



The art of leisure

Placing art in the realm of leisure has been a favourite pastime of history. Symbolic of a society at ease with itself and flexing its right to relax, art is viewed by some as the product of those on a philosophical sabbatical.

This tension between the hobby of making and the industry of art is a favourite hunting ground of Brian McKay. It seems he believes art should hold a pivotal position in the structure of society. Certainly, this is what is gained from looking at his work. That art is parodied as a leisure pursuit is frustrating to McKay and in the current pieces at Galerie Dusseldorf in Mosman Park this frustration takes the form of irony, both in symbolism and material process.

The works – for the most part – are McKay's current signature process, a combination of automotive paint on etched and sealed aluminium. Some images attempt to create a depth through automotive paint colours but it was the "colourless" works that really grabbed me.

The cross etching he uses in these to garner texture makes the viewer's mobility integral to defining the image. Depending on the light, the images of a boat, shell or deckchair acquire rotation themselves and differing solidity through tonal values. Manipulating the viewer into giving the images sustenance is a wonderful comment. It sums up the symbols as false idols rather than

iconography, illusions of materialism rather than symbols holding any substance.

This idea of falsity or lie is important in considering how McKay views the relationship between art and industrialised society. McKay's works on aluminium muse over the way our landscape has been formed through the relationship between industry, leisure and art.

His work tells of the false icon of increased leisure time which has been promised to us by industrialised society since the revolution of mechanised labour some 300 years ago. The false symbols of security, like boats and deckchairs swimming across aluminium, caught me thinking about the act of looking,



Ambiguous Box

'The cross etching he uses in these to garner texture makes the viewer's mobility integral to defining the image.'

too. Having time to look is directly related to material security; one gives the opportunity for the other.

The use of aluminium in McKay's work is very contemporary. The aluminium is beautiful to the eye and placating to our senses. Further to this, it exonerates us for our sins of

over-production, beautiful things that have been made from industrial processes.

In McKay's working method, desire is OK because it drives us to understand our environment.

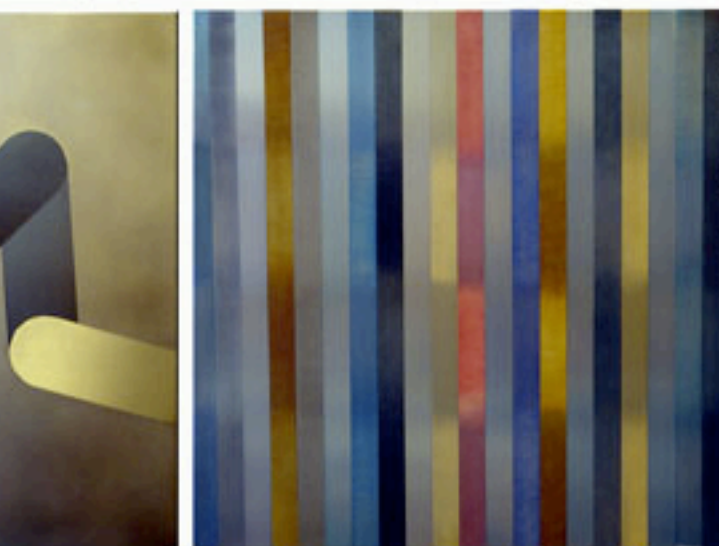
Yes, through industrialisation we have raped our planet but in doing so



Quintet

we subconsciously honour that same planet through replicating its beautiful organic forms and attempting to understand the light that builds these forms for our eyes.

The show at Dusseldorf is a conglomeration of pieces that



Celebration

I've seen in various shows in different places before. But put his works that concern structural elements alongside the works with icons and it begins to read like a philosophical reasoning for why we are drawn to continually

wanting more in our lives.

This world and its light and forms are so beautiful that it seems only natural we should desire to produce beauty ourselves.

At first glance McKay's images are difficult to grasp.

They need time to see the irony and levels of connective thinking between the process, the form and the image.

He doesn't own the picture plane in his process and along with the mechanic craft quality of these images, he implies a lack of authorship that simultaneously critiques the depth of icons as well as artist's ideas.

His ideas, like his sails, slip across the surface of the aluminium — they are barely hanging on. This is why McKay's work is so important to art today. His work understands and speaks of the precarious labour which is art-making within an industrial society bent on production.

There is an intense input of time and scrutiny involved in McKay's art-making, an intensity that is far removed from the art that much of society views with envy or disaffectedness as a whim of leisure and a waste of time.