

ART LANDSCAPE

Life, captured

Grand architectural structures are the stars of a new exhibition by Paul Davies, writes **Lisa Carapiet-Fanous**.

Paul Davies is not interested in painting people. Instead, architecture and landscapes are the stars of his work, but that doesn't mean his paintings lack life.

Structural design, psychedelic colours and stencilling are utilised to draw the viewer in. Davies says this offers an escape from the monotony of suburban life.

"The main reason to do the architecture and leave it devoid of any sort of human form is to invite, hopefully, the viewer to generate their own response," Davies explains, fresh off a flight from Hong Kong where he exhibited at über-cool The Cat Street Gallery.

"I think if there was a figure anywhere in that subject then you would quite often think about them. The thing that sparked me being interested in architecture to begin with was a painting by [Australian artist] Jeffrey Smart that my parents had. I used to make copies of it. I loved his work right through school ... When it didn't have a person in it, you would look at the space and imagine yourself there."

In his current exhibition at the Olsen Irwin Gallery in Sydney's Woollahra, he explores different forms of art and structure following a residency in Paris at the Cité Internationale des Arts earlier this

year. "Architecture is frozen fashion, in a way. Once it's made it is set. Whereas the landscape is constantly changing," he says.

During his Paris residency, Davies created 12 paintings, 37 sketches and a two-metre tall sculpture based on one of his stencils.

"The way I paint is I take photographs from different locations, then I take them back to the studio and print them out in A4 size. Then I'll print it out poster size in paper, then hand cut it with a scalpel blade to make a stencil. A detail of that has been translated into a computer CAD [computer-aided design] file which has then been laser cut into steel," Davies says.

Using Parisian architecture is new for the artist, who previously focused on 1950s-style homes and abandoned pools to illustrate urban life in an isolating, eerie fashion. This time, his work features grand structures like Villa Savoye and the Notre Dame.

"The 1950s houses are so bold and bright but ... in Paris, when you're exposed [to their architecture] every single day and you're making it your routine to go out and absorb and sketch it,

"I think it is a privilege. The [Parisian] villas I was looking at in the older style [of



Paul Davies created *Columns* acrylic on linen (above) and *Parc Notre Dame* (detail, below) while resident in Paris.

architecture served the same purpose ... It didn't have to be a 1950s style of architecture to say the same story."

His daily routine in Paris provided inspiration. "I've never exhibited the sketches before and that was a real turning point for me.

"The studio was a 10-minute walk from Notre Dame so every morning I would get up, get a coffee and walk over to Notre Dame and sketch, or sketch in the street. It was such a fantastic experience.

"It was hard to come home," Davies laughs. **L&L**



Paul Davies:
Flattening Sublime
Where
Olsen Irwin Gallery,
Woollahra, Sydney
When
Until June 23

