

MOON HAVOC

Rod Moss

25 Oct - 15 Nov 2025



The drawings are of the rocky ridgetops and outcrops in and around Mparntwe/Alice Springs, encountered on walks from his front door. The title work takes its name from the poetic fragment inscribed across it: 'Moon havoc fell upon the soil with sacred sadness.' Such inscriptions occur in some drawings to amplify their expressive intent. They are not explicatory. *Moon Havoc* shows a bright quartz outcrop topping a ridge, with quartz shards scattered over the sloping ground. At a sacred site some two hundred kilometres away, shown to him by longtime Arrernte friends, quartz shards are said to be 'pieces of the moon.' Thus, the lunar association of this outcrop and the drawing's aura of reverence.

For almost four decades Moss made narrative paintings in which his friends figured. They feature in his memoirs. The first, *The Hard Light of Day*, won the Prime Minister's award for non-fiction in 2011, attracting national attention as an artist and writer. Both it and its successor, *One Thousand Cuts*, won the NT Chief Minister's Literary Award. Environmental concerns populate the most recent book, *Moon Havoc*, published to coincide with this exhibition.

Rock formations, drawn with loving attention to detail, are pushed to the fore, looming and creaturely, alive with urgency. Vegetation is sparse, small trees mostly leafless, jutt up from the rocks like skeletal fingers. Only the buffel grass flourishes. Scientists now recognise that the grass has wrought an ecological change on the landscape exacerbated by the warming climate. With the repeated wildfires it fuels, destroying fire-sensitive species, it threatens to become a monoculture. This environmental catastrophe, reaching into the arid interiors of bordering states, is not yet widely known nationally, but it weighs heavily on the minds of many in the Centre. Viewers bring, or may not bring, this knowledge to the drawings, but they cannot escape their gravity. Inquiry soon leads here: the rocks will endure, but what else? And who will be able, or want, to live in that world? Its dystopia is evoked in the title poem of the most recent drawing, rocks like a gaping mouth against a blank sky: 'Great silence returns to fill the endless numbered days.'

Kieran Finnane

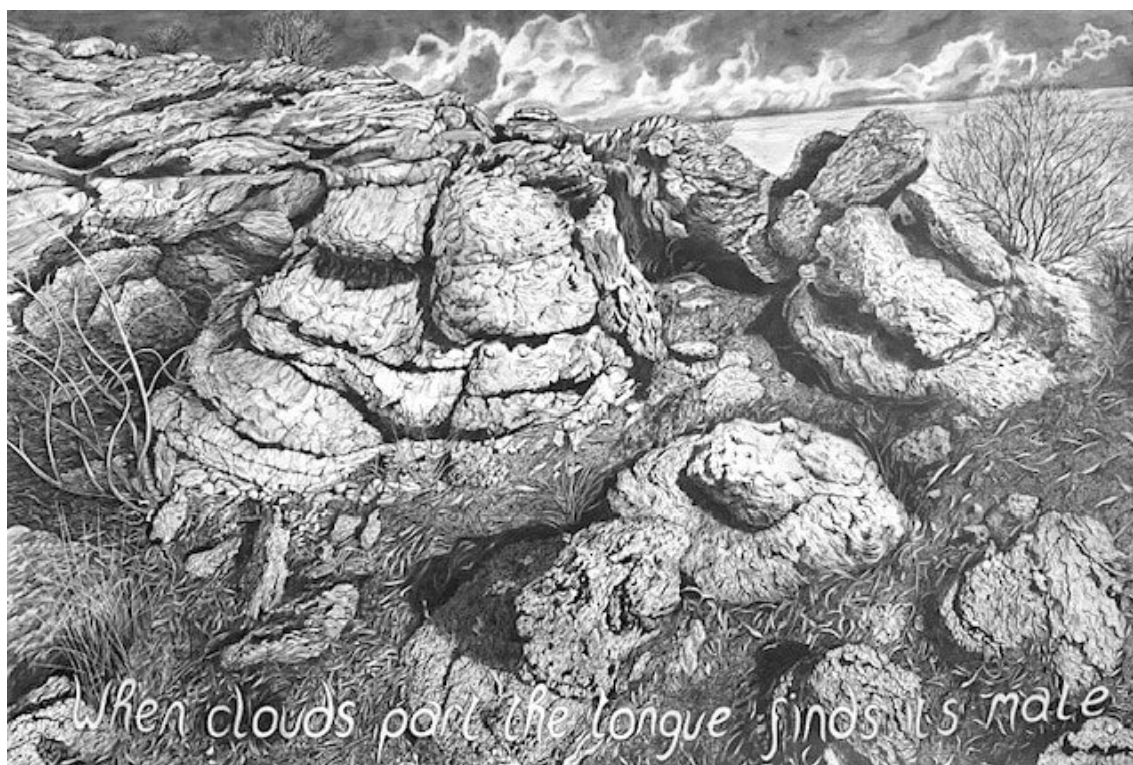
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1



Rod Moss

When Clouds Part the Tongue Finds its Mate, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

