

Magic put into everyday reality

ART REVIEW

KIRRILY HAMMOND: LOWLANDS PAINTINGS

Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.
Until September 23.

REVIEWED BY Sasha Grishin

Kirrily Hammond employs the language of high romanticism with touches of the sublime to tackle the subject matter of the suburban reality. Working in oils on small panels of copper plate, she creates gem-like tableaux that shimmer on the gallery walls and have attracted an appreciative Canberra audience, with the exhibition virtually selling out on the opening night.

Her paintings closely mimic a photographic reality, but Hammond seems not drawn to delete warts and all of the scenes to which she bears witness. A lovely painting at the show titled *Moon* depicts the traces of a faint moon cast against a pink, glowing evening sky.

It immediately brings to mind parallels with the work of the 19th-century German

This forces the viewer into an intimate engagement with the work.

romantic landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich, where I would anticipate seeing heavily clad figures staring into infinity or the work of Australian painters such as David Davies or Arthur Streeton celebrating the majesty of nature. Instead, in Hammond's small painting, we catch the outlines of telegraph poles and power lines that remind us that the moon rises not only over the spirit of God in nature but also over suburbia.

Hammond works on a small, rather than miniature scale, with the largest copper panels measuring 20 centimetres by 24.2cm and the rest 12x9cm. This forces the viewer into an intimate engagement with the work instead of allowing for a contemplative distance.

If part of her exhibition tugs towards Friedrich and that European tradition of the sublime, the rest looks to a source closer to home, that of Clarice Beckett.

Beckett was a tonal painter who was attracted to the ideas of Max Meldrum.

Hammond in a painting such as *Gloom* arrives at a formula very similar to that of Beckett, wherein a misty twilight in a suburban street scene with the tall verticals



Kirrily Hammond's *Gloom* (above) is a misty twilight in a suburban street scene; *Moon* depicts the traces of a faint moon cast against a pink, glowing evening sky.

of the telegraph poles, car headlights fight to illuminate the small arc of light.

The use of an archaic word for the title further heightens connotations of something belonging to the past.

Hammond has been exhibiting for over two decades and has established a reputation as an artist who manages to transfigure a common everyday reality into something that has been touched with a bit of magic.

