

# Pace of life alters vision

Exhibitions suggest a need for us to slow down in order to see the patterns of the universe

**I**s the pace of life too much for you? Can't seem to find the time? Feeling a little out of sorts? Trying to hold it all together? Showing around town at the moment are a few shows that highlight the fact that you're not alone.

Clare McFarlane's fine brushwork, Indra Geidans' surreal paintings and Gigi Hesterman's oscillating night visions all convey a sense that the moment is far too quickly gone and a strong sense of occasion is needed to grasp the subtlety of this universe's patterns.

McFarlane's work doesn't actually smell but it incorporates a sense of the pungent, a feeling of dust, mothballs and damp walls. Walking into *The Enlightenment Project*, her new series of works at Turner Galleries, is, to me, like walking into a house that hasn't been open for a while, culminating in that moment when you first open the window and let in the fresh air.

It's the vestiges of memory meeting the reality of the elements and it's this poetic combination of contained time and its inevitable progression that gives McFarlane's intricate work its tension.

Put together as a number of mini series, *The Enlightenment Project* is William Morris meets Kiki Smith — the security of domesticating space up against the inevitable decline of the body. Each of McFarlane's paintings is acrylic paint built up on a patterned silkscreen; most contain a picture of an insect or small bird painted on to a wallpaper pattern.

The *Dragonfly Project* is exquisite, *The Moth Project* moody and her *Elements of the Periodic Table* is a beautiful meandering work



which combines indices with insects and ends up looking like a series of kids' alphabet blocks. In all of these the relationship between calculating nature, from an external point of view, and enjoying our part very much within it brings energy to the work.

Geidans' *Split*, also at Turner Galleries, brings the figure in and out of focus in a number of performative portraits. Re-awakening aspects of Giorgio de Chirico's fear of the unknown, Geidans' psychological studies invoke the metaphysical world, extracting it from the everyday.

Geidans successfully induces an uncanny response by placing the figure in precarious and unlikely reposes; one lies on top of a fence, one hangs from a washing line,

another hides under a chair. This rupturing of our normal reaction to objects upsets the familiarity we desire but in doing so asks us if we haven't limited the enjoyableness of life through our oversimplified responses to our environment.

There is a wicked and dry sense of humour in these works and more "sinister" pieces like *Quick Fix* and *Self Preservation* also engage in the inevitability of nature winning, despite our best efforts to stave it off.



**Challenge:** Indra Geidans' *Split*, left, and *Limbo*, above, present figures in unconventional settings to probe our oversimplified view of the environment.

These two works, along with *Thwart* and *Self Preservation II*, show women, one a self-portrait, with their faces covered in plastic bags, stockings and the like. I immediately thought about kidnapping, torture and terrorism (testimony to our times and the strength of the media image) but I'm thinking these "accessories" may just as likely be comments on keeping time at bay and the art of cosmetic application.

This is a strong series of works,



Clare McFarlane: *Corvus*

definitely benefiting from the artist's recent stint in Europe. The paint's relationship to ambience has shifted in Geidans' work, invoking in the more recent works a strong presence of absence and the melancholy of the everyday.

Clare McFarlane's *The Enlightenment Project* and Indra Geidans' *Split* are at Turner Galleries, 470 William Street, Northbridge, until April 9.

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