

## Artistic dreamer

**Adelaide is often viewed as the city that Australia forgot. With an intriguing take on art and life Adelaide based artist Michael Jeffery gives a reason to remember.**

Daniel Bloom

It's cliché to think that the artistic process is a form of meditation for an artist. However, for some, this process is filled with darkness and despair. The process is a nightmare rather than an alluring dream.

Adelaide based artist Michael Jeffery loves to dream of art. It's not that the process of creating his work is free from struggle, but rather Michael wants to learn from the process as opposed to being repelled by it.

"Good art is always inspiring. Sometimes I dream of art. A number of [my] works have been based [upon my dreams]. I wonder whether art from my dreams contains deeper meanings and therefore has particular importance. I'm fascinated with dreaming and intend to pursue experiential studies in this field as a resource for my work," Michael declares.

While other artists find the creative process trying, Michael is philosophical. "I use painting as an exercise to quiet my mind, like a moving meditation. I try to make a compositional decision making an intuitional response rather than a rational one. This tends to enhance my creativity and therefore the quality of my work," he says.

Indeed, Michael's avant-garde approach to creativity allows this 2006 Wynne Art Prize Finalist to create work that defies convention, literally.

Michael's work is not quite collages and acrylic on canvas, not quite photography. In fact it's a mestizo version of the two mediums.

"My works are essentially collages of dried paid skins, some of which incorporate photographic images. My techniques are variations of those originally developed by my university teachers, Paul Hoban (painting) and Di Barrett (photography). After learning a few basics, I experimented through trial and error to develop my own individual processes. Basically, I paint onto plastic sheets and later adhere cut-out fragments to canvas," Michael claims.

The themes in Michael's art are truly authentic to the artist. In his work, Michael explores the isolation of the city as it's juxtaposed with nature.

"I describe my work as abstract urban landscapes depicting a sterile environment separate and 'insulated' from nature, a manifestation of the mind of society. I feel human civilization needs to become more in tune with nature, to embrace it instead of fearing it," the artist says.

While Michael doesn't necessarily want to "dictate [his] own personal philosophies" through his work, he does want to explore how the creative process serves as a window into his mind. "It [my art] is both a spiritual practice and an exploration within my own subconscious world."

From: *McGrath: The Weekly Magazine*, Issue 20, 14 June 2008, p 2-3.