



the **WALL**

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introducing

**paul
davies**

now showing at
art district 13

haave you
met....paul?





Paul Davies with his stencils
Image Courtesy: Matt Reed

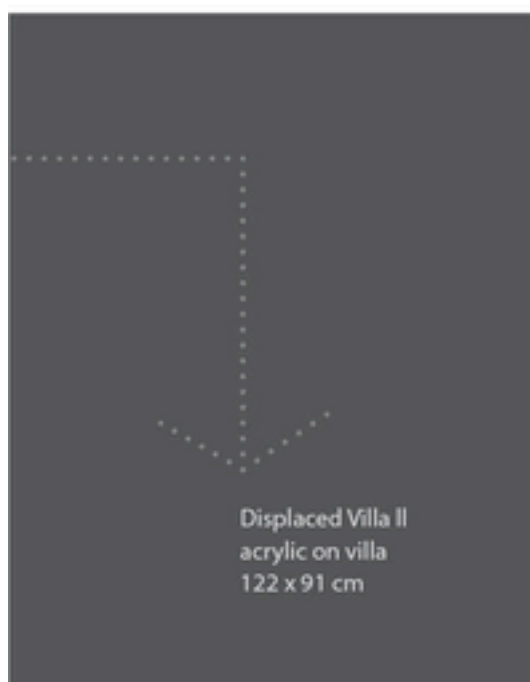
Stephanie Samuel speaks to Olsen Irwin's rising star about being forced to study sculpture, stenciling as his modus operandi, Metallica and more!

SS: Tell us a bit about your childhood. Growing up what attracted you to art and made you decide to take it on as a career?

PD: Since I was a kid I always liked drawing and after my dad saw some sketches I made of the cartoon character Asterix, he and mum found a local artist who took art classes. At first Kel (the teacher) refused to take me because I was only 7 years old, but mum insisted and said that drawing was all I was interested in. I ended up going to classes with him for the next 8 years. We still write to each other, which is great. Kel taught me the basics of oil painting, mostly landscapes.



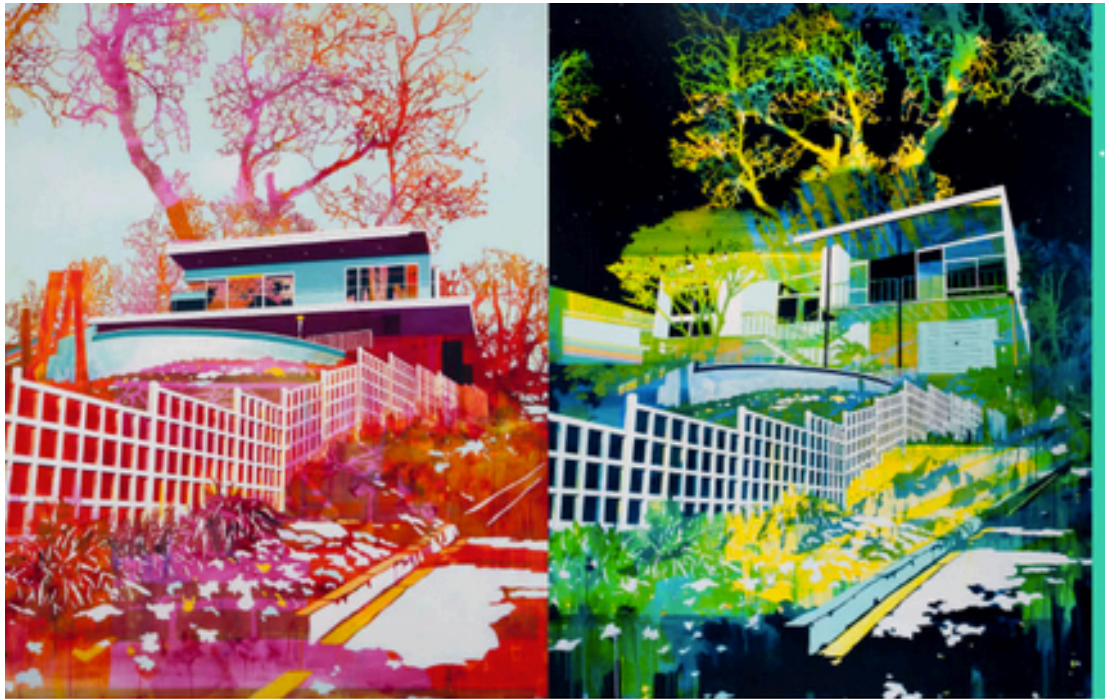
In high school my parents bought a painting by Australian artist Jeffrey Smart, the work is typical of his suburban themed style, which I really loved for its geometric precision. It inspired me to make paintings based on suburban subjects that were around me. Art was also a way to make friends who were into the same things; I drew logos of the bands I was into like Metallica, which was fun to share with other kids at school. However I never thought it would be possible to make a living from art. It wasn't until I joined a group studio in Sydney and met other artists, graffiti artists, street artists, graphic designers and fashion designers that I realized it could happen.



