



An elemental approach: works from the collection
The Withey Family Gallery

Friday 18 October 2013– Sunday 6 July 2014

In the fifth century BC the Greek philosopher, scientist and healer Empedocles believed that all matter was comprised of four elements – earth, air, fire and water. This theory was later supported and expanded by Aristotle. The idea that these four elements comprised all matter was the cornerstone of philosophy, science and medicine for two thousand years. Although these theories are now known to be untrue, the elements of earth, air, fire and water remain a source of fascination and the basis of many systems of belief.

The four elements align with the four states of matter that form the basis of modern science, being solid (earth), gas (air), plasma (fire) and water (liquid). The same four elements have also been used to describe a person's temperament. Hippocrates used earth, air, fire and water to outline the four 'humours' found in the body. The humours of ancient times were linked to four unique personality types associated with the signs of the zodiac. Some believe the elements influence character traits, behaviour, emotions, thinking and intuition.

An elemental approach considers these interesting, historical, theoretical and perhaps puzzling notions as its base. Utilising the Gallery's collection of landscapes and portraits, the exhibition includes works in a variety of media by artists such as G.W. Bot, Robert Hannaford, Euan Macleod, John Olsen, Tim Storrier, Judy Watson and Hui Haie Xie.

Robert Hannaford

Bill 1990

oil on board

176 x 116cm

Acquired as the Winner of the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, 1990
Tweed River Art Gallery Collection