

WHAT ERA IS THIS BUGS MY DISCRIMINATIONS, ALL NUANCED SO HEFTILY?

Artists: Ian North—*East Antarctica 1915*—and James Tylor—*These Are Our Objects*—Greenaway Art Gallery, April 1st—April 26th; Lisa Roet—*When I Laugh...*—Hugo Michel Gallery, April 22nd—May 23rd; Paul Sloan and Dan McLean—*World Index*—Hugo Michell Gallery, April 22nd—May 23rd; Christian Lock—Greenaway Art Gallery, April 29th—June 14th; Nicholas Elliott—*Gothic Graphs and Other Paintings*—Light Square Gallery, May 7th—May 28th; Anna Horn—*Lightweight Heavy*—Fontanelle Gallery, April 26th—May 17th.

by Ken Bolton

NORTH GOES SOUTH

Ian North's oeuvre is shaping up to be an interesting, yes, but also a far more various body of work than it must once have looked to be. While active as a curator North kept his work out of the public eye, as a matter of possible conflict of interest. Further complicating things, the various bodies of work exhibited since have not always come to the world in chronological order. As exhibited, the purely photographic works have been quite distinct from each other though they probably hang together as a body, and we have seen paintings and photographic image-plus-paint, and works to a large scale and to small. All of this is now long on record. The most recent addition is North's *East Antarctica 1915*, at Greenaway. The exhibition is likeable but a little thin: not quite 'enough', in terms of weight of content, to constitute a show. It is also stretched to too many pieces not sufficiently different from each other. Their number seemed to make that content more meagre, to

dilute it. Easily fixed: show a smaller selection. One wouldn't want not to have seen them: a little thin, a little vague, still they are haunting.

What was their content? Maybe it is anxiety. North himself reports someone else remarking an "over-riding sense of crisis".

East Antarctica was made up of a dozen identically landscape-formatted, identically sized (55 x 150 cms), works on paper: ink-jet-printed photographs taken around the southern polar regions: the familiar polar exoticism of other-worldly whiteness, of vast skies (serene, bleached, empty and so on), of pale menthol greys and greens and icy blues. The horizons were a straight line, broken occasionally by an ice floe, a drift of snow. The ocean featured more than land-mass did and in most cases the latter might in fact have been floating ice-and-snow.

The scenery was beautiful enough—and so, too, were the photographs—with a high degree of family resemblance between one picture and the next. Were they a little short on 'incident'? Or am I hungering for something Minimalism's long reign should have trained one out of, the picturesque, reportage, or something else aesthetically criminal? On all but one work North has added, in charcoal, fairly quickly drawn distant bi-planes, or ships, or dirigibles, and ships caught in the ice, sinking, or sailing by in the distance, some abandoned submarines. These graphic components sit well within the photos (rather than ostentatiously upon them) and for a second or two look convincingly photographic. The viewer might suspect Photo-shop. But no, they are hand-drawn.

And some of them are a little improbable, fanciful—did WWI fighter planes have the range to get anywhere near the pole? Quite apart from Why would they go there?

So some of the pictures might make the viewer smile—might be designed to do so, in fact. The graphic additions, or interventions (they might signal themselves thereby as 'propositions'), are compatible visually with the photographic images partly because those images are themselves a little 'softened', definition blurred by wind and snow. "Ice welding land to sea. Frost smoke. Clouds mottled by reflections of water holes in the plains of ice. The glare of ice erasing dimension, distance, subjecting senses to mirage and illusion. A rare place." (E. Annie Proulx)

Perhaps the original photographs (taken in 2012) never had involved absolutely sharp focus. In any case, the charcoal is not markedly less sharp in detail than the printed image.

It is also that photographs of snow environments inevitably do look close to black-and-white, colour is muted and greyed, and generally suppressed, blanketed. In this respect, too, the black lines of North's drawn (and mostly few and small) additions do not immediately register as imposed or as a foreign medium. When they do, they can read as impish and fanciful, imaginative. They reminded me, for that reason I think, of Eric Ravilious—whose work as a war artist often seemed cheery and casual, alert to the amusing or unintendedly cheering and decorative look of some war activities. Some of these quick additions had the presence of cheeky graffitied doodles on otherwise rather 'empty' scenes, any meaning I think would be unintended. The resulting 'anxiety' might be a happy accident?