SS: You've majored in sculpture but we see more canvases in your repertoire. Any particular reason for that?

PD: I was forced to study sculpture at University because I didn't get the marks to study painting! I was really disappointed at first because I had no experience with sculpture and just wanted to paint. However this provided an alternative approach to making artwork. I created installations and sculptures, which encouraged me to consider and respond to positive and negative space. I continued to paint after college and drew on this experience to explore three-dimensional subjects on a two-dimensional picture plane, using stencils.

I stopped making sculpture after college partly because I didn't have a studio big enough to create the work that I was able to at University. It was not until I returned (10 years later) to study a Masters by research at the same University in Sydney that I began to flesh out my process, which involves stenciling, and translate that into sculpture. I like switching between painting and sculpture because each informs the other and I am grateful now that I didn't get into painting at University!



SS: Coming to your art, this exhibition was the outcome of your residency at Cite Internationale des Artes , Paris. What is the idea and philosophy behind 'Flattening Sublime?'

PD: Flattening Sublime is an exhibition of work based on a recent artist residency at the Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris, awarded by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia.

The word flattening, for me, refers to the process of stenciling, which I employ to create the paintings. The stencils derive from my own photographs taken at various locations, which are printed to the size of a poster and hand cut to create

a screen or silhouette of the image. I paint over the stencil onto the canvas and peel the stencil away, revealing the negative space or "holes" of the stencil. These layers are built up using different stencils to create the image. Similarly to the "flatten image" tool in Photoshop, these layers are compressed onto a single plane of the canvas. The word Sublime, for me in this exhibition is less defined, it can refer to the landscape or the ideals projected by the built structures; I hope that it is open to the viewer's interpretation.

During the residency I was fortunate to investigate first hand, various styles of architecture and surrounding



natural environments. These subjects were collaged and interchanged on the picture plane, similarly to the use of architectural pattern books, using photography and hand cut paper stencils. The images depicted in this series consider the relationship between the frozen built and living natural environment and remain devoid of human form to encourage the viewer to generate their own response to the work.

SS: What attracts you to architecture, the protagonist of your current works? Also, Kate Bryan in her essay 'Filling the Void' said that you were particularly inspired by the Rose Seidler House in Sydney, and have

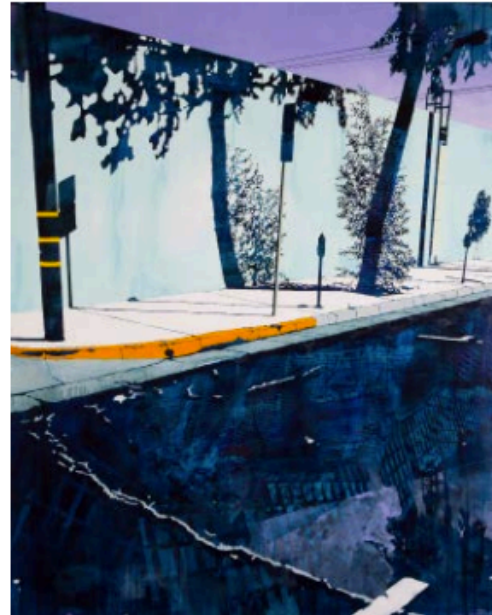
featured it prominently in your work. What about that?

PD: I am interested in the spaces architecture creates; one of my favorite artworks is Rachael Whiteread's House, in which she cast, using concrete, the interior of a Victorian townhouse on the outskirts of London. House turned the inside out, encouraging the viewer to consider the interior space as a physical object. In my practice, I use hand cut paper stencils in a similar manner. I use a brush to paint through the negative space of the stencil, which once on the canvas, creates the figurative element to my work.

It is important for me, that when I paint these subjects, that they remain devoid of human form, to invite the viewer in the space and generate their own response. Modern architecture due its clean lines, compliments the stenciling method. However I juxtapose the buildings with alternating examples of the natural environment referring to the way we now have access through digital technology, to cut and paste our environment. I also like the projected utilitarian ideals of modern architecture and how these concepts have been translated from Europe to



Luxemburg Trees Looking Down, Peach
acrylic on linen
53 x 122 cm



LA Road
acrylic on linen
153 x 122 cm



Image courtesy: Lexie Reeves

places all over the world with different cultures and climates. The title "Built in Translation II" for my upcoming exhibition at Art District 13 derives from this idea. It's interesting to see how modernism has been adopted in Australia, for example the Rose Seidler house, which appears from the exterior as a foreign object that has landed in the landscape, yet once inside the house, the landscape is invited in through large windows and open plan living spaces, which suits the Australian climate.

SS: They often say that the 'Medium is the Message.' On that note what role does stenciling play in your work?

