

Marc Standing's work *Effigy*, 2008 (mixed media) is in his exhibition *the playground* at South Coast Gallery

WELLINGTON

Zimbabwean-born, Sydney-based artist Marc Standing will exhibit paintings and drawings at South Coast Gallery from 15 November to 7 December. In them a series of disembodied, balaclava-swathed heads are disturbingly irresistible symbols of modern struggle. Hoods tend to reveal more than they hide, and their relevance in this age of trainee terrorists and teenage bullying is spot on.

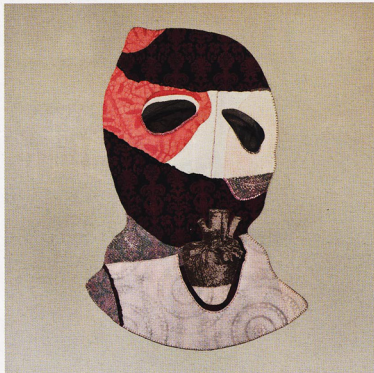
Standing unleashes an arsenal of techniques, layering the stencilled hoods with transparencies, texture and glitter, which collide and overlap. These elements are held in fragile order by stitched, wounded borders as he overturns traditional notions of craft. The pulling power exerted by his 'safe' materials exerts a magnetism on the viewer, and once we're hooked, tougher concerns surface – or bite back.

Standing is interested in portraying the "emotive characteristics of fear and displacement, which have become distinctive attributes in dealing with the reality of our ever-changing and vulnerable urban world".

His work deals with a sense of slippage and the need for totems or shamanic images to make sense of "a contemporary culture gone awry".

Standing's paintings are beautiful and profoundly terrifying. He's particularly adept at catching the uncanny gaps just before action – or thought – occurs, so that we're left out of kilter, out of our comfort zone. His subjects drift in undercurrents, like the feral occupants simmering below the radar of any modern city. They're totems of a world unbalanced, unsure of itself in a moral sense, where strength comes out of desperation and only a stunted future is foreseeable.

In September and October at South Coast Gallery, Turi Park exhibited glowing, light-filled paintings based on Italian landscapes in his show *Theatre Country*. Years earlier his father Geoff, author of *Theatre country: essays on landscape and whenua*, had alerted him to the wondrous potential of the Claude Glass – a small, dark convex mirror used by picturesque artists in the 18th and 19th centuries to give the landscape a painterly quality. Celebrating this knowledge, Park used a natural palette of sienna, umber, Naples yellow and Venetian red to illuminate the Tuscan countryside, which is so different from our own.



I was lifted out of myself on entering the blushing, liquid world of Kim Pieters at Bowen Galleries in September. The show's title, *wings caught in the tears of the pool*, comes from Sally Ann McIntyre, an Australian-born writer with an interest in hybridizing text, visual arts and music. Her words are minutely inscribed on Pieters' sections of particle board as if to anchor the ephemeral markings surrounding them. A ghosting of stains washes around Pieters' bursts of electrified activity, while torn edges and furiously controlled scratchings put paid to any notions of daintiness. These intimate elegies reminded me of ultrasound procedures where mysterious, viscous elements move in and out of time and urgency. She's making us take note of our fears and, more importantly, our hopes.

A couple of *One Day Sculpture* events took viewers on separate pilgrimages in August and September. A steady stream of visitors took a mental health day and made their way to the south coast to see Wellington artist Maddie Leach's *Perigree #11*. In this a tiny boatshed became both a viewing platform and a shelter where we were supposed to witness the atrocious weather conditions predicted by long-range forecaster and mathematician Ken Ring. Perversely, the sun bore down, and rather than a being a test of huddled fortitude, Leach's installation allowed us to pause and reconnect with our gloriously wild surroundings.

In *Golden Slumbers* Aucklander Kah Bee Chow created an inner-city garden. In the early 1900s many Chinese immigrants settled in Wellington's Haining Street, which became notorious as a hub of opium dens and white slavery. The 1905 murder of Joe Kum Yung, by racist Lionel Terry, inspired the artist to examine the dreams of those who uproot themselves in search of new lives. Visitors were offered hot soup and shelter as they took in videoed interviews with the current Chinese and Haining Street communities.

At Photospace Gallery photographer David Boyce returned from his Hong Kong base to turn half the gallery into a playground for koi carp. In *The Philosopher's Stomach* hundreds of photographs caused a delirious spin-cycle sensation. In the other room, *Mixed Messages* appeared related to Chinese calligraphy. Boyce digitally pieced together shots of athletic courts, arranging the coloured squares vertically on thick printmaking paper. Weathered ochres and greens suggested ancient parts of an Asian city. Where the paintwork was pristine, I imagined more moneyed players, perhaps having a game of tennis atop a high-rise in Hong Kong. Boyce plumbed beauty, high and low. /Katy Corner



David Boyce preparing his photographic installation *The Philosopher's Stomach*, 2008, at Photospace Gallery