ART · ARCHITECTURE · DESIGN · FASHION

ARTAND

AUSTRALIA · ISSUE N°51.4 · 2014

THE HANDMADE · INGE KING · DARREN SYLVESTER · KARLA DICKENS
JAPANESE OUTSIDER ARTISTS · POETRY PROJECT

BULGARI & THE
ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
CONGRATULATE

DANIEL BOYD

THE RECIPIENT OF THE

BVLGARI ART AWARD 2014

The Bulgari Art Award is an initiative by Bulgari and the Art Gallery of New South Wales to foster contemporary art and is one of the most valuable awards of its kind in Australia.

The annual award of $80,000 consists of the acquisition of a painting for the Gallery and a residency in Italy for the artist.

artgallery.nsw.gov.au
bulgari.com

ART GALLERY NSW

BVLGARI

DANIEL BOYD

Daniel Boyd has built a strong reputation as a painter and is one of Australia's most outstanding contemporary artists.

Boyd's work reinterprets Aboriginal and Australian-European history, drawing attention to the subjective nature of what we are taught. He explores themes of inheritance, drawing inspiration from late 18th- and 19th-century paintings and reworking them in subtle and provocative ways.

Boyd's paternal great-great grandfather was brought to Queensland from Pentecost Island, part of what is now Vanuatu, to labour in the sugarcane fields. An archived photo of his ancestral home was the inspiration for this new work, *Untitled* 2014.

The monumental, three-metre high painting has been created for the Gallery's collection and is currently on display.

BVLGARI ART AWARD 2014

BULGARI & THE
ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
CONGRATULATE

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Image: Tehching Hsieh. *One Year Performance 1980-1981*. Waiting to Punch the Time Clock. Photograph by Cheng Wei Kuong © 1981 Tehching Hsieh. Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly, New York.

CALLUM MORTON

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Linda Marrinon *Victorian woman with earrings*, 2014

THE BEAUTY OF IMPERFECTION COMBINED WITH RAW GUTSINESS LEADS THE WAY IN THIS ISSUE OF *ARTAND AUSTRALIA*, WHICH CONSIDERS THE HANDMADE. AROUND THE WORLD ARTISTS ARE BOTH FUSING AND DISEMBODYING THE TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF ART AND CRAFT IN THEIR PRACTICE, AND SO THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE TWO DISCIPLINES CONTINUES TO DISSOLVE. THE VOCABULARY OF CRAFT IS EMERGING IN CONTEMPORARY ART AS A CONCRETE FORCE TO POWERFULLY COUNTERBALANCE THE RISE OF DIGITAL MEDIUMS.

FROM THE HANDMADE TO THE FINELY CRAFTED, THIS ISSUE ALSO FEATURES TWO *ARTAND AUSTRALIA* PROJECTS. THE FIRST – ARTIST DARREN SYLVESTER'S PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY ON THE MICHAEL BUXTON COLLECTION – IS PART OF AN ONGOING SERIES OF COLLECTOR PROFILES BY CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS. THE SECOND, 'OUR STORY BEGINS', PRESENTED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE RED ROOM COMPANY AND PAIRING ARTISTS AND POETS TO CREATE NEW WORK IN DIALOGUE, SEES THIS ISSUE'S PAGES POPULATED WITH THE WORDS AND WORKS OF PRUDENCE FLINT & ELIZABETH CAMPBELL, AND JENNY WATSON & KEN BOLTON.

ELEONORA TRIGUBOFF

Masthead

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Newsagent distribution
Integrated Publication Solutions (Australia and New Zealand)

