

AMBERGRIS

Steve Lopes Paintings

“ Consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return! ”

Herman Melville
Moby Dick (1851)

For Brian

Foreword

It was awe and curiosity, a fascination for the “overwhelming idea of the great whale”, that lured Herman Melville’s Ishmael into the hunt for Moby Dick. These are the qualities that seem to me to animate Steve Lopes’s paintings. In some we see complete skeletons. In others, whale bones abstracted into surprising forms: callipers, a harpoon, perhaps a model aeroplane. The living whale is both revealed and concealed by its bones – a tension that Lopes suggests with his juxtaposition of clothed and naked human figures. Melville himself wrote that the skeleton of the whale “furnishes but little clue to the shape of his fully invested body”.

Some years ago I visited Bruny Island in Tasmania. In the early nineteenth century whaling thrived at Adventure Bay. As the whalers boiled up their try-pots the sky would have been streaked with smoke and the beach strewn with cinders. Their task was

to strip the carcass of all its saleable material – not just the oil that fuelled lamps and lubricated machines but the misnamed “whalebone” or baleen used to make umbrellas, brushes and women’s corsets, and spermaceti for candles. Whale meat could be eaten; teeth were carved into scrimshaw. What remained after the butchery was the skeleton: massive, awkward, uneconomical. You can still see whale ribs and vertebrae hanging from rusty wire cradles on some of the old shacks.

Lopes’s pictures reminded me of those macabre souvenirs of an industry that in a very few years consumed its own future. At first sight the whale bones look incongruous in their settings, inanimate objects belonging to another idiom. Yet in their shapes and shadows and colours they echo the landscape and the figures in it. Scattered or complete, they possess a peculiar grace.

Tom Gilling
July 2003

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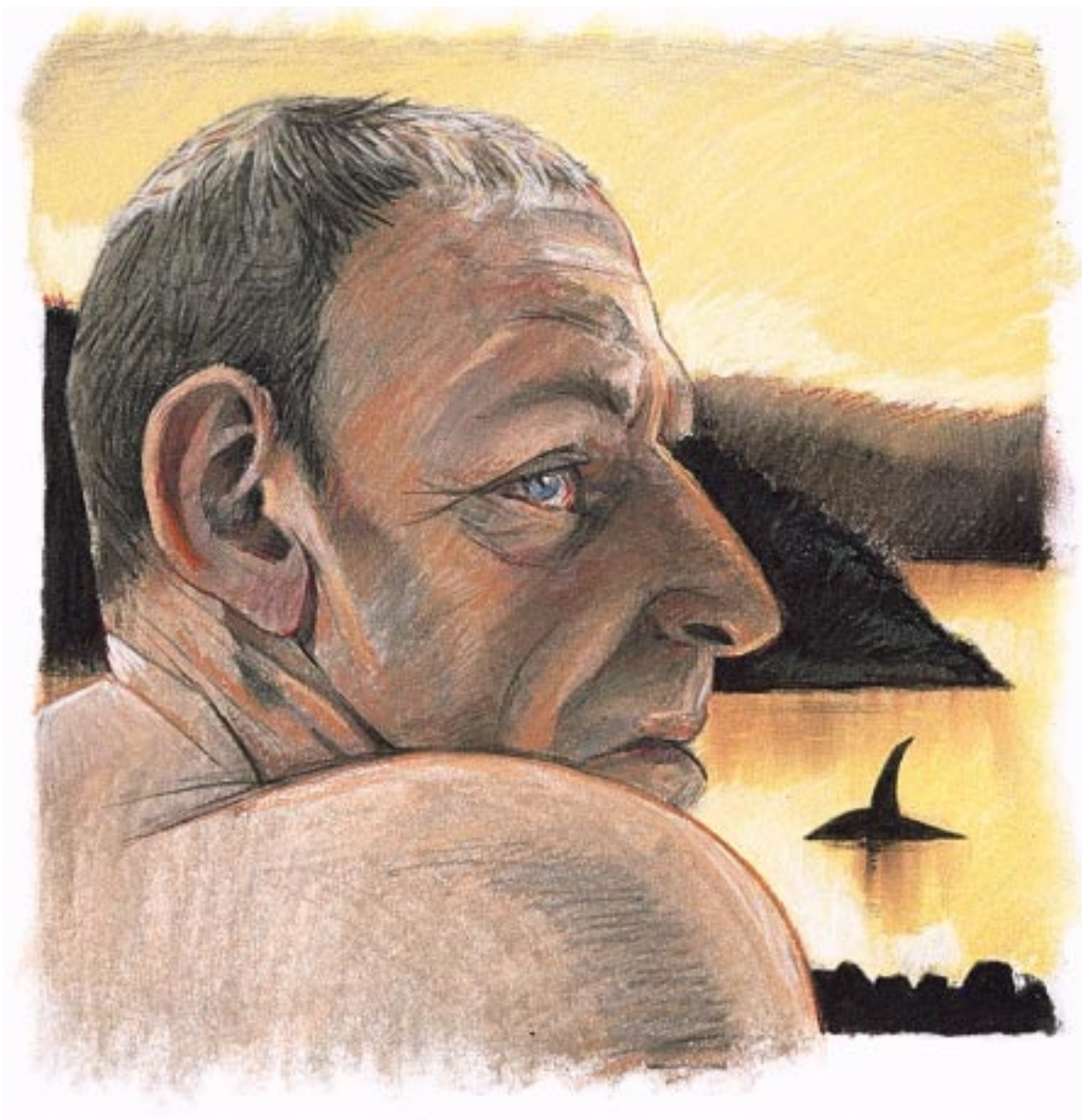


