

artroom5

TAR Feb 2018

Always something happening

artroom5 Henley Beach

3 – 31 March, Wednesday – Sunday 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

John Neylon

These days an alternative space 'art gallery' could be a Sulo bin, an abandoned factory, a pub, a laneway or a home. This last concept has form in Adelaide. SALA Festivals have featured 'open studio' opportunities for people to meet and observe artists at home. Artist Week '96 featured a project 'Compost' (curated by David O'Halloran) in which fifteen artists staged work in different homes within the Norwood area. Most recently a group of Adelaide Central graduates have participated in The Suburban Version (2016, 2017) a three-day co-curated (Cassie Thring/Jane Skeer) event showcasing work variously installed in a suburban house, temporarily vacated by obliging parents of one of the artists. Then there is artroom5. It's at Henley Beach (5 Kent Street), a private house belonging to independent curator Vivonne Thwaites. Thwaites began showing artists at her home in 2004 and has continued to mount exhibitions on site, at varying intervals, to the present. A rummage through artroom5's site will give an idea of how substantial and diverse this process has been as well as documenting Thwaite's extensive curatorial achievements and experience. The artroom5 project involves specialised curation, with the selected works embedded both within a domestic 'daily living' space as well as an existing hang of many other art works from Thwaite's private collection. Therein lies the challenge and adventure of experiencing art in this kind of context – something almost impossible to replicate in more conventional gallery spaces.

Four artists are featured in this exhibition; Therese Ritchie, Stephanie Radok, Andrew Baines and Susan Jenkins. Ritchie has lived and worked in Darwin from the early 1980s ('like living in a crash site' Ritchie has observed) and was a prominent figure in the political poster movement of that decade. Satire, irony and mordant wit are her weapons of choice as she has continued to comment on life in the Territory (and by implication – wider Australia) in all its red neck glory. Paradoxically, within her work, is something equivalent to the eye of the storm – moments of beauty and reflection in which people are caught up in an implied narrative of uncertain outcomes. *Adelaide House Todd Mall* in this exhibition is an example of her tradecraft in assembling panoramic images from multiple photographic sources. Dutiful tourists snap trophy sights while we the viewers are pinned by a dot painting held aloft and staring right back. No words necessary. Stephanie Radok's art works the liminal ground between sign and symbol. Within her imagery, vessels, plants, creatures and food act as cyphers for open-ended narratives concerning the migration of people, traditions and memories across the world. *Chinese Greens*, in this exhibition, consists of a series of paintings of spring onions on unfolded cardboard boxes. Other paintings, also on cardboard, feature images of teacups, teapots, bowls of rice, and other items associated with Chinese cooking. Painting style is direct and robust in keeping with the artist's appreciation of the six principles of traditional Chinese painting, particularly 'spirit resonance'. Packaging inscriptions ('Liver Sausages' 'Made in China') are clearly visible. Fusion, palimpsests, lost in translation – call it what you like – these diminutive, even humble panels have the character of ancient clay tablets bearing a message from the ancestors, that food and feeling mean everything. Photographs by Andrew Baines may surprise some who are accustomed to the artist's trademark paintings featuring aerial bovines and odd conjunctions of

corporate souls and the seaside. Musicians actually in the water, caught in mid bow sweep or tuba grunt, makes for exciting viewing, particularly when violin handbooks caution against dropping instruments into seawater. The Hills Hoist at the beach image (from the *Post Modern Backyard* series 2011) has been explained by the artist as his surreal way of highlighting the demise of the Aussie backyard. The beach is such a ready-made chessboard you could put almost anything on it – and it would work. Maybe it is a slightly dystopic image. Baines is certainly having a lot of fun making the point. Susan Jenkins lives in the Port Adelaide area. A long career in arts administration and curating has largely kept her from the studio until now. Unleashing the artist within has involved getting out and about, observing and painting Port Adelaide panoramas. The scale is intimate – small wood panels – and the format emphatically landscape. Couldn't help thinking about the Australian Impressionist 9 x 5 works and Arthur Streeton's horizontal and vertical studies of Sydney Harbour. A combination of plein air observation and studio resolution, these images have an engaging freshness. They also remind that the Port can be a happy hunting ground for the right kind of eye. This exhibition runs across March which is a busy time for art enthusiasts. So lock it in to the Festival/Fringe schedule. artroom5 is always a rare and rewarding experience.

John Neylon February – March 2018