

Greetings from the Ukraine

Nearly Monochrome, Five Walls, Melbourne, 2016

This diptych is nearly monochrome: aubergine black acrylic and slightly pigmented exposed wood panel. In the top panel the black painted image acts as the 'figure' and in the bottom panel the black is meant to read as the 'ground' although, obviously, the figure/ground relationship is unstable in both panels. And to create further confusion both panels contain the same image but mirrored and flipped.

The work is abstract, although perhaps it cannot be strictly defined as 'non-objective'. The forms are invented ones, albeit adaptations of 5-second scribble drawings made while watching television documentaries on various dramatic historical events.

The title *Greeting from the Ukraine* recalls inscriptions on postcards tourists would send home to family and friends from exotic places before social and electronic media rendered this tradition almost redundant. Kasimir Malevich, inventor of Suprematism was born in the Ukraine, once a popular tourist destination mainly for Russians. Now most of the country is a war zone. It is also the location of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor that, in 1986 went into meltdown releasing radioactive material that caused death, injury and destruction in the immediate vicinity with dangerous levels of nuclear fallout spreading throughout Russia and Europe. Now, 30 years later, the reactor site is apparently a tourist attraction!

Reference to this destructive event is hardly discernible in the work although the work's predisposition towards bleakness and darkness are evident: the title should be clue enough for further cogitation along with the implication that these forms are intended to resemble either desolate remnants of industrial architecture or a ground plan of an excavated burial site. Obscuring content but providing a smattering of deciphering clues is a deliberate ploy Wilma has often used. For her, abstraction is a means for presenting beautifully constructed and meticulously made works apparently without meaning but nevertheless embedded with social and moral implications detectible by those intelligent enough to appreciate that abstraction is not, at least in most contemporary works, just a conglomeration of meaningless forms and colours. Abstraction speaks to the intellect and to the structure of the world beyond mere appearances.

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