

DELICIOUSLY WEIRD



IT HAPPENED ON THE STEPS
Gabrielle Rish
 Top Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre
 Until August 29

Some exhibitions stand out for their sheer oddness of execution. Gabrielle Rish's meandering, quasi-fictional journey through the edges and lanes of Hobart comes across like a peculiar, occult-tinged cult television show that screened late at night some years ago and has now become a secret obsession shared by the few people that stumbled over it.

Rish has done something fairly remarkable here - the art feels cryptic and clandestine, as if there's a secret code here to be cracked. The imagery is very familiar to anyone who lives in Hobart - you will find yourself recognising certain locations - yet Rish has an eye that makes things different.

These works include a lot of stairs, but there are also doors in alleyways, ageing gravestones, cigarette butts and other indications of messy, frayed edges.

It's not just photography - Rish has incorporated techniques of collage into the art, melding and mixing her photographic works together, adding in elements to enhance the chimerical, peculiar feelings the images invoke. She's printed these in a way that makes them look like film stills, and also uses a screen so her visions are viewable as a linear narrative.

The work leaps into the strange realm of psychogeography. This esoteric practice is an exploration of urban environments that encourages a kind of randomised exploration of a city. It's way of wondering about how the physical make-up of a city, and its history, affects the people who scurry through these places every day. In effect, we map a city as we travel through it, our navigation of place totally individual to us: everyone walks through a city just a little bit differently to everyone else, our paths shaped by our



individual choices. Rish wants us to slow down and take in detail we recognise and negotiate, but have never really looked at, which is normal - modern life is nothing if not hectic, so this idea of slowing down and looking for clues beneath the surface is a radical one.

She's right of course - there is a lot going on. There's the terrifying weight of history and the crushing paranoia about the shape of the future that we all have to contend with on a daily basis as we go about dealing with our immediate responsibilities - I can be as worried about climate breakdown as I wish, but I still need to make it to work somehow.

There's unease here, but there's also a well-constructed aesthetic - Rish has used a particular grade of paper to print on, the works are of uniform size so there's a real rhythm implied by the placing of the images and there's a big pile of screwed-up paper lying in one corner. This paper looks like rejected images, and almost begs to be sifted through, but all the artist has done is complicate things and the puzzling narrative she creates can only be concluded by the viewer.

It Happened On The Steps is a deliciously weird show that creates a mental map of Hobart and rewrites it in the process of doing so.

Clockwise from top: Untitled images from Gabrielle Rish's exhibition, It Happened On The Steps.



Ashley Eriksmoen's winning piece *Following years of steady decline, we are witnessing a period of unprecedented growth.*

CLARENCE PRIZE DESIGN AWARD 2021 WINNER

The 2021 Clarence Prize for Excellence in furniture design has been won by Ashley Eriksmoen, head of furniture at the Australian National University School of Art & Design. Eriksmoen's chair, titled "Following years of steady decline, we are witnessing a period of unprecedented growth", is a glorious melding of concepts and techniques that utilises a rescued chair incorporated with salvaged parts from other furniture. The chair is unconventional and unique, seeming to sink back into the natural world it originated in but it still functions as a chair.

Marta Figueiredo's work *The Elementary Abacus* was highly commended. Designed for sensory experiencing, *The Abacus* has an internal musical mechanism, one segment is covered in braille and can be read, and it emits scents from essential oils. It's a clever, fun work.

The Clarence Prize continues at the Rosny Barn until August 15, open Wednesday - Sunday 11am-5pm.



Marta Figueiredo's work, *The Elementary Abacus*, which was highly commended in The Clarence Prize Design Award.