Arryn Snowball

Arryn Snowball was born in Sydney, New South Wales in 1977. In 2001 he graduated from the Queensland College of Art (qca), Griffith University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Art, and a year later received First Class Honours from the college. He is currently studying for his Doctorate of Visual Arts at the Queensland College of Art, and continues to lecture part-time in painting at the qca.

Awards include the Redcliffe City Art Prize (2005), and the Melville Hayson Memorial Art Scholarship (2003).


Snowball’s work has been included in various national and international exhibitions, including the ‘Inter Image, Art Encounters: Contemporary Japan and Australia’, Queensland College of Art, Brisbane and Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo (2006); ‘Honours Exhibition’, Queensland College of Art, Brisbane (2002); and ‘Stratification’, Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane (2003).

Formal abstraction combines with ethereal moments of domestic life in Arryn Snowball’s paintings. Train tickets, television static and a kettle’s steam have featured in previous paintings. In this, his most recent body of work, Snowball has turned his attention to the flutter of sheets on a backyard clothesline. His subjects are symbols of transience, of impermanence, traces of the everyday.

The big guns of international abstraction inform Snowball’s lexicon – Gerhard Richter, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Kasimir Malevich, Josef Albers and so on. The monochromes is at the heart of his sheet painting series, a white square against a black field. However, in these paintings the force of nature animates them, contorting and shifting the square. Unlike Malevich’s white-on-white paintings, Snowball’s squares are not forever locked into place by the geometry of the canvas. And whereas Albers’ squares shift hue as the overlaid shapes reduce in size, Snowball’s are akin to overlapping veils, building presence through uniform scale and tone.

While artists increasingly look to video as a method to animate otherwise still images and introduce a framework of time, Snowball works in an opposite manner. His pieces capture fleeting moments that are otherwise indistinguishable to the naked eye. In reference to Snowball’s earlier steam paintings, Rosemary Hawker suggests that he captures a fragment of time immediately preceding or following a key moment in the coalescence of form – a fleeting moment that if you blink, you will miss.

Snowball’s new series is reminiscent of a flipbook, except that all the images are overlaid on one page. Instead of a single glimpse he presents several instants simultaneously. The viewer recognises the subject, but the paintings are a conceptual abstraction of the real. To paraphrase Snowball, he’s painting sheets but they’re not paintings about sheets.\(^6\)

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1. Installation view of sheet paintings
2. Untitled II, 2007
Oil on linen
Private collection
Courtesy of the artist and Heiser Gallery, Brisbane

\(^6\) Hawker, Rosemary, ‘Stratification: Paintings by Arryn Snowball exhibition catalogue’, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2004