

# ART 3

## The Sydney Morning Herald

### WHAT TO SEE IN MELBOURNE'S GALLERIES

By Dan Rule - July 24, 2015

#### JUSTIN WILLIAMS: STAINED MOUNTAIN

While mystic forest scenes, occult characters, long beards and deep green-blue palettes are all the rage in certain segments of the painting lexicon, the new show from young Melbourne artist and one-time illustrator Justin Williams offers one of the more convincing examples.

Depicting characters from his local environment in the Dandenong Mountains, Williams' intermittently large and small canvases and works on paper show a host of idiosyncratic, guitar-strumming, pipe-smoking, beard-caressing characters, each summoned to the surface amid a miasma of crude, loose strokes and dense, nonetheless gentle underpainting. Certain figures assume the guise of peculiar idols, as do the artist's quite charming totemic sculptures.

A work on paper, *Baba Desi*, sees a figure cloaked in a shimmering shawl against a deep blue backdrop, while a larger painting on canvas sees a bearded fellow perched cross-legged, his mind adrift as wisps of what might be either smoke or plant life enshroud and envelope his pallid form.

The strongest of these works skimp on the flourishes and lyricism for gloomy landscapes and wraith-like forms. A favourite sees an owl or eagle rise from a black pyramidal shape, its eyes wide and dark and its wings rough-hewn. It is an example of form, gesture and texture, without the unnecessary trimmings.

Until August 1; Anna Pappas Gallery, 2-4 Carlton Street, Prahran, 9521 7300



Justin Williams' *The Clearing*, oil and pigment on Belgian linen.