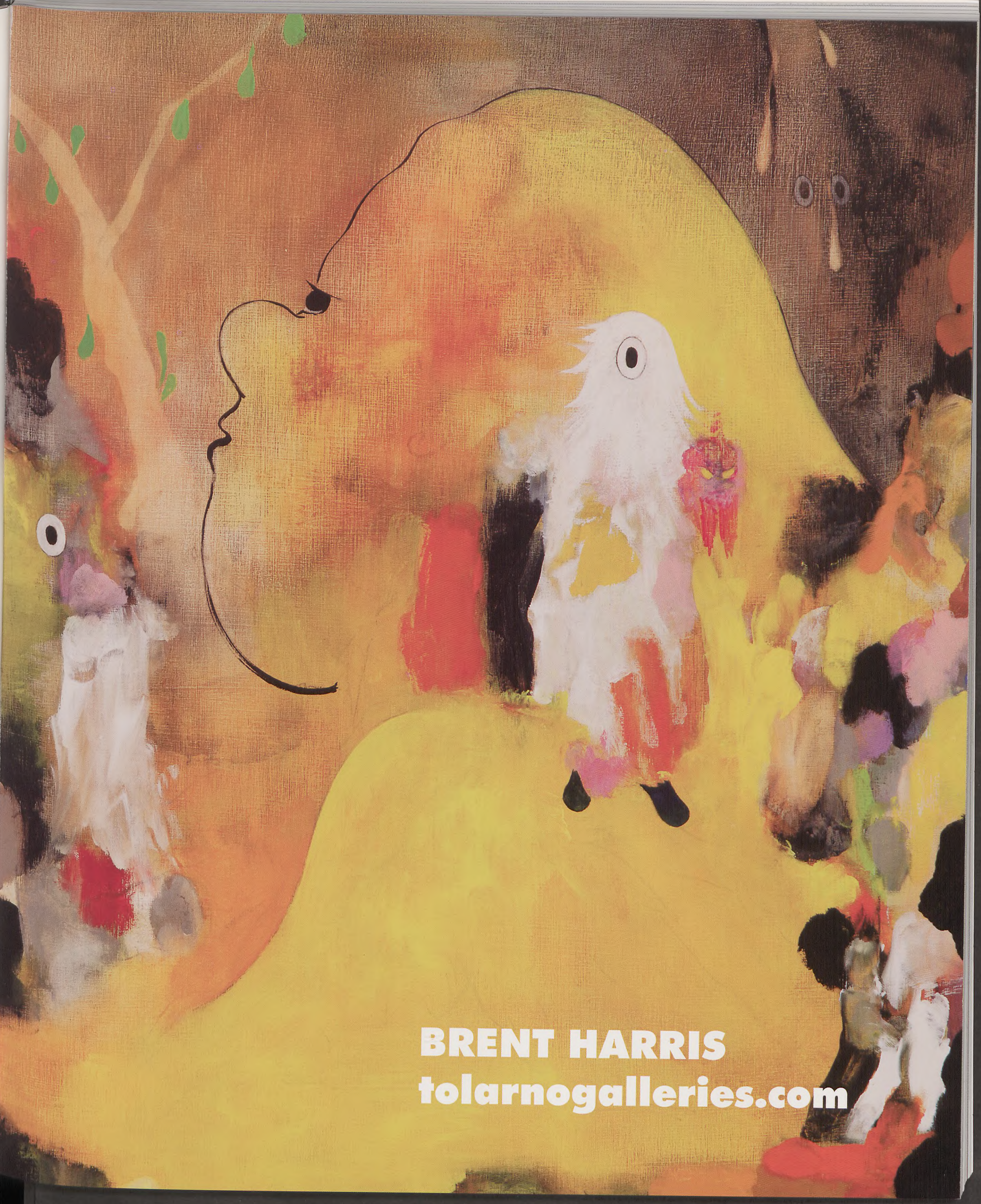
International distribution
Pansing IMM (Asia, Europe, United States and Canada)

The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of Art & Australia Pty Ltd.

