



Nigel Milsom, *The Rubber Room*, 2008,
installation view, Yuill/Crowley, Sydney, courtesy
the artist and Yuill/Crowley, Sydney.

concoction (all from 2007), also feature etched-glass domes and fleshy-looking wax sculptures, but their reference points are less clear. Instead we are left to guess what organ or bodily process is being represented, recognising without knowing.

Into the underworld, *Uprising* and *Lodestone*, three globular glass and wax sculptures (all from 2007), continue Armstrong's fascination with the eye as a primal and evocative shape. These different 'eyes' – which could also be a host of other organic forms and body parts – refer to both the act of looking, and the unreliability of sight.

The 2006–07 linocut print series 'The shape of things to come I' and 'II' act as proof for these experiments in sculpture. The identical prints, one on dark hand-dyed paper, the other on pale paper, produce different images depending on the colour of the background. Orifices become appendages, the concave becomes convex. This was Armstrong's real coup, suggesting that all those eyeballs and organs mightn't be eyeballs and organs at all; viewed in a different light they might be something else entirely.

Benjamin Armstrong, *The Shape of Things to Come*, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, 13 February – 15 March 2008.

Nigel Milsom

Dougal Phillips

What is 'The Rubber Room'? Nigel Milsom gave us a number of clues in the suite of over twenty paintings exhibited in his first show with Sydney's Yuill/Crowley. The room is a place where a lot goes on, although like a television on mute, we are left wondering just what that going-on is. It is

somewhere dark, with rakish steps and tall white walls and columns. It is a claustrophobic space with profoundly theatrical lighting: blades of white light cut across black voids, and that's only the backdrop. In this bold exhibition Milsom's sharp and deft touch brought to life a bizarre cast of characters. What the artist achieved was to fight against the normally fluid curvature of paint-on-canvas to produce a world full of geometric angst: a world of edges. Cardboard men with rolled cylindrical bodies and flat paper-plate faces populated this stage, riding in from the wings on pantomime cardboard horses (as well as mixing with elephants and an odd bird-like character) and striking dramatic and tragicomic poses.

Milsom is well known for his skill in monochrome painting and that skill was on display here, with black and white dominating, set off by slashes of pale purple (almost mistaken for grey) which punctuated the tableaux. Perhaps what was most impressive about this exhibition was its sheer scale and the artist's commitment to his subject. Twenty-six canvases were produced to document the events in the room, and Milsom continues to show the best quality that any young artist can have – an original idea taken seriously and seen through to its open conclusion. This exhibition was a tribute to that singular focus. Wherever the rubber room is, it is somewhere you'd like to wake up from. Although it has the nightmarish quality of an otherworld, it is a compelling place to spend some time, and the creative force which built it is one to keep an eye on. Who knows where we will be taken next.

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