

Social critique from young talent.

REVIEW/ART

SIEMON ALLEN and GREG STREAK (Institute of Contemporary Art, Jeppe Street, Johannesburg)

Allen's works are a refreshing solution to the problem of sculpture in the wake of the post-formalist generation — sheets of kitsch synthetic wood-clad crass chipboard boxes containing relics from the artist's white, middle-class adolescence. There is no cultural or class suicide here, only honest introspection — an examination of the very fabric of his moral, ideological and cultural composition.

A brand new pair of Doc Martin boots rest claustrophobically beneath a limited edition Powerhaus T-shirt; a collection of SA stamps; Hardy Boys books; an REM compact disc — what more could you say about the secret life, the fears, hopes and dreams of a young white SA man?

Like mantelpieces or carpenter's trays pregnant with family memorabilia, the works reveal that deep rooted human need to collect and display. There are no inherent values in the objects themselves: sentimental and profound values are imposed by the collector's own securities.

Formally, the works critique the SA Calvinistic preoccupation with labour, narrative, symbolism and transcendence. Their inoffensive and polite appearance mask a penetrating and incisive social critique comparable in contemporary terms with Hogarth.

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