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This is an impression of the first few moments' viewing. The wrecked ships recall photos of explorers' boats caught in the ice, long-preserved, and it might occur to the viewer that the period of heroic polar exploration overlaps that of World War 1. The technology looks to fit. We are used to the distracting and irrelevant prettiness of much military hardware, and used to clocking the irony of the aesthetically pleasing's being evil, of the quaint Fokkers and Sopwith Camels looking harmless but of course 'signaling danger'. North's conflation of the war and the era of exploration adverts to that exploration's being *similarly competitive*: a matter of national pride, a race for resources and primacy.

Intruding upon the polar scenery, the military presences enlist the more familiar 'ice-bound wreck' images as equally intrusive, a beginning made upon modern devastation or despoiling. (I think the 'fact' of the charcoal mark's being 'foreign' to the photographically printed—and therefore a metaphor in itself—is a small pun and probably unintended.)

So ***East Antarctica 1915*** touches ecological bases too.

All of these themes begin to kick in after a few moments' viewing and they complicate interestingly our feelings about the pictures. These are the meanings, the subject of the art. Ecology, history, the future as we fear for it, the past as we regret it. The actual look of the landscape is made to take a back seat to these meanings, retreats quietly before them, ceding space. Do the charcoal images have enough to say to hold centre stage? Admittedly we have seen a lot of the picturesque beauty of the Antarctic from others and North has necessarily avoided duplicating their efforts. *"But who's going to star in this play*

if we're all a cast of extras?" (Director sighs, hunches his shoulders, marches up and down, ruffled shirt, braces, cigar, Mel Brooks maybe.)

I would think ***East Antarctica 1915*** is a six or eight-piece sequence, ideally—smaller than it is as currently shown. It is a little underpowered as a whole show, though the works do stay with you, both easily recognizable and unusual, perhaps too easily understood.

I looked at the pictures for a little while, a few times over and came away with an impression of more snow than in fact there was: as if the identikit I'd derived of the show (and 'from' the show) had abridged and collated the imagery into, not one, but a relatively few pictures. Composites. (There were more submarines than I'd remembered, for example, more ocean.) If this is blindness, it is hardly a virtue, admitted. But I think the effect stems from the pictures' not having enough to claim the eye's attention. There is a chastened and sad mood to them—as well as that sense of folly witnessed. All of this is appropriate enough. But as we drift from picture to picture: their images replace one another rather than adding up. The themes the pictures signal and give rise to are heavier than the images—which are not quite adequate to anchoring those meanings, or sustaining them, they can merely indicate.

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Also at Greenaway over this period was James Tylor's ***These Are Our Objects***, a set of ten small, greyly sepia daguerrotypes, close-ups, of paraphernalia associated with drug culture: smoking dope, pot, amphetamines. "These are our objects" suggests an equivalence—"our objects are us"—and the consequent diminishing is intentional. The images have a sadly noirish, lonely feel to them, as solitary, illicit occupations that remove one from society as much as they are, or more than they are, a refuge from it: an unbreakable closed-circuit. The style and the technique give the images an air of the past, the 1930s, 40s, 50s. The lighting could be that of Weegee. Daguerrotype, too, suggests the past. These could be items in the room an Edward Hopper figure might return to. This, despite one image featuring a CD cover (a smooth surface to sniff from) and with a credit card nearby. The moody monochrome presses the iconography back in time. Tylor would have these images in some small way assist in our facing the problem of widespread addiction throughout Australian cities and rural life, across classes etcetera. I am not sure that they do.

ME JANE?

