

Lensman marries old with the new

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IF YOU go to one of artist John Hart's shows looking for a replica of the work of his late father, Pro Hart, you're in for a big surprise.

John's work is chalk to his father's cheese. For a start, John Hart, the eldest son of the famed Australian painter, works in a finely honed photo-realism manner that contrasts with his father's colourful, expressionistic style.

"Everything I do is very much a collision of classical painting, photography and print making, it's all about putting the whole lot together," Hart says.

The main idea behind his coming exhibition, *Through a Glass Darkly*, is how the rise of digital imaging has subverted the notion of photographs as being realistic representations of everyday life. The exhibition includes a series of paintings of white drapes dramatically set against a black background.

"A photograph is no more real than a painting any more because digital imaging has changed the whole thing, so that's what motivates me," he says.

Contrary to theorists who argue that the rise of digital art is prompting the demise of traditional, painterly ex-

pression, Hart believes a marriage between the old and the new will result in a rebirth.

"I use a lot of old classical techniques because I love (Italian painter) Caravaggio and I love the old way of painting, so I take bits of material or I crunch up bits of paper and make these wonderful, iconic things to look at. But I want people to think about what they're seeing."

Hart, who trained at the Adelaide Central School of Art, draws satisfaction from using Baroque techniques, such as dramatic lighting and

“Everything I do is very much a collision

contrasts between darkness and light.

"I've got camera lights (set up in his Broken Hill studio) so the initial idea is to take something simple (like a sheet) and cross-light it," he says of his technique.

"I photograph that and take the photograph (to the computer) and digitally manipulate it and come up with the working image. Then I paint from the working image."

◻ *Through a Glass Darkly: Recent Paintings by John Hart, August 8-September 13, Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery, Broken Hill.*



BOLD MOVE: John Hart bravely pushes the envelope on design.