

Chris Bond

Artist Statement

In the Shadow of Leaves

Nellie Castan Gallery, 14 July – 13 August 2011

In the Shadow of Leaves is an exhibition of perverse process.

My first solo show since the 2010 Melbourne Artfair examines the discipline of painting, the ritualised process of acquiring and using source material, and upends them in the name of fiction.

At first glance, the show's three core components – five expressive paintings of the human iris, three collapsed paintings of sun glare, and a corner installation of greyscale batons, each appear to have been literally inspired by the titles of a book of plays also exhibited. However, the book of plays is in fact a fictional painted source made at the end of the process.

This apparently authentic book, a worn and torn edition of Herbert Pilken's 'Odd Principle Plays' features on its cover the plays 'Five Times Unblinking', 'Three Shall Fall' and 'A Shadow in the Corner', each of which have unfolded into a component of the exhibition. The book's publisher, 'Ritual Theatre Company Press', seems oddly appropriate given the nature of the exhibition.

The tendency of some artists to exhibit source material alongside their work interests me, for its honesty, as well as its vanity. On one level it may provide a sort of pathway for literal interpretation, or demonstrate an artist's ability to jump from a source to somewhere else. In this exhibition, the centrality and supposed importance of the source is revealed as artificial, a construct. The ability of the included paintings and installation to stand on their own is tested.

My interest in fiction, manifest in the form of painted fictional books, stretches back seven years, where they originally operated as an autobiographical tool, driven by personal history and my fascination with the demise of Modernism.

The title of the exhibition, 'In the Shadow of Leaves' is a loose translation of 'Hagakure', a book which lays out a code of suggested behaviour for the Samurai class of 17th Century Japan. In essence, the book shifts between discussions on the importance of keeping up appearances, to the role of discipline in the attainment of higher truths, a conflicted mixture of honesty and deception. It is the actual authentic source of inspiration for this show.