

TRACEY CLEMENT REVIEWS 08.07.15

Thanks to arts writer Tracey Clement for her piece on our 08.07.15 exhibition.

If only these walls could talk

Don't get me wrong. I like the white cube. It's clean, it's light, white and bright. What's not to love?! The point of a good white cube is to be non-intrusive: minimal, verging on boring even. We should be engaged by the artwork, not distracted by nifty (or ill considered) architectural features. As an exhibition space, a white cube is semi-neutral (after all, nothing is truly neutral). Conceptually, it should be almost silent, gently whispering, 'Don't mind me, just look at the art.'

But sometimes it's nice to step outside this quiet zone into a space that wants to strike up a conversation with the artworks. And this is exactly what happens at Home@735 Gallery. As a 19th century terrace house in inner city Sydney, this space has something to say. Redolent with meaning and associations, it becomes an active (almost collaborative) partner with the artworks on show, in this case paintings by Lisa Kotoulas, Frank Trimarchi's photos, mixed media wall pieces by Gabrielle Bates and Alana Wilson's ceramics.

Frank Trimarchi's photos are of highly decorative domestic interiors: think flocked wallpaper, floral carpet, crystal chandeliers and more alarmingly large ceramic animal figurines than you can poke a stick at. Installed in a resolutely domestic, but aesthetically very different, space (the narrow stairway and upstairs landing) they read like square portals to a parallel universe. Visually we jump from the polished wooden floorboards and 'gallery white' walls of a renovated Victorian terrace to the plush, lush interiors of the suburban home of Trimarchi's grandmother. The effect is almost surreal and never would have happened in the white cube.

Seven mixed media wall pieces from the *Recurring Dream* series by Gabrielle Bates are strewn across the wall in the narrow upstairs hallway. In this setting, and still steeped in the kitschy-cool world of Trimarchi's photos, they seem to stand in for the ceramic ducks that used to grace similar positions in homes worldwide. In fact, with this image in mind, they resemble flying carpets, an apt mode of transport for dreams.

A wooden cabinet hung at eye height at the end of this hallway houses a single hand-built ceramic vessel from Alana Wilson's *Terra Australis* series. At first its solitary position and pitted, pockmarked surface make it look like a museum artefact. But the mirrored back of the cabinet ensures that a person is also in the picture. This, alongside the domestic setting, is a reminder that Wilson's ceramics are part of the ritual of daily life.

Portraits by Lisa Kotoulas hang in the lounge room downstairs. In this context it's tempting to imagine that they depict residents of the house, either past or future. This reading is reinforced by the canvases *Preempted Melancholy* and *Got Brass in Pocket* in which the artist depicts figures wearing roller skates in the sepia tones of old photos. Elsewhere, in *Clouds* and *John Really Wants to Remember*, she captures expressive, bleary faces that could be ghosts.

The old saying goes, 'If only these walls could talk.' At Home@735 Gallery, thanks to their interaction with carefully selected artworks, they do.