Plate 1. The Whale Watcher – Edén.
Mixed media, 40cm x 60cm.

Edén

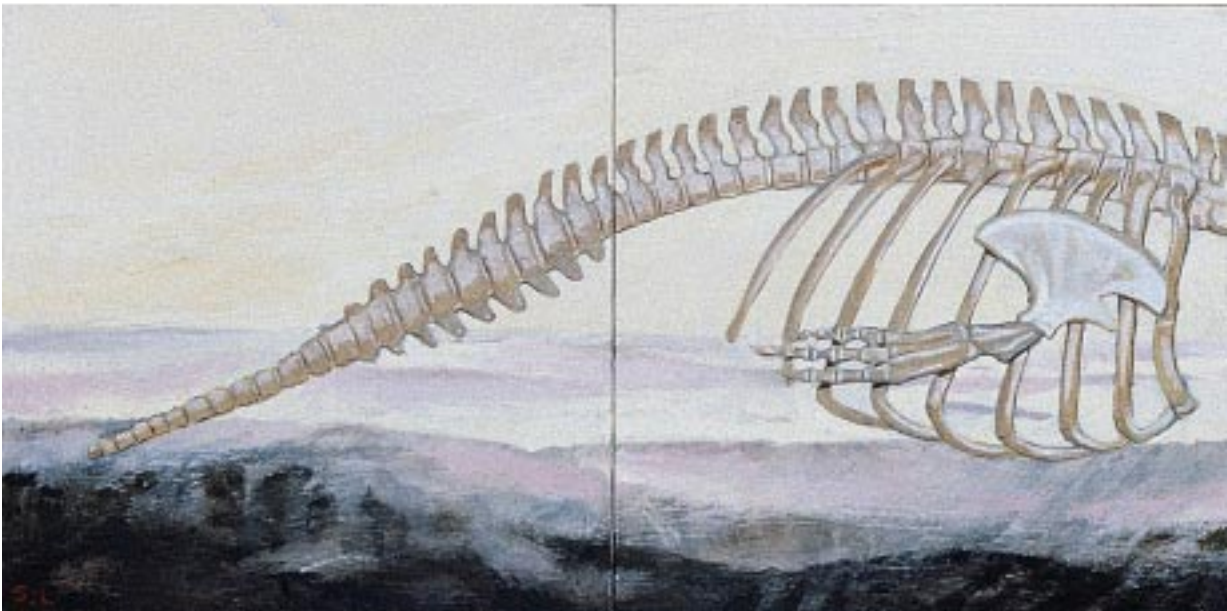
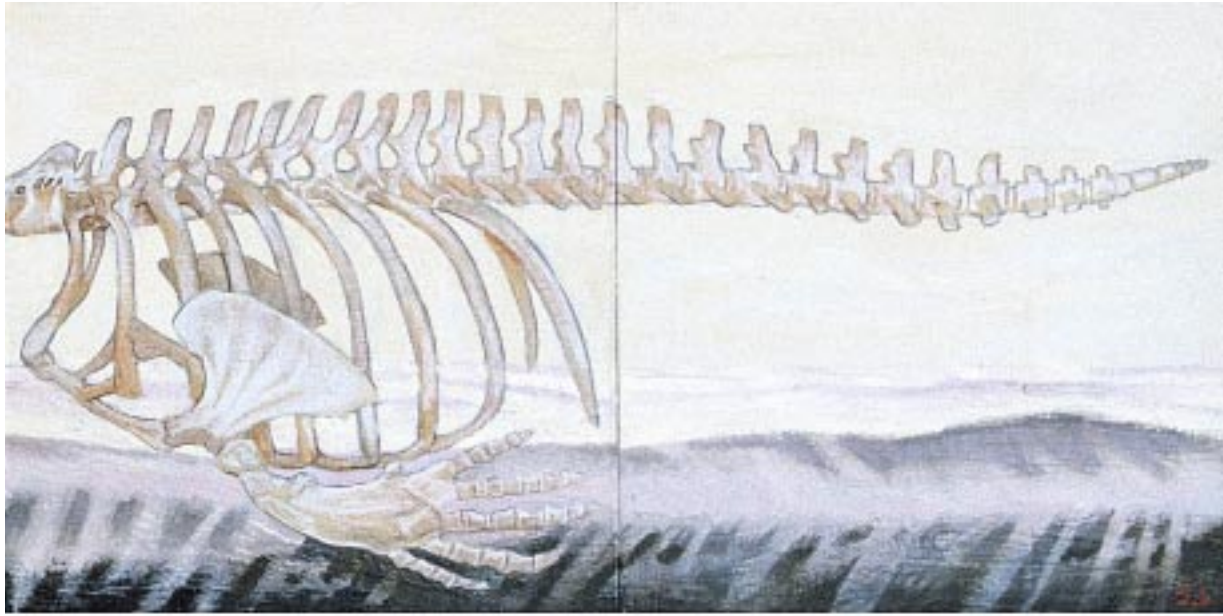


