

Martin Watson

# The Sacredness of Everyday

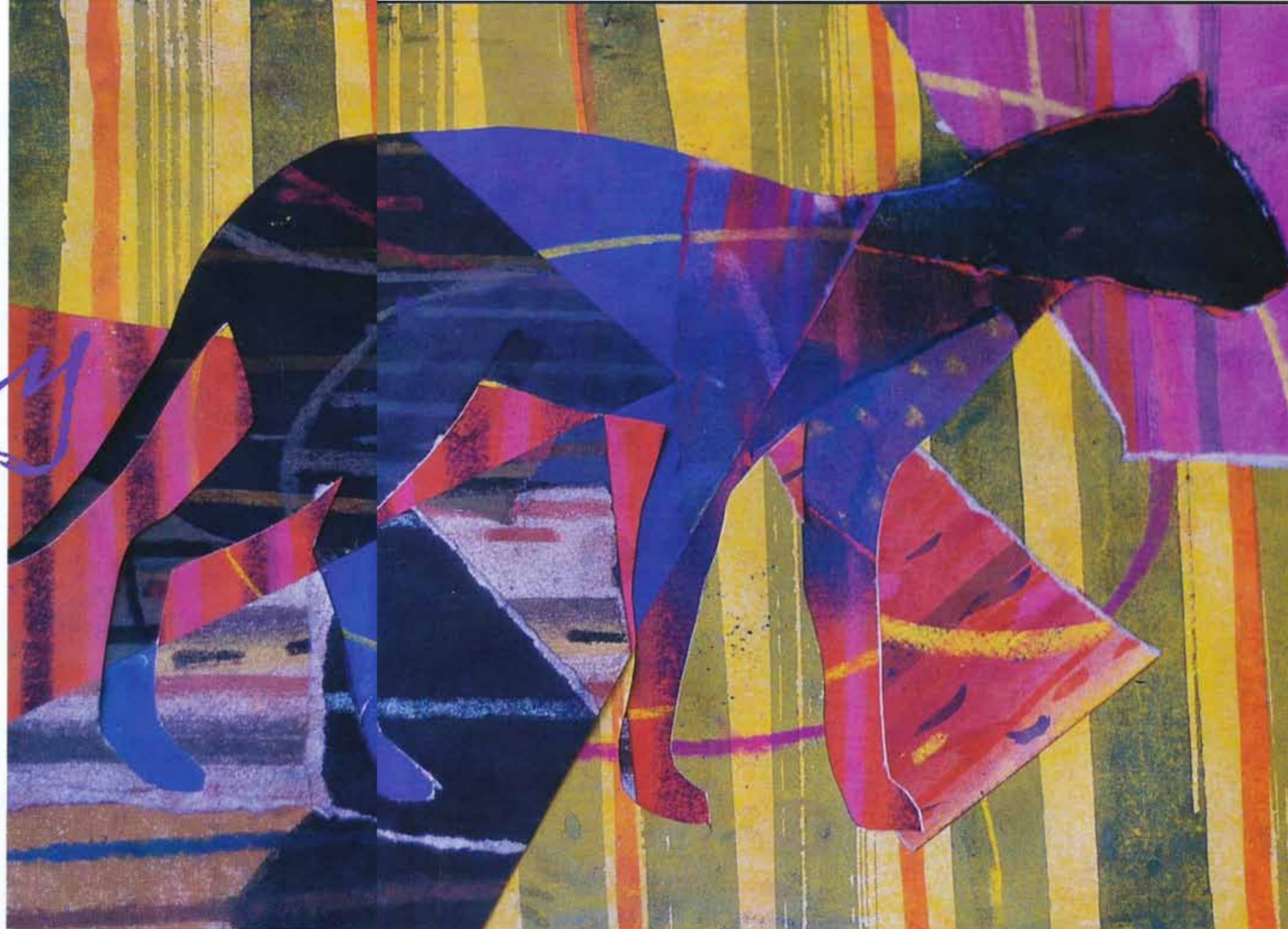
Living

By Nick Wilcox  
Photography by Craig Kershaw

"To paint effectively, you really need enough room to swing a cat," jokes young Australian artist



Martin Watson as we look east out of the window of his small basement studio over the next-door neighbour's Portuguese vegetable patch. "The type of work I do is governed by the size of my studio. For instance, I'd like to use more oils but the lack of space and ventilation means that if I did I'd quickly pass out."



Above: *Cosmic Cat*

It's obvious that a lack of space has not been a burden on Watson's creativity. On the contrary, his capaciously challenged studio appears to have acted as something of an impellent for innovative imagination. "I have to work in a mess. I have to have a lot of crap about, and quite often, to finish a work I might use something that's under my foot, something I've just trodden on ..."

