

Peter Boggs: *Interiors and the mystery of light*
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street,
Deakin. Until April 14.
Reviewed by: Sasha Grishin

When you reduce the number of variables in a painting, you increase the number of creative possibilities. This is one of the philosophies Peter Boggs explores in his art.

Since I first encountered Boggs' paintings about two decades ago, I have slowly become a convert and a great admirer of his very quiet and profound meditations. Stillness and silence are among the most notable characteristics of his art, with every element distilled, ordered and beautifully observed. So much art today screams for attention, it is noisy and gimmicky and ultimately quite ephemeral. Boggs' art is what you could call "slow art", which is there for contemplation, meditation and is intended for the long term.

Many of his paintings deal with gardens, deserted landscapes and cityscapes, and earlier works were preoccupied with still life compositions. He had already been hinting at facades of buildings and looking into windows and open doorways.

In this new body of work the focus is entirely on interiors of usually unspecified structures. They seem European, quite grand, possibly museums, but seen from odd angles with open curtains, windows and doorways exposing glimpses of the outside world.

In his paintings nothing much happens, there is no dramatic narrative for us to engage with, but everything is charged with an inner tension where the anticipation is immense. There is so much that can happen, but nothing actually does.

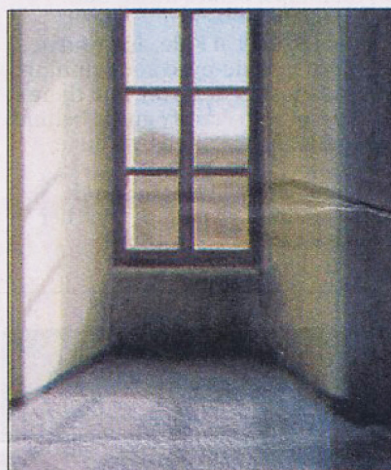
The viewer is provided with privileged access to these scenes, but there are relatively few clues as to what we are actually witnessing. We are invited to contemplate a passage of sunlight in the hallway, a painting hanging on the wall as a silent witness, a glimpse of a street through

an open doorway or the play of shadows on the floor.

Boggs exploits two very deliberate artistic strategies in his work. The first is the use of a very subdued tonal palette; there are no screaming bright colours or sudden contrasts. The second is the total depopulation of the settings and the general sparseness. There is no movement and although there are signs of human habitation, no one is present and we are invited into the spaces in the manner of voyeurs. When there is no human presence, we tend to populate the space within our imagination; we invent narratives.

It is at this stage that Boggs is at his most imaginative. His interiors are unknown, but distantly familiar, creating that uncanny feeling that we have been here before, but possibly in another existence. It is an art of suggestion and mood, where we are seeing the world for the first time through a glass darkly only to realise that we had always seen this, but somehow differently.

Over the years Boggs has not only established a growing national and international reputation as an artist, but has also developed a unique artistic language which is distinct and distinguishably his own.



Peter Boggs' *Salon View (Carnavalet)*, top; and *Louvre Interior*, above.