

## Survey - Galliano Fardin

### Layering Space

Concerned about crises in politics, urbanisation and pollution in Europe and Italy, Galliano Fardin moved to Australia in 1972'. He came having heard of both the bush and the boundless spaces of the outback and has, since migrating here, set about travelling, walking, working and experiencing a diverse range of the available natural environments, However; after graduating with distinction from Fine Art at Curtin University in 1986, Fardin has essentially committed to developing his art practice in a studio he built in the environs of Lake Clifton and regular solo exhibitions with Galerie Dusseldorf.

I recall walking up the stairs of GalerieDusseldorf in the late 1980's,when it was located at 890 Hay Street, Perth, to find a fine show of Galliano Fardin's work. Amongst what was on show were rusted and flattened steel cans which, along with their remnant glazing of red desert dust (suggesting that they had been found partially burned in the outback), had been mounted on white-washed packing-crate boards. The resulting crushed and eroded patterns were not quite symmetrical, whilst the tangible objects they once were eluded me the longer I stood before them. There was plan and chance at play, suggestions of the urban and the immense landscape brought together; and a precarious narrative of sublime space evoked. It was a heady sensation to get pulled into the rhythmic gestalt of object, ground, surface and pattern, as well as into questions about our systems of production and waste. Amongst these and the other works on exhibit were some parallels to Italian Art Povera work, Indigenous work, as well as the finesse and allusive imagery of the American Abstractionists. Indeed included in the style of the paintings on show was a bit of the labyrinth structure and texture of de Kooning and John's art, as well as the calligraphic cosmography and Zen stillness of the Japanese art Fardin would have seen when studying in Boston in 1986.2 Having not known of Fardin's work before climbing up to the gallery I came away wondering whether I'd just seen a show by a conceptual collagist, a painterly metaphorist or a pictorial perfectionist. Nevertheless I knew that here was an artist whose work intrigued me and one whose work I would endeavour to see again, in the intervening years there has been ample opportunity to do so. Since then, twenty years on, some of the titles of Fardin's subsequent shows - such as 'Horizon Line' (1992), 'Acqua e Terra' (1997), 'A Matter ofTime' (1999), 'Nothing stays the same - everything remains' (2008) and 'Fear of Failure/ Regeneration' (2010) - indicate the terrain of his philosophical, metaphoric and painterly vision.

Fardin trained at the Western Australian Institute of Technology W.A.I.T (now Curtin University of Technology) in the mid 1980's when there was, around Perth and amongst art graduates, an emphasis on process.' Certainly the material properties of paint and how it is both applied and sits on a surface is central to 'what' an artist 'makes'. Yet colour texture and paint application may become- if too literally applied - consciously decorative or mechanically insensitive (think overtly technical). Similarly, yet to the other extreme, work which is too overtly unrestrained can become emotionally over-bearing or too chaotically subjective to appeal to a viewers rational mind. Fardin thus attempts the balancing act of bringing into the process of painting that "something intangible"; revealed through the creative workings of an artist's subconscious studio experiences and his "everyday life experiences at Lake Clifton and of travelling the big spaces of the Western Australian landscape.4 Michael Wardell, curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, described this approach as "emphasising the element of time as an inherent component" and thus Fardin's art "is a meditative process that, like litmus paper absorbs the world around him.5 Similarly, curator Paola Anselmi sees Fardin's sensibility as coming "from an awareness of the fragility and impermanence of nature" and that he "experiences this reality as part of the artistic output itself" so that "Memories, stones and images of remote places are transformed in a personal language of marks and colours which do not translate but recall the lived experience rather than being an analytical process removed from nature.6

When I recently visited Fardin at his studio in Lake Clifton, \ was delighted that curator Gary Aiken had chosen some of those early collages of rusted cans to be exhibited in his Mandurah small survey show, but also intrigued when Fardin pointed out that a large painting (also to be included), which looked like a series of interlocking modular shapes, was actually palimpsest of a flattened can he had traced border to border across the surface. Even after being 'explained' the chart of lines remained enigmatic and quite beautiful as a display of the artist's determination and 'logical' approach of not creating his work through preliminary drawings but allowing ideas and images to flow directly onto the canvas.

