

"I think it was Dalí who said, because of Hollywood, art would never been the same."

Matthys Gerber, *Holy War II*, 1994,
oil on canvas, 165 x 233 cm. COLLECTION
NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA. IMAGE
COURTESY SARAH COTTIER GALLERY.



"portraiture" and "abstract" to create a hyperbolic, overloaded and "super-generic" version of these very same types of painting. Unsettling and unaccountably evocative, his works hover in an uncomfortable space between the familiar and the strange. "I wanted to get away from the direct appropriation of things and more towards dealing with the amateurishness of painting, looking at the debased qualities of it," says Gerber. "Whenever anyone told me that you couldn't look at something, that was when it intrigued me. The landscapes I did weren't necessarily there because of their kitsch value, they were there because they were the synthesis of everything landscape painting hitherto had been," he adds.

Although Gerber says the continuity of his seemingly disparate works is "organic" – art that ranges from abstracts to landscapes, Rorschach inkblots rendered in cut out, to cheesy images of Jesus Christ – he rejects the idea that the evolution from one series of

works to the next is purely reactive.

Over the last few years, Gerber has embarked on a series of works that could be called "abstract", although the conceptual rather than purely gestural basis of the paintings calls into question the easy categorization of his works into a given genre. Gerber's work shifts between a fascination with the techniques of painting and what those techniques suggest. When talking about his landscapes, Gerber could well be describing his entire oeuvre. "Lacan said that the pleasure in the trompe l'oeil is the fact that you know you're being cheated," says Gerber. "It's not the cheating as such, it's the knowledge of how that is achieved technically that gives the pleasure. It's the laying bare of the illusion that actually makes it not an illusion ..."

Matthys Gerber is on show at Sarah Cottier Gallery from August 8 to September 9, 2001.