Lisa Roet's exhibition—*When I laugh ...*, at Hugo Michell over April and May—makes it's most telling play with the first piece the viewer encounters on entering the gallery. It is the sculpture (carved wood, about the size of a person, on the viewer's left as one enters) of an open hand, palm upwards, fingers in a relaxed, cupping splay. The hand is a great ape's. The placing is dramatic and 'obvious' in a way, but a way we would not deny the artist. The wood (pod wood, an exotic timber, I gather, but sourced from fallen wood, not cut to purpose) is blond and marked with interesting striations that suggest for a moment, the prints on a hand. There is a great deal of detail in the creases, wrinkles, muscle and tendon of the palm and fingers. The detail gains one's attention and slows time as we observe. The hand—'*Gibbon Hand*'—of course echoes our own, also on our left like the sculpture—an 'extension'. And one has same immediate identification, or the sense of a parallel identification, of the ape subject and its hand, and of ours with our own. One does not often look sustainedly at the palm of any hand but one's own, so the sculpted, intricately detailed yet magnified palm establishes an immediate intimacy, a kind of proxy.

Most of the show's themes are versions of this sense of difference and near but unknowably near similarity with the simian 'other'. The giant palm has a look of age. The finger nails are chipped and quite individual, the lines on the palm and fingers are equally distinct and fateful seeming. *When I laugh, I start to cry?* Is that it? The pieces in the show variously beg sympathy, or posit similarity and offer the spur of a unguessable difference. There is a sequence of delicate, smaller cast hands (all called '*Gibbon Love Stories*' and numbered). The most affecting of these, had a middle figure bent to meet the tip of the thumb—as if to signal (to us, since it is our sign) Good luck, or A.O.K, She'll be right, Here's Hoping. And we know things don't look rosy for any of these animals as a species.

There's a large, maybe life-sized, bust of an ape (*Bokito... When I laugh, he laughs with me!*) and a '*Spider Monkey King*' with its vastly long arms, and three thumbs (a gorilla's, a chimp's, an orangutan's) and a '*Primate Finger*'—all very big. The thumbs are all 85 x 30 x 50 cm, in Cararra marble, honey onyx, in red and white marble. Size gives them presence. The ape, Bokito, has teeth that are chipped and gnarled which converts it from generic representation to individual portrait. Bokito, I gather, attacked a woman who had visited him often in the zoo and who thought he must like her: He had always "laughed when I laughed," she is said to have said. And the discussion that entails there, is that bared teeth are a sign of aggression. Did she provoke that attack through repeated taunting?

There are some photographic images (from Roet's *'Bride of the gorilla'* series) that remind us of the 'classic' European cultural response: the King Kong image, of the ape with delectable naked woman fainted in his grip. These play a role, but they are very uninteresting to look at and scarcely bear thinking about though I expect we are supposed to. Two other images (*'Humanzee Part 1 and Part 2'*) are related, but are less from the West's supposed unconscious and the land of kitsch: a woman in a real ape fur, as if waiting to attract an ape, or trying to identify with one, by some sort of immersion.

To choose the animals most like us, closest to us, is this narcissistic? I mean, if you're going to be dealing with the Other? How other *is* an ape? In one part of Spain they have 'personhood rights'.

But of course we know they think. (And people generally do sentimentalize when they over estimate the thinking of their dogs and cats.)

(At the same time, it has to be said, that the average Siberian Husky, Malamute, German Shepherd, and most Collies entertain Heidegger's base insights every day—*dassein*—and most cats know something we can only glimpse for a few seconds every week or fortnight, depending on your schedule.) You may happen simply to like apes. Roet might be a 'fan'.

The Spanish response is only extreme version—which will come to seem simply necessary and commonsense—of the laws and numerous resolutions we make to protect endangered species *from ourselves*. It would be nice to think, as we 'go' extinct, that the apes might get another chance, might evolve, even, to understand our Rothkos, our Dale Frank. *In any case* their extinction likely prefigures ours. Which dovetails with their (affinity and) resemblance—and returns us to the themes at the heart of Roet's show. Roet's exhibition has affinities with Ian North's. Both ask us to regret a looming loss, both rely on us to see warning signs. Roet's objects are very well made, some very beautiful and this too, adds to the dignity of the animals the work asks us to think about. It certainly slows the gaze while that thinking takes place. Perhaps their number, too, has a cumulative effect, of stressing the theme's importance. At the same time the show has the air of 'commercial exhibition', a range of 'things made', for the luxury market.

