

## HORIZON. BETWEEN

Robyn Bardas

My horizon is not your horizon, because my eye level is not yours.  
The horizon line tells us where we are in the world. It leads us through time and possibility.



Figure 1. *Time(s)* / 2014, Acrylic on Digital Prints, 330gm Rag paper; 152 x 105.5cm.

Horizontal lines are a foundation theme in my Masters research. They recur alone or grouped in my studio practice, and function as a formal device, affecting viewpoint and lateral motion, and marking place. The idea of liminality or in-between space is addressed here. The works considered are large-scale photographic inkjet prints and gouache on paper, sized 152 x 105.5cm. Horizontal lines in these works imply horizon – earthly and psychological, spiritual and allegorical, as in “walking the line,” “drawing the line,” dichotomy, scar, grief, barrier, connection, vastness.

The lines in this work are sometimes ‘between:’ between the stones, between the histories. As Homi K Bhabha writes in *The Location of Culture*, “Being in the ‘beyond,’ then, is to inhabit an intervening space ... but to dwell ‘in the beyond’ is also ... to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side.”<sup>1</sup>

A focal notion in my practice, the verb to *limn*, derived from Latin and Middle English, means to shed light or highlight; to illuminate manuscripts; as well as simply to "depict or describe in painting or words."<sup>2</sup> It refers to a threshold or lintel, and represents a transitional idea of neither in nor out. It speaks also of ritual initiations in non-space.

*Liminality* is found initially in the transitional spaces of the architecture of these images. Manifest in the sixteenth-century ramparts surrounding the Old City of Jerusalem, where the original photographs were taken, these in-between spaces allow a certain expansion of thought and an undoing of mono-faceted 'fact': an archer's slit or *arrow loop*, a plumbed water channel, building blocks from varying eras on a tourist walkway, the exterior montage of bricks in a prison wall (Figures 1-4). These small, linking, transitional physical spaces provide a welcome uncertainty, akin to the use of ritual non-space. In their presence one senses concurrent time infinitely layered in present time. Painted lines in the works build into these photographed spaces.

The Hebrew word *da'at* translates as knowledge or consciousness, and it too involves the idea of liminality. In the heart position on the Jewish Tree of Life, *da'at* is placed where all energies are united. In Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) *da'at* is an internalised 'empty slot,' not always accepted as existing – an unspoken knowing.<sup>3</sup> My superimposed



Figure 2. *Time(s) II*, 2014, Acrylic on Digital Prints, 330gm Rag paper, 152 x 105,5cm.

painted line too may be read as an empty slot or interfering otherness, incongruous yet contained within the whole. The mini long paintings themselves are redolent of energy, atmospheric cloud movement and occluded horizon. They are a vast, internalised *da'at*, slipped between the physicalities of rock walls.

Long, thin painted rectangles are also a void or portal through which to enter. This space may be read as a landscape, seascape, spacescape, as an internal environment, emotion, or state of being, allowing a dreaminess or imagining to emerge, as if breaking through the material representation set in the photograph. The work does not take a stance or make an opinion. It provides a line on which to lean one's own thoughts.



Figure 3. *Akhshav (Now)* 2014, Acrylic on Digital Prints, 330gm Rag paper; 152 x 105.5cm.

My painted lines intervene with the ubiquity and predictability of the mechanised photograph, on the paper and in the viewer's understanding. Each line's colour, in neutral sandstone tones, is sympathetic to the rhythm and palette of its digital image, melding into a synthesised whole work. The paint itself is luscious, viscous and applied with fingers.

The word *horizon* comes to us through Middle English via Old French and ultimately Latin, as well as being etymologically related to the Greek terms *kuklos*, 'limiting circle,' *horizein*, 'bound,' 'limit,' 'divide,' 'separate,' and *horos*, 'boundary.'<sup>4</sup> An apparent visual differentiation where we imagine earth and sky meet, horizon refers also to the extent of one's knowledge or potential. Visually, we read horizontal as prostrate/ restful/ continuum/ landscape, while vertical means standing/ divisive/ strong/ human. As the position of a horizon exists relative to the viewer's eye, it is an entirely subjective and moveable construct. According to poststructuralist theoretician Louis Marin:

The limitless horizon is one of the main characteristics of the romantic landscape, an indefinite extent related to the display of a transcendence at this extremity where it seems possible to have a glimpse of the other side of the sky, a 'beyond space' encountered through the poetic and rhetorical figure of the twilight, in terms of which a bridge seems to be established between the visible and the invisible.<sup>5</sup>

Set in Israel, these four works marry a material world, found in the photographed walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, with a spiritual, multi-layered energy applied in paint. A melding of selected liminal spaces in both media, they embody the potency of the place itself as well as the notion of horizontality.

A Hawea Flat resident since 1996, **Robyn Bardas** is an MFA candidate at the Dunedin School of Art. Originally from Melbourne, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) from RMIT in 1989, she has exhibited regularly in painting, video, performance, theatre, photography and mixed media. Her current research focuses on the significance of the horizontal line.



Figure 4 *Time.Line*. 2014, Acrylic on Digital Prints, 330gm Rag paper; 152 x 105.5cm.

- 1 Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Psychology Press, 1994), 10.
- 2 *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 3 Basics in Kabbalah: Da'at, 23 Jan 2014, <http://www.inner.org/sefirot/sefdaat.htm>.
- 4 <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/horizon>.
- 5 Louis Marin, "Frontiers of Utopia: Past and Present," *Critical Inquiry*, 19:3 (1993), 397-420, at 407.