

Richard Giblett, *Fixtures*, Murray White Room

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[Murray White Room, Melbourne](#), is showing Richard Giblett’s new works in an exhibition suitably titled *Fixtures* until 23 April. The title of the exhibition refers to the lighting elements used repeatedly through the works. Given though, that the works focus mostly on the abstracted and minimalist takes on architectural patterning (in facades, in city skylines, and so on) — seeming networks only visible once the focus is drawn by the artist — the title ‘Fixtures’ also calls to mind that grand invisible network of the economy, so well highlighted by gaming fixtures. The sport in this group of works is limited though, to a kind of intellectual athletics, played by both artist and viewer — and it is a friendly game, outside the competition fixture.

Richard Giblett, *Grid System*, 2011

Enamel on glass, perspex, shelf, fluorescent light. 63 x 70 x 10 cm.

Courtesy the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne



To my mind the strongest work in the show was *Grid System*, an enameled sheet of glass with the paint scratched away, so that when a fluorescent light beneath lights it, a city stretches far beneath the viewer to a distant horizon. Most impressive, was the surprisingly accurate mimesis of the light blooming over the horizon, especially given this was achieved by the mere removal of enamel paint and the addition of a fluorescent light. For what is so interesting about this piece, is its status as a near perfect symbol of what *painting is*. Paint, by its nature, is about the subtraction of light. Pigments allow certain colours of the spectrum to bounce out, but trap others. Blue paint, for example, appears blue, because it traps the orange range of the spectrum allowing only the colours that add to blue out. This painting then, despite being plain black, is an indicator of paint’s function as a catcher or destroyer of light. Very tempting is the ability to play über-Villain, and remove the power cord ... catching the light, plunging the city into the black of night.

We move from a piece in which the bulk of the picture plane is nothing but black sky, to a piece in which there is no horizon or skyline to be seen: only the city itself.

Richard Giblett, *Window 2*, 2011

Enamel on glass, shelf, 80 x 80 x 10 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Murray White Room,
Melbourne.



A complex (and almost disorienting) effect of depth is achieved by allowing the set lights of the gallery space cast shadows through the minimalist negative-space rendering of the cropped metropolis. You could mistake the view on offer for a fictional city without limits, or a microscopic view of a computer chip. Staggeringly, perhaps because the glass is leaned on angle against the wall causing the shadows to appear at differing depths behind the enamel, a pristine cut-copy of the enamel is avoided. Instead, the metropolis exists in depth somewhere between the glass and the wall, and the viewer's eye is caught in this point.

The exhibition, indeed, is focused almost completely on the creation and destruction of passages of light. And so it is, with a conspiratorial wink, that the artist agrees with us on our deduction, and offers us a reward, in *Fluorescent Pyre*.

Giblett presents the viewer with a pile of defunct, salvaged fluorescent fixtures. In pristine white, excepting the steel end caps of the tubes, they visually join the white walls with the polished cement floor of the space. The effect seems to pull all the works together, bridging from one wall to the other. On closer inspection, the ruse breaks and it is clear these fixtures are made entirely of wood, cut and assembled by hand. The gallery's press release states:

Primarily working in sculpture and installation, [Giblett's] recent practice has been to use objects commonplace to the built environment and subvert, or invert them in such a way that re-contextualises the object, ultimately allowing the viewer to regard the object in a new way. By using an economy of materials including paper, wood, cardboard and fluorescent light, his aim has been to reduce and replicate such objects by focusing purely on the form of the structure. Richard's work has strong ties to design elements, particularly of the industrial and architectural kind, yet as a visual artist he has a propensity toward

making detailed and time consuming works by hand, without the assistance of design based computer programs.



Richard Giblett, *Fluorescent Pyre*, 2011,
Acrylic and enamel on MDF and hardwood, dimensions variable.
Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne.

The lack of a use of design software highlights, perhaps, why an artist working mostly in installation has been able to make some very exciting *paintings* — he is concerned with technique and craftsmanship; and utilising these to create a striking end result. Whilst design-influenced artwork is nothing new, it is certainly prevalent in recent years, and not always to positive and challenging results. Here though, Giblett knows that the minimalist paintings are fairly serious formal examinations and he breathes a refreshing air into the show with the piece *Fluorescent Pyre*. Whilst I found *Grid System* to be the strongest and most compelling work in the show, *Fluorescent Pyre* is a dream for art writers (fond of puns) everywhere. There is no light to gained by plugging these fixtures in, but should you set a match to them as the title invites, they are sure to light up.

Simon O’Carrigan is the founding editor of Figure Ground ‘Zine. He is a visual artist, an animator, and a fan of literature and music.

<http://figuregroundzine.wordpress.com/2011/04/13/richard-giblett-fixtures-murray-white-room/>

