

All News Stories

Media Roundup

All Viewpoints

Arts

Food & Drink

Holidays

Films Screening

New Books

Sport

Classifieds

The Team

All Letters

Alms

Wednesday July 22, 1998

South Australian Living Artists week: Daryl Austin Still-Point Studio Paintings

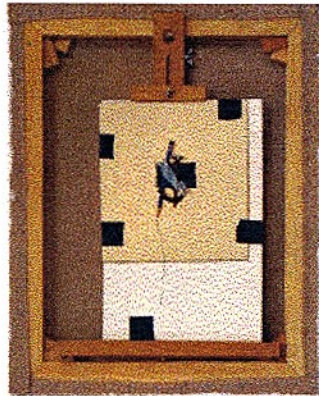
Greenaway Art Gallery, Kent Town.
15 July - 9 August 1998
reviewed by Dianne Gall

Enter the world of illusion, question what is reality, these are the things that perforate the consciousness when looking at these superbly crafted and intelligent paintings that Daryl Austin presents in his latest exhibition at Greenaway Art Gallery. Go see it, you will not be disappointed.

There are 15 works in the exhibition, all are of a high technical standard and paint the portrait of Austin and his daily existence. I particularly enjoyed "Studio Painting #4", where there is almost a voyeuristic sense as the clues of presence are given, but not evident. The light pouring in gives a sense of life but also adds to the solitary, introspective nature of the imagery.

I interviewed Daryl Austin a few days ago about his exhibition.

Two years ago Austin travelled to Europe after winning an EVA award, this resulted in a major re-assessment of his work. After holding certain works dear from reproductions and in turn being influenced by them, seeing the actuality of these great paintings was in some cases a real disappointment. Monet's Cathedral series seemed nothing more than what can be described as wedding cake! Whilst others like Van Gogh's portraits were very intense and gazing onto Jean Auguste Ingres "Madame Moitessier" in the National Gallery in London, became an exceptional and even a humbling experience. Austin was amazed at Titians handling of paint to describe form, with one brush stroke he could describe a finger and also leave a wonderful physical surface behind. The coolness and detached nature of Velasquez work and the analytical nature of David and Ingres work has had a



profound influence on Austin. The Result of all of this was the need to give up on his previous love of pure abstraction and focus on the image as a priority.

Many viewers of Daryl's work are puzzled by what they see when they are looking at the imagery in his latest body of paintings and drawings. They are trying to work out how they are being tricked. Eventhough there are many clues in Austins work, such as the spectacles, the frame of the canvas shadowed from behind or the fake photograph behind fake tape, in fact many things that are peripheral to the process of constructing the painting but all necessary in its production are visible. These paintings are about the everyday, about universality, a portrait or perhaps testimony to the artists existence.

Austin has observed odd things happening in his studio, the play of natural light falling from the window as against the fluorescent light reflected on the floor. Objects left in Austin's studio by visitors often end up in these paintings and in this way the article becomes part of the environment. In the same way, the photographs in his work are often happy accidents using bad reflected light, with under or overexposed images. There is this randomness of chance of articles appearing in the works.

With the metaphor of using glasses, Austin quotes Jasper Johns seeing the rims of his frames as a disturbing experience. Austin found a noticeable visual experience that became very disconcerting whilst he was in England with the foggy distances, whilst being used to seeing for miles, the crispy clarity of the Australian landscape. The idea of putting tape over the glasses in some of the paintings is to have a bit of fun, a bit of a joke with the need to wear glasses as an aid to vision and then negating this by impairing the vision with tape. So even with all the aids of modern technology we still do not really see.

These series of works seem to be about memory and Austin refers back to TS Elliot's Still Point, where the author talks about memory, the spaces that exist before, afterwards and those that always will. They all exist in the same time and point in memory. Here is the key, we see looking at Daryl's work, the back of his painting at the same time as the front, the working tools of trade that helped construct the painting at the same a finished image all revolving within the same space. Another reference point for Austin is the notion of who we are as told in the movie "Blade Runner" (or "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"), where the androids held fake photographs to prove that they had a past. As photography is now such an easily manipulated image via computers, it is no longer as trustworthy a testimony to an event and perhaps painting now seems more authentic. chance to occupy his work.

It is great to see a sell-out exhibition in Adelaide, good for Austin and fantastic for the inaugural SALA week. Congratulations on a solid, well thought-out show, it just goes to prove that hard and dedicated work always is rewarded.