

**Fluoro is something so eye-offensive and eye-attracting.**



I own a jumper that is of a particular turn of orange, a woven neon, that it makes my skin fall away. Makes me pallid. I'm desperately jealous of that monitor-glow hue.

Just the other day I read in the paper some lines by Richard Larter, one of the old Australian Pop guys. He said:

"I dreamt I walked into a gallery with a friend and I said, 'Who did these paintings?' and she replied, 'You did!'

I'd never seen them before, but I was just canny enough to remember what they looked like when I woke up!"<sup>1</sup>

Usually, I hate dreams, but this one sounded good. The dream sparked probably the best paintings in Larter's most recent Melbourne show. It was a process where a subconscious gift (like an alien birth) was placed back on the gallery wall. I'm pretty sure the pictures he referred to were the sort of psychedelic ones. I just kept looking at them. I work at his Melbourne gallery, so I've seen them, miraculously, still not enough.

The paintings had lots of fluoro, then some blue. The blue, rather than taking away the offensive sheen, seemed to exacerbate the troubles. It was so very very good, very very epileptic.

I find fluoro a little problematic.

I love John Armleder's work, but at the same time I thoroughly distrust it. I'm sure it's because of the charismatic fluoros. They always capture my wayward

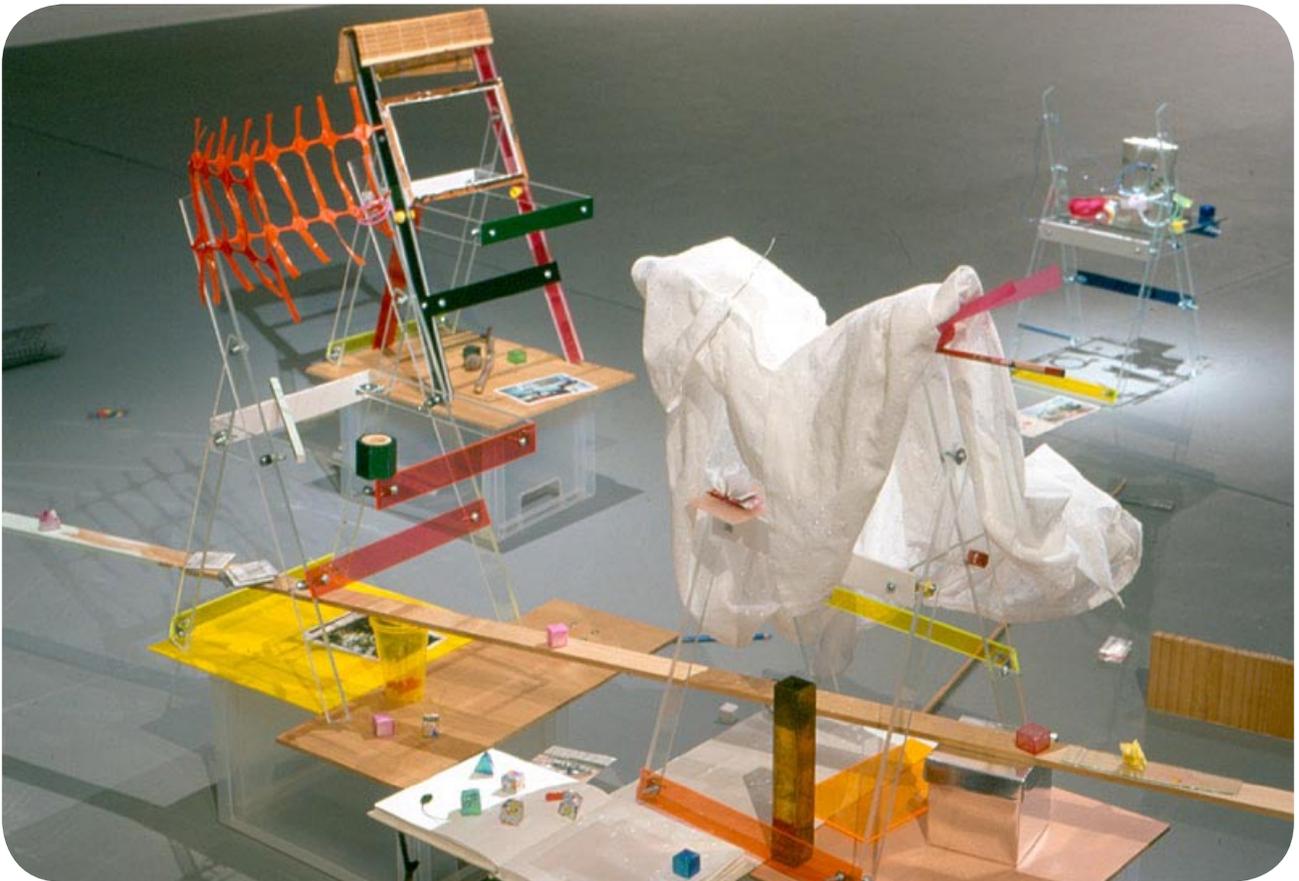


**Left:** Richard Larter, *Tweet tweet* (2003). **Right:** Peter Upward, "Shared Time" (1970) courtesy of Peter Upward Estate & Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne.

art lust. Shiny surfaces, translucent impossible yellow and pink. Easy, so desperately easy, that I can't believe it. Perhaps I am bitter that I have fallen for it, yet can't find anything there. I think John Armleder's art is the same as Ashton Kutcher's good looks. Yeah.

Katherine Huang had a show at RMIT Project Space a little while ago. There was a beautiful orange, more sweet than my jumper but with a similar strength. It was focused in a small monochrome, synthetic fibres stretched over timber bars. Placed sorta funny on the wall, a bit up and a bit to the left, it kind of floated by itself. I really wanted it, so I could just look at it as it bored away at my retina.

Katherine's work was very serious. Even with the naïve texta scribbles, there was a casing of dense ideas. I didn't really understand what was going on. I



dunno, but I think it was damn good.

Image courtesy of Katherine Huang.

I often go to the Charles Nodrum Gallery in Richmond. There are always fantastic examples of 60's and 70s chi-chi abstraction. The sort of thing that was made for a 60s International Style Harry Seidler apartment. My favourite works are by Peter Upward. He had read about action painting in the 1950's and it was all about gesture and body movement. The early work was thoroughly oriental. Then he went to England in the 60's, took acid and found epoxy resin. And with this epoxy resin came fluorescent colours and circular grounds and the razor edge balance between profundity, vacuity and wall candy. I ended up getting my dad to buy one.

Fluoro might be a good thing, or it might not be. I have no idea. I think its attraction is based on an empty lust. As much as I love it, I still haven't embraced it. My paintbrush remains devoid of fluorescent paint. Perhaps I just haven't been brave enough to take the plunge.

#### Notes

1. Richard Larter quoted in Ashley Crawford, "Artistic differences," *The Age*, 17 December, 2003

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**Rob McKenzie was born and bred in Melbourne, works at Niagara Galleries, is responsible for the morphous publishing project SLAVE and tries to make good art.**