Plate 2. Whale Visionary I & II
Oil on board, 16cm x 64cm.



Lozano



Plate 3. Ambergis – The Heart Shaped Bone.
Oil on board, 110cm x 90cm.

Ambergis



Plate 4. The Gateway.
Oil on canvas, 140cm x 170cm.

Rogier



Plate 5. Kiah Offertory.
Oil on canvas, 93cm x 70cm.

Roger

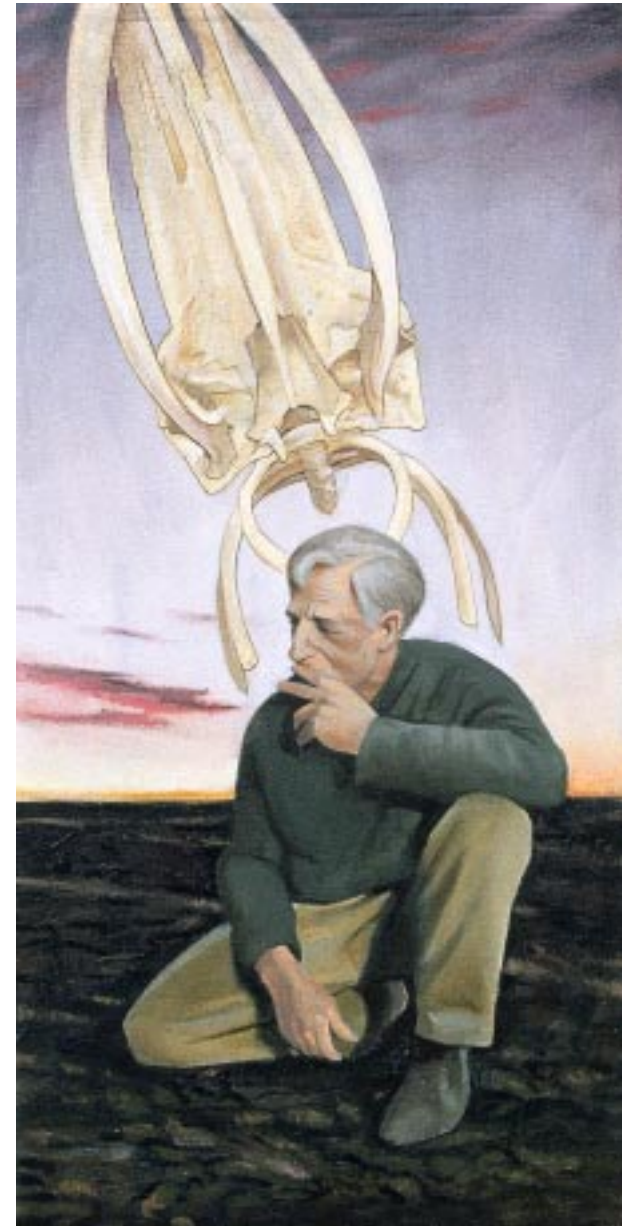