Printed by Dominie Press Pte Ltd, Singapore

ARTAND Australia 51.4
May / June / July 2014
Art Quarterly ISSN 0004-301 X

Published by Art & Australia Pty Ltd
11 Cecil Street, Paddington
NSW 2021 Australia
Tel 612 9331 4455
Fax 612 9331 4577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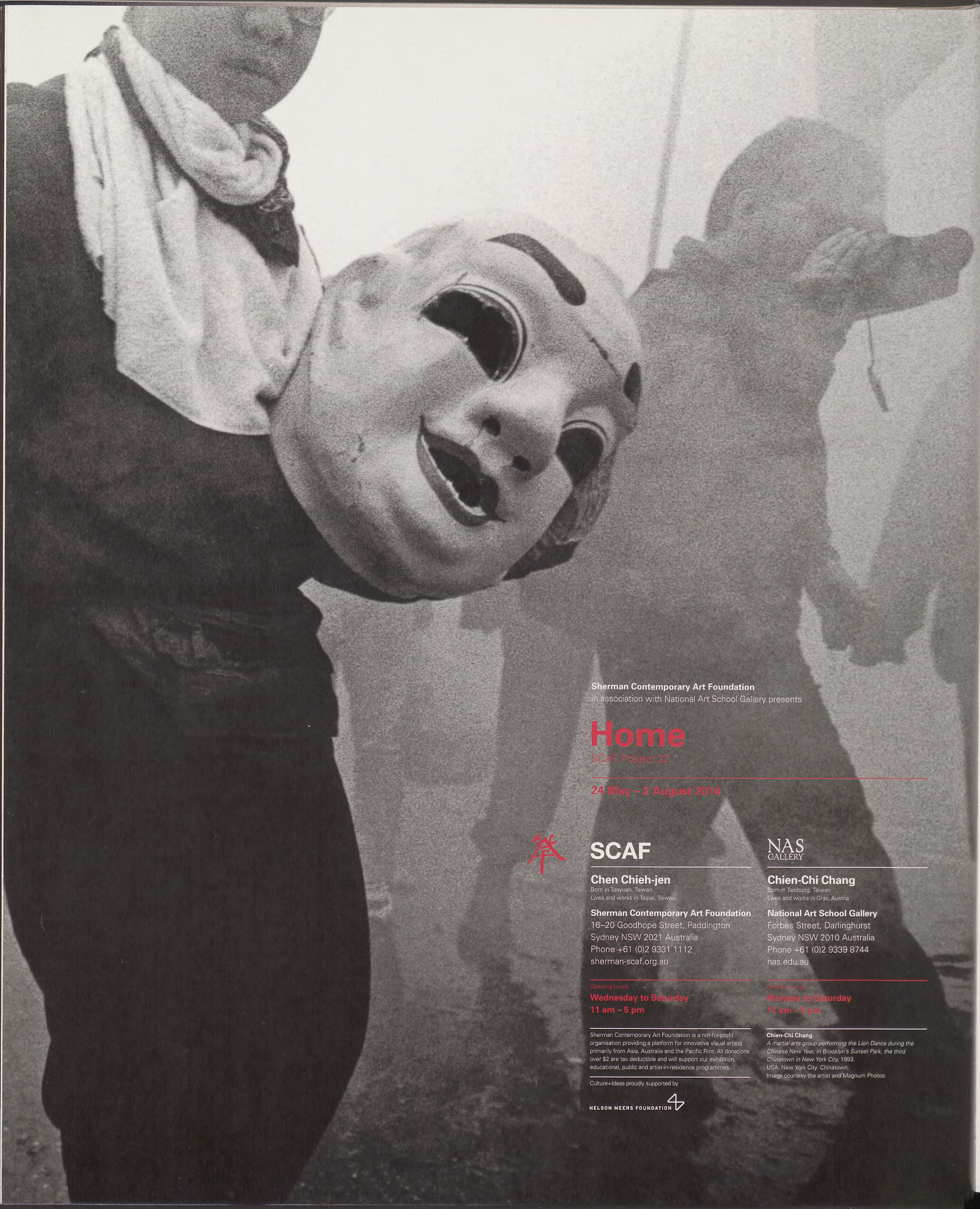

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Chien-Chi Chang
A martial arts group performing the Lion Dance during the Chinese New Year, in Brooklyn's Sunset Park, the third Chinatown in New York City, 1993.
USA. New York City. Chinatown.
Image courtesy the artist and Magnum Photos.

Contents
Issue N°51.4

COVER
Brendan Huntley, *Untitled*, 2010–11
Stoneware, terracotta, slip and glaze, 64 x 21 x 21 cm
Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Contributors

Glenn Barkley
is an independent curator, writer and gardener based in Sydney and Berry, New South Wales. He was senior curator at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008–14, and curator of the University of Wollongong Art collection, 1996–2007.

