

Review:

Steven Asquith Storm Concepts 6 – 28^h August, 2010

Utopian Slumps, 33 Guildford Lane, Melbourne

As the title suggests Steven Asquith's new show alludes to landscape and the weather – but not literally. Asquith seems to draw inspiration less from darkening skies and more from the idea of them – he is an urban artist, not a landscape painter – and his blackened clouds seem more like metaphors than marvels of nature. Storms insinuate themselves into our lives and weathering them is what we do; we prepare for change, for inclemency, for a sudden deluge of... of something.



Yet this series of works on paper is hardly threatening but more a reflection on life at street level, nested in overhead wires, flanked by glass and rendered brick invariably tagged; a habitat as natural to us as ice to an Icelander. We live with the forces of social change and we experience our storms amid an amalgam of acrylic and steel, cell phones and TV, signs and signifiers.

To render this, aerosol spray, paint marker and coloured pencil seems logical, and with them Asquith produces structured, highly resolved images as sensitive as a Constable or a Corot. But where these artists looked for nuance in a weather-altered expanse with man writ small, Asquith delicately adorns an environment transformed by culture. This 'landscape' used to be called *second nature*, now it's just life, and the difference between 19th century plein air painting and Asquith's *Storm Front Time Bomb* is the passage of time, changed circumstances, altered habitats, new concepts.

Asquith has his own idiosyncratic way of doing things and in a burgeoning art scene where so much looks like a version of what we saw last time, this is refreshing indeed.

Robert Hollingworth