

Little to praise in inaccurate vision

AUSTRALIAN VISIONS', the survey of recent Australian art selected by Diane Waldman and exhibited at the Guggenheim in 1984, is on view at two locations in Melbourne. Monash University Gallery (Menzies Building; ends 5 July) is showing the works of Jan Murray, Mandy Martin, Susan Norrie and Bill Henson, and the Australian centre for Contemporary Art (Dallas Brooks Drive, The Domain; ends 7 July) those of Peter Booth, Dale Frank, John Nixon and Vivienne Shark LeWitt.

As Waldman's selection does not provide an accurate reflection of the growing points of Australian art, it is pointless to generalise about the work it contains. Nor should the show be seen as the basis for confident generalisations about our identity.

There is little in this survey which I can praise. The garish colors and endlessly slurred forms of Dale Frank's paintings strike me as ugly, and it escapes me how anyone can find his work interesting.

Equally trivial, I feel, is the work of John Nixon. The 20 or so small panels and relief-constructions which make up his 'Self-Portrait (Non-Objective Composition)' include such items as a monochromatic field framed with bottle tops (Ah! but they are CUB bottle-tops!) and two planks of wood nailed together in the form of a cross. These gestures strike me as utterly arid.

Peter Booth, the one major artist in the exhibition, is badly served by this selection. 'Painting 1982', one of his best recent works, was shown at the Guggenheim but is not to be seen here.

Any show which purports to present Booth's art should include 30 or 40 of his drawings as a matter of course.

EXCEPT for Booth and (just possibly) Susan Norrie, Peter Ellis and Allan Mitelman strike me as more worthwhile artists than those included in 'Australian Visions'. Ellis's show at Powell Street (20 Powell Street, South Yarra; ends 4 July) should not be missed.

ART

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