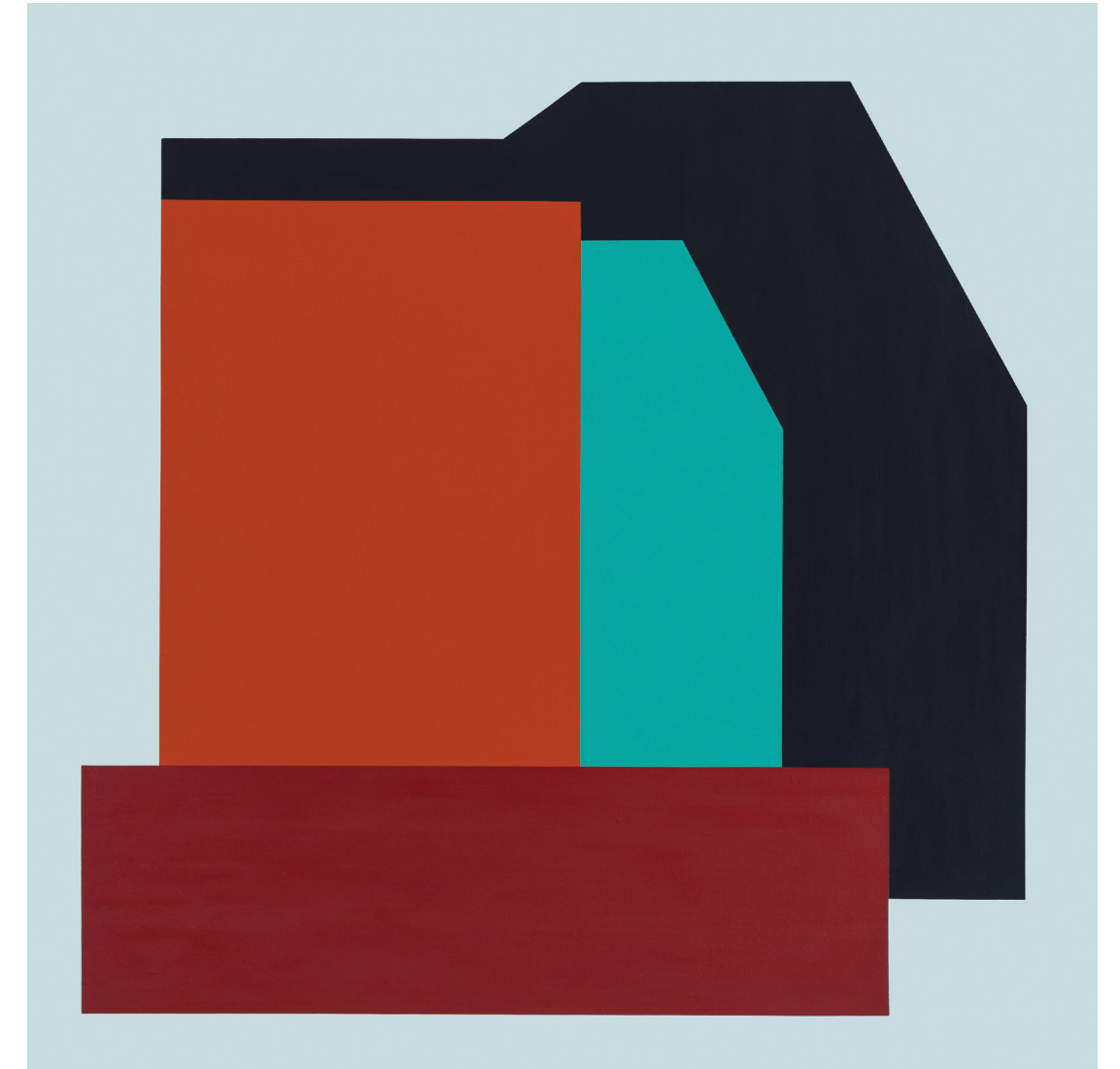
Wilma Tabacco: June 2023



Aqua Alta 6, 2023, acrylic, pigment on wood panel, 40 x 50 cm



Aqua Alta 2, 2023, acrylic, pigment on wood panel, 50 x 40 cm



Campus Martius (Field of Mars #4), 2019, oil on linen, 100x100cm

¹ J. Morris, Venice, Faber & Faber, 1960, 3rd edition, 1993, p. 220

² J de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, Latin translation by G. Ryan and H. Ripperger, Arno Press, New York, 1969, pp. 587-592.