Plate 6. Cetacean Relic I & II.
Oil on canvas, 66cm x 33cm.

Loggia



Plate 7. Tidal Configuration.
Oil on canvas, 138cm x 142cm.

Rogier



Plate 8. Man with Whale Skull, Twofold Bay.
Oil on canvas, 120cm x 95cm.

Whiteley

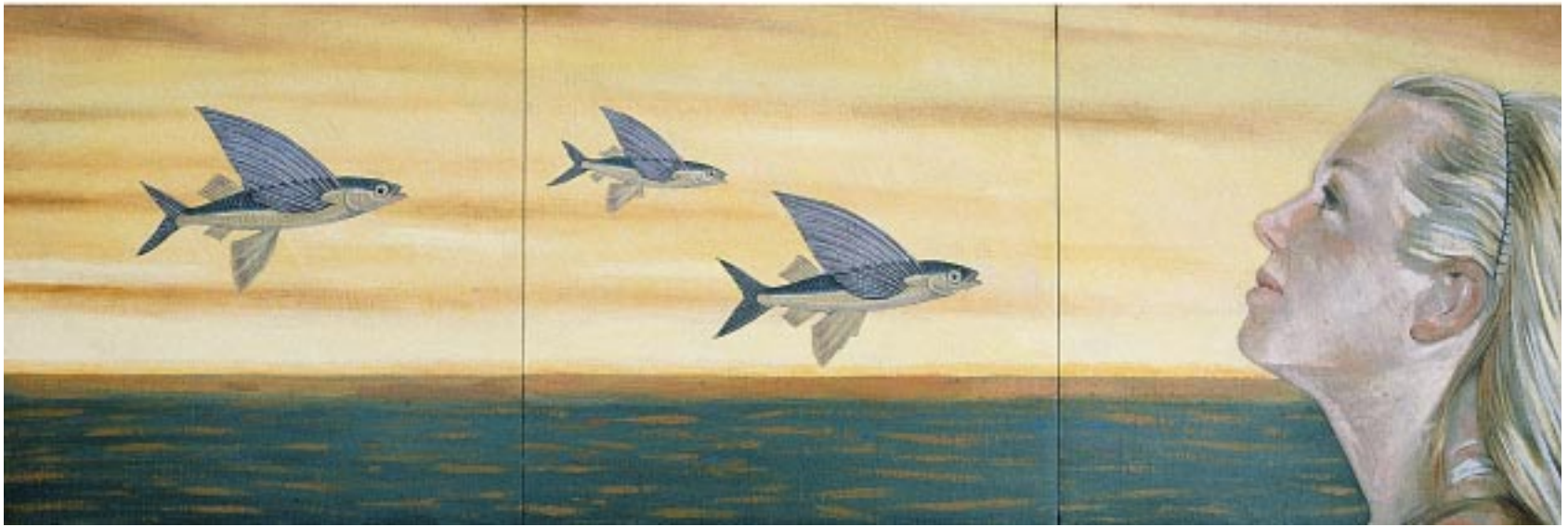


Plate 9. Sea Dreamers I & II.
Oil on board, 30cm x 90cm.

