



Juan Ford's *The Distorter* (detail) (2015), at This Is No Fantasy.

JUAN FORD

Photorealism and hyper-realism are troubling genres. All too often we're left with empty gestures, pointing no further than back to the painting itself. Where the job of realism is to evoke the lived experience, hyper-realism might be read as painting's equivalent of the heavy metal guitar solo: all show and little substance. Luckily, Juan Ford is one artist whose hyper-realistic renderings offer something different. There's a flattened, softened, almost synthetic quality to the Melbourne artist's surfaces and colour palette that eschews them from the directly photographic and the self-referential. Instead, his paintings become odd, unsettling and, in some cases, otherworldly – their washed-out sky spectrums, flat light and motley cast of characters (wrapped in bright masking tape, extension leads and gum leaves, and brandishing flags and toy guns) pointing us in the direction of some kind of parallel dimension. Other works capture native foliage entangled with detritus, like bike tubes and tape. They, like the portraits, almost operate as still-lives. Ford uses his meticulous work with the brush to keep us wondering, guessing and thinking farther afield.

Until December 20; This Is No Fantasy, 108–110 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, 9417 7172,
thisisnofantasy.com