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CULT

A SPACE FOR THOUGHTS, REVIEWS, AND MELBOURNIAN CULTURAL HAPPENINGS

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Raise High the Roofbeams

8th May 2007 – 19th May 2007

Bus Gallery (in association with Firstdraft Sydney)

Australia's numerous artist-run initiatives (ARI's) are without doubt an irreplaceable fixture of the local cultural community. In celebratory acknowledgement of this fact, Victorian ARI's are currently coalescing in a collaborative season of exhibitions entitled *Making Space*. Ratifying the festival's emphasis on the communal network, Melbourne space Bus has extended an invitation to interstate ARI's excluded from *Making Space* to exhibit in a Melbourne locale. With an exhibition featuring increasingly popular artists Sean Rafferty, Michaela Gleave and Camille Serisier, renowned Sydney initiative and recipient of the aforementioned invitation, Firstdraft, is creating strong impressions on visitors to their southern counterpart.

Camille Serisier presents a quirky juxtaposition of the natural environment with human manufactured materials titled: *My Big Baby Bear*. The images of a large grizzly-bear as well as forestry and wilderness are stylistically hand-drawn on visibly 'man-made' torn paper and cardboard. The artist's sentiment is neither sinister nor passive, but a sophisticated work of calm ambiguity. Playful in its presentation, the work of Serisier immediately engages its viewers with its undeniably appealing aesthetic, and then furthermore propagates a mood of curiosity and perhaps empathy towards the artist's character of the 'Big Baby Bear'. One can't help but be reminded of current impending environmental concerns.

Sean Rafferty's *Projection Standee Manual Instruction* is a crafty play on functionality and the artistic process. With a series of white cardboard box constructions all hung to tactfully resemble the artist's

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canvas, Rafferty neatly cuts into, illustrates onto, and arranges his meticulous forms in order to instruct his audiences regarding the construction of a viewing booth intended for video art projections. It is however art about art; and although meditated, considered and executed in a manner that is both thoughtful and sophisticated, any hope within the viewer of an explosion of meaning will inevitably be countered by the actuality of an implosion of self-indulgence. Rafferty's work is an intrinsic reminder of art's self-destructive counter-productivity in the event of becoming too engaged with its own methods of practice.

Contributing to the disparate array of themes within Firstdraft's offering to Melbourne audiences, the black and white photographic work of Penelope Benton is almost neo-feminist in its treatment of the male-gaze. Entitled *Mini Mechanics*, the work consists of three digital prints, stylised in a black and white aesthetic that draws to mind burlesque vaudeville. In each photograph are leather-clad sexualised women posing amongst an old fashioned automobile in a mechanic's garage. Indeed a vocal critique of masculine iconography and its derogatory assumptions of women.

While the *Making Space* festival presents the work of emerging artists already quite familiar in Victorian spaces, Bus have proved themselves a hot-spot with the inclusion of interstate artists making a mark in other Australian capital cities. *Raise High The Roofbeams* is a commendable effort, brought to Melbourne by one of Sydney's most well established artist-run initiatives, indeed refreshing in a scene that too often can seem congested by its own cultural introversion.

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POSTED BY JARED DAVIS AT 6:44 AM

1 COMMENTS:

 sean said...

you've nailed it

12:27 AM

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