Loggers



Plate 10. Blue Breeze.
Oil on canvas, 120cm x 95cm.

Jozsef Rippl-Ronai



Plate 11. The Companions.
Oil on canvas, 150cm x 200cm.

Rogier



Plate 12. The Companions II.
Oil on canvas, 150cm x 62cm.



Lojpas



Plate 13. Man on the Head of a Whale.
Oil on board, 120cm x 95cm.

Rogier

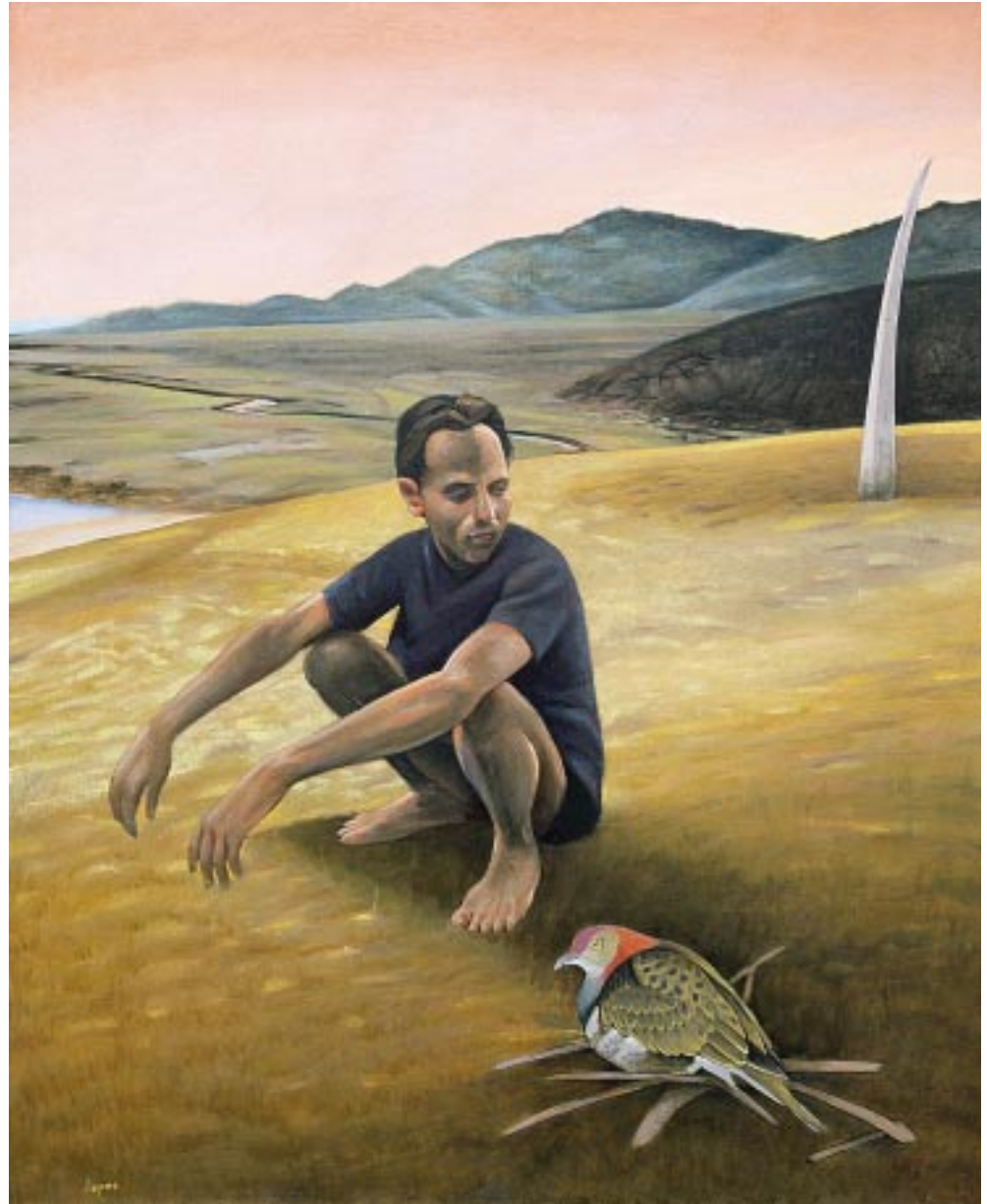


Plate 14. Bird and the Bone Marker.
Oil on board, 110cm x 95cm.

