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# Scarred rural images need a response of purpose



By Sasha Grishin

Amanda Penrose Hart: Paintings.  
Chapman Gallery, 31 Captain Cook  
Cres, Manuka. Wednesday-Sunday,  
11am-6pm. Closes February 27.

**B**RISBANE-TRAINED and Sydney-based painter Amanda Penrose Hart is having her third solo exhibition at the Chapman Gallery.

Her imagery in this show is that of the rural landscape, not that of the virginal bush, but a landscape which has been scarred by the signs of human occupation.

Telegraph poles, barbed-wire fences, roads and road signs, railway lines, grapevines and bee boxes all populate her canvases.

With the exception of some unfortunate-looking cows in *Shadows on a cold day*, her paintings show only traces of occupation, but never the occupiers themselves. This leaves a slightly eerie sensation as your gaze moves through the landscape.

Hart's manner of painting is broadly naturalistic, in the sense that she presents in her work a recognisable figurative content.

Yet in her technique of painting she employs several deliberately abstracting strategies. Much of the background has been thickly worked with a palette knife with broad expanses of colour scraped across the canvas, while the specific features have been picked out and built up in very thick impasto, in what could be termed low relief.

This method of work is particularly apparent in her large painting *Truck driver's lunch hour*.

When Keith Looby employs this very thick oil-impasto painting technique, he tends to set up a certain dialogue between the various parts of the canvas, but for Hart it is more of a convention employed to heighten the sense of tactile realism in her work.

It is certainly effective, but somewhat lacking in purpose.

Hart is a young artist in her early 40s who has made considerable strides since her earlier exhibitions.

Here she has presented a pretty show which demonstrates a mastery of means. What her art perhaps still lacks is a purpose and orientation.