Interview: Tim Croucher

Tim Croucher is an artist who is academic Dean at the Waikato Institute of Technology where he lectures in painting

Describe the history of your art practice and training.

"I received a fairly conventional art education, majoring in painting at the University of Canterbury during the early - mid 1980s. I grew up on European and American Modernism and tried out making various sorts of painting as a typical self-conscious student in New Zealand, acquiring most of my experience of painting through books in the school library.

"A friend and I, having grown tired of working in factories to support our study, got several commissions to paint murals around town; this opened up not only a lucrative and entertaining source of income, but became for me an invigorating and relevant form of artistic practice. Upon graduating, I went into full-time work as a self-employed mural painter.

"As Christchurch got painted out and I got inclined toward a new adventure, I, my wife and young family left town for a teaching position at the then Waikato Polytechnic. Here, my interest gradually moved back towards forms of painting I had been educated in and am now teaching."

Who influences your work?

"My influences in painting come from those who engage in rather subtle forms of post-modern responses to painting, contributing contemporary influence my work 'cos they pinch some of my ideas but I pinch from them too."

What inspires you to create artwork?

"I reckon inspire is a bit kind of social and mystical: I make painting 'cos I've done it for a long time, 'cos I have a great job that enables me to get resources, and because I like painting traditions and the kind of persistent and stuck quality it has now. I like messing with games of form and content, figuration, abstraction, objective, subjective that painting can still be drawn into."

Describe your recent work.

"I'm making paintings on different sized canvases that manipulate good 'ole riddles of pictorial illusion, surface, materiality, and things. I'm using photos of skies and trees and combinations of mural painting techniques and gestural abstraction."

What are you working towards for 2005/6?

"I'd like to build this current series of paintings out into a more complex and well thought out project. I'd like to visit Madison in the winter and go to the Venice Biennial next year. I'm a big et al fan, and I like boats."

What is the process you go through to produce an exhibition/series of work or individual piece?

"Producing work for an exhibition involves reducing and managing possibilities in the work, to sort out how the group will function as a

(Above right) *Madison after the heat # 1,* Tim Croucher, acrylic on canvas, 2000 x 800mm.

moves to re-evaluate painting's place in art - a place that acknowledges such things as photography and film. I have a long standing interest in the North American painter, Ed Ruscha, who I think came out of photo realism and Post-Pop art. I enjoy the humour, sentiment and conceptual variety of his work. I enjoy Gerhard Richter's finesse in the displacement of codes in painting and photography. I enjoy Eric Fischl and Balthus for their potent and ill-mannered digging around. I sometimes manage to like a read of Yves Alain Bois, a great art historian who can turn my thinking about modernist art on its ear. He and Rosalind Kraus did this fantastic exhibition way back in 1996, that flogged some life out of the old nag. My students whole, with bits feeding and trading off each other. Then there's the logistics involved, and the dynamics of the gallery, its audience, etc. and the other exhibitors if any, whose work always complicates and adds to the dynamic. Developing a series of work involves opening up options, considering things that have been hanging around a while that are still valuable, exploring materials blah, blah. It requires some discipline to be playful at times and restrained and systematic at others. This is where pinching from students becomes useful."

Wendy Grace Allen