Coalface; Choreography of War Reportage; Pathfinder Closing; The Catalyst, Lifting a Helpless Patient, Sparky the Culture Hero, Ground Control, Treatment for Hysteria, Artificial Respiration (Second position); Hydration Tactic - works of art exhibited in the exhibition Primavera

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Abstract
These works dramatise the familiar in order to create a more seductive dimension that might cause the viewer to drift elsewhere, to a stranger place where worlds collapse and intersect. Nature is depicted as transient and ephemeral within ambiguous environments that reverse or rearrange ordered thinking. Humanity is seen as suspended between aid and attack, or support and threat, while also intrinsically linked to the natural world. Paradoxical relationships between nature and culture emerge.

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Cover image: Madeleine Kelly
Pathfinder: Crying, 2005 (detail)
oil on canvas, 240 x 189 cm
Private collection, Brisbane
Photograph: John O'Brien
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MADELEINE KELLY

These works dramatise the familiar in order to create a more seductive dimension that might cause the viewer to drift elsewhere, to a stranger place where worlds collapse and intersect. Nature is depicted as transient and ephemeral within ambiguous environments that reverse or rearrange ordered thinking. Humanity is seen as suspended between aid and attack, or support and threat, while also intrinsically linked to the natural world. Paradoxical relationships between nature and culture emerge.

Inspired by the myths Claude Levi-Strauss examined in his book The Raw and the Cooked, I have used animals as metaphors for human behaviour. In these Brazilian myths, the deer represents water and conversely is diametrically opposed to fire, hence its role smouldering fire or pumping water. However, the paintings add a contemporary dimension to these ancient myths by examining an extreme form of cooking: the combustion of fossil fuels.

Each of these works contains mediations between raw nature (oil) and cooked nature (its burning). While each painting’s subject is that of transformation (from nature to culture), the paintings are equally objects of transformation. The content of one painting may be perceived as the inverse of another. In Ground Control (2004), ancient club moss, a fern-like plant that was the basis of what constitutes much of our fossil fuel reserve today, is transformed into a consumable. Shell Oil. In Coalface (2004), coal is burnt and consumed. This system allows me to create an open narrative between works that is logical without being overly didactic.

Madeleine Kelly 2005