

CASPAR FAIRHALL: BELOW IS ABOVE

ART COLLECTIVE WA | 11 FEBRUARY - 5 MARCH 2016

Passing Time Building Form



Star, 2015, 50 x 50 cm, oil on marine ply



Strata, 2015, 21 x 21 cm,
graphite and ink pencil on Arches paper

In a digitised dependent age, perhaps predictably more than ironically, the appreciation of the hand made has experienced resurgence. The object of the artisan and the endurance embedded within its making is recognised anew. Yet conversely digital capability has unleashed a raft of possibilities in graphic articulation, design, making and in knowledge.

Caspar Fairhall is cognisant of the times in which he lives and embraces the capacities of virtuality. He is also deeply curious about time and matter itself. As an avid astronomer he looks above into space and hence into time, and in 2013 his reflections upon the magnitude and impact of time have been further intensified during a residency in the Pilbara, where the intrigue and aesthetics of iron oxide and quartz striated rocks led him to delve back in time to comprehend the geological flux.

This research continues to fuel his imagination and his art today:

The banded iron formations I encountered in the Pilbara are the first of two striking examples of this interaction between life and the planet. Around 2.3 billion years ago, the first photosynthesising life in the oceans caused iron oxides to precipitate to the sea floor—building the Hamersley Ranges, from which both iron ore and the deadly asbestos at Wittenoom have been extracted. So this ancient phenomenon has a very tangible impact on our life in Australia today. More importantly, the same organic process completely changed Earth's character. The oxygen we breathe and the resulting blue skies we live under entirely owe their origin to what scientists refer to as the Great Oxygenation Event.

Armed with awareness of Fairhall's earthly and cosmic inquiries, works entitled *Strata* and *Stars* in this exhibition point to their origin. The finely faceted studies might allude to the constellations tracking the sky that the artist keenly observes, or reference the sedimentary rock beheld in the ancient landscape of Western Australia. Although these works are not so much representational as they are propositions for perception. They are only deceptively diagrammatic. The titles help anchor a viewpoint while the reality is far less grounded.

The perplexity of time and space as a pictorial quest is central to Fairhall's art, yet as a painter who moves seamlessly between watercolour, oil, ink and graphite this

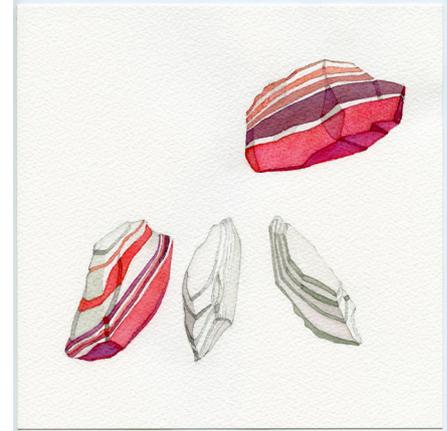
exhibition primarily exudes the sheer pleasure and challenge in applying material to surface to build the illusion of modular form. In this way this suite of works traverses technological input and geometry with the finesse and atmospheric of the hand-made. There is a coalescence of form and matter that is largely reliant on chromatic variations and spatial rendering within the picture plane – the artisan at work.

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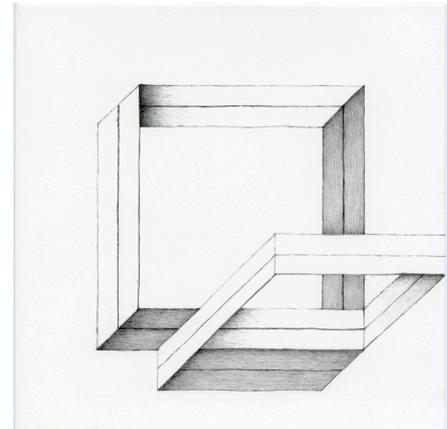
It is the subtlety of multiple magenta hues that morphs into a star formation. It is the balanced consistency of wash and pigment that enables translucency over opacity and implies depth and dimension. It is the bleeding of colour at the edges of paper that projects a crystalline form into space, momentarily appearing as though it is hovering off the paper. In the most recent large scale painting, the banded rock or tectonics is only hinted at in an undetermined object almost given flight into an otherworldly trajectory in space. The floating shapes and planes in high key orange offset with grey seems also disarmingly redolent of design and painting from moderns in the 1960s and 70s.

Then again Fairhall is as attuned to the painter's lineage as he is to grappling with technological empowerment. The quandaries of life forces and the passage of time are matched with the physical nature of colour palettes, the drawing of lines, the folding of paper and the mark of a brush. The velocity of which can be volatile. It is this that is at play in the production of these intricate works.

Margaret Moore
February 2016



Below is above, 2015, 21 x 21 cm,
watercolour on Arches paper



Square braid, 2015, 21 x 21 cm,
graphite and ink pencil on Arches paper

CASPAR FAIRHALL | BELOW IS ABOVE

11 February — 5 March, 2016

Art Collective WA, Perth, Western Australia

<http://artcollectivewa.com.au>

<http://casparfairhall.com>



Front cover:

Below is above, 2016, 133.5 x 133.5 cm, oil on Belgian linen

Back cover:

Star, 2015, 24 x 24.5 cm, oil on marine ply