

BEN CRAWFORD

A SLOW MIGRATION



CURATORIAL+CO.

30 AUGUST—16 SEPTEMBER 2023

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Twelve years ago, I left my homeland to come here to Australia to live with my wife's family. I've often thought about what led to that decision and it seems to me that there are countless subconscious influences that brought me here, as well as the obvious factor of falling in love with an Australian. My mother moved to Ireland from England when she was 18. My father was himself a second-generation immigrant in a way – my grandmother migrated from America to marry my Irish grandfather. I write all this to try to explain how my sense of identity is complicated. There's an affinity to many places yet I feel culturally transient. To migrate, therefore, felt like the most normal thing in the world; probably because part of me believed I would be coming back home again shortly. But as things worked out I didn't, and as the years rolled by, I became more settled.

My painting practice over the past few years has been a way for me to come to terms with my feelings about leaving my home and creating another one so far away. As I look now at this body of work there are familiar themes such as the vastness and incomprehensible wildness of the landscape I find myself in.

Lonely figures are almost swallowed up by the dense, savage undergrowth of the wilderness. But in several of the paintings there are groups of people interacting with each other, with the focus shifting away from their environment. My own family features more prominently now too. I wonder if this is a reflection on whether I have finally migrated after all this time. A sense of community, a family, friendships; I suppose these are the things that make it possible to feel rooted in a new land.

Making these paintings presented some technical challenges, but out of these moments of frustration came some discoveries I'm very pleased with. Apart from the studio practice side of things, I've found I have a much more confident approach to creating an interweaving narrative between the works. I don't consider myself a poet, but I found as I worked on the paintings, I wanted to respond to them with words. This really clarified for me the direction I desired the exhibition to follow. Some of the paintings are quite layered (paintings over paintings), some are offcuts of bigger compositions, some have figures buried in a landscape and some have figures born from abandoned trees and skies. These links created a kind of map between the paintings and in strange way a chart of my slow migration.

A SLOW MIGRATION

I look at the maps.
They're torn along the edges,
stained with exes:
Golden promises,
Carelessly wished and hoped for,
No one possesses.

I've ripped them all up,
They are given to the wind
In all directions:
Landmarks and breadcrumbs
Back bearings and compass points -
Station to station.

There was a time spent
Pursuing old horizons
With hesitation.
Retracing my steps
I have arrived at this place.
A slow migration.



A Movement in Twelve Years (Music of a Blazing Star), 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
140cm x 140cm
Framed in dark oak
\$6500



300 Years Went By (Tir Tairngire), 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
217cm x 283cm
Framed in dark oak
\$13,500



Listen to the Children's Songs (Know Your Time), 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
104.5cm x 104.5cm
Framed in dark oak
\$4800

NORTH STAR

Dreams and memories
Wrapped in holy drapery
A dark thread that sows
The blackness of night
Allied to an orphaned light
Burned out long ago



The Afterglow of Western Horizons, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
104.5cm x 109.5cm
Framed in dark oak
\$4900



A Dark Thread That Sows, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
83.5cm x 104.5cm
Framed in dark oak
\$4300



Secrets and Expectations, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
140cm x 140cm
Framed in dark oak
\$6500

