

Sunshine Coast Art Prize 2014 – Judges' Comments

Winner: Matthew de Moiser, *Servo (state 3) 2014*, Laminex on board, 60 x60cm

Mathew de Moiser's *Servo (state 3) 2014* was the most visually compelling and pictorially resolved work in the Prize. It was the work that I kept coming back to; the work which excited my interest the most. I wanted to know more about it. I still do, and I am still looking at it and thinking about it. That's what a good work does, it invites and it rewards your curiosity. How it is made, what is it trying to say and what might it mean.

With a striking economy of visual means, de Moiser conveys both the spare modernity of service station design and the kit-set composure and all too occasional emptiness of suburban life. There are, in the Australian context, allusions to the work of architecturally-obsessed artists like Callum Morton and Jeffrey Smart, and perhaps even an unknowing nod to the low viewpoints and ennui of one of Sir Russell Drysdale's outback towns. A meticulously wrought assemblage with all the appearance of a dead pan painting, *Servo (state 3)* is a worthy winner.

De Moiser's suburban servo is rendered, with a knowing retro note, in the flat featureless visual language of 1960s Pop Art or 1980s Neo-Geo – reminding me of a David Hockney painting, the Tate's *A Bigger Splash* 1967, and any number of other works of its ilk. It is similarly clean cut, evenly and blandly sunlit, illuminated by bright, bold and Pop-saturated colours that are part naturalistic and part not – the Shell livery against a bright blue sky; the surprisingly space-making effect of the red forecourt concrete.

I think it's an accomplished, creative and highly resolved application of an unusual medium to achieve a visual effect usually gained through another medium altogether – namely, acrylic paint! It is made from a finely cut-out laminate, cannily laid down on a timber laminate support, as its edge reveals. De Moiser's use of re-purposed laminate makes for a visually spare and 'indirect' medium. While, on close inspection, it eschews even the slightest surface hint of being 'hand painted', it resolutely retains that appearance from afar.

One of the things I enjoyed about this work was that it in every way behaved like a painting but ultimately, deliberately, resisted being one.

Beyond its more technical accomplishments, *Servo (state 3)* is a work that says 'I'm here, but I'm oddly not'. No one is at the pumps, in fact there are no pumps, but it's still unmistakably a service station. It's a work that tells us a good deal about the sterile, head-office led design of much of our suburban landscape here in Australia and in Europe and the West Coast of the United States, where the servo design doubtless originated from. There is nothing particularly 'Australian' about it but there is a good deal of what passes for our suburban vernacular – making it a sort of Everyman's servo.

I commend it to you, and I warmly congratulate Matthew de Moiser on his achievement.

Highly Commended: Prudence Flint, *Doll 2013*, oil on line, 122 x 102cm

Prudence Flint's *Doll 2013* is an evocative and finely calibrated painting, at once a self-portrait and a visual poem of reflection and quietude. In a highly organised composition that has resonances of Australian modernist John Brack, Flint looks longingly back into her childhood. It is a painting filled with measure and calm, as interesting for its abstract organisation of planes as for its more narrative subject.

Commended: Nicola Moss, *Resource Ecology (Conserve-Develop) 2013*, synthetic polymer paint on hand cut paper, 148 x 14cm

Commended: Stephen Bird, *I am the Way 2013*, ceramic, 41 x 51cm

Commended: Sam Scoufos, *Tim Skiizz 2013*, giclee print, 90 x 70 cm

Commended: Donna Davis, *Life Support 2013*, pigment print on Hahnemuhle fine art rag, 64 x 44cm

Commended: Carla Gottgens, *Swarm 2013*, photograph (C type print), 56 x 83cm

Chris Saines, CNZM
Director
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