

art&events

What's new and exciting in the world of art, people, books and cultural happenings.

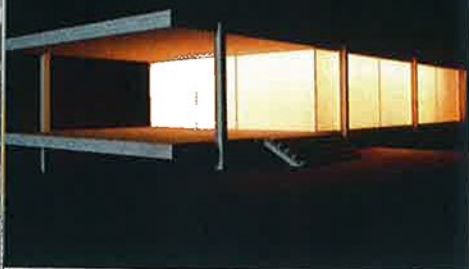


house painters

Art and architecture combine in new works which continue an old preoccupation.



PREVIOUS PAGE: Darren Wardle in his studio with a canvas from his 2006 *Spacejunk* series. ABOVE: Noel McKenna's *House on Cliff, Dover Heights* (2006). BELOW: Callum Morton's *International Style* (1999) reinterprets the Farnsworth House.



LIKE RATHER TOO many clients who commissioned now classic Modern Movement buildings, Edith Farnsworth wasn't entirely happy with having to inhabit an experimental design. Her entirely glass Farnsworth House (1946) may have wowed critics and magnified the luminescence of architecture star Mies van der Rohe but there was nowhere in the kitchen to put a bin without it being on display to the whole world. And that was the least of it.

When artist Callum Morton showed a scale replica of the Farnsworth House in his recent show at the MCA, you heard voices, an argument and gunshots from within the building. Ms F getting her own back on her architect, perhaps.

Morton is one of three visual artists representing Australia at this year's Venice Biennale. Daniel Von Sturmer is another. Both are artists with a close relationship to the architectural. A retrospective of Howard Arkley, another artist who painted housing and the suburbs is currently on show at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Architecture has long been the material for traditional painters but there seems to be a renewed interest in the architectural: not so much the subject matter, but as a device for exploring ideas about the world around us. Art curator Stuart Koop suggests that this interest in manipulating representations of buildings is "in direct proportion to our lack of control", the distance we feel over the big decisions being made about our world. Sometimes it is an approach that raises tricky questions. Is a model or a painting of a real or proposed building a piece of art or simply part of the architectural working process? Does it make any difference if the building is imaginary and not intended to be

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constructed? Well it depends who made it. And for what purpose.

"I love architecture," says Morton, who often creates architectural models, "but if I was just making models of buildings they would just be models of buildings.

Instead he says, "They're objects that I can attach other ideas to – about the built environment, about oedipal dramas or cinematic ones". Of these stories that inhabit his work, he says "It's like a narrative that you can't see. It is always frustrated, blocked. I'm interested in how something theatrical can still retain its object-hood.

"There's a lot of things in architecture that look like art," he observes of the latest wave of cross-disciplinary work, "and a lot of art that look like [design]". One isn't preceding the other anymore – in either direction.

Australia-based artists Peter O'Doherty, Kirsteen Pieterse and Darren Wardle are among those working in this area. >



LEFT: Callum Morton with *Silverscreen* (2006), TOP: Darren Wardle's *Loose Slot* (2006). ABOVE LEFT: Peter O'Doherty, *Red Block 1* (2006). ABOVE RIGHT: Vladimir Tatlin's unbuilt Constructivist *Monument to the Third International* (1920) blurred the lines between sculpture and architecture.