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Showing at Hugo Michell at the same time as Roet was an exhibition of Paul Sloan and Dan McLean. Each piece was a spider: the tactic was to get well and truly 'other' here: no sympathy, just fright. The pieces were comical, merely comical, even—but pretty genuinely amusing. Each spider carried a threatening gun, a hand-grenade, a gas mask or smoke bomb. Some spiders laid lines of small grenades. The show (entitled '*World Index*') filled the smaller room at Hugo Michell, much of the filling done by a constructed web that dominated the room and startled as one entered. Executive toys for the guffaw-friendly. Not a patch on Sloan's dribbled and willfully messy drawing and painting—a lesser and much less complex humour at work. 'But hey!' might be the best argument for them.

TWIN-ACTION

Christian Lock presented an untitled show of large and very large paintings, the majority of them closely linked as variations on the same shapes and procedures. The pictures were all named '*Untitled*' and numbered: black and white polymer paint on yellowy-cream canvas, unstretched. There were two or three smaller works in pale green and with a different, less *malerisch* motif, and another that seemed to hark back, I thought, to a previous show, with some yellow mixed in among the black-and-white. There was also—as a kind of decorative, emblematic flourish?—a would-be attention-grabbing sculpture, or hanging, made on the feature wall one passes on the way into the space: two or three paintings folded and massed together and which I found myself avoiding.

As an exhibition the whole made a nice showing. It boiled down to being a small show. Lock's exhibitions have for some time heralded a new body of work that features some small number of significantly new moves, techniques, motifs, materials. A bit like a demonstration. I don't mind this fact. Though *is* it a fact? Taking it to be so means that the shows boil down to the exhibition of a number of prototypes that have led to or surround one or two peak expressions. '*Untitled 3*' might have been the star of the show, though '*Untitled 4*' might have given it a run for its money: hard to tell. Reproduced in the catalogue, it was one of the folded works in the credenza out the front where it had little impact as a single piece. '*Untitled 1*' I also liked. These were all white paint on black canvas, a chief difference being whether they came across as white paintings, on balance, or black. All shared the same efflorescent, floral rocaille motifs, repeated once above and once below, usually in 'balancing' or reciprocal rhythms to each other, top and bottom. The black on which they were painted (paint applied with squeegee and hairdryer by the looks of it) marked, with total but happily casual accuracy, a black square within the creamy

square of the canvas. So effectively they were 'of' an image—or paired images, top and bottom, Rothko-style—that was a square framed by a warm and wide cream margin. This rectangular stability was given an extra and crucial twist or spin with the addition two or three sharply cut black accents, themselves more or less rectangular, but dynamic. They gave twist and tension to the overall work, on the 'black' paintings floating back, and less obtrusive than on the white works, where they tended to anchor and flatten the white image, interposing themselves as reading in front of the plane beneath, which held the white. And of course, lighter, the nacreous white pressed close up to the surface plane though reading as somehow behind these black vinyl-looking black patch tabs or baulks: so, a shallower, maybe less baroquely deep and mysterious space. My knowledge of the techniques involved is faulty: they are, I gather, 'skins'—of the sort Paul Hoban regularly produces. A bit like monoprints?

In detail the motifs suggest scalloped shell shapes, waves and water, and rorschach blots. There is a good deal of turning and twisting though the fascination of the detail can render passages of the pictures abruptly still. A squeegeed mark, that speaks of swift movement and decisive gesture, will be made up of tiny ridges, lines of dragged paint that have a wonderful and miniature fascination as now-frozen physical process. Seconds later, from some distance or simply with different focus on the viewer's part, the same passage will suggest energy and movement, turbulence or bloom.

Were they finally a little too simple, not quite complex enough? They have progressed back to the past at least, in that they do seek to work as whole paintings, not motifs floating within the arbitrary and unactivated framed space of the canvas. No longer failed late Kandinskys but attempts to live in and fully possess the field of the painting. There are only two elements: the 'figure', of turbulent clouding and wave-motion or shell-shape, and the hard, distinct black accents, always near the corners or the perimeter, that impart spin, do some anchoring or stabilizing, and lend another kind of tension.