BACK BEARINGS

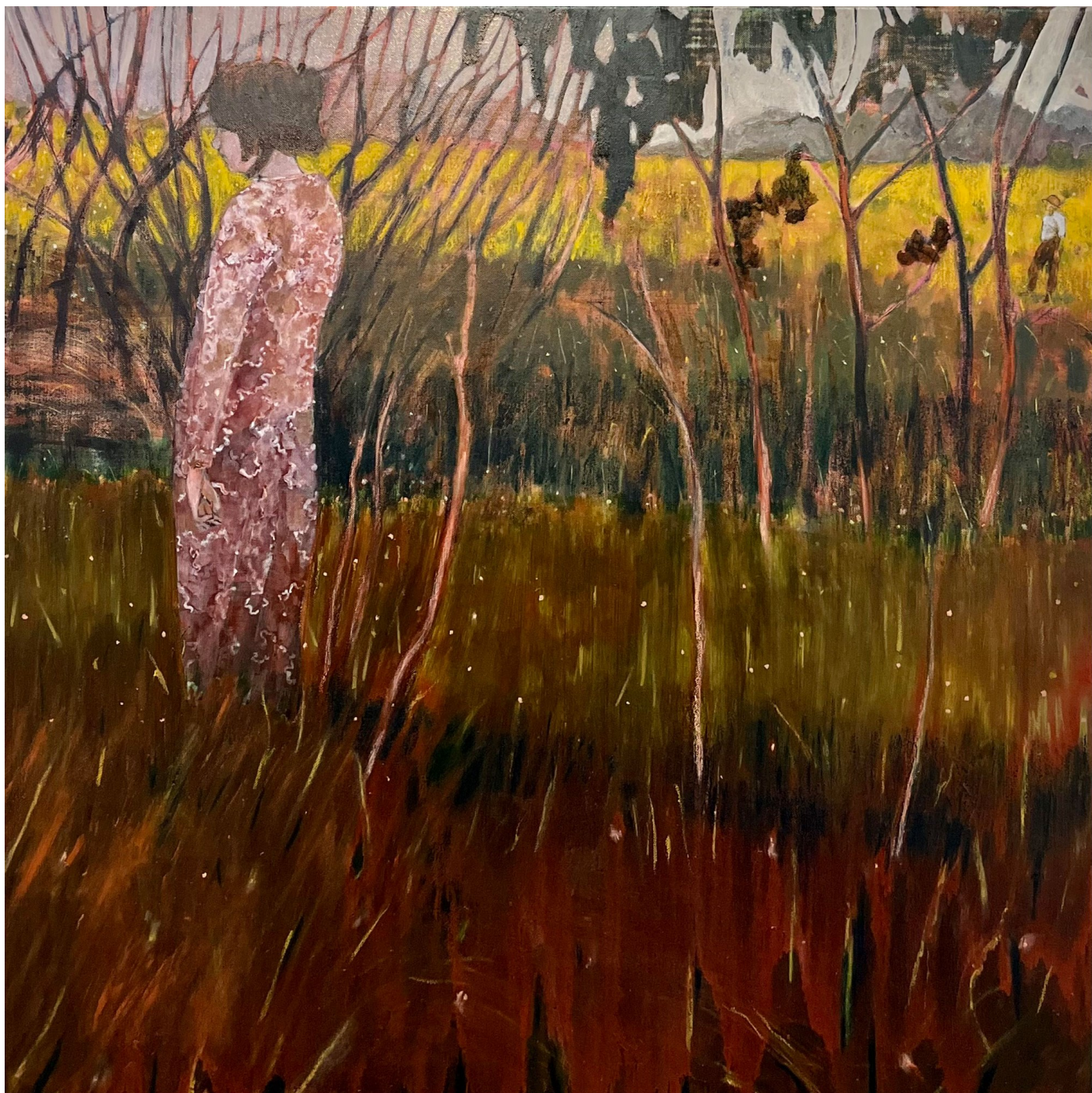
Get thee thy bearings
In frost and heat and shadows
The pathways we tread
Rarely are the ones we know



Get Thee Thy Bearings, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
140cm x 140cm
Framed in dark oak
\$6500



Retracing My Steps, I Have Arrived at This Place, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
104.5cm x 84cm
Framed in dark oak
\$4300



