

# exhibition review: hubert duprat

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Volos, 2013

Polished axe, fresh clay, Hubert Duprat. Photo: MONA

Showing at Hobart's [Museum of Old and New Art](#) (Mona), this is the first solo exhibition in Australia by French artist, [Hubert Duprat](#). Having been enamoured with Duprat's [caddis fly project](#) for years when I stumbled upon it somewhere in the depths of the internet, I was very excited to see this show. I knew none of his other work and was picturing some wealth of [Island of Dr Moreau](#) inspired madness.

Why you may ask? Well, the caddis fly project involves coaxing caddis fly larvae to instinctively build their protective shells with precious materials such as gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, opals, pearls, rubies and diamonds which were placed in Duprat's tank system for just such purposes. The results are divine miniature casings, and watching the caddis fly in action, patiently and fervently constructing their firmament under water was a really great experience.

This I'm afraid, is where the wonder ended for me. The rest of the show fell down against the purity of the living idea. Although we are told that Duprat investigates the natural world and its processes in complex inclusions in his work, I failed to see any other evidence of this. As far as I could tell, it was straight up sculpture in every sense of the word. Yes, Duprat uses natural materials such as clay, fallen tree branches or stone, but I could not find evidence of tampering with the nature of these natural elements beyond arrangement. Perhaps I was not looking hard enough and this was one of those times where wall plaques needed to provide more information. If this was the case then it is a shame, because if presented simply as sculptures, then the works were really very beautiful and delicate. Some of them were truly surprising in their combinations, such

as the big block of unfired clay with a stone flint jammed in to the top. It seemed to say something fundamental about human nature, about how hopeless it all is, but in such a non-confronting way that you could connect with the message and smile.

Hubert Duprat is showing at Mona until 21 April 2014. Tickets \$20/Adult, \$15/Concession.

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