The green and white pieces, not reproduced in catalogue, work well only at a distance. Everyone remarks—well, two people—on their resembling Christopher Wool. How Woolen were they? Close-up their overlaid grids of ben day-dotted squares become too transparent to have much definition against the pale green underneath. From across the gallery they begin to work. These works don't seem part of the same group as made up the bulk of the show, and seem to be announcing older news. Having less drama to work with, less definition against their unpainted margins, they necessarily call in more compositional help: the squares and squares-overlaid-upon-squares work away quietly. #9 in the exhibition

was advantaged by a possible landscape reading: the suggestion of a group of trees near the top—and the consequent implication of foregrounded, closer parkland lower down.

WHO'S A GOTH, WHO'S A GRAPH, WHO'S ANOTHER PAINTING?

Matt Arbuckle showing, recently at Fontanelle, was one I missed and which I'm feeling might have made a relevant point of comparison with the work Nicholas Elliott, and maybe with Christian Lock. I will look out for Arbuckle's work in future.

Nicholas Elliott presents a quite extensive show. The focus is narrow—on some particular ranges of effect and affect—but the whole has a great deal of authority. It is not the sort of painting seen often in Adelaide. And there are those ancients who will ask rhetorically whether we haven't seen it before? A younger crowd might respond exactly as 'the young' do to the news that a film is in black-and-white and that furthermore it has no soundtrack, and no there won't be popcorn! Wailing refusal.

The show is very effectively hung—to make clear the two or three variations of format and size, to announce its colour range, to offer three or four kinds of strategy or procedure: the paintings were mostly large at one size, a few were smaller at another, and there were some diptychs and triptych arrangements of these same sizes; the paintings were monochromes of single seemingly solid colour, were a single colour applied over another (black on white, or silver, or grey, applied to either black or white ground; the monochrome fields were squeegeed, mopped or rubbed in one or other consistent manner, those featuring colour-on-a-ground were more graphically scribbled or scrawled in looping but consistent coiling strokes, and there were some black-and-white's that used stencilled areas and called in no softening, muting, or dissembling vaguery (no mist, no smudge, no brushiness).

The punter who doesn't turn on his or her heel has their eye quickly seduced and sensitized, drawn in to the fine discriminations of intensity, shallow or deeper depth, and still or mobile atmosphere of the paintings. The repeated rubbings—or 'passes' at any rate (of whatever kind)—cover the surface with an initial uniformity. Some present first and quickly as opulent, beautiful cubes of colour: a whole work that is a kind of slightly sour, jute gold, '*She came to me at night in the field*'; another—'*Gold inside the night*'—that is a

woody burnished brown but very glowing; another (*'Softness suddenly'*) that seems a white grey, but seems also to possess pink in some of its turns. In each the uniformity of the monochrome gives way to perceived depths and to variations on the energy of the scratching, scrawling, graphic countering or abandonment that has gone on. These differently worked areas produce differentiated areas of sheen, of light and dark, of depth.

Unlike Lock's pictures, with Elliott's we always know we are looking at nothing. 'Abstraction' can, might correctly, imply that we are looking at something derived from and pertaining to—perhaps summary of—a particular, usually visual, *thing*. Elliott may be non-figurative as opposed to this sense of 'abstraction'. A clue in one of the other paintings suggests that the artist would have it that the paintings embody/derive from/engender or communicate emotion. We can safely leave this as his business. As surfaces, expanses of worked canvas, they do seem well capable of supporting such a reading, of taking strength from our attribution of the emotional. For some viewers, not unreasonably, there will be an immediate emperor's-new-clothes moment: there's nothing there. And maybe Elliott is too susceptible to the charm of the medium. But let's say there is, there is something there.

Following the golden yellow *'She came to me at night'*, a large painting, came two smaller works in black on white, and in a looping, scrawling style, leaving plenty of the white ground underneath visible, breaking the painting into distinct areas of black and white. One of their functions—within the exhibition, if not absolutely—is to make the opulent painted monochrome that has gone before, seem especially vibrant and unitary by contrast with its own breakdown into binaries: two colours, line versus ground, energy opposing inertia. The first of these was entitled *'Nearly no'* a white arch of scrawls on black and the second, *'Cancellation... no regrets'*, a diptych of two abutted canvases, each themselves divided—in Christian Lock-style—into an upper and echoing or countering, lower half. So, a kind of four-piece, all up. It was black on white, four energized areas, with some slightly warmer colour coming through in the edges of lines or in thinner, more scumbled areas of the black.

