The Dead House

Oil on canvas

96 x 76 cm

2013

When I first moved to Adelaide back in 1997, one of the first places I'd spend time as a stranger in a new town was the Botanic Gardens of South Australia. It is a place I still love. One of the most intriguing places I found in my early explorations was a strange little potting shed, near a monument that was in the shape of a mushroom, towards what was then the back of the gardens. Only later did I find out about the history of "the dead house" and its links to the old Adelaide lunatic asylum. The dead house was the morgue for the asylum, where deceased inmates were prepared before finding their final resting place. After I began learning to paint, it was one of the first subjects I wanted to try on my own. There was a JMW Turner exhibition on in Adelaide around the time I composed this and I took inspiration from the work "*Shade and Darkness – the Evening of the Deluge"*. In essence this painting describes the turmoil inherent in this little building's past, acknowledging the suffering of people who partly spent their last remaining time on the Earth passing through here on their way, hopefully, to peace.