

FRIDAY REVIEW » ART

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REVIEW

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TOPICS

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painting

Australian artist Paul Davies' mysteriously vacant homes encourage the viewer to build their own.

A new art address in the city – Art District XIII – is showcasing Paul Davies, a young Australian artist. Interestingly the gallery is the latest addition to the art mile of Lado Sarai and has come up at the same place where Mala Aneja's Art Motif used to be. Kapil Chopra, President of The Oberoi Group and art connoisseur who owns bestcollegeart.com – a website giving space to the work of young artists from all over the country – and The Wall, an e-magazine on art, chose Sydney's Olsen Irwin Gallery's brightest upcoming star Paul Davies to inaugurate the gallery with Paul's first show in India titled "Built in Translation II". Edited excerpts from an e-mail interview with the artist.

What was the starting point for your house series?

The house series resulted from a combination of influences. Initially it was a painting my parents owned when I was still at school, which was by the late Australian artist Jeffrey Smart. This work is typical of his style and depicted an urban setting rather than the iconic "Australian landscape". I made sketches and paintings inspired by this work because it referenced the environment I grew up in.

I continued painting and sketching throughout school to college but unfortunately didn't get the marks to study painting at the university and was forced to take sculpture as my major. At the time I was disappointed but it turned out to be a positive experience as I produced installations and sculptures to create a space for the viewer to inhabit. After college I was fortunate to be introduced to graffiti and stencil artists working in Sydney. I was drawn to the speed with which these artists executed work, often directly onto public walls, and fascinated by the stencil itself, which to me resembled sculpture. Combining these elements is for me a way to respond to the environment that I am surrounded by and the house is a focal point for the viewer to inhabit and generate their own response.

What is the conflict between the natural and built environment that you portray in your canvases?

Like I said, the house in my work is a space for the viewer to inhabit and generate their own response. It is for this reason I omit the human form. Although the paintings depict homes set in idyllic, leisured landscapes, and appear realistic, the paintings are an amalgam of elements from various locations. For me this leaves the work open to interpretation, allowing the viewer to consider their purpose like what may have happened there earlier or what might occur in that space.

In my paintings the relationship between the built and natural environment is often a precarious one. Sometimes the architecture is the dominant subject placed at the centre of the painting and surrounded by landscaped natural elements. But in the forest works the building plays a submissive role, in which the surrounding landscape engulfs the manmade structure.

How do you create your works?

I start by photographing source material such as buildings, forests, palm trees and swimming pools from a variety of locations. Some of these subjects are researched and others I stumble on. In my studio I select and print images (using a large format printer) onto sheets of paper and cut into the sheet using a scalpel blade, which creates the stencil. I place the stencil onto the canvas and brush paint in the negative spaces. I then peel the stencil away to let the paint on the canvas dry. This process is repeated with a variety of stencils that build layers to create the work.

How does it feel to exhibit in India? How responsive is the viewer to the kind of art that you make?

I was thrilled to be given an opportunity to exhibit in Delhi. It was my first visit to India and first show for an art gallery here. I was excited to see people respond with their own experiences to the exhibition. Someone at the opening mentioned that a particular painting evoked a memory of beach houses they had seen in Goa. As the scenes in my paintings are a culmination of places it is encouraging to hear that people find it relatable. Hopefully I can return and incorporate elements of the built and natural environments in India and someone from another country may respond in a similar way.

Keywords: [Art District XIII](#), [Paul Davies](#), [Built in Translation II](#), [art exhibition Delhi](#)