Ken Bolton
is a poet and critic. His 2009 book *Art Writing: Art in Adelaide in the 1990s and 2000s* was published by the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia. He works at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation bookshop in Adelaide.

Elizabeth Campbell
lives in Melbourne. Her two collections of poetry, *Letters to the Tremulous Hand* (2007) and *Error* (2011), were published by John Leonard Press. Elizabeth is a teacher and education consultant on poetry.

Johanna Featherstone
established The Red Room Company in 2003. She is an Honorary Associate of the University of Sydney's School of Letters, Arts and Media, and her chapbook *Felt* was released in 2010 by Vagabond Press.

Prudence Flint
was a finalist in the 2013 Archibald Prize. She has previously won the 2009 Portia Geach Memorial Award and the 2004 Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, and her work is held in public and private collections.

Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton
is a senior law woman and community leader of Amata, South Australia. She began making baskets in the late 1990s, and has only recently created sculptural weavings through Tjanpi Desert Weavers. Nyurpaya also paints at Tjala Arts.

Natalie King
is a curator, writer and editor. She is Senior Research Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, and co-curator, with Djon Mundine, of the 2014 TarraWarra Biennial.

Amita Kirpalani
is a writer and curator. She is currently Assistant Curator at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne.

Annika Kristensen
is a Sydney-based writer and arts administrator, currently working as Exhibition and Project Coordinator at the Biennale of Sydney.

Jeanine Leane
is a Wiradjuri author, poet and scholar. She holds a research fellowship at the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Australian National University, Canberra, and is the recipient of the 2010 David Unaipon Award.

Anne Loxley
is a curator and writer who works with contemporary artists both inside and outside gallery contexts, in communities and in public spaces. In 2011 she took up the position of Curator, C3West, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Nina Miall
is a Sydney-based curator and writer. Her most recent exhibition with Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh features at Carriageworks in 2014. Nina also runs Future Perfect, a commercial gallery in Singapore.

Lucienne Peiry
devoted her PhD thesis to the history of outsider art and the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland. She was appointed to Director of Research and International Relations of the collection in 2012, having been director for the past ten years.

Colin Rhodes
has written extensively on modern and contemporary art. He is the author of *Outsider Art: Spontaneous Alternatives* (2000) and Editor of *Elsewhere: The International Journal of Self-taught and Outsider Art*. He is Dean of Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney.

Martin Sharp
worked across art, publishing, music and film, and is widely recognised as Australia's foremost pop artist.

Danielle Smith
is a graduate student in art history at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. Her research focuses on the function of historical myth in Spanish painting.

Jasmin Stephens
is a Sydney-based independent curator. She is curating exhibitions with UTS Gallery and Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, as well as researching an exhibition exploring how ideas circulate between Australia and South-East Asia.

Graeme Sturgeon
was exhibitions director at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, art critic for *The Australian*, and the founding director of Artbank.

Darren Sylvester
is a multidisciplinary artist whose recent work *For you*, 2013 – a Yves Saint Laurent dance floor – featured in the 2013–14 National Gallery of Victoria exhibition 'Melbourne Now'.

Anna Waldmann
is an art consultant, visiting fellow at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, a board member of the Power Institute Foundation, and a former director of visual arts at the Australia Council.

Jenny Watson
has exhibited extensively since 1973, representing Australia at the 1993 Venice Biennale. Recent exhibitions include 'Jenny Watson: Here, There and Everywhere', at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, and 'Other Lives' at Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo, both in 2012.

