

Epidemic. DUCK FOR COVER
Craft ACT, August 2009.

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The Craft ACT exhibition *Epidemic* is less a result of bacterial spillage than of deeply-worked, well-individuated responses to what it means to make art as a young practitioner in the 21st century.

Described as a 'breaking out' of young artists into the public milieu, it's a more apt analogy to call it a harvest of the best recent graduates selected by staff at Craft ACT from University of Canberra, Australian National University School of Art and Canberra Institute of Technology.

Dan Edwards focuses on the 'typical trademark of the 1970s craftsman, the beard and hand-knitted jumper' with a row of jumper-scarves as distinctive as woollen clan kilts. Their lengths of interlocked hexagonal shapes wear like an irreverent scapula—an elegant cellular geometry and gauchely-coloured materials pleasantly working against each other. His wall-mounted felting "The woollen aesthetic" is like a de Kooning splash across plain plyboard canvas. Dynamic and playfully assertive, it is a wry comment on the values placed on painting versus craft.

Ply is the feature of Ben Hubbard's "Animal imagination clothes rack". It's a wacky and ingenious flat board with stencil cutouts of animal shapes on which [through which?] to hang clothes. His elephant benches are like dynamic Ikea stools but funnier, with a quaint feeling of come-down for the noble elephant.

Renee Osterloh exhibits a modular chair here in its white-painted prototype of bluefoam and fiberglass. Plastic multiples are being produced. The chair, somewhat like a Barbara Hepworth, sits clean, clear and curved in the gallery space. It's a remarkably comfortable stool. In 2008, Osterloh won the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Australia [ACT branch] prize.

Eden Waugh looks at how we sit in ourselves. His 10 paintings depict a series of images showing human vulnerability: saints and sick people, whores and cripples, the quick and the dead. The figure in the coffin of 'The Funeral' is painted in a glassy fashion, almost as if a mirror of his former life. In "Contemplation", a smoking man sees his double in the wallpaper. Waugh's paintings reflect an ambiguity to do with Self and Selves and experience playing either side of the skin. His "Homage to Bonnard," whilst respectful of Bonnard's little dog, is also an acid twist on the presumptions Bonnard makes of our complicity in viewing the

vulnerable 'subject' of his vision. Here, the subject's twisted mouth and askance look wonders how it found its way into the painting.

The risk Jacob Potter takes is of a different order, playing brash colours and textures against each other. Potter creates a unique sense of form and space by virtue of this friction. His "Untitled 3" is brisk with its scraped-back technique. '1' and '2' explore rougher textures against flattened terrains.

Robert Blackwell's elegant, laser-cut, wall-mounted "Climb" provides a trompe-d'oeil to the dynamics of the room. This piece would work in all kinds of architectural situations, confounding our sense of spatial direction.

In Deborah Fiori's Crucible showcase, "Lost You", her subject is looking for definition. Combining the sheen of silver with the translucency of soap in her intimate jewellery pieces, Fiori hovers three birds over a pile of shadowy people ["Comfort and Pain"], or a fragile wreath just holds a flight of leaves against a wind. They are delicate memories of something once held, now lost.