

New Thoughts on Luxury

Robert Hollingworth feels the width and quality of **Matlok Griffith's** latest at Melbourne's Blockprojects...

Binary opposites; despite the criticism, we still trust them. Material and spiritual, body and soul, love and hate, truth and fiction; these are the polarities that Western society still uses to make sense of life. Yet nothing is like this; there are no such clear distinctions; in reality everything contains something of the other. When it comes to art, abstraction and representation are the polarities we use for evaluation. But problems arise. Australian indigenous art, for example, is often still not recognised for what it really is. Those artists, untrained in Western conceptual modes, haven't the slightest interest in binary opposites, abstract or representation, or indeed that entire way of thinking.

Likewise there are other contemporary artists who seem to disregard these rationalist modes of thought. One of these is **Matlok Griffiths** who is currently showing *New Thoughts on Luxury* at Blockprojects, Melbourne. Griffiths is relatively new to us and, as sometimes happens, he brings to the art scene something fresh, honest and energising. His paintings have a spare, layered translucency, clearly evincing a process of erasure and reassessment, and they sit uneasily on the abstraction/representational platform because they are neither of these.



Matlok Griffiths, *Luxury's Disappointment*.

Rather, his works roam unselfconsciously across another plane altogether, engaging experiences and memories which are always in flux – like the paintings themselves. We sense that the works begin anywhere; something is plucked from the material world and under Griffith's unmediated guidance, evolves in directions of its own. Painterly decisions seem to be influenced by small encounters with unknowable elements (as in life) which means that his working trajectory might easily turn left or right, reconcile or complicate further.



Matlok Griffiths, installation view. Photo: Simon Strong

The works on the walls seem still in transition; they are never quite resolved, never 'finished off' – which is the popular objective of so much other art. That 'need to complete' can create a kind of enslavement, but Griffiths sidesteps this completely. His logic seems to operate outside language and outside the object-based world, yet very much within his sensory and cultural experience. Perhaps it's not form that interests him but phase; not definition but discourse. In a society that is deeply mired in the "Age of Reason", uneasy about fuzzy boundaries – and still anticipating enlightenment – this work is refreshing indeed.

Until May 25 [Blockprojects](#), Melbourne.

Robert Hollingworth