

## Artist Statement – The Continuing Ellipse – Steve Woodbury

**Calligraphy has evolved over millennia from the transfer of information through to the gestural marking of the abstracted line.** These two lineages give calligraphy an interesting duality that is currently being combined in a small niche within the contemporary painting landscape. This project sought to conflate both aspects of calligraphy within my contemporary painting practice and add to this continuum. By defining the elements of what traditionally is required for calligraphy as a methodology, I looked to the past to re-invigorate the contemporary.

The line forms the basis of text and therefore calligraphy. I sought to instill the line with the literal, beautiful writing and gestural marking of that line as an artefact in its own right. Traditionally, classic literature and artist's own poems were used as content that was painted on silk and paper with ink derived from burning pine and the capturing of soot. In this project:

- I used text of my own poems (*Bloodshot*)
- Handwritten words were turned into typed text in the published *Bloodshot* poem book
- Burning the book made ash (seen in glass jar and *Book Marks*)
- Ash was made into ink/paint and then (re)formed into handwritten text in the *Poem Paintings*
- Text scraped off, subtracting material, erasing original form and compressing material into handful of what was once burned, then rewritten text (see glass jar).
- Taking these compressed subtractions, and then reformed them into gestural *Untrammelled Vertical* and *Untrammelled Horizontal*

The *Source Book* was a sculptural inclusion that compressed the complete text of the poem book. The actual words that were subtracted from the *Source Book* surface, the scrapings, were then placed into one of the jars. I also included *Full Stop*, which was the actual arena that enabled all the painted works through burning books to ash and a continuous circuitous line that mixed that ash into paint.

Using material reincarnations, defined by ancient calligraphic methodologies, I re-presented these fundamental elements on both traditional and non-traditional materials. Taking the painterly strategies of *compression*, *subtraction* and *erasure* as parameters derived from Ancient Calligraphers' methodology helped keep a spine for this project's process to build upon. I created a poetic process that crosses cultural boundaries and moves into the universally available language of paint – gesture and material. Utilising calligraphy as a methodology to generate new outcomes, rather than simply a style to be copied has resulted in the installation of 'The Continuing Ellipse'.