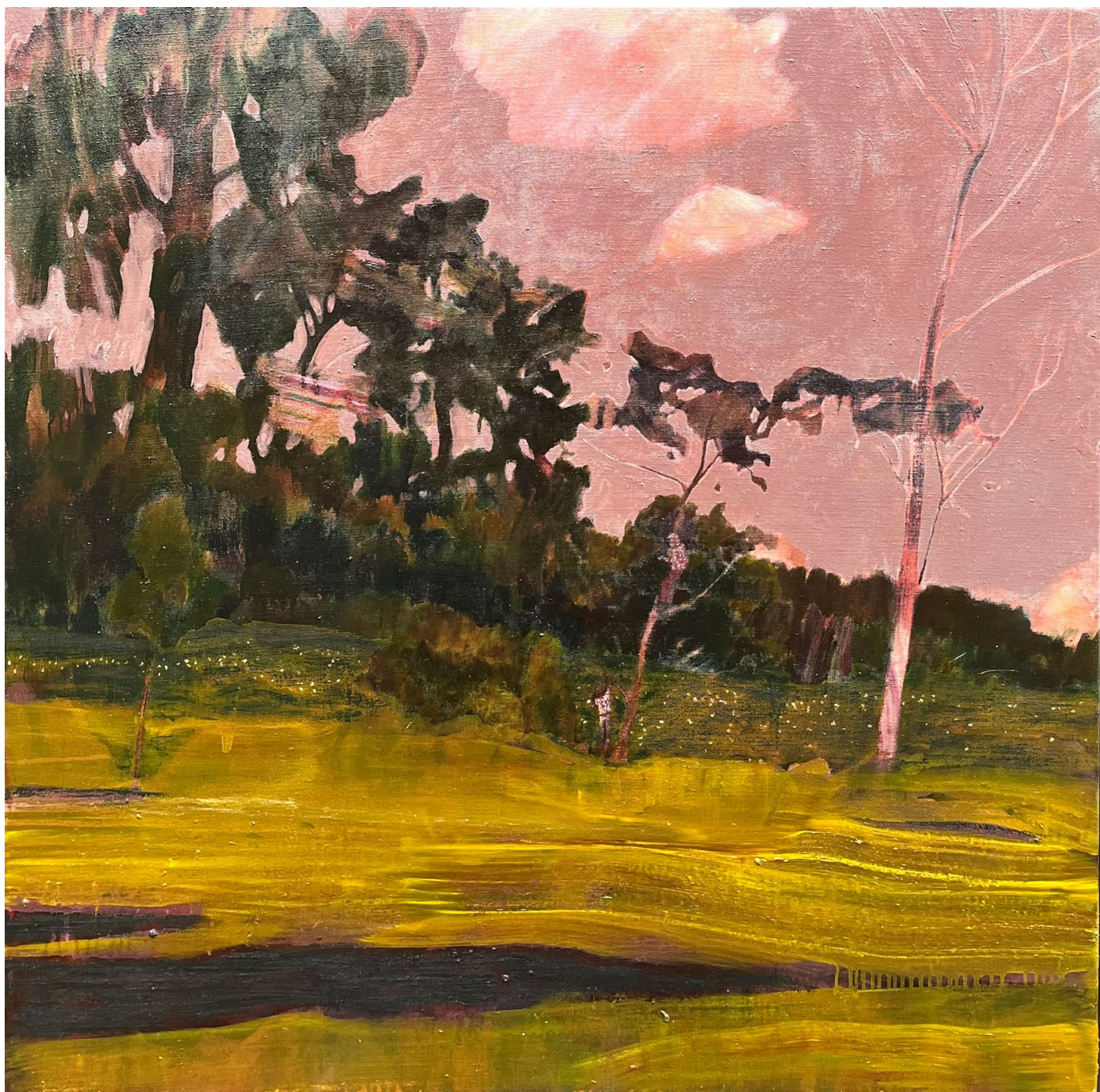
Married to the Land, 2023

Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen

104.5cm x 104.5cm

Framed in dark oak

\$4800



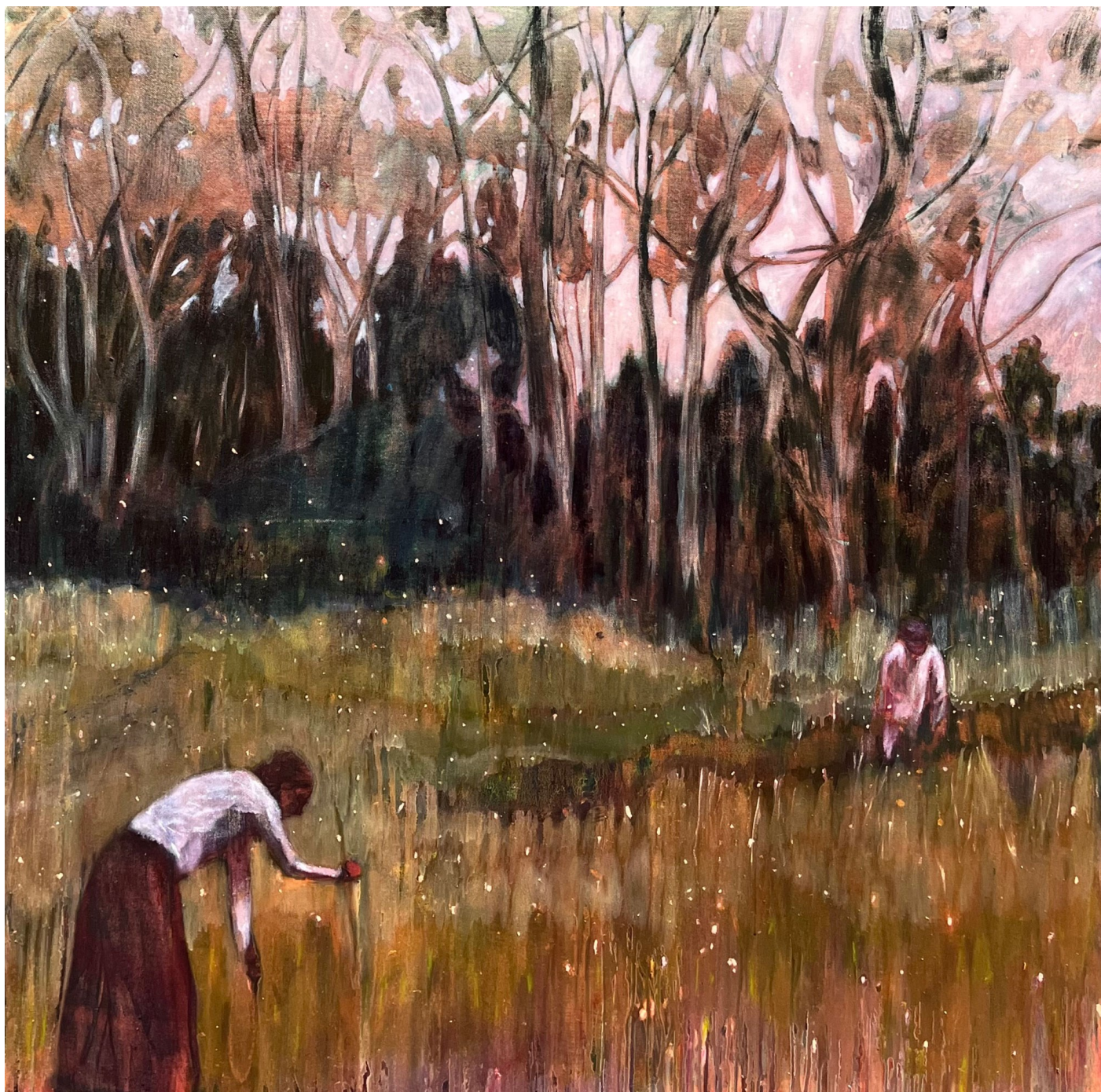
An Echtra (The Honeyed Pathway), 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
115cm x 115cm
Framed in dark oak
\$5300

TRUCE

There is a peace now
Between these conflicting lands
That reside in me.

There is a treaty
Signed in fading memories -

A promise to forget
The things left behind
And to remember, always,
What I have taken.



Tinder Sticks, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
125cm x 125cm
Framed in dark oak
\$5800



Pockets Full of Strange Currency, 2023
Oil, acrylic, oil stick + charcoal on linen
104.5cm x 109.5cm
Framed in dark oak
\$4900



CURATORIAL+CO.

ART GALLERY + ART CONSULTANCY

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Curatorial+Co. acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country on which the gallery stands, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and cultures.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.