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Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger, *Souls*, 2011, collage, 27 x 21 cm. Courtesy the artists. Photograph: Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger

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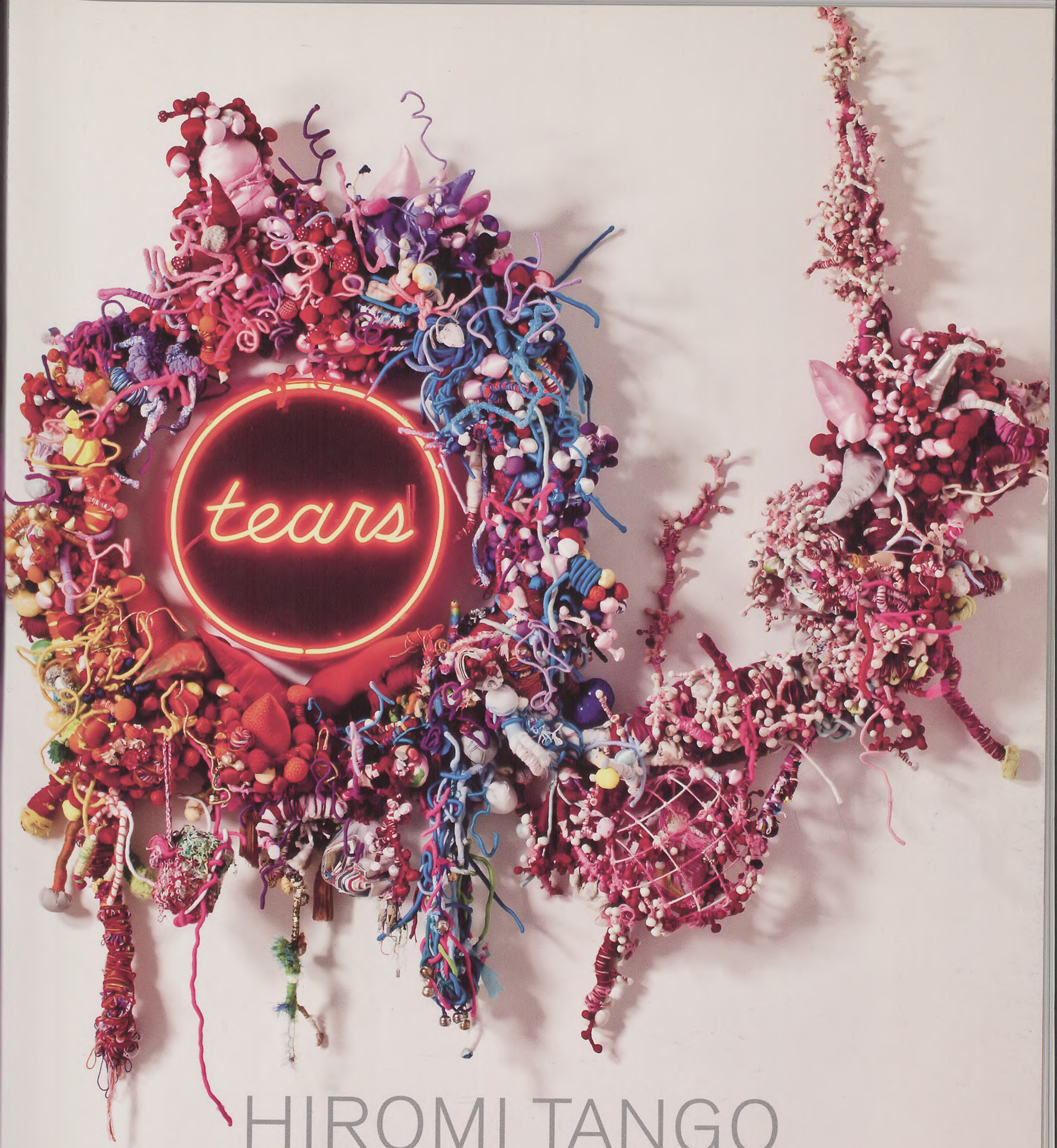
Untitled (2013), synthetic polymer on rice paper, DMX lights, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist



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Vivienne Binns & Hossein Valamanesh

19 July - 7 September

Image Credit:

Vivienne Binns, *Untitled (made in London) 1*, 2000,
acrylic on canvas 22.5 x 65 cm.

Hossein Valamanesh, *Lotus Vault*, 2011,
Lotus leaves on paper on plywood 210 x 527 cm.
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Courtesy the Artist and Greenaway Art Gallery in Adelaide.

