

ANITA TRAVERSO GALLERY

TRACY POTTS *I Am Your Exotic Bird* - Catalogue essay



In an age of Guerilla Knitters, Craftivists and Stitch'n'Bitc circles – aligning craft making as the cultural output of tea drinking Nannas or bored housewives is tantamount to living under a rock. This is particularly true in the context of Melbourne where the proliferation of craft circles has exploded and with it, any residual archaic notions that craft was not art.

Not that the artistic practice of Tracy Potts could strictly be confined by such narrow definitions. It could not. In fact the visual language of the artist is a complex mesh of idiosyncratic decorative tendencies and contradictory historical reference points. Potts' work evades being pigeonholed into any particular artistic canon and this is what makes it so engaging.

Firstly, Potts' practice unashamedly elicits the inner magpie. Embracing embellishment, the canvas picture plane is bejeweled with candy coloured sequins and gleaming gold beading that refracts the light, creating points of interest. This is evident in the intricate detailing of works such as *I Am Your Exotic Bird*, 2012.

Utilising a plethora of unconventional artistic materials, Potts garners a myriad of fabrics from stretches of crochet, to furniture upholstery and denim. Hooks, seams and frayed edges are all embraced and tacked into place. Linear over stitching branches outwards like arterial networks. Miscellaneous patches of knitting are scrupulously searched for at opportunity shops or graciously accepted from friends and relatives.

The input of this random data is integral to Potts' work. It functions as a point of departure. Solutions for creative quandaries are found along the way as the surface functions as a constant site of negotiation. As such, disparate elements and composite parts produce whimsical and uncanny forms. In each work the artist resists the formulaic and the preordained, embracing chance and accident as core to the process. While some aesthetic decision-making comes into play, the destination arrived at is often ambiguous when viewed from its point of origin.

Resembling amorphous and organic forms the work is stylistically naïve or childlike. This is demonstrative in works such as *Portrait of a Man With Emotional Congestion*, 2008. When referencing the figurative, form appears almost mutant, misshapen and primal, like primitive drawings of totemic horses, or three legged signifiers of something animalistic.

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Concurrently, there is a subtle inference of the architectural with the suggestion of an antenna, pylon, or a towering urban structure. The artist is interested in what she terms 'the organic essence of buildings' and the way in which structural materials such as concrete, steel and plastics are sourced from nature. This implicit connection between technology and nature is articulated through her use of organic materials and is evident in works such as *6,000,000 Moments of Your Life That Have Simply Disappeared*, 2012.

In her latest body of work on show at ANITA TRAVERSO GALLERY in November, the reintroduction of the painterly gesture and a return to surface concerns hint at traditional modes of landscape painting with the implication of a horizon line. Within this though, the surface is enlivened with the inclusion of found and reclaimed craft remnants that generate a sense of intrigue as to the secret lives that these artifacts of the past may have led.

Anna Briers
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Melbourne 2012

IMAGES:

First page : *I Am Your Exotic Bird* (detail) 2012 mixed media 147x128cm

Second page : *600,00,000 million moments of your life that have simply disappeared* 2012 mixed media 94x64cm

Second page : *My Beautiful Wife* 2012 mixed media 128x147cm

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