

Fragile beauty unfolds

Still life — new life, by Crispin Akerman, at Beaver Galleries, Deakin, until Monday.

JUDGING by the number of sold stickers only a few days after the opening, Crispin Akerman has obviously, yet again, captured an enthusiastic Canberra audience for his still-life paintings. His repertoire of props, fruit or flowers with a simple bowls or pot, continues.

What is new in these works is the increased use of a white drapery, previously confined to the table on which his objects are set.

In a number of paintings he depicts the white lily, a potential symbol of purity in Christian iconography, which may or may not be significant.

In *Bath and lilies*, the fragile beauty of the flowers is enhanced in contrast with the coarser brown texture of an old hip bath which serves as a container.

In Western art the still life came into its own as a genre in the late 17th century, notably in the Netherlands — including the so-called vanitas painting — and in Spain, and has been described as having its roots in classical traditions of illusionistic realism.

It is from these early beginnings that Akerman has drawn.

He has focused on the basic constituents



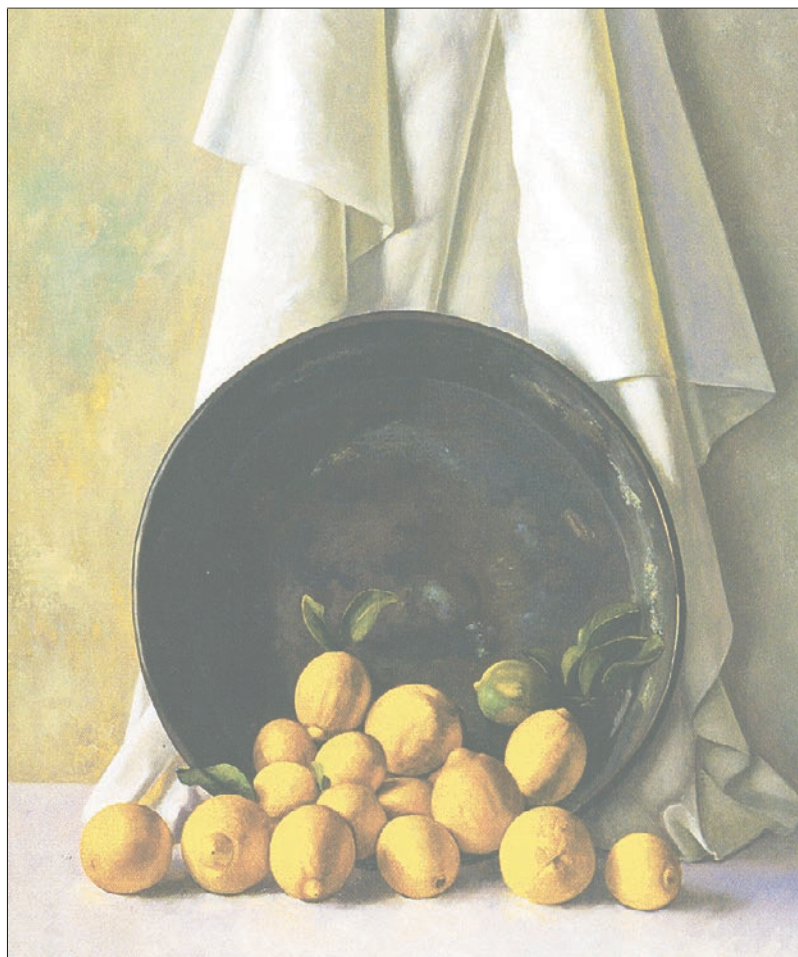
SONIA BARRON

Review

of flowers or fruit with objects on a table which define a still life. If there are any allusions to the vanity of earthly pleasures which preoccupied many early painters, they are overwhelmingly subsumed by the obvious pleasure he takes in painting simple and ordinary things.

His choice of the lily and, possibly, in *Red dress and irises*, in which a dress is flung across a chair to convey a sense of absence, is as close as he comes to vanitas painting.

What appears more characteristic of Akerman's intention can be appreciated in the lovely *Turkish mixing bowl and lemons*. The deceptive simplicity of his compositions of accessible objects with the subtle textural contrast, between the folds of the commonplace drapery, the bowl and the gloss of the lemons, proves a respite from the frenetic consumerism and stress which characterises contemporary life.



LEMON FRESH: Crispin Akerman's *Turkish mixing bowl and lemons* (oil on linen) is a respite from the frenetic consumerism and stress which characterises contemporary life.