101 x 148 cm

\$ 6,700

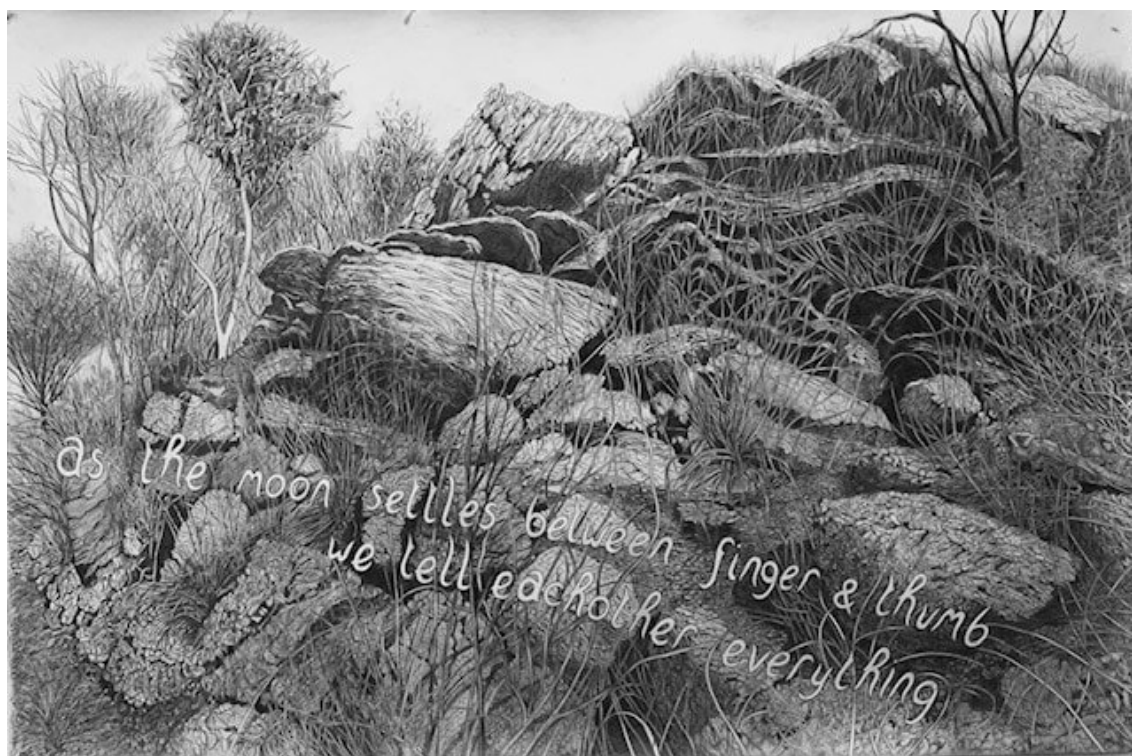
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2



Rod Moss

As the Moon Settles between Finger and Thumb We Tell Each other Everything, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

102 x 153 cm

\$ 6,700

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3



Rod Moss

Night's Simple Breath fell with Tender Gravity, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

103 x 143 cm

\$ 6,700

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4



Rod Moss

Old Heart Dense with Scars, Sap Oozes from Your Wounds, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

104 x 154 cm

\$ 6,700

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5



Rod Moss

Garden, little garden, how your million Small Stars do Bloom, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

112 x 170cm

\$ 6,700

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6



Rod Moss

Moon Havoc Fell Upon the Soil with Sacred Sadness, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

116 x 170 cm

\$ 6,700

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7



Rod Moss

Dancing toe to toe, bloody giddy, sun ablaze in our bellies, 2023

graphite on Waterford paper

108 x 173 cm

\$ 6,700

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8



Rod Moss

First Laughter, then the Whispering Across Uncertain Sands, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

123 x 193 cm

\$ 6,700

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9



Rod Moss

Great Silence returns to find the Endless Numbered Days, 2025

graphite on Waterford paper

110 x 160 cm

\$ 6,700

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10



Rod Moss

Fly, Fly patient Seed. An infant Earth Awaits, 2025
graphite on Waterford paper
110 x 150cm
\$ 6,700

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ARTIST BIO

I've lived in Alice Springs since 1984, writing, painting, and drawing. More than half that time I lectured at Charles Darwin University. Prior to then I was teaching and exhibiting in Melbourne.

Australia's relationship with its First Peoples, following the pattern of European countries worldwide, has been contentious since colonisation. How this relationship was unfolding in Central Australia occupied my attention from the get-go. My creative work concerning this relationship has ineluctably attracted attention in town and far beyond.

The artwork has been widely exhibited and reviewed in Australia and the U.S.A. reaching a significant audience with representation in the 2004 NGV Show, *Australian Art Now*, and featuring among the four other representatives in the Australian chapter of Terry Smith's *Contemporary Art: World Currents*.

Both memoirs, *The Hard Light of Day* and *One Thousand Cuts* won the NT Book of the Year. *Hard Light* also won the Prime Minister's Award for non-fiction 2011.

The drawings, re-describing country close to home, have strong affiliation with the figurative social commentary. It is after all the same country that I've walked, hunted and camped in with the families staffing the paintings during 40 years. The drawings are uniformly grey. While they celebrate with loving detail specific places the tone intends to alert the viewer that our environment is not as pristine and healthy as it appears.

My excitement derives from bringing the look and feel of something into existence that creates the illusion of a parallel world.

Rod Moss