



Ruth Cleland, *Smolder*, 2001, burnished aquatint, pastel & graphite, 20 x 43.5 cm.

corners of the mind and eye, Evans finds objects of interest.

Cassandra Fusco

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Otago

Ruth Cleland at Hocken Library

Ruth Cleland (b. 1976, Hamilton) is one of a group of young Dunedin printmakers, including Jo Ogier and Inge Doesberg, (many of whom were taught by the New Zealand print doyen Marilyn Webb) currently making a living from their art.

Cleland's most recent exhibition, entitled *Saunter*, demonstrates how and why Dunedin enjoys such a high profile in New Zealand print circles. Cleland has a genuine sensitivity for, and ability in, the burnished aquatint.

Saunter considers interior and exterior spaces, corners of rooms, sections of ceilings, cornices, fixtures—areas familiar yet often overlooked, here reviewed from decidedly unusual angles. The resultant spaces are intriguing and lend themselves not to disorientation but the beckoning realms of reverie whereby detailed, mimetic drawing gives way to dissolves of thought.

Any single image in *Saunter*, as the title suggests, invites pause. In each, proximity and distance are juxtaposed: a ceiling is joined to the sky, a room is somehow joined to a distant one. In *Resonance*, for example, beside some elaborate Victorian 'velvet' wallpaper, flat planes of color and line join company with a glowing lampshade. It is, the mind tells us, suspended from a plaster ceiling, but the eye finds it rising up, spindly and straight, triggering inquiry.

A similar certain unease moves through *Smolder* where electric wall socket plugs do just that—smolder. And, is *Redolent* another unsafe territory? Here, a beautiful anaglypta ceiling runs out before us like an elegant Robert Adams floor. To the right, marring this "other time" ceiling, there is a utilitarian neon light.

Once you think past the meticulously "recorded" surfaces of these highly adept and beautifully textured works, the viewer will find questions the answers to which the artist declines to give, preferring instead to almost seduce us into daydream. Cleland says that she perceives reverie as something highly productive rather than idle. She persuades us to consider not only the superbly mimetic, upside-down, and juxtaposed spaces depicted, but also the subtle shifts in tone

and detail within these and what they might suggest. It is in the exploration of these smaller "movements," she intimates, that we will best be rewarded.

Cassandra Fusco

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THE PHILIPPINES

Manila

Alfredo Juan Aquilizan at Galleria Duemila

Alfredo Juan Aquilizan's recent exhibition of paintings summons memories of his years in the United States in the late-1980s as a student of art in New York. The artist then was initiated into the Figurative-Expressionist tradition, a hybrid idiom heavily driven by vested gesture and the energy of a peripatetic body and imagination. It was a tendency informed by notions underlying lyrical abstraction, *art informel*, or even post-painterly abstraction that resisted the *ennui* induced by the mass culture of World War II's aftermath and is recalled here as a prospective response to the progress of this social condition.

The heady convergence of evocative figuration and ex-

pressionist temper would be infused with a significant spirit of abstraction by way of Aquilizan's teacher, Robert Beuchamp, a student of Hans Hofmann of the New York Abstract-Expressionist School. A mingling of all these potent substances coheres today in a highly saturated skin of canvas as Aquilizan "returns" to painting and banks on its "return."

But this is-not all there is to this visual and visceral landscape. There is also the mountain fondly called Makiling, named after the fabled goddess of Laguna, a province south of Manila, who presides over a vast domain and dwelling of flora and community. The lush scenery that surrounds Aquilizan's home and studio cuts deep into a dense forest of inspiration, a wilderness of a habitat that breeds its own vines and gardens, a cosmos of origin, growth, and perpetuation. We discern this depth alongside the delectation of the lucculent veneer of painting.

What emerges from this hectic surface is a palimpsest of styles culled from tutelage elsewhere and the quotidian details of a familiar environment. As style is not merely vessel, so is environment not solely content. Aquilizan ensures that both schemes form an aesthetic ecology, intimate in their assertion of values and intricate in their liaison with each other. The