



REAL AND FAUX: Artist Paul Davies' work

Australian art experience

The natural and the built. Paul Davies explores both in his latest exhibition

By SEEMA BAWA

☑ Houses, imagined and living, refer not only to living spaces but also memory, history and power. Paul Davies, an artist from Australia, exhibiting at Art district XII, explores these abstract references through houses and landscapes drawn from contrasting locations — urban, sub-urban and marginalised.

He juxtaposes these with real and faux landscapes that add to an aura of peace and calm, though sometimes this is over emphasised so that the spaces look abandoned. The lack of human presence is deliberate, for the artist wants the viewer to create his or her own narrative around the lives of the absent players in the composition — the inhabitants.

Davies, uses stencils of houses, superimposes them upon the backdrops and then paints on these surfaces. The process is ideated on the notion that stencilling itself repeats 'the ideals and anxieties that come from the original subject'. But the repetition is neither mechanical and nor neutral, it creates a space within which the original and its reproduction communicate with each other.

This reflects on the architectural history of Australia that throughout the colonial experience borrowed from various architectural styles from the metropolitan country as well as later neo colonial powers.

All the while, it also struggles to construct and control its own identity by controlling the 'original' prototypes to produce its own cultural self. The houses as structures are two storeyed and are set against a distant built environment, or a villa with a pool, empty or otherwise, or with some kind of small landscaped area around with tropical trees. Thus, each hints at being an incomplete story, the empty pool with few dried leaves suggesting winter, drought, vacation and immense loss.

The reflections on the water seem to refer to temporary absence of users not lack of them, as well as the relationship of the built and nat-



Paul Davies

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