Accompanying his acerbic sense of humour is a keen awareness of the relationship between communities and the environments that these communities create for themselves. Watson's work focuses on the relationship between the natural matter from which we are made and the tangibles with which we surround ourselves. "I don't have a fixed direction, I'm merely reflecting and

commenting on contemporary society and the issues it's dealing with."

Recyclables such as train tickets and milk cartons form striking backgrounds for mixed media studies that invariably include fine etching and liberal use of watercolours. Pieces of human anatomy are juxtaposed with everyday inanimate objects, providing sometimes bleak reminders that one was created by the other. "It's the

Left: *Still Life*Below: *Circuit*Bottom: *Apple Orchard*Opposite page: *The Garden*

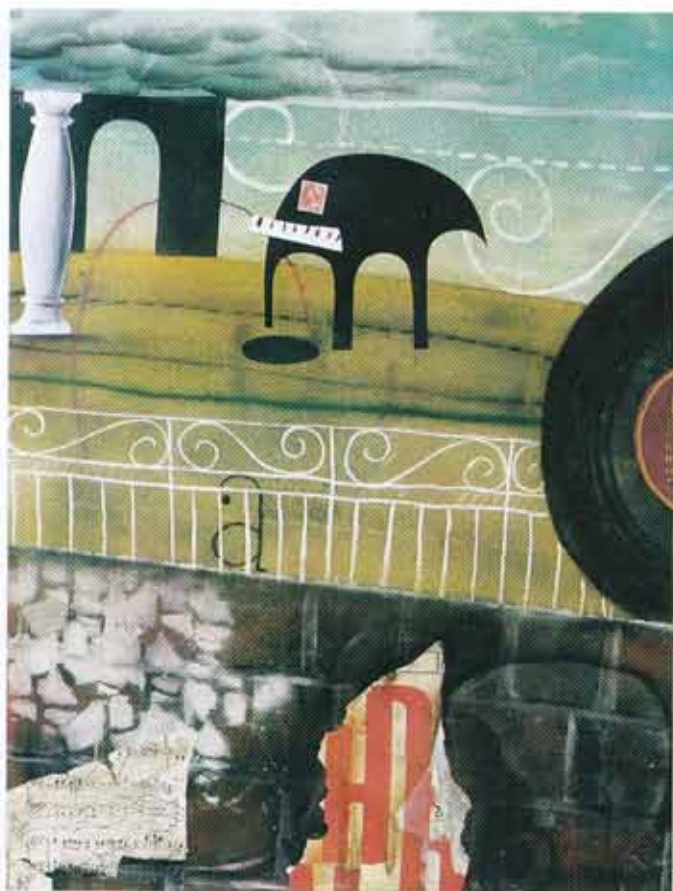
relationships humans have with material objects that I'm trying to explore," he says, as I develop a close relationship with a coffee mug and its consummately brewed contents.

"A lot of my art has an apocalyptic feel to it but generally I try to bring out the 'personality' of an object, with the aim of reflecting the age of information we live in. There's so much information out there at the touch of a button. It's a matter of somehow making sense of it all!"

A self-confessed junk collector (he's "trying to cut down"), Watson loves to play around with perspective. This stems partially from his early fascination with the work of the New York school's Philip Guston, a successful figurative-surrealist in the 1940s who progressed to abstract impressionism and romantic expressionism. Depending on his mood and what's going on in society around him, Watson shuffles from collage representationalism to abstraction. "I don't really have a process, I just get in there and do it

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Above left: *The Director*

Above: *December*

Left: *Hospital*

and don't really think about the style so much as the substance. The process changes, but intuitively what's in my head comes out onto the canvas."

Asked whether he's becoming more abstract as he gets older, Watson says

"well actually I think, in a subtle way, I'm becoming more and more like a cartoonist". In part, he says, it's a dreamlike manifestation of his childhood memories. "When I was young I was always drawing these

quirky, misunderstood cartoons ... I think it's also an attempt to ensure that I use humour in my art ... no matter what you're doing it's important to keep your sense of humour."

Pressed on what it is that drives him, Watson extemporises about that which so many artists describe as their catharsis. "It's soul searching and reassuring. For me it's therapy. It helps me cope with things day to day. I'm really interested in the healing qualities of art ... it really can transcend day-to-day obstacles and materialism. I like to think that my artwork could change people's ideas about something and make them look at things in a different light, convey some sense of sacredness of everyday living." ■