



LANDMARKS

I can still remember that strange, pungent waft the first time we emerged from the subway. I can remember the air feeling warmer and thicker than I thought it would in late autumn. I can remember the dense, mid-level noise of the street and the cacophony of signage and light and neon. I remember the rush and throng of the streets outside the plaza, even though it was late in the night, as we wandered north looking for the hotel.

Janelle Low's nocturnal photographs depict modest fragments of the built suburban landscape, but their effect is layered and complex. Peering over fences and from darkened street corners, her highly formal compositions capture houses, apartments and dwellings, each mediated and illuminated by different sources of light. In some images, the ambient light of the city – the cumulative glow of streetlamps, car headlights and illuminated buildings – does enough to light the scene; in others the light source comes from a window into one of these mysterious dwellings; while elsewhere the dramatic shock of the flash renders the scene.

The idea of the threshold between private and public permeates throughout these works. The public space is punctuated by these personal, subjective “worlds” of their own making – homes, shopfronts and other incursions into the landscape. Low seems to mine questions of personal and social limits and constraints; just where do our private and shared experiences begin and end?

I remember the smell of the tatami as we lay close, and I remember jimmying open the small window before sunrise and feeling the blast of cold, crisp, city air.

I remember lying there with you as the light rose, and that the city seemed almost silent but for the crows. All we could hear was the crows.

A distinctly personal undercurrent belies both the format and subject matter of Kirrily Hammond's understated oil paintings. Her lanes, streetscapes and suburban vantages are at once observational and indelibly personal. Where her photorealist style describes the northern end of Lygon Street, a nondescript (but patently recognisable) Brunswick East laneway and an arched roofline – its spindly television aerial and domestic chimney poking out into the dusk – in striking detail, omission is key to her paintings.

It is the materiality and contour of her local suburban landscape, and its intersection with that most fundamental quality of light, which features here. Iconicity is unimportant to Hammond; these paintings are tiny, vivid apertures into a daily, very specific experience of place.

Later that morning, we would wander tiny streets and buy onigiri from convenience stores and play with stray cats. And in the afternoon we would search out the nearest skyscraper and catch the express lift to the top floor. And you would forget your vertigo for an hour as we gazed out across the city, its beautifully suffocating tangle of streets sprawling off in every direction.

Jessica Ebert's vibrant paintings speak to the subjective and interpretive nature of our understanding of geography.

At a glance, her works read as if abstract colour fields, awash with dynamic, faceted detailing and loosely geometric shards. But time with these paintings reveals their topographic quality.

Using maps and aerial views as her source material, Ebert considers the landscape via her own unique lens. Creating intricate arrangements of spatial, topographic, textual and abstract gestures, she essentially remaps the landscape to correspond with her own experience, memory and understanding of it. In the process, she further articulates the act of mapping as a process loaded with decisions, contexts and histories. The landscape is alive with our subjectivity, and the map anything but passive.

From one side of the building, we could see the planes queuing to land at Haneda. From the western perimeter – far off in the distance – we could make out the perfect visage of Fujisan, towering from the horizon into the half-light.

Steven Perrette's drawings are energetic and frenzied in equal measure. Like the contemporary urban space that surrounds him, his works are awash with a kind of industrialised, commercial and corporate fervour. Set along major retail and transportation routes, his vivid, colour-drenched texta drawings pull no punches in their depiction of a landscape remodelled for corporate and consumer activity. Big oil, fast food, Kmart, Tyre Power, Repco and various other roadside chains punctuate this deafening, high-speed landscape.

As much as anything, Perrette's works might be considered in terms of corporate visual language and its relationship to the democracy of space. Just how much of our visual experience is mediated by a commercially acquired, controlled and coded visuality?

And I remember, on our return, friends smirking knowingly and telling us that it was a shitty area of Tokyo, that we were wasting our time there. And sure, we knew that, we recognised the cues – the tiny, rickety family businesses, the pachinko parlours, the love hotels and hostess bars – but we didn't care.

