

**‘WE HAVE COME TO THE SHORES,
AND PREPARE TO ENTER’:¹
A VISUAL TRIBUTE TO DAVID MALOUF**

MANDY MARTIN

I decided to make studies of the Lake while I was at Paruku, a massive inland lake in the Tanami Desert, but make studio paintings about it at home. I had been re-reading David Malouf’s *Ransom* and I had also been thinking about passages from his *An Imaginary Life*. In both books, the shoreline is the memorable stage-set for human drama. The passage ‘It is time, not space, he is staring into’² sums up the feeling of awe I felt gazing at, or into, or even from, Paruku. As an artist it was tempting to walk straight to the Lake and, like many of the haunting photos taken of it, paint the dramatic dead trees in their watery environment. But I hesitated, feeling there was more for me to say by stepping back beyond the littoral zone of dead trees and samphire, into the surrounding grasses, coolibah, termite mounds and red sand.

I decided to use the panoramic format, to picture with the natural pan of the eyes some of the different elements at play in this environment. The viewpoint I chose was not elevated but often sitting or crouching in the grasses or standing under the trees with my ironing-board easel.

Walmajarri Traditional Owner, Hanson Pye named my five works ‘Falling Star,’ where all the dead trees point straight up after the star fell into the middle of the Lake.

Above all, it is the brilliance of the falling stars plunging toward the Lake through inky night skies that provides the material for profound story, as well as source material for the visual creators, the scientists and story-tellers of Paruku. The works they create are a reflection of this unique place after ‘leaving the shores.’

WORKS CITED

Malouf, David. *An Imaginary Life*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1978.

_____. *Ransom*. Sydney: Random House, 2009. 6.

Morton, Steve, Mandy Martin, Kim Mahood and John Carty, eds. *Desert Lake. Art, Science and Stories from Paruku*. Collingwood: CSIRO Publishing, 2013.

MANDY MARTIN: FALLING STAR PAINTINGS



Falling star 1 2012 pigments and oil on linen, 76 x 280 cm



Falling star 2 2012 pigments and oil on linen, 76 x 280 cm



Falling star 3 2012 pigments and oil on linen, 76 x 280 cm



Falling star 4 2012 pigments and oil on linen, 76 x 280 cm



Falling star 5 2012 pigments and oil on linen, 76 x 280 cm

¹ Malouf, David, *An Imaginary Life*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1978, 138.

² Malouf, David, *Ransom*, Sydney: Random House, 2009, 6.