



Visual arts

Andrew Harper

Take us back to the future

DAVO IS SHAZAM
Stan Barnes
ARTMINR
Johnny Scholes
Moonah Arts Centre
Albert Rd Moonah
Until February 18

It's probably a coincidence, but these shows at MAC sit well together. Both are explorations of near-mundane ubiquitous contemporary technology in that they use handheld devices – mobile phones.

It's great to see new work from Stan Barnes – his prior outing, which was also his debut as an artist, was *Good Video* – a highly memorable show that was clever and effective. Barnes has done well here, surprisingly coming up with a work that's as accessible as *Good Video* was while being totally different.

Barnes' latest work features a lot of screenshots – three years' worth of a daily activity, where Barnes sent his good mate Davo a screenshot of his mobile device in reply to a notification that started after an evening at the pub. It's a bit of a gag at least in the initial premise, but the interesting aspect is that Barnes committed to it, and took a daily screenshot and shared it with his mate. This took place all through the recent pandemic, and now we have over a thousand screenshots to peruse as part of this show, with a reminder that the activity continues. This lifts the work into the realms of endurance art, and it's the sheer volume of images and data generated that becomes something more. Barnes is talking about connections and relationships, but he's also sculpting and measuring time in a meaningful way.

Johnny Scholes is a fascinating artist and mainstay of the local arts community; he's part of the *Vibrance* project that has worked hard to transform the status of street art and graffiti in Hobart and beyond, and he's a forward thinker who uses new technology to create art. Scholes is interesting, basically, and deserves recognition.

This show, *ArtMinr*, is a bit of an accident. The show was supposed to be something else, called *Interpreted*, that was meant to be an exploration of new and old technologies. Something went astray with



the project though and the work is yet to emerge. Scholes, in the true spirit of DIY and lateral thinking that is a hallmark of street art – which is something he's well versed in – came up with a new concept and realised it. *ArtMinr* is a science fiction informed interactive work that casts the viewer as a working artist in 2031. There's a slight but discernible dystopian undertone here that gives the work some friction by suggesting a kind of creative apocalypse, turning artists into labouring grunt workers. Scholes is onto something with this idea,



ArtMinr, top and left, by Jonny Scholes, and a still from the Davo is Shazam work by Stan Barnes.

and it's a clever critique of emergent technology and a possible warning.

Both these shows are really strong, are easily accessible – you get them instantly – but also manage to create a lingering aftertaste. They sit incredibly well in tandem, providing moments where two views of the same technology are revealed: both use mobile devices as ways to literally work and make art happen.

The future is right now, and as AI makes us ask about art, it's timely to see art that is engaging with this broad and complex issue.



Three cheers for tears and beers! By Lily Langley

MOTORMOUTH COMICS
Lily Langley
Good Grief Studios
Until February 12
Price range: \$350-\$600

This raw, hilarious show has so much energy it feels almost dangerous. Lily Langley draws on the energy of classic underground art, traditionally found in the unruly medium of comics, and bangs out some work that's so alive it's almost bleeding – and there is blood in some of these images. There's violence, drunkenness, drug use, swearing and nudity, so this is not one for the faint hearted, but it's also genuinely funny, brazenly queer, and has a really well-defined style.

Langley really knows what she wants to see, and assembles a cast of diverse characters that seem totally realised. There's a narrative to be gleaned from studying the whole exhibition, but each individual image has so much crammed into the frame it's almost too much to handle!

Comics are where I first found my way to appreciating art, and any work that understands that format is always going to catch my attention, and Langley has done exceptionally well here: she's in command of a deceptively complex medium and has shared a vision of real people that aren't seen enough. It's a delightful slap from a steel hand in a velvet glove and is impossible to be ambivalent about. Not everyone is going to like this material, but *Motormouth Comics* simply does not care and is going to do exactly what it wants to, and so it should.