

steph smiedt artist

Steph Smiedt is a young Sydney artist fresh from the highly acclaimed National Art School. With a successful exhibition under her wing, the school's Murray Sime Achievement Award on her CV and a new line of works already taking shape on the canvas, she has decided to take on another challenge and make her mark on the Melbourne art scene.

Smiedt's work has a beautiful seamlessness that incorporates thick oils and acrylics with other mediums and elements of her life picked up along the way. From two steps back, the works that line her Richmond studio are a mixture of soft hues upon heavy poster prints or thick material and it is difficult to detect where one medium becomes another. Up close, the collage effect is evident and the piece takes on an equally-as-stimulating new aesthetic that has become Smiedt's signature in the art world. How far this world stretches is yet to be seen but her works have already been profiled in two international art magazines since finishing her degree last year.

Smiedt's move to Melbourne has been two-pronged. At once resistant to leaving behind the security and support of her art school contemporaries, Smiedt has found these positives were grounding for taking a step back from the Sydney scene. She has also felt the itchy feet many artists do when the inspirations of their immediate environment begin to dry up.

"For three years I have engulfed myself in art school, its people and its influences," Smiedt says. "I think the work I did at school reflects this. Now I need to see how my art fares without this security blanket. I am really testing myself in the outside world and I guess in turn this new solidarity will be reflected in my painting - something I couldn't achieve if I stayed in Sydney."

According to Smiedt, Melbourne has proved a good place to redefine herself. Though Melbourne has often been a haven for artists from Sydney because of the cheaper studio spaces and general cost of living, Smiedt believes the city has also earned a reputation through its public works. "It seems everywhere you turn in Melbourne there has been environmental input of an artistic nature," she says. "Where Sydney was built on existing beauty of its harbour, Melbourne has strived to create its own beauty. It shows in the architecture, the streetscapes. Just walking through the city is an artistic experience."

Catch Steph Smiedt's next exhibition between Thursday September 5 (opening night) to Wednesday September 24 at The George, White Bar & Gallery, 129 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda

words Penny Watson photo Ralph Alphonso

