

Layers of mood and meaning



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**Sunlight and Shadow: Micky Allan
Cast: Stephanie Jones**

Helen Maxwell Gallery, Level 1, 42 Mort Street, Braddon. Until April 26.

The use of texture and surface to create emotion and mood has been deftly displayed in the works of Micky Allan and Stephanie Jones currently on show at Helen Maxwell Gallery.

Layers of meaning are evoked through layers of brushstroke, pencil mark, and engraver's scratch.

Stephanie Jones's *Cast* is a gathering of subtly coloured renderings of faces in silhouette. In her artist's statement, Jones refers to the legendary tale of the birth of drawing recounted by Pliny the Elder, in which a woman captured a memory of her soon-to-be departed lover by tracing the outline of his shadow on the wall.

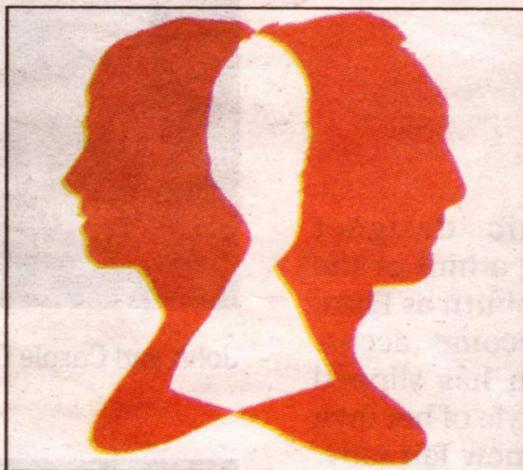
Jones's work takes this idea of affectionate commemoration intertwined with the physical surrounding of domesticity by rendering silhouettes in the negative spaces of textured wall papers. Painstakingly coloured in, these shadows somehow evoke a plaintive sense of sadness despite the simplicity of their content.

In *The Shadow of Love* Jones explicitly refers to the idea in Pliny of the silhouette as expression of affection.

Jones's work is very gentle and delicate; some silhouettes overlap to gaze towards their reflected selves, in other images they float between the ripples, dots and quivering lines of the richly embossed paper on which they are drawn.



Detail of Micky Allan's *Wombat night (Lake Mungo)*, 2005, above, and Stephanie Jones's work *Cast 190*, 2008, below.



This is a collection of work much enhanced by knowledge of the artist's intent, which reveals an expression of femininity, of emotion and of creativity through

a repeated simple and subtle motif.

Micky Allan's *Sunlight and Shadow* also plays upon subtlety and simplicity for its visual effect.

Combining drawing, painting, engraving and assemblage, these works invite the viewer close to discover the layers and secrets contained in each image.

Many of the images are framed with a sheet of glass between viewer and surface.

This glass is itself often engraved with patterns and images, which are then recreated on the paper behind, the shadow of the engraving both mediating and participating in the impact of the work.

Often working on almost black backgrounds, Allan uses silver, white and coloured pencil to decorate her surfaces with fanciful and fantastic imagery.

The glistening and sparkling pigments give a dramatic counterpoint to the dark ground.

Elsewhere the works are pure and bright, as in *Shadows (pink)* and *(blue)* where white and colour sweep and swirl across the paper or *Soft fall*, which deftly recreates the emotional mood of autumn.

Allan's works need to be seen in person – reproduction strips them of the subtle complexity which is their strength.