

I scrolled down the images of the fitters' on the web sent to me by a friend. There were some of the façade, a few of the interior with musicians performing but none that actually caught the essence of the building itself. It disheartens me that soon this building and all the history associated with it will be lost—forever.

The fitters' was built to accommodate the electrical machinery that was required for the construction of the adjacent powerhouse. It was where the groundwork was done that led to the building of the nation's capital as we know it today.

It would be extraordinary to document this building; to allow oneself to be immersed in the light that bathes the interiors in the morning; to spend the day as the sun moves from one angle to another. I have been enamoured by the unpretentious charm of the fitters' for the last couple of years...in fact ever since I worked at the Canberra Glassworks for a residency in June-July 2010.

Every lunchtime of the three weeks that I spent at the Glassworks I would walk along to the Fitters' and try and peep into the building. At one stage I was even tempted to enter the building unnoticed when I saw that its large doors were open and unattended...only a certain sense of propriety (no thanks to my parents for instilling the same in me!) restrained me from doing so and I continued my ambulations along the circumference of the building.

I believe here I should stop to introduce my self. I am a local artist who chiefly works with the camera. Early in my career I realized that my passion lay in unearthing through my art the congruence that exists between the past and the present. This interest fed my Honours thesis at the Canberra School of Art, ANU in 2008. I based my research on the idea of conflation of time, on the theory that the past, present and future exist in tandem. At the end of the year I came up with the series of

images “being on the edge of abstraction 1-7”. Please see image 2 as a sample.

For that series I worked in a 1930s house in Kingston that I was living in at the time. The feeling of working in a place that has a history, real and imagined, is indescribable. While working toward this project that I had set myself I traveled from one plane of time to another, all in the space of my mind. I imagined a history for the house and its inhabitants that drew from its actual history, which was charming nonetheless.

I next approached the Glassworks with a project that had been germinating in my mind since a talk I had with Ann Jakle at my Honors show. The history of the Powerhouse building was of course primary in my mind as was the now converted interior and its present use as the Glassworks.

I quote from the essay that Clare Belfrage wrote for the catalogue for the works made during the residency:

During her residency Payal inhabited musty tunnels, odd corners, voluminous stair wells, working with light where it leaked or flooded into space. Through the final works created from her time at the Canberra Glassworks we are shown something of mystery and melancholy, exploring the power and space that is taken up by absence.

We are also shown the joy of light and colour captured by the steel framed gridded windows, a sense of order contrasting with the gentle life of each panel of glass refracting the light differently through varying texture, marks and dirt.

This is the joy of being an artist, the ability to travel to lands that are inaccessible when one is engulfed by the restraints that the dreariness of life imposes on us.

Please see images 3, 4 and 5.

The fitters' began as a building that housed electrical machinery, in that sense it is not hard to imagine it as a site for some of Megalo's print making machinery. But to change the very fabric of the building by dividing it in two or more parts would be to wreck the artistic possibilities that the vast interiors of the space offer.

While surfing on the net I came across an image of an exhibition of prints that Megalo had organised inside the Fitters' workshop in 2010. I implore you to take a look at image 1, which is an example of a lovely light filled space that is perfect for showing art of all kinds.

What I find hard to fathom is the loss of this magnificent space to not just individual artists like me who would want to document and perform in its interior but also the many local musicians who have performed in the venue in the past to much acclaim and success.

Why can't the Fitters' be claimed by all artforms and not just printmaking? Why can't it be accessible as a place that can house artists from various media, musicians and dancers who may want to spend some time in its interiors to create bodies of work or even as a venue for a particular type of music?

Megalo could be housed in a purpose built structure adjacent to the Fitters'. This would support ArtsACT's Kingston Arts Precinct Strategy by ensuring that two major artforms, glass and printmaking are represented in the area and also by ensuring a space for the local arts and performing arts and music communities to access—namely the Fitters' workshop.

This will ensure, in my humble opinion, a more democratic environment where the arts of the city can thrive.

Payal Sehgal
Artist, Canberra

Image 1: Print Big, Exhibition of prints at Fitters' by Megalo Access, 2010, from Megalo's Facebook site:

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=148347518542920&set=a.148346561876349.32369.135707476473591&type=3&theater>



Image 2: *being on the edge of abstraction 3*, Payal Sehgal, 2008. 145 x 95 cms



Image 3: *Penso a te 1-4*, Payal Sehgal, 2010. 29 x 43 cms each (Canberra Glassworks).

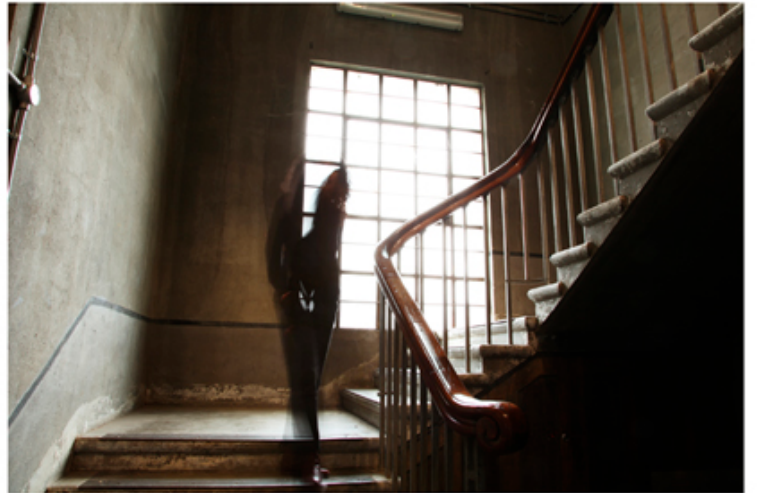
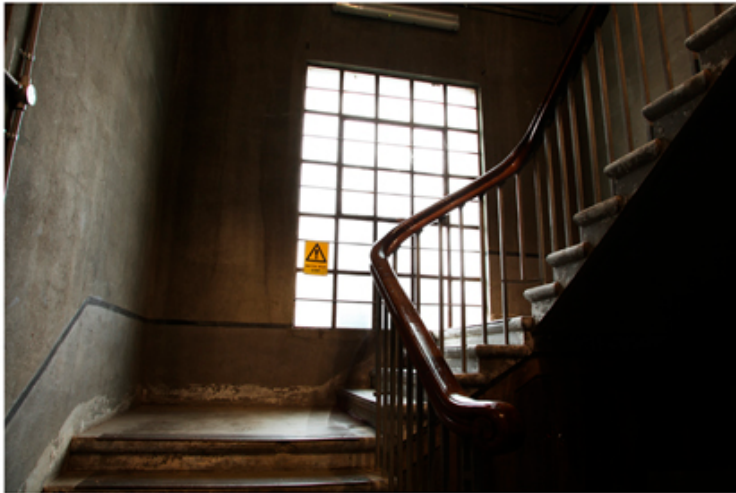


Image 4: *Senza Titolo # 1*, Payal Sehgal, 2010, 90 x 61 cms (Canberra Glassworks)



Image 5: *La Luce* # 4, Payal Sehgal, 2010, 45 x 30 cms (Canberra Glassworks)

