

A crowd of almost-human figures mope aimlessly through structures of concrete. A dilapidated basketball hoop teeters precariously. Weapon-like objects in pastel hues tower above. Or, are they letters from an alien alphabet? At midnight, a lone figure climbs a hill, surrounded by Grecian statues. It is perhaps as if a lunatic bowerbird has been at work, creating an absurd assortment of images and constructing fantastical structures. In *Comfortable Living* Nabilah Nordin and Nick Modrzewski create immersive narratives that simultaneously reconstruct and subvert reality.

This world created by the artists is one of duality, involving opposing and often illogical narratives. Concrete and wooden objects resemble remnants of civic structures, bridges, highways, housing projects: a post apocalyptic suburban universe. This contrasts with the exhibited paintings that tell charming and often absurd, fable-like stories. There is a textual element to the works. The paintings have a distinctive visual code, hinting at a language one can understand, but not quite. In *Remember the Birth Feast*, a gargantuan bird-like creature spreads its monstrous emerald wings over a turbulent sea. Does it guard some foreign land, or is it about to attack? Or is it something else entirely?

The sculptures appear to be machines or tools, but not ones that are recognisable. It is almost as if they would work perfectly in an alternate universe. They have an eerie presence: it as if these objects are relics, totems, left from a prehistoric past or perhaps somehow, a period from our future. Indeed, the entire exhibition is Janus-like¹, referencing the cannon of art history and historical events, whilst simultaneously moving forward to create a new narrative. Perhaps it is our [the viewers'] interactions with these works that ground them in the present. Their identities are ever changing. It is as though they are naturally occurring or magnetic, sucking in structures, energies and objects to form clusters. Like a fire sucks in oxygen and disintegrates wood, these are the embers, the charred remains.

Nordin and Modrzewski imagine new futures for the materials they collect and manipulate, exploring notions of sustainability with found objects. Indeed, *Comfortable Living* evokes the Japanese philosophy of Wabi-sabi: that nothing lasts or is finished. One gets the sense that the objects they have created could

have infinite imagined functions, or could be deconstructed at any moment, revised into new and constantly evolving assemblages.

I am in a particularly unique position to write about this collaboration as not only am I familiar with Nordin and Modrzewski's respective practices, I was with them during some of the initial discussions of the project. Watching the artists prepare for the exhibition and talk about their shared practice, it is if they have, in a sense, developed a third brain, a shared consciousness. Nordin and Modrzewski occupy the rare space of being partners who also work together, carrying on the collaborative dialogue beyond the studio. Their practice ranges from discovering new materials and digesting art history together, to brainstorming ideas and simultaneously working on individual artworks. Ideas are collaged and blended, spontaneously re-emerging to form a shared, non-verbal language.

Finally, it is time to consider the title of the exhibition. The phrase *Comfortable Living* could encompass any number of notions. It could refer to Nordin and Modrzewski's determination to interrogate one another's work, ensuring neither can become too comfortable in their practice. Perhaps Nordin and Modrzewski's expansive universe created for the exhibition is a method of questioning the comfortable complacency of suburban living? Or it could be the way the objects and paintings have the feeling of belonging to multiple worlds or times, and therefore cannot sit comfortably within any of them.

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<http://www.nabilahnordin.com>

<http://nickmodrzewski.tumblr.com>

¹ * Janus is the Roman god of beginnings and transitions. He is usually depicted as having two faces that look in opposite direction, since he looks to the future and to the past simultaneously.