One very large triptych: a black and white 'scene'—of what suggested themselves as craggy mountain tops and vertiginous valleys. This one wasn't very interesting. It was the only piece that called for the term 'Gothic', but it didn't do much for or with the concept. But, if you were wondering at all about the exhibition title—which did feature the word—there you are. The picture itself was called *'Gothic dirt graphs'*.

There were three other 'graphic' works—graphic in the sense of being sharply black-and-white, not painterly, graphic also in the sense that they reminded of assembled offcuts—accidental arrangements from the layout and design desk—from the light-box, say—of a pre-digital era layout room. Graphic Design. (I have a memory of Europe presenting a lot of this stuff in the sixties and seventies: it always looks forceful, dramatic and scaleless, and its effect unearned. Eastern & Northern European art, & magazine layouts from all over: it was a weirdly empty brutalist rhetoric that suggested power, overdetermined conflict, via slabs of pattern dots, a torn edge sometimes, in tensely burdened, slightly architectural arrangement. A lot of visual huffing and puffing. It loomed and towered threateningly and suggested terror, revolution, imminent change. It was once ubiquitous and people must have made careers out of it, but none of them made a name.)

As there were three of them they do constitute one of the bodies of work within the larger show. (*'Battle fields and Anxious edges'*, *'Future blues'* and *'Text'* were the titles.) Elliott's were good of the type. And still not to my taste.

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'Most of no' was a bluey silver-and-black, two-colour piece, filled by the word 'No' in a simple, lower-case hand-written script. It reminded of what was in the 80s an oft-sighted antipodean triumvirate: Kiefer-Tillers-McCahon. What to say about the painting, it was great to look at. Some other of these energetically graphic pieces (the work of the whole arm rather than the wrist) had words in them, fragments of statements, not usually given a great deal of prominence. Still, another nod to the influence of Colin McCahon. Maybe.

'That driving drag of time'—(at some time it must be said that these titles don't do much for the paintings)—was another of the large, uniformly painted monochromes: a kind of grey-white that turned out (though probably *not* uniformly) to have a deliciously comforting pale pink in the paint's edges. This work was made up of contiguous, sometimes touching sometimes not, bricks of paint, themselves made of a repeat scribble motion. So *'Driving drag'* registers as very lapidary, but not at all to do with geometry or the stable overlay of a grid. And as anything but stoney: the repeated shapes look wondrously soft and comforting. These monochrome efforts were great just for being able to demonstrate that they worked, that the surface could float and be energized, be sustaining, with so little else going on. In the past such works might have sat with any number of 'abstractionists' from the 70s—Poons, late Olitski, or with the more minimalist-affiliated, like Ryman. Here and now they might 'sit with', though how comfortably?, Sam Howie—and Christian Lock. Three

very different mind-sets. Howie's would be literalist, Elliott's most purely retinal, Lock's the more tentative and open to change. Anna Gore might be another, and Ben Sando. Gore has shown at Fontanelle not so far back, the work recalling Frankenthaler, but less gestural—or should that be “but *still less* gestural”? Sando showed at Light Square with Elliott a few years ago, a series of works that were high-energy, ebullient, smart-arsed, hard-headed and joyful. And there are Paul Hoban, Anton Hart and Aldo Iacobelli: their inclusion would bolster the roster.

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Elliott's was a good show. It makes an odd moment, I think. These paintings that might have been at home in the 70s—or would they have been: I suppose they are generally a little more square-on to the picture frame, no vast expanses left picturesquely and suggestively 'open', so 'more minimal' or at least disabused somehow—these and a performance art-on-video show at the AEF, recalling in part those same mid-seventies. I will not review the AEF's '**PP/VT (Performance.Presence/Video.Time)**', beyond saying that it seems a good one. My working hours preclude my seeing that show, which takes time to offer its rewards. By contrast with the paintings it seems resolutely fact-based, proposition-making, confronting, 'redoubtable'. The Experimental Art Foundation was born, in 1975, out of this kind of stand-off.