Chris O'Brien's mixed media works see him reclaim and reinstate commercial images with historical and humanistic character. In a series of altered real estate photographs, O'Brien etches, cuts and draws atop the otherwise crystalline, homogenised images of houses on the market.

Where the aesthetics of real estate advertising material requires homes to essentially shed their idiosyncrasies to achieve maximum market appeal, O'Brien's works offer insights and speculations as to their histories and former occupants. In one example, he inserts a silhouetted figure into the foreground (the spectre of a former occupant perhaps?). In any case, O'Brien subtly draws the unbreakable link between the built environment and the lives lived within it.

And we would continue return to that neighbourhood and walk and explore and practice our half-baked phraseology,

because – for that short time – it was ours. In amongst the hectic winding streets, our memories took root.

To describe Peter Atkins' cumulative found works in terms of mere detritus would be a misstep. While his collected library date stamps, found school portraits, empty drug bags, fragments of St Patrick's Day tinsel and Valentine's Day newspaper ads are certainly the result of urban fossicking, their cumulative effect is systematic and empirical in tenor.

These works are the material and textual symptoms and reverberations of individual and collective lives, thought patterns, desires and habits of ingestion – through time and space. They are methodical compilations of human, social and cultural evidence. In some small way, Atkins describes our relationship with the world around us.

Three years after our first visit, we would marry in the crappy, nineteen-seventies city office with the heat turned up too high – the same place we'd walked past so many times. And the bureaucrats would laugh heartily with us and ask: why here, why now? And while we couldn't put it into words, we knew.

DAN RULE, 2016

Dan Rule is a writer, editor and publisher. He is the co-director of Perimeter Books, Perimeter Editions and Perimeter Distribution, a former art critic for The Saturday Age and the former editor of Vault magazine.



1. Chris O'Brien
146A Smith Street, Thornbury 2015
mixed media on paper
21 x 29.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

2. Chris O'Brien
23 Davis Street, Carlton North 2015
mixed media on paper
21 x 29.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

3. Kirrily Hammond
Lygon Street South, Brunswick East
2012
oil on linen
31 x 31 cm
Courtesy the artist, Gallerysmith,
Melbourne and the Moreland Art
Collection, Melbourne

4. Kirrily Hammond
Victoria Street, Brunswick East 2012
oil on linen
31 x 31 cm
Courtesy the artist, Gallerysmith,
Melbourne and the Moreland Art
Collection, Melbourne

5. Janelle Low
Untitled #1 (From Maybe Here
series) 2016
inkjet print
53 x 80 cm
Courtesy the artist and
THIS IS NO FANTASY and
dianne tanzer gallery + projects,
Melbourne

BELOW: Chris O'Brien
Marysville 2015
glazed earthenware
11.5 x 10.5 x 17 cm
Courtesy Private Collection,
Melbourne



6



7

COVER: Jessica Ebert
Not titled 2013
 gouache, ink and watercolour
 paint on paper
 56 x 60 cm
 Courtesy the artist and
 Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

7. Steven Perrette
Not titled 2011
 acrylic, marker, pencil
 and glitter on paper
 50 x 70 cm
 Courtesy the artist and
 Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



LANDMARKS

26 Aug – 25 Sep 2016

Curated by Victor Griss and Sim Luttin
 Presented by Counihan Gallery In Brunswick
 in partnership with Arts Project Australia

ARTISTS

Peter Atkins
 Jessica Ebert
 Kirrily Hammond
 Janelle Low
 Chris O'Brien
 Steven Perrette

6. Peter Atkins
Journal 2014
 2014
 mixed media on plywood
 20 panels
 30 x 30 cm each
 Courtesy the artist and
 Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne



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 traditional owners of the land in which we
 work, the Wurundjeri people. We recognise
 their continuing connection to land,
 waterways and community. We pay our
 respect to them and their culture, and to
 their Elders past, present and future.



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