Art Seen: The Artist’s Studio

Arts Review

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It was my good fortune to be invited recently to the Robertson Park studio’s in Perth to view the artworks of artist and educator - Paul Carstairs.

More often than not I’m caught up in critically appraising creative endeavours which reside in museums and and other lofty, yet dank climes. What strikes me as appealing in foraging through an artist’s nest is the unseen treasures that lodge themselves amongst the chaos of the art making process.

Carstairs has a way of creating art works that speak of the classical elements of figurative form in his drawing and painting, whilst retaining the mythical and often disturbing vernacular narrative that is his reflection of experience in the everyday. I feel that the visual punch of juxtaposing belief, fetish and fascination with the mortal elements of humanity are Paul’s greatest creative accomplishment – to date.

Marquette’s for bronze and steel sculptures casts, reams of paper collage, constructivist assemblage, slip cast ceramic busts, multi-panel oil on canvas surrounded by digital printmaking experimentation all contributes to what amounts to be a well executed visual feast. It is obvious however that sharing a modest space with 5 other artists is no mean feat for a Claremont School of Art graduate with decades of sweat and toil tucked up in this eclectic portfolio.

What impresses me the most about these spontaneous events where artist / educator meets artist / educator is the camaraderie that is absent in other unions of creative souls.

I’m amazed that I can still feel life breathing in a city that has changed remarkably since the turn of the millennium, particularly in the embrace of the role of spectator in art, a city otherwise known for it’s stuffy interpretation of relational aesthetics. Carstairs does not shy away from these changes and draws upon his knowledge of the digital domain divide having recently
exhibited at PICA as part of the ‘Invisiblecities’ collaborative installation with Rob Muir and Caspar Fairhall.

Weaving, ducking and diving; the tale of life’s journey runs as a thematic thread through Carstairs work like water runs in a varied pattern from the Perth hills to the ocean or the still aquifers that form this city’s sandy sub-terrain. My instinct tells me this artist will accompany his life partner to established climes where cosmopolitan fare is part of a vast and respected (if somewhat metaphorical) menu.

Carstairs has very cleverly released his creative endeavours in small doses to an unsuspecting Perth public and now the main dish is about to be served. More exceptional art seen – the artist studio.