

Nine Paintings speech opening

Good evening and thank you for coming to view Nine Paintings.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.

My name is Alan Spackman for those who don't know me. I am the artist in residence here at Culture at Work.

Culture at Work is a studios, education and community outreach. Set up by prior Art Gallery of NSW worker, Sherryl Ryan.

Sherryl's vision is to support mature and younger artists, in providing project and working space with short and long term residencies with a flexible bias in Arts relationship with science.

She likes to link young artist's applicant projects to UTS academics in applied science. At the moment we have three artists in residence here in glass, music and painting.

I thought I would open my exhibition with a few comments on the work.

This work you see here extends my research interest in the artists of the early 20thC, informed stylistically by the era of the Avant-gardes of Cubism and Constructivism in Europe to mid-20th high modernism of New York and on to Australia in Pop and Minimalism.

The early 20th C also witnessed the rise of labour and industrial relations of which I am an embodiment in also being a tradesman from a long working class labour ancestry. So the work here also refers to labour in its use of industrial materials with Bunnings and the Mall being the new art stores over the traditional and pre-industrial art supply. Socially the rise of industry and the machine age now seems in this post conceptual art and technological era, for me a romantic longing. I think it's now right for a modernist revisionism to track what we have gained and lost as we headlong rush into our revolutionary digital present and future.

The intention for this project was to attempt to make several standard sized timber plywood and frame structures, applying industrially printed and imaged textiles stretched as foundational painting surfaces. Metaphorically two of the panels use trade painters drop sheets! These textile and imaged surfaces, allowed me a dialogue to proceed with a formally abstract response.

After 12 months, I arrived at simply Nine Paintings as discreet entities in themselves with no overarching conceptual theme, as in a series, that have characterised my other projects.

Some of the paintings show weakness, some I think are strong. In titling the works; literary images, philosophical and metaphysical ideas, the love of language, came easily and fitted well. Abstraction, like improvised jazz, can allow an open, with also critical interpretation.

I'd like to make a claim here for the practise of painting as the most intellectually engaging work any person can do for lifelong learning.

Painting is backed by the longest human history of mark making going back to Spanish, Indonesian and Australian indigenous cave, body and sand painting. Dates are contested between 20 and 50 thousand years.

Painting constantly renews itself through millennia; it's always engaging and changing with the artist in social, philosophical and political circumstances.

Personally I see the painting activity as a self-teaching or heuristic tool, translating meaning of lived experience to a visual language or better a philosophical practise in visual language.

Painting doesn't take up any room, its unobtrusive, its flat to the wall, ceiling or floor, it can be a window or a wall sign, it's not a product or commodity, it embeds with the built environment, it's not noisy, its silent yet communicates, it allows you to take a stance, it humanises the world for the best.

Simply, it keeps you focused, engaged, at least amused.

I hope you enjoy the show and thanks again for coming and engaging with the work.