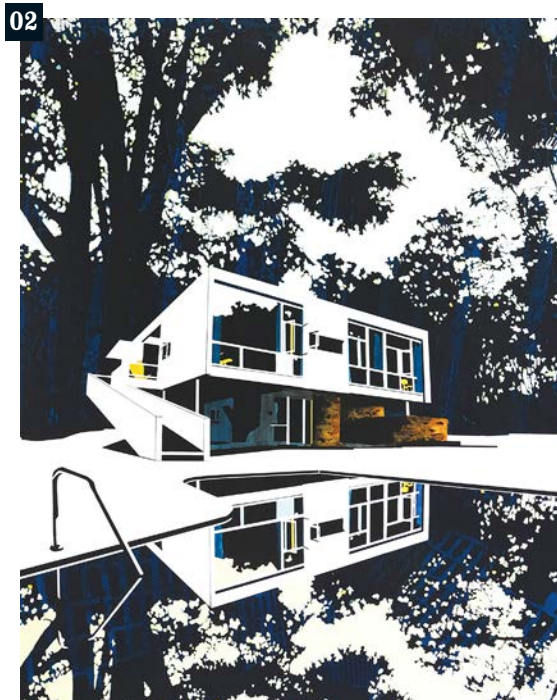


Built in TRANSLATION

• PAUL DAVIES •



01 Paul Davies, *Palms Home Pool*, 2013. A reflection of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye (1929–30) is seen in an imagined foreground swimming pool.

02 Paul Davies, *Built Home + Pool*, 2013. This depicts Australia's renowned Rose Seidler House (1948–50) as a mirror image of reality.

Paul Davies's stencil artworks of 'displaced' iconic houses casts modernism's ambiguous relationship to site and setting into sharp relief.

Words by Colin Martin

Suburban domestic architecture fascinates Australian artists. Jenny Watson documented street views of five Melbourne houses in which she had lived, titling them by suburb, for example *Mont Albert* (1975–77). Howard Arkley titled his depictions of suburban housing ironically, including *A Splendid Superior Home* (1989). In his first solo exhibition in London, held at the Fine Art Society Contemporary gallery, Paul Davies ups the architectural ante, depicting exteriors of archetypal modernist houses.

Displaced Villa IV depicts Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye (1929–30), recognizable by its ribbon windows and white-painted, thin rectangular profile supported on slender

columns. Davies shows this quintessential "machine for living" translated from its airy, real-life clearing to a fictional site hemmed-in by forest trees. He adds an imagined foreground swimming pool, which reflects the house and trees. *Palms Home Pool* depicts a puzzling mirror image of the Villa Savoye facade, incongruously surrounded by palm trees. Then the penny drops. Davies's starting point is a carefully cut stencil of the facade, which he either flips laterally to paint a mirror-image facade or inverts to paint its pool reflection. His painted surfaces are textured not flat, as he prefers the greater challenge of working with acrylic paints, which dry more quickly than oils.

Australia's renowned Rose Seidler House (1948–50), on Sydney's upper North Shore, appears in *Displaced House*, partially reflected in Davies's imagined swimming pool. Its facade reappears in *Built Home + Pool* as a mirror image of reality and as a pool reflection. All of Davies's paintings are depopulated, with only rare indications of human habitation, such as the three

bright yellow chairs in this predominantly monochrome canvas.

The artist cites British sculptor Rachel Whiteread's casts of negative spaces as an influence. In 1993 *House*, Whiteread's concrete cast of the interior of a Victorian terraced house, won her the Turner Prize. As well as framing some of his stencils after using them to paint foliage, as works in their own right, Davies also uses them as templates for metal casts. *Digital vs. Analogue*, his freestanding steel sculpture with rusted patina, sited below a circular staircase at the gallery, dramatically demarcates interior and exterior spaces.

Davies's interest in modernist architecture prompted his recent move from Sydney to Los Angeles, where he plans to paint noted modernist houses. In *Displaced Home* he nudges a nondescript Palm Springs house into noir by translating it into a Germanic forest. In time, his alternative view of Californian modernism could rival Julius Shulman's celebrated photographs. pauldavies.com.au
faslondon.com