

SEANKELLY

Jasper, Adam. "Callum Innes," *Time Out Sydney*, January 2008.



Callum Innes



Looking at minimalist art can sometimes be as entertaining as watching paint dry. But for Callum Innes, the process is apparently so much fun that seeing it dry once isn't enough. He satisfies his need by dissolving and reapplying multiple layers of lampblack and luminous colour on simple white backgrounds. The effect is like someone smashing a bottle of pinot noir across the stern face of a Richard Serra sculpture. Who would've known it would result in something so meditative?

Innes was nominated for the Turner prize in 1995. It was the year Damien Hirst won, but their work couldn't be more different: thoughtful and composed, Innes is a painter's painter rather than a crowd pleaser. His work is abstract, but it's about time rather than space. He prepares his images in reverse steps, adding to and subtracting from an image until it is perfected and exhausted. The Exposed Paintings from the past 15 years are made by first mapping out a field of black, and then dissolving it in a corrosive layer of turpentine. Then an acidulous monochrome colour is applied and in turn also washed away, the entire process being repeated until the colour glows as if from a light within.

The sense you get is of a surface that has been naturally eroded, rather than added to, as if the paintings are giant three dimensional structures that have oxidized and decomposed. The aura of industrial corruption is increased by the poisonous names of the pigments favoured: cadmium orange, cobalt green, dioxazine violet.

Also included in the show are germinal works such as monologue seven, with its suggestions of monumental landscapes, and the Untitled 2002, a galaxy of black points applied to a canvas primed with shellac. The points have been repeatedly removed and reapplied in a process that was continued until the shellac dried, fixing them in their final locations, and leaving a constellation of ghost images that brings to mind a glass negative of the Milky Way.