

New kids on the block

by megan backhouse

Georgina Campbell makes unusual, unsettling pictures of human flesh and animal bones. You can see every mark on both skin and skull – and that's despite the fact that these photographs were taken with nothing more than a flatbed scanner.

Claire Harris first saw them late last year and now Campbell has made a new series of pictures – incorporating flowers on the cusp of death as well – for the latest *Exploration* exhibition of unsigned artists, which Harris has been curating ever since moving to Melbourne seven years ago.

Exploration 7 brings together works by nine artists, all of who have only recently graduated from art schools and none of who are represented by a Melbourne gallery (though one of the artists, Queenslander Paul Adair, has just been taken on by a Sydney gallery).

Where Campbell works in a darkened room using only the light of the scanner, which she places



Paul Adair, *Stump*, from decay series, 80 x 80cm, giclée print

on its side, upside-down or in some other precarious position (she says she goes through a fair few of them), other artists here are working with more traditional forms of photography, as well as paint, sculpture and installation.

Harris says she chose the artists by visiting graduate exhibitions, artist-run spaces and scouring the Internet. "It always has to be something that appeals to me, so it's biased in that sense," she says. "But I try to get a cross-section of what is happening at the moment by artists that are doing interesting, but not necessarily saleable, work." Given that



Georgina Campbell, *The Conundrum*, digital inkjet print from flatbed scanner

Adair is now represented by the leading Stills Gallery, however, we can assume his crisp, 3-dimensional-looking photographs are saleable to boot. Routinely 80 centimetres square, Adair photographs sparsely staged scenes of taxidermy animals and such everyday objects as a milk crate, a log, tyres and a bucket (though never altogether).

While there is something overtly sculptural about Adair's pictures, Melburnian James Parrett is, in fact, the only sculptor represented here. Parrett, who was shortlisted for the lucrative McClelland Award two years ago, makes large abstract sculptures in broken-up circular forms. There's only room in this show for one large work, a finely balanced marine-ply piece, but there will also be three small maquettes, in rusted metal, stainless steel and cardboard.

Cardboard is also put to use in the work of Queensland installation artist Pamela See who is cutting out unnervingly life-like (but for the fact they are one-metre-long) feathers that will be cascading down the gallery walls. There will be more cutting-out courtesy of Melbourne's Hannah Bertram, who is to suspend a four-metre-high, lacy paper curtain from the ceiling. And that's a pretty robust piece for Bertram – her latest show included finely perforated receipts, Metcards and other scraps of paper, while last year she exhibited an old chair, the paint that had peeled from its surface arranged in patterns over the floor.



Pamela See, *Drawn*, wire, glue, paper, 130 x 70cm, 2007

The chair was part of Bertram's solo show at the nearby Upstairs Flinders, which Harris opened as an independent space a year ago. It was at the same space, also, that Harris first exhibited two of the painters included in this show – Alan Garcia, a Melbourne abstract artist with a punchy, expressionist style and Alison Gray, also from Melbourne and with a penchant for juxtaposing expansive (lurid) colour fields with more illustrative details (such as animal stencils and outlines.)



Naomi Zouwer, *Blue Slippers*, oil on canvas, 76 x 110cm

On the figurative painting side, we get Canberra's Naomi Zouwer, who does small, feminine paintings of girly items (slippers, silky underwear) spilling out of a hatbox or over a floral-patterned carpet. Finally, there is Melbourne painter Heidi Yardley who makes dark Polaroid-sized paintings on board, often of people and landscapes by night, which she presents with rounded corners like an old photographic snapshot. She does with oil paint what Campbell does with a flatbed scanner, and that is to explore the darker side of domesticity, some of its secrecy and isolation.

Exploration 7 is at Flinders Lane Gallery,
137 Flinders Lane, Melbourne Vic
from 8 to 26 May

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