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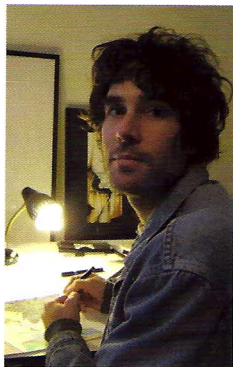
# simon esling

Born Auckland 1973  
MFA (Hons) Elam 2005  
BA (Hons) UA 2001  
Lives in Auckland

It is by no means easy for an artist to develop a recognisable style without producing formula art, but Simon Esling has succeeded handsomely in this endeavour. His manner of drawing and his subject matter are so idiosyncratic that a new piece by him will be immediately identified by anyone who has seen his earlier work, yet it is always fresh and surprising.

A graphic artist, Esling works on paper (with the occasional wall drawing), so the scale of his drawings is limited by available paper sizes. Elements used are ink or pencil, watercolour applied sparingly, and occasional collage. A typical work will contain some of the following elements: images of suburban houses and other buildings, landscape fragments, weapons, armoured vehicles, warplanes, and Esling's trademark quasi-organic forms. These resemble blocks of wood or stone joined together in elongated strings, or skeletal and raw muscle shapes. They reach out across, or float upon, otherwise blank paper. The bone forms are sometimes seen in cross-section, exposing a sponge-like interior. There can be little clouds of ink marks and water pouring unexpectedly from crevices. Esling uses colour with restraint, and contrasts tightly drawn imagery with washy watercolour. Sometimes he will use a straw to blow the colour out into root-like runnels.

Esling has remarkable powers of imagination and a strong sense of the surreal. His drawings depict worlds that look like some alien life form has invaded Earth and begun colonising it in the manner of a parasite, drawing nutrients from buildings and objects (cf. Beazley, 3; Hunt, 43; Kearney, 49). Things that we rely on for protection (suburban houses, bunkers, weapons) seem to be singled



*Untitled, 2005. Ink and watercolour on paper, 420 x 300 mm.*