There was a time—will it come again?—when artist was synonymous with painter. Fifty or more years ago. Painting is respectable again, even amongst devotees of the new if not, perhaps, with avant-gardists: currently Richter towers amongst the rest with two modes, one deriving from photographs and looking at representation, the other looking 'at' painting, while seeming to enact it satisfactorily. Christopher Wool has resuscitated de Kooning's legacy by resuscitating Johns' and Rauschenberg's irony and dispassionate cool at the same time. These paintings shouldn't be compelling but they seem to be: somehow new, somehow 'of' our time. (Which is a rather 'window-dressing' phrase: how, by what mechanism are they?) Karen Kilimnik and Elizabeth Peyton and others seem to propose the past (Manet, Vuillard, Bonnard, Van Dongen), leveraged to employ their old-time transgression, their old time sweetness and nostalgia, and to do it for now. I mean, they are not simply comfortable, even Peyton though her ironies are gently offered. Luc Tuymans seems to have painting in his sights and at the same time to affect a minor artist's tones and lack of fanfare—the flat, unemphatic and mild colour reminds of Marquet amongst the Fauves.

I'm plainly out of touch—a desk-bound local critic, saying, I notice, “seems” too much. The last time Australia felt it was on the money was in the early 80s: the early *Art & Text* era (of quote, pastiche, double-bluff, parody—when ‘the postmodern’ was taken on board not as a prospective periodisation but was cashed in for immediate use as a style term, one soon to be used up while the era itself continued).

EXHIBITION BOUT

Anna Horne—*Lightweight Heavy* at Fontanelle, showed a set of sculptures, mostly assembled, hybrid objects that had the look of a classic and exemplary demonstration, a rolling out of a particular vocabulary of shapes and sizes and ploys, all about catching the eye and building around one simple contradiction, or anomaly. The pieces combined simple elements—pieces of metal piping or copper tube, small pillows, simple daises or bases, tiles, mirror, rope and string, clothesline cord, vinyl, a hula hoop, some cast concrete, polystyrene, plaster—positing lightness against weight, simulating weight in objects lightly hung. There were contrasts of line against bulk, of day-glo colour against more dour colour and material: a length of apparently heavy pipe resting on a small cushion: weightiness vs lightness, hardness versus softness.

The exhibition was visually entertaining and well-laid out so as to have the viewer constantly looking up then down, sensing colour or in sequence, color or texture, known quantity and less certain. I liked the work, but it seemed almost surrogate art, and to have been derived—or to be derivable—from Louise Haselton or Warren Vance. Whether or not it was so derived, or could be, it did not have their full follow-through, their deeper agendas. So the contrasts and surprise of the materials were less extreme and confined to a much narrower, and more predictable range than Haselton's. The works—‘*Light box*’ and ‘*Plinth?*’ say—that resembled Warren Vance's—a particular phase of his from quite some time back—had not his works' air of preoccupation (with effects of light and transparency, illusion and, um, ‘spirit’: one suspected some actual, crazy ‘belief’ on Warren's part). ‘*Procrastination*’ was not far from a redaction of recent Louise Haselton wall-pieces; a number of pieces featured the irregular hoop shape that has run through Haselton's art over many shows.

Haselton would not claim ownership of these elements or motifs: they are public domain material and much of the show seems an unpacking of standard first-generation minimalist procedures: of leaning, stacking, hanging, of simple demonstrations of weight and gravity,

hollowness or solidity. Pipe remains a constant, the taste for lead and felt seems to have been replaced by one for plastics and decorative satin, the proportions are all more domestic, like the materials. A deliberate *Cheap As Chips* aesthetic replaces the more industrial presence of early Naumanns and Andres, Judds and Serras. ***Lightweight Heavy*** might have been a demonstration of current, accepted practices, slightly tongue-in-cheek and breezily confident.

The boxing trope (also a joke about the artist's ambitions or anxieties) seeks to alert us to the punch and counter-punch dynamic activating most of the work—and is amusing because it is appropriate to these objects that are mostly rather delicate and beautiful (as well as witty). I doubt the exhibition is proposing boxing as 'the sweet science' or anything like that. Though who knows? Eva Hesse is the only influence mentioned in Jennifer Kalionis's writing for the show.