

Exploring the archaeology of modern life

Visual Art: Adam Dutkiewicz

With the action of the Fringe and so many competing possibilities in the art world over the last month, I missed out on seeing the Michael Jeffery exhibition, which had caught my eye through the publicity material. So I wandered out there when I had a spare moment hoping to catch some of the work before it disappeared back into its burrow.

I was impressed with the well-resolved surfaces and design of these abstract-inclined text paintings, evoking the archaeology of urban life as it is often layered upon the walls of any city: posters torn off, graffiti, signs of instruction and the site's historic use.

Paintings like *Black and blue* and *Sneaks and ladders* offer an insight into the artist's thinking and material processes, which involve the combination of collaged paint skins and stencilling. There are technical parallels with silkscreen printing and, if anyone saw it late at night recently, the almost industrial technique adopted by Melbourne artist Asher Bilu in his recent installation work.

Fused with an aesthetic that borrows from the late Rosalie Gascoigne, it results in a sophisticated contemporary adaptation of late modern abstraction.

Peter Walker not only deals up-and-coming young artists, such as Jeffery, but also works with what he calls "better quality art across all periods on the secondary market". He is gaining a reputation interstate as a reputable Adelaide dealer. His current project is bringing to light the work of 19th century painter Mortimer Menpes, who was born at Port Adelaide and went on to become the largest selling artist in the world, working with the likes of the ostentatious American in London, James Whistler. Menpes is widely recognized overseas but hardly known about here – a familiar story for a number of expatriate artists!

I was also pleasantly surprised to note that Miss Gladys Sym Choon is using its upstairs gallery again. On this occasion it presents work by two young photographers: South Australian Danielle Walpole, whose large, Type-C photographs are concerned with capturing fleeting visual and tactile experiences, and Queenslander Jen Brazier, who has an ingenious method of freezing photographed landscape images in clear tablets of acrylic resin.

Both artists are members of Shoot collective (www.shootcollective.com.au) and have already exhibited together for eight years. Their fresh, modern work complements the archaeological setting, with its historical photographs and paraphernalia.

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