Such an approach builds a strange convergence of constructivism and contemplative sensation to produce works of molecular looking essence: which though highly structured also seem organic. Fardin described this as a process taken up across his oeuvre so that each work "Goes back and forth, like mirrors reflecting.7 At its most basic the varying directions and layers of paint are artistic choices which become sedimentary layers to the finished work: fossilised like the skeletal forms of trees Fardin sometimes sees at low tide in the Harvey Estuary or the limestone stepping stone like circles which appear in the Lake Clifton soil when the sun dries these embedded rock substrates after rain. This produces a micro and macro participatory refinement whereby a work accrues and seeps into a consciousness of its own frequency or modulation wave; and thereby settles into its own, yet shared, motif of layered lines and shimmering threads of colour and shape. Saturated colour; hypnotic intersections of lines and dots, and the textured synthesis of patient variations of mark made by small brushes, are the hallmarks of his style. The result appeals to our visual senses as well perhaps as our disposition to read painter/ connectedness to both place and wider ideas.

The painterly fields and surfaces produced are akin to biological processes and the interconnectedness of bio fields and cosmic cycles.8 Such fields, in a modern society, include technological extensions and thus some of Fardin's oeuvre references computer screens as well as the larger landscape beyond. It could be said that if Fardin's oeuvre is about place, choice, accumulated history and the resulting "information" then one possible reading is that the dots and the strokes he so patiently builds up in his paintings can refer to information transfer and coding through a language system of simple variations in placement and sequences. At one level his works can thus be considered a series of screens that explore how even the genesis of a so called sophisticated image requires simple information transfer based around continuous rhythmic vibrations. Thus our earth, technology, art and the ver/ veil of physical space and matter are shown by Fardin to pulsate in a similar motion.Yet throughout his oeuvre there is also his expectation that "Ideas might come from the most humble of materials."9 In this way the simple looped 'Chain of Events' - a chain made from links of varying sizes - is aesthetically minimal, connotatively potent, so materially Australian and wry.

The current survey reminds me that whether made from a can, or a chain, or a labyrinth of paint, Fardin's works are cohesively beautiful and poetically meaningful. They have palpable presence and power i look forward to seeing his next exhibition. Dr Phillip McNamara

- 1 Fardin, Galliano. Conversation with author at the artist's Lake Clifton studio. January, 2012.
- 2 [Ibid.](#) At the Boston Museum of Fine Arts there is an extensive collection of East Asian Art. The collection was established in the eighteen hundreds during the Tea Trade'. In Boston there were also some great collections of Abstract Expressionist work that Fardin saw.
- 3 Fardin studied art at Curtin [1984-86.](#) At Curtin John Beard and Brian Blanchflower were, amongst other teachers, influencing this approach. By the late 1 980's and early 1990's a number of artists (Karl Wiebke, Alex Spremberg, Trevor Richards, Jurek Wybraniec, Andrew Leslie, John Dahlsen) were confirming this style. I commented on these Fremantle based artists for the Fremantle Herald i.e.'A greater degree of abstraction' (vol I No. 38, Aug. 16th, 1 99 and What is Art?' (Vol 2 No. 33, July 29th, 1991).
- 4 Fardin, Galliano, 16- 12-2001. catalogue statement for 'Unspoken Thoughts', Galerie Dusseldorf, 3-24 February 2002.
- 5 Wardell, Michael, prev.cit.
- 6 Anselmi, Paola. Catalogue essay (translated by the artist from a text in Italian) for 'Galliano Fardin : Nothing stays the same - everything remains', Galerie Dusseldorf 20 April - 18 May 2008.
- 7 Fardin, Galliano, 2012 conversation with Phillip McNamara, prev. cit.
- 8 Fardin, Galliano. Ideas suggested in the artist statement for 'Fear of Failure/Regeneration' Galerie Dusseldorf 11 July-8 August 2010.
- 9 Fardin, Galliano, 20 ] 2 conversation with Phillip McNamara, prev. cit.

Survey - Galliano Fardin is a Stretch Festival project for the City of Mandurah by curator Gary Aitken. This exhibition is presented from 13 April to the 6 May 2012 at the Alcoa Mandurah Art Gallery, MPAC, Galliano Fardin is represented by the Galerie Dusseldorf/ Images: Ross De Hoog /Writer: Dr Phillip McNamara

An overwhelming feeling of joy is experienced in the company of good people and as a guest of the Fardin family you are in such company. From the sanctuary of his humble dwelling/studio Galliano offers us the opportunity to experience through the eyes of the artist that real connection between man and his environmentThe work and artist offer us an insight into new ways of seeing and living with our environment, and these experiences are as much rewarding, as they are life changing.  
GARYAITKEN: Artist/Curator