Curator: Toni Bailey

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Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is the cultural facility of Liverpool City Council.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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David McCracken (NZ), diminish and ascend, *Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi* 2013. Photo: William Patino.

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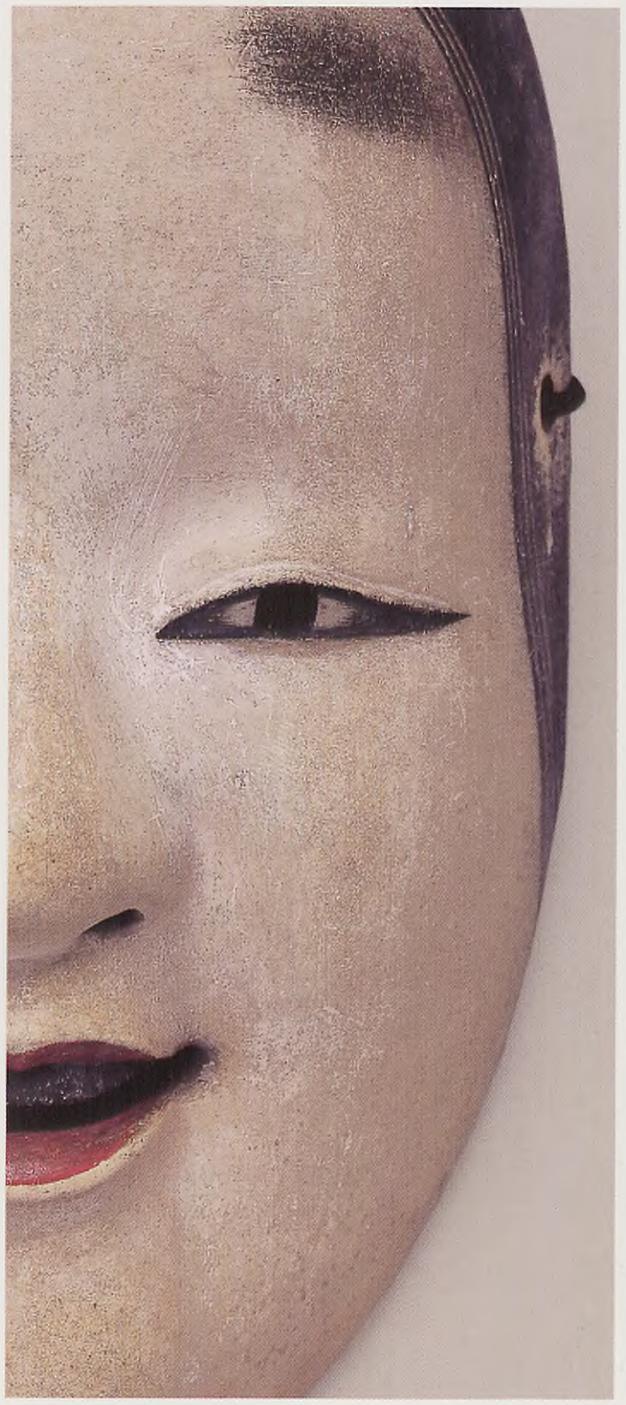
Winter at the Gallery



