



Fibro Façade

Catherine O'Donnell
The Anthony Gallery

Friday 31 January – Sunday 28 June 2020

My art practice focuses on the urban landscape by representing the commonly overlooked dwellings of suburbia in an abstracted form. A current interest is fibro houses, which can be found all over Australia, but more locally for me in Western Sydney, where I grew up. This type of housing was used for housing estates in parts of the country; an exercise in idealistic social engineering that has now become a cultural signifier of lower socio-economic communities. In other areas of Australia, these humble structures were used as low-cost housing solutions in towns and on properties; some have come to represent the holidays, escapes from the routine of daily life.

Through my drawings, I aim to highlight the building's function as a home, as well as its modernist form, in order to reveal it as simultaneously altruistic, beautiful, impractical and a refuge. In these structures, it is the uncomplicated geometric construction and simplicity of form that captures my imagination. I draw what I regard to be beautiful or interesting in order to highlight the power of the ordinary, commonplace architecture of the urban landscape. At first glance, these qualities may not be evident, as these developments are not always given the same value as other housing. But to me, these buildings are so much more than the physical embodiment of post-war utopian ideals and principles of European modernism. They have been, and still are, homes for many people.

Catherine O'Donnell, 2018

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Fibro Façade is a touring exhibition
from MAY SPACE, Sydney.

Catherine O'Donnell

Urban perspective – large window 2017/18

charcoal on paper, 98.5 × 135.2cm

Image courtesy the artist and MAY SPACE, Sydney