

Treading the light fantastic



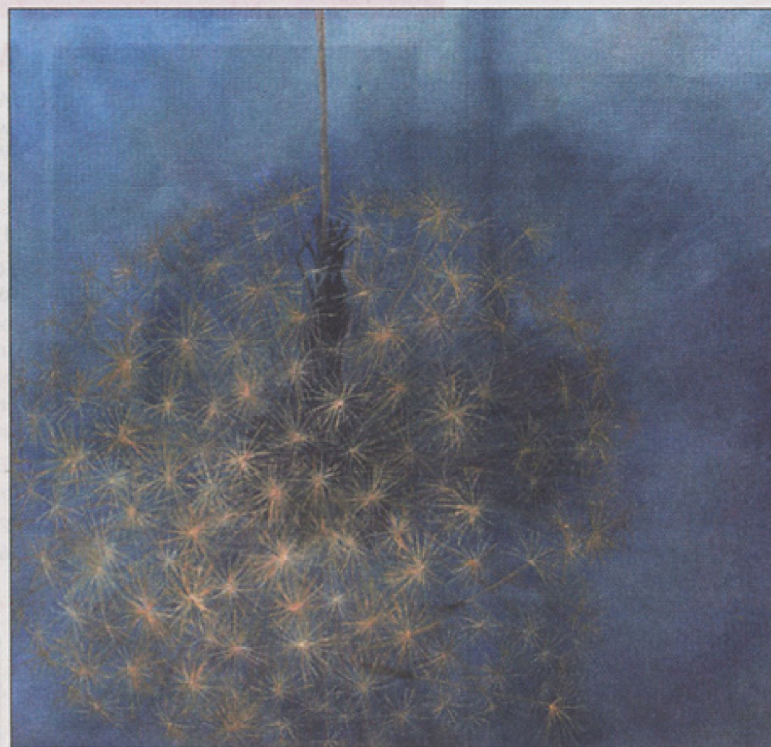
SASHA GRISHIN

Kirrily Hammond: *There is a light that never goes out*

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.
Closes March 22, Tuesday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday-Sunday 9am-5pm

Romanticism is back in vogue. It was only a few years ago that to call someone a romantic painter was deemed a deadly insult on a par with calling someone a fossil, or at least a leftover from a bygone era. Now the new romantics are crowd-pleasers and fashionable, and attract many emerging talents.

Kirrily Hammond, in her mid thirties, is a printmaker trained in Canberra who has been living in Melbourne for the past decade. In her art there has been a gradual progression from a form of ritualised surrealism with slightly edgy, uncanny compositions to a celebration of the sublime in wondrous settings in nature. In the present exhibition, the romantic spirit and feelings of awe and the sublime are transferred to a more commonly experienced reality. We encounter urban landscapes with electricity pylons, industrial landscapes shown at dusk with the skyline draped in electricity cables



Meticulous realism . . . above, Kirrily Hammond's *Dandelion XIII*, from which one almost expects a fairy-like creature to emerge, and right, *Kansai II*.



and airport runways, as well as the occasional dandelion captured in meticulous jewel-like realism from which one could expect some fairy-like creature to emerge.

The title of the exhibition I assume is based on The Smiths classic *There is a light that never goes out*, where Morrissey creates the evocative melancholic mood of gloom with the lone figure set at dusk. In Hammond's exhibition

there is a certain preciousness in design and a lovely tonal luminosity.

In her art she carries echoes of Clarice Beckett and Jessie Traill, both in their technique as well as in their general sensibility and subject matter, but Hammond makes these misty visions peculiarly her own. The specificity of her titles, such as *North Beach* and *North Beach II*, both dated Sept-

ember 3 2010, or *Docklands II* or *Kansai*, suggest that locations are important to the artist, although to the viewer these may appear as incidental as all seems to be subsumed in her sweeping romantic lyricism. It is a strong and even exhibition where the beautifully worked small-scale oil paintings are well balanced by the series of precisely observed drawings. A slight pity is the absence of prints,

which are the major strength of Hammond's oeuvre.

Hammond is increasingly making her presence felt on the art scene in Canberra and Melbourne, with this exhibition is virtually a sell-out at a time when many artists are finding it difficult to make a living. Although embracing the popular trend for romanticism, Hammond is pushing her vision a little further and in a more interesting and personal direction.