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ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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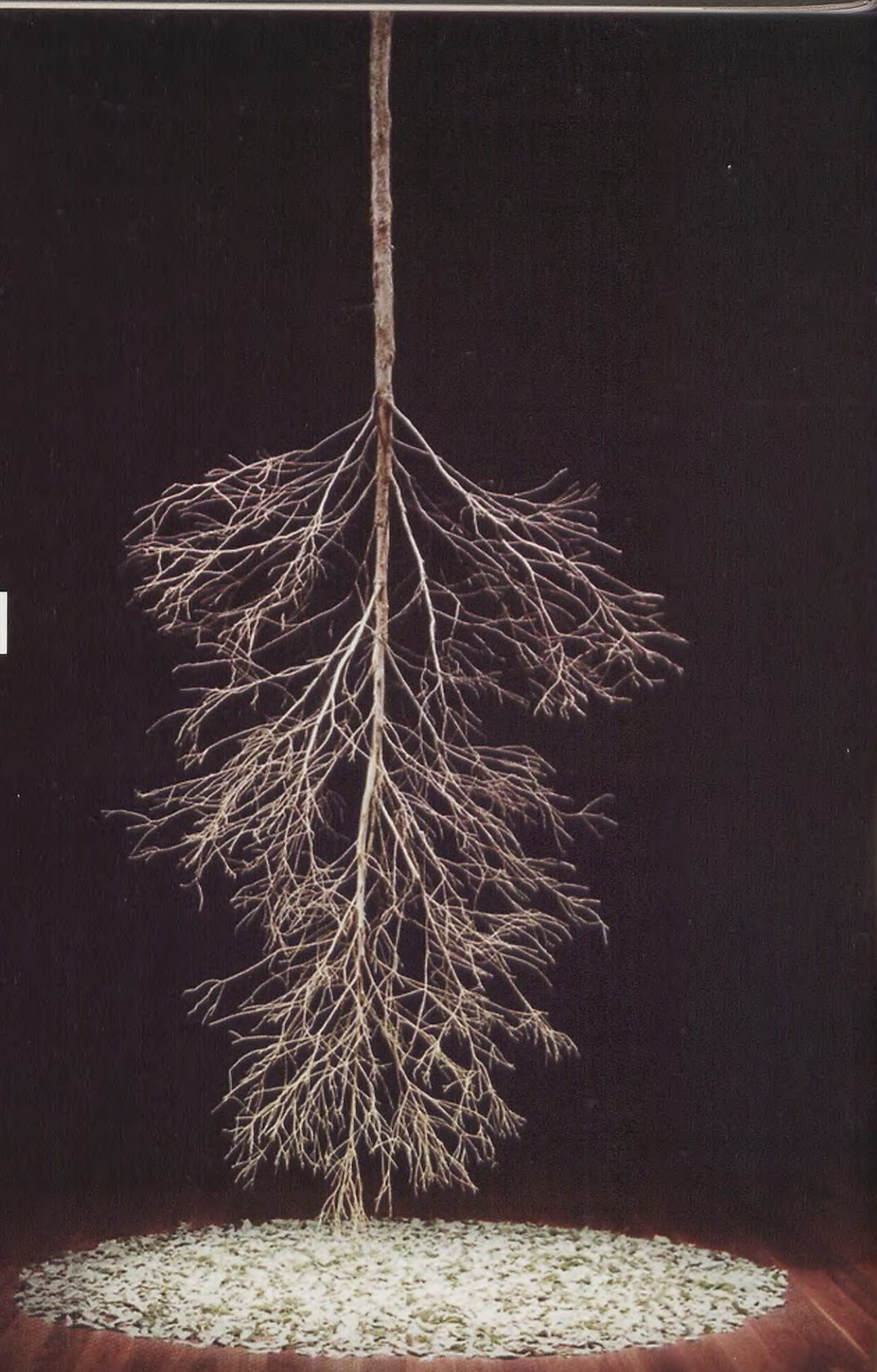
left to right: Deborah Kelly *The Magdalenes (Praise)* 2012 (detail), archival print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper with collage, 206.5 x 112 cm. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney. Photograph: Alex Wisser; Vincent Fantauzzo *Love face* (detail) © The artist; Ko-omote mask (detail), 17th c, pigment on wood, National Noh Theatre, Japan

ART GALLERY NSW

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH
WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
SIMONE EISLER



LITERARY NOTIONS 2014
LITERATURE INSPIRED INSTALLATION ART
THE VAULT BUNDABERG REGIONAL ART GALLERY

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH
AFTER RAIN
Exhibition 9 July to 17 August
Artist talk 9 July
In conversation with Hossein 10 July

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
ZENO WRITING
Exhibition 20 August to 12 October
Curators talk 20 August

SIMONE EISLER
ALLURE
Exhibition 15 October to 30 November
Artist talk 15 October

bundabergregionalgalleries.com.au

Australian Government | Australia Council for the Arts
This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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Image: Hossein Valamanesh, After Rain 2013 on display at the Art Gallery of South Australia (image supplied by the artist)

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