PD: I am interested in the stencil as a 2d and 3d object. It can be both a tool for painting and sculpture. The viewer looks at a painting, however through a stencil. The stencil is both a surface and a form and allows the viewer to read and understand its subject by observing the spatial qualities within and around it.

Stenciling in essence repeats the ideals and anxieties associated with the original subject, but the relationship between the original and its reproduction is blurred through this process.

The act of painting, from a photograph, in my studio recalls memories of the experience, yet the stencil acts as a standard to gauge those fleeting recollections.

Left to Right:

1. Neo Village
acrylic on linen
122 x 91 cm
2. Bridges
bronze
42 x 21 x 4 cm
3. In a pensive mood



Columns
acrylic on linen
122 x 153 cm

The stencil has a physical unchanging memory and acts like a skeleton to the painting. This trace differs to the memory of the mind shaped by time and other external forces. My works create utopias of imagery, which contrast my memory with that of the machine.

The paint, which is pushed, through the stencil onto the canvas, records the stencil's memory and I am able to work back into this with free hand brushwork that contains both my cognitive memory of painting methods and recollection of the site itself. It is partly for this reason that I choose not to exhibit my photographs as finished works. Rather these snapshots are tools, which enable me to construct a memory, from a number of viewpoints, similar to Thomas's discovery of the murder in Blow-Up, which only becomes apparent in hindsight.

The memories I possess from location, with that of the physical stencil, are played out in the painting by placing, for example, the garage directly above the swimming pool. This in reality would not exist, however these areas are manipulated with paint to appear correct, to imply a multitude of possible meanings.

The stencils are not sprayed or rolled

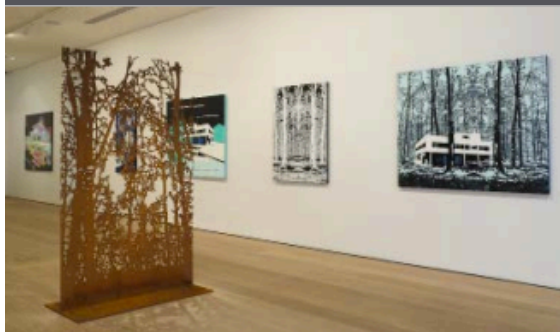
on, rather backgrounds are built up and areas retouched with brushwork to indicate the artist's hand and thought process acting against the mechanical counterpart.

SS: Now you graduated in 2000 and by 2006 you were exhibiting solo at Tim Olsen (then now Olsen Irwin). Since then your works have been showcased in Hong Kong, Paris and now in India. It's been quite a journey, and it's only just the beginning! How does it feel?

PD: It's exciting to be able to travel with work, meet interesting people and check out studios and exhibitions overseas. I recently relocated with my wife to Los Angeles, which is great as the architecture is inspiring and the people we have met are all doing interesting things. Although I have a rough plan for the next few years it's good to be open to new opportunities as you meet more like-minded people.

SS: This your first show in India and at a gallery that is making its own debut. Any thoughts on that?

PD: I am thrilled to be exhibiting in India with Art District 13! Kapil (Chopra) is so enthusiastic and his energy is contagious. I am very much looking forward to the chance of



Flattening Sublime
solo exhibition
Olsen Irwin Gallery, 2013

meeting people at the opening and checking out the space when we install the show. It is exciting to be planning the trip and I am keen to see as much art as possible!

SS: What is your perception of the current scenario of Indian

Contemporary Art? Any particular artists you follow?

PD: My perception is that Indian contemporary art is exciting; lots of the stories I have read about Indian art are of young artists responding to their surroundings. Nature Morte's stand at the recent Sydney Contemporary Art Fair was great and I really admire Asim Waqif's installations, it would be terrific to see his work in the flesh! I am interested in the way he explores the concepts associated with everyday objects and trash and translates those into art, specific to its location. I also saw Raqib Shaw's Paradise Lost at the Asia Pacific triennial in Brisbane, Australia, which was incredibly detailed.



Mums House Night Sky Blue Reservoir
acrylic on linen
123 x 150 cm



Deathmask Night
acrylic on linen
123 x 150 cm



Jervis Bay NSW
acrylic on linen
133 x 100 cms



SS: Finally, future plans - what do you have in store for your collectors and followers in the next 6 months?

PD: Carine Guimbard, curator at Foundation Le Corbusier, has offered to exhibit my stencil sculptures in the Villa Savoye, in Poissy, France, which is a very exciting opportunity. I am looking forward to the possibility of making a site-specific installation with these pieces both inside and outside the building. I also have a site specific installation planned for the end of the year at the Standard Hotel in Los Angeles based on mid century modern architecture. Also an exhibition



with Sophie Gannon in Melbourne, Australia, in November this year, based on Californian and Australian homes that I am researching here in Los Angeles.