Garageland Reviews

Catlin Art Prize 2014 at Londonewcastle Project Space
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From a foreboding waxy chamber to repetitious Alpine vistas, Joe Turnbull surveys the spectacle of this year's Catlin Art Prize and finds the prospects to be tremendously pleasing.

Neil Raitt, Fade (Triptych), 2014

Now in its eighth year, the Catlin Art Prize is a showcase event for seven recent graduate and postgraduate artists, selected and curated from the Catlin Guide 2014 by Justin Hammond. The standard of work is so ferociously high that it could induce vertigo on even a seasoned veteran of multi-artist shows. The curation allows the art to speak for itself, successfully compartmentalising and arranging a series of immersive environments, taking you on a weaving journey through each artist's own little world, and making excellent use of Londonewcastle's impressive gallery space.

The judging panel of Turner Prize winner Mark Wallinger, art critic and writer Coline Milliard, and gallery director and curator Will Jarvis opted to give the £5000 prize to Neil Raitt, for his repetitious alpine scenes. They were impressed by the 'effectiveness' of Raitt's work which 'needs no mediation' and applauded his 'quiet maturity'.

It's true, his almost geometrically precise paintings – which play tricks on the eyes like those optical illusion books from your childhood – are technically astute, belying his inexperience. His giant alpine air freshener, coated with fragranced paint in a nonchalant nod to the subject matter of his other paintings shows he has a sense of humour too. But for me they have little beyond their beguiling, mesmeric aesthetic, and it is the sort of work covering the sort of themes you've probably seen dozens of times before.