Rogier



Plate 15. Dream of the Whale Visionaries.
Oil on canvas, 40cm x 50cm.

Lopes



Plate 16. Remnant.
Oil on canvas, 40cm x 50cm.

Lopes



Plate 17. Man with Whale Rib.
Oil on canvas, 40cm x 50cm.

Rippl



Plate 18. Peninsula.
Oil on board, 90cm x 110cm.

Rogier



Plate 19. Beached Male.
Oil on canvas, 80cm x 80cm.

Jozsef Rippl-Ronai



Plate 20. Kiah Pathfinder.
Oil on canvas, 120cm x 95cm.

Lopez

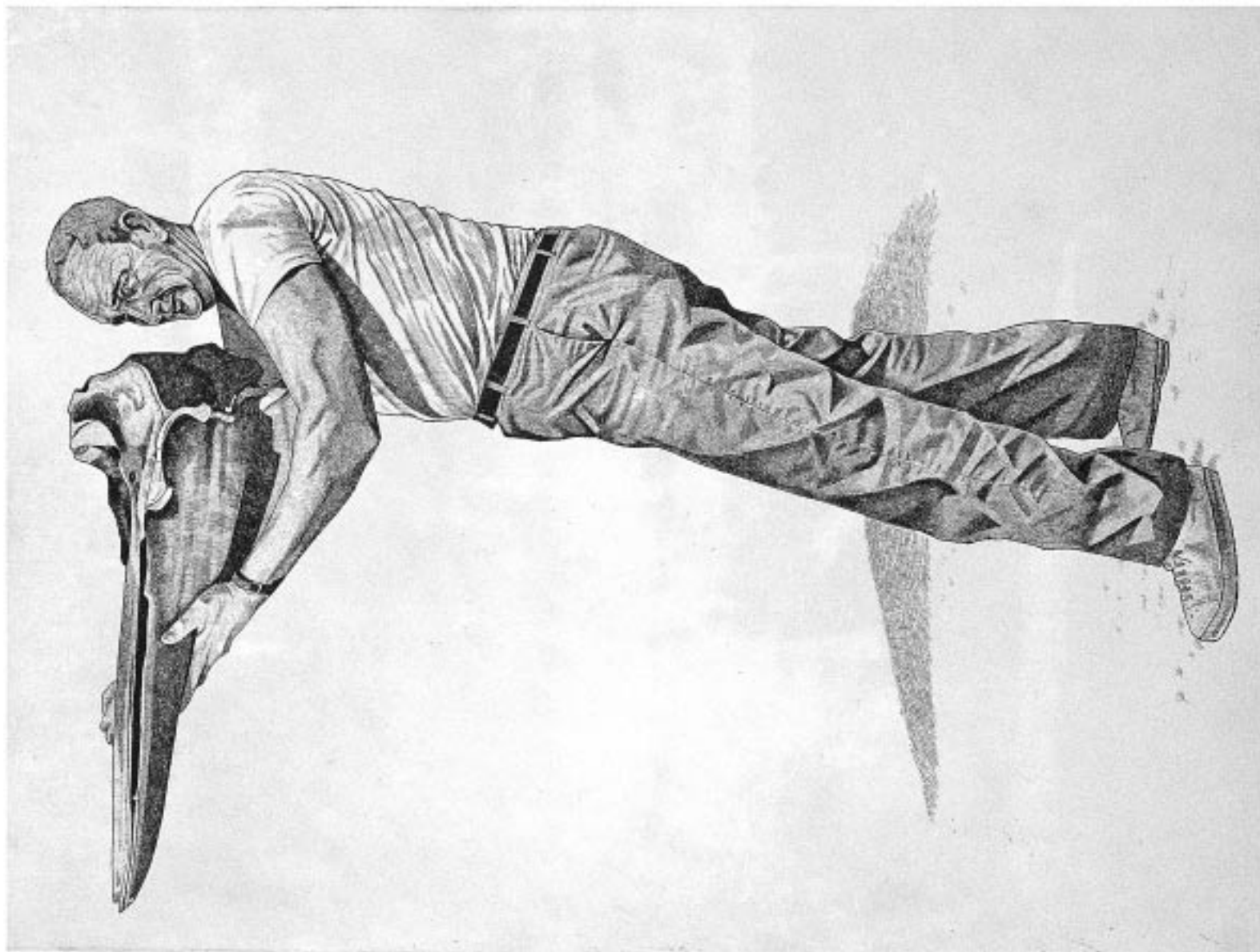


Plate 21. Man with Whale Skull.
Etching, edition 30. 80cm x 60cm.

J.M.W. Turner



Plate 22. Study of the Whalers.
Oil on board, 21cm x 42cm.

J.M.W. Turner

STEVE LOPES

Born in Sydney, Australia 27-5-71

1988-91 Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts
Graduate of University of New South Wales
Sydney, Australia

1991 New York Art Students League, USA

1989-95 Press artist for The Australian and Daily Telegraph
newspapers

1997-98 Artist for Financial Times newspaper, London

1998 The London Print Studio, UK

Solo Exhibitions

2004 *Ambergris*, Brian Moore Gallery, Paddington, Sydney

2003 *Regeneration*, Windows on Church Galleries,
Melbourne

2002 *Introduced Species*, Gallery 482, Brisbane

2000 *The Arrivals*, Gallery Savah, Paddington, Sydney

1996 *Access*, Toast II Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney

Selected Exhibitions & Awards

2003 Metro 5 Art Prize Finalist, Metro 5 Gallery,
Melbourne
Shirley Hannan National Portrait Prize, Bega
Regional Art Gallery
SCEGGS Art Prize, Sydney

2002 *Small Gems*, Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne
Naked & Gallery Artists Exhibition, Brian Moore
Gallery, Sydney
Jacaranda Drawing Prize, Grafton Art Gallery
Waverly City Art Award Finalist, Sydney

2003, 02 & 2001 Hills Grammer Award Finalist, Kenthurst

2002, 01 & 1999 Mosman Art Award Finalist, Sydney

2001 Alice Art Prize, The Araluen Centre Alice Springs
Conrad Jupiters Art Prize, Gold Coast City Art
Gallery
Group Exhibition, Goya Galleries, Melbourne

2001 & 2000 AGNSW Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship
Finalist

2001 & 2000 Archibald Salon de Refuses, S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
2000 Doug Moran Portrait Prize Finalist, National Tour
Lloyd Rees Youth Art Award Finalist, Atrium Gallery,
ABC Centre
Shell National Print Awards, Fremantle, WA

1999 Alice Bale Awards Finalist, Glen Eira Gallery,
Caulfield, Melbourne

1999 & 2001 Carnivale Arts Festival, Artists on Norton, Sydney,
First Prize

1998 Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Mall Galleries, London

1997 Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Young Artist Award,
Mall Galleries, London

1997 Sothebys Art Auction, New York. Drawings.

1996 *Access*, Toast II Contemporary Art Gallery, Sydney

1995 Orange Regional Gallery, NSW

1990-95 NSW State Library, Black & White Artists Exhibition

1991 University of New South Wales, College of Fine Arts
Graduates Exhibition

Collections

New South Wales State Library,
Intercontinental Hotel Sydney
Time Warner, New York
Crouch International, New York
Rolls Royce, London
British Biotech, London
Psion Communications, London
Premier Farnell, London
Cable & Wireless, UK
Private collections in Australia, UK, Italy and USA

Publications

The Age, News section, May 25, 2002
Artists Palette magazine, 10-page feature article,
July 2000
Sydney Morning Herald, 3-page Summer Times arts
feature, January 5, 2000
Sydney Morning Herald, Metro feature, April 5, 1996
Daily Telegraph, Arts profile piece, March 28, 1996

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