

MANUSCRIPT

Art Culture Design Fashion Grooming

SEE: GREGORY HODGE

The work of emerging artist Gregory Hodge has the power to beguile with its blurring of reality.

Mitchell Oakley Smith



Gregory Hodge, *Procession*, 2014.

On Sunday, the Melbourne Art Fair finished for another two years, and while it featured several emerging artists, particularly as part of MAF Platform, more galleries chose instead to show the wares of bankable, most established names. But an art fair is not an accurate measure of a region's artistic health at any given time; indeed, this coming weekend in Sydney, Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art will present an exhibition of new work by Canberra-based artist Gregory Hodge who, since graduating from the Australian National University in 2005, has steadily established a solid career, curated into solo and group shows at high profile galleries including Sophie Gannon, Contemporary Art Space Tasmania and Canberra Museum and Gallery. Additionally, his work is held in the permanent collection of Artbank, amongst others. Mr Hodge's work comprises at its core painting, but in eschewing the current trend for the medium, he combines this with drafting film, coloured paper and masking tape, the resultant collages a manipulation of original source material. While he prefers not to attach explicit narratives to the works, they offer a playful exploration of the space between image and reality.

Mitchell Oakley Smith What drew you to art making?

Gregory Hodge I developed an interest in art in my late teens but mostly I was into sport and surfing. I think it was probably surf culture, the films, magazines and graphics that I responded to and was a way into making art. I went to the ANU Canberra School of Art where I learnt about painting. I became friends with and was taught by artists. As for so many

people, this time at art school was my first exposure to artists. It was very powerful and hugely influential.



Gregory Hodge, Weather Patterns, 2014.

MOS Your critical approbation has been swift, last year winning the Hazelhurst Art on Paper Award. How do you juggle being an artist with the business of being an artist?

GH I'm enjoying having the work seen by a wider audience. I spent a number of years making work, traveling and looking at

painting though not pushing my career super intensely. So while the most recent attention has been generated fairly quickly I feel I have been working consistently over a longer period. I'm diligent with my studio practice and am aware of the importance of keeping connected, however living outside a major city is really positive for the work and my life.

MOS From where do you source the found images in the collages?

GH Specific to this new body of work is an interior space which comes from images of sculptures or three-dimensional objects sourced online or from magazines. Cutting out these objects, a negative silhouette remains along with its cast shadows and the interior. I build up a collage around this interior space incorporating abstract gestures and transparent papers. Recently other figurative elements have been incorporated though are mostly unrecognisable. I look for things that have an affinity with the gestural abstract motifs in the work such as folded drapery, a sleeve or garment, most of which come from magazines or Old Master paintings and images of textiles.

MOS How do you put them together with the painting? And how long might a piece take?

GH Completion time varies from one work to the next. The most recent larger works have been demanding and can take up to a month. All the work responds in some way to a work on paper process in the studio, which in part involves making collages from found imagery, abstract gestures on paper, drafting film and masking tape. While some paintings rely on the collages compositions, in other works the decision-making is done on the surface of the painting.

MOS Are you trying to tell a story or narrative? What's the motive behind your work?

GH I'm not thinking about narrative explicitly however it does become apparent in some way as the works evolve and certain paintings respond to one and other. These new paintings deal with a central motif that expands outwards and with the cast shadows and interior they could be read more figuratively than in previous work. I aim to incorporate both an optical sensation via illusionistic painting techniques and a more subtle focus on formal relationships with colour, surface and form.

MOS How will you spend your residency in Rome?

GH The Australia Council Residency in Rome is a great opportunity. I'm there for three months in early 2015. I imagine I'll make a new series of works on paper but I want to be very open with the outcomes at this stage.

MOS If you weren't making art what would you be doing?

GH I'd probably be doing a trade or maybe writing fiction, but I'm pretty happy with being an artist.

**Gregory Hodge: Unfolding opens today at
Sullivan+Strumpf, Zetland,
and is on display until 06 September 2014.**