



Ride III, Acrylic on canvas, 184 x 205 cm, 2004



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## Philip Trusttum: just william

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Mingyi III, Acrylic on canvas, 182 x 203 cm, 2004



Willie II, Acrylic on canvas, 184 x 204 cm, 2004

This new series of paintings entitled 'Just William', depicts vibrant large scale characterisations of Philip Trusttsum's three year old grandson William. In reviewing a long term 2003 show, New Zealand and international art critic T.J McNamara poignantly noted "Philip Trusttsum has that great gift of making paintings that are recognisably his, but always fresh, surprising and new."<sup>1</sup>

Trusttsum's current family life is central to this new series of work. His widowed daughter and her infant son William now live with the artist; it is this circumstance which inspired the series. Three year old William has forced Philip to experience what he describes as "re-parenting, and exploring the role of *parent* in *grandparent*". As well as the intimacy between Philip and William, the wider implication of the series is an exploration of the unique bond between grandparents and grandchildren.

Although "the little chap" is central to the series, it is his likeness which Trusttsum employs "to make the image work as a painting, rather than an agenda."<sup>14</sup> William

is the face of this series, but Trusttsum's terrain is the subject. Through Trusttsum's abstract interpretation, the subjects revolt against the real, emerging as disjointed and detached from ordinary life. Trusttsum's dominant style however does not distort the delicacy of his subject, and William's hedonism and innocence remains palpable.



2 Again, 183 x 208 cm, 2004



Look, 184 x 204 cm, 2004

Typically, warm colours and loose brushwork convey Trusttsum's pervading optimistic energy.<sup>5</sup> Such energy is evident in *Will Ya II* as young William stands pensively before his grandfather's paintings. Behind William looms a fantastical creature from Trusttsum's acclaimed *Homage to Goya* series of 2004. Vast areas of red and green leap from the canvas, dwarfing William who paradoxically sits contently playing in the security of his grandfather's studio. *Will Bucket III* exemplifies Trusttsum's reduction of form where William, here boisterous and confident, is reduced to fragmented shapes and sections of colour. Like a "one eyed monster"<sup>16</sup> William entertains himself wearing a bucket on his head as he tears about self-assuredly on his trike.

Trusttsum is the bearer of an innate perception for colour, form and composition.<sup>2</sup> As a student of Rudolph Gopas at Ilam Art School his technical aptitude was soon discovered. For the past four decades Trusttsum has woven the diverse influences of artists such as Gopas, Van Gogh, Picasso, Kandinsky, Klimt and Klee through his distinctive subjects. *Just William* demonstrates Trusttsum's artistic exuberance and vitality most obviously through the aesthetic result of his technique. This flamboyant process of rubbing, painting, scratching, rolling and stomping is characterised by an openness of form and detail distinguished by colour, outline and contour. "Trusttsum's life and paintings are inextricably interwoven, allowing him to paint from his experiences, and present them as part of a bigger 'world view'."<sup>13</sup> We are exposed to the artist's enthusiasm for life itself through a compelling expression of the ordinary.

In *2 Again* Trusttsum has captured William's hesitation as he gazes reservedly into a world without his father. This timidity is replaced with excitement throughout the

series as William gains confidence. His childish fervour is captured in *Look* as William excitedly plays with his toy truck, which through Trusttsum's animated portrayal, assumes a cheeky personality of its own.

Although *Just William* is born out of tragic circumstances, these paintings are a celebration of life and the innocence of childhood. Trusttsum has captured the essence of pure unadulterated fun and transports us momentarily back to our pre-school days. Here the grandparents' home is a place of warmth, happiness and indelible memories - an enduring place William will always go back to, if only in his thoughts.



2 Tennis I, 212 x 184 cm, 2004



Will's Bucket III, 112 x 92 cm, 2004

1 T.J McNamara *The New Zealand Herald* Wednesday October 15, 2003  
 2 T.J McNamara *The New Zealand Herald* Wednesday October 15, 2003.  
 3 John Gow and Elizabeth Caughey, *Contemporary New Zealand Art III*, page 77  
 4 Conversation with the artist, 17/08/2005  
 5 Conal McCarthy 'Pictures at an Exhibition - Trusttsum does Mussorgsky' *Art New Zealand* No. 113 Summer 2004-05, Pp 54-57, Page 55.  
 6 Conversation with the artist, 17/08/2005