

Matt Arbuckle: *Colour Vision*

The French idiomatically call it 'entre chien et loup', the measure when daylight ends and night begins. The phrase is borrowed word-for-word from the Latin 'inter canem et lupum', 'between a dog and a wolf,' because at the time of day described, one can't tell the difference.

Maybe the difference between rods and cones is similar. Both photoreceptors in the back of your eyes that gather light, picturing your view. One sharp and focused, the other more receptive. The strain you feel squinting through the windscreen is the effort of transitioning between them, a circadian failure to make sense of the world outside. Most car accidents happen at dawn or dusk.

Vision in transitional light is contentious, not because it's volatile experientially, because authorities in eyesight have varied opinions. Your brain tries to make up the space between rods and cones, dogs and wolves, shutting down superfluous activity to fill the gaps in your perception. The point of contention sits between confused cones and a compromising brain: their overlapping impact on quality of vision is difficult to distinguish.

Looking at Matt Arbuckle's paintings, there is a slippage in what appears to be in sight. The ambiguity he's fashioned creates space to focus on sensations of seeing and being: the adjustment of eyes, a settling in to somewhere or something else veiled and vast, the sheen of textile surfaces as you move across the room, bathing in colour, the sense that brought together like this, Arbuckle's canvases could be windows into new topographies.

Landscapes are an enduring feature of his practice – both in his thinking around place and in the perception of his work. The orientation of the three large canvases that anchor this body of work heightens this reading. It's new, this landscape format. It belies that there's a vista somewhere in the folds. You're staring beyond the windscreen at the ranges, you're losing the light.

Layers accumulate across the three large works. The first soaked once, the second twice, and the third three times - an insight in the repetitive procedures that Arbuckle uses to build up rich colour fields. Fewer layers mean no masking or mingling, it's restrained and less forgiving. The success of *Reading the night* shows adept anticipation of the behaviour of pigment and substrate — how versed Arbuckle is in this language of making. More monochrome colourways are a development too. When the amount of light passing through an automatic camera lens is insufficient, it reverts to night vision, black and white.

Here, sight slips between these registers, reflecting an enquiry into the eye's perception and the brain's interjection; how we might stand in place, and tell the difference as colour vision blisters in the back of our eyes.

By Victoria McAdam