

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009 SA MINES & ENERGY JOURNAL

Topical Landscapes

The complex and controversial use of land inspires Robert Habel's bold paintings.

ARTISTIC LICENCE

24

South Australian artist Robert Habel is drawn to the industrial use of land for his striking landscapes. He is intrigued by the harsh Australian landscape and the ways in which it is affected by human activity.

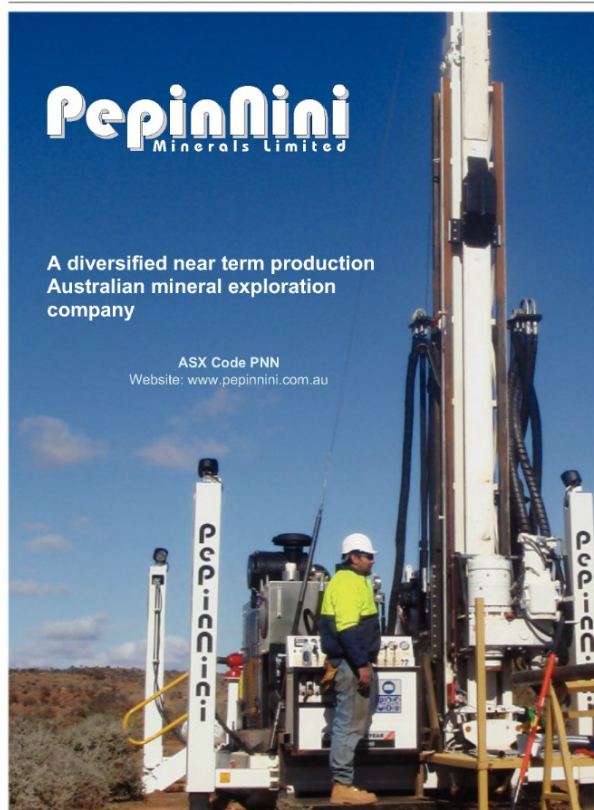
Habel's SA landscapes bear little resemblance to the nostalgic, pastoral paintings of Hans Heysen and his contemporaries. Rather, it is the complex and sometimes controversial use of land that piques his interest.

The artist aims to create works that show contemporary landscape issues, inspire public discussion, contribute to the national psyche, and invoke passion and intrigue.

Habel is drawn to sites where development is taking place; where contemporary use of land alters landscapes and can divide opinions. It is the interactions between people, and between people and the environment, that make a site interesting to him.



Pelican Point Tracks



PepinNini
Minerals Limited

A diversified near term production
Australian mineral exploration
company

ASX Code PNN
Website: www.pepinnini.com.au

He records what he observes and understands about the place, about the issues and effects of the interactions.

Unexpected viewpoints captured on canvas can be a catalyst for discussion. For example, Habel began painting at Gillman in the 1990s, when debate raged about proposed developments, including a multi-function polis (MFP) and a prison. His Gillman exhibition of this work at Port Adelaide was incorporated into a public forum where the managers of the MFP explained the project to the public, responding to questions and criticisms.

Habel welcomes this practical use of art. He believes art has a legitimate part to play describing contemporary issues, and offering new or surprising ways to perceive what might be familiar subject matter.

Much of Habel's work is done on site – he treks through bush to capture the severity of the environment. His art sometimes shows a battle with the elements, of working in extremes of cold or heat, in rain or dust storms. He lets the wind, raindrops, grasses and dust impact on his work, so the paintings reflect the physicality of his chosen environments.

In 2009, he is seeking out new industrial landscapes to paint, such as wind and solar farms and new developments in the mining industry.

The South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy is currently hosting an exhibition of Habel's work at 290 Glen Osmond Road, Fullarton. His work is also at the Peter Walker Fine Art Gallery in Walkerville.

To view Habel's work online, go to: www.roberthabel.com.au



Excav. Site, Tamar Valley