

# Maryrose Crook

b.1957

Self-taught

*Bringing All The Things That Run* by Maryrose Crook is an arid landscape scattered with mysterious luminous objects. The hills are bleakly barren and cut away in the middle ground to reveal their underlying structures. Dramatic clouds above the hills draw your eye towards a lake that quietly shimmers in the background and seeps down slowly to the front. It's a mysterious place full of crevices and channels and water that quietly laps around those enigmatic objects – are they glass or strange living organisms? If you look closely there are scenes within scenes and what appears to be a convent or church submerged under water.

This is a landscape based on a real one – possibly Central Otago – but painted in a way that suggests a still life. There is no movement. Everything except for those clouds, is eerily still – even the water. There is an overall feeling of melancholy and sadness. But just when this feeling begins to weigh, you notice again those strange lamp-like objects, some of which sprout eyes. These comic notes lift the mood of the painting without giving away any of its secrets.

Crook's painting is reminiscent of Dutch still life painting of the 17th and 18th centuries. Like those paintings, her images are meticulously painted. No brush strokes are evident and the deep contrast of glassy highlights with dark areas is built up with many layers of paint and glazes. As with those historic still life paintings, Crook's image is completely self-contained like a world in a bubble – uninhabited and impossible.

So what does *Bringing All The Things That Run* mean? The title suggests a gathering of important things, a capturing of things lost, a 'remembrance of things past'.<sup>1</sup> It feels like an ethereal dreamscape littered with personal symbolism, the true meaning of which is known only to the artist. For the viewer though, it is a richly evocative and haunting image. We can overlay our own dreams or invent our own narratives to 'understand' this painting. Like a glossy bubble, we can gaze into it and see ourselves or elements of our own experience reflected back.

As well as being a painter, Crook is a singer/songwriter from one of New Zealand's most enduring country acts, The Renderers. Used to writing songs that reflect the lives of others, Crook's paintings have a similar resonant quality – like visual representations of sad songs. This painting takes its name from the lyrics of one of her songs, *Broken Banks*.

## Mary-Jane Duffy

<sup>1</sup> Translation of the title of the novel *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* by Marcel Proust.

### Galleries and museums:

[www.brookegiffordgallery.co.nz](http://www.brookegiffordgallery.co.nz)

[www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz](http://www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz)

[www.gallery33.co.nz](http://www.gallery33.co.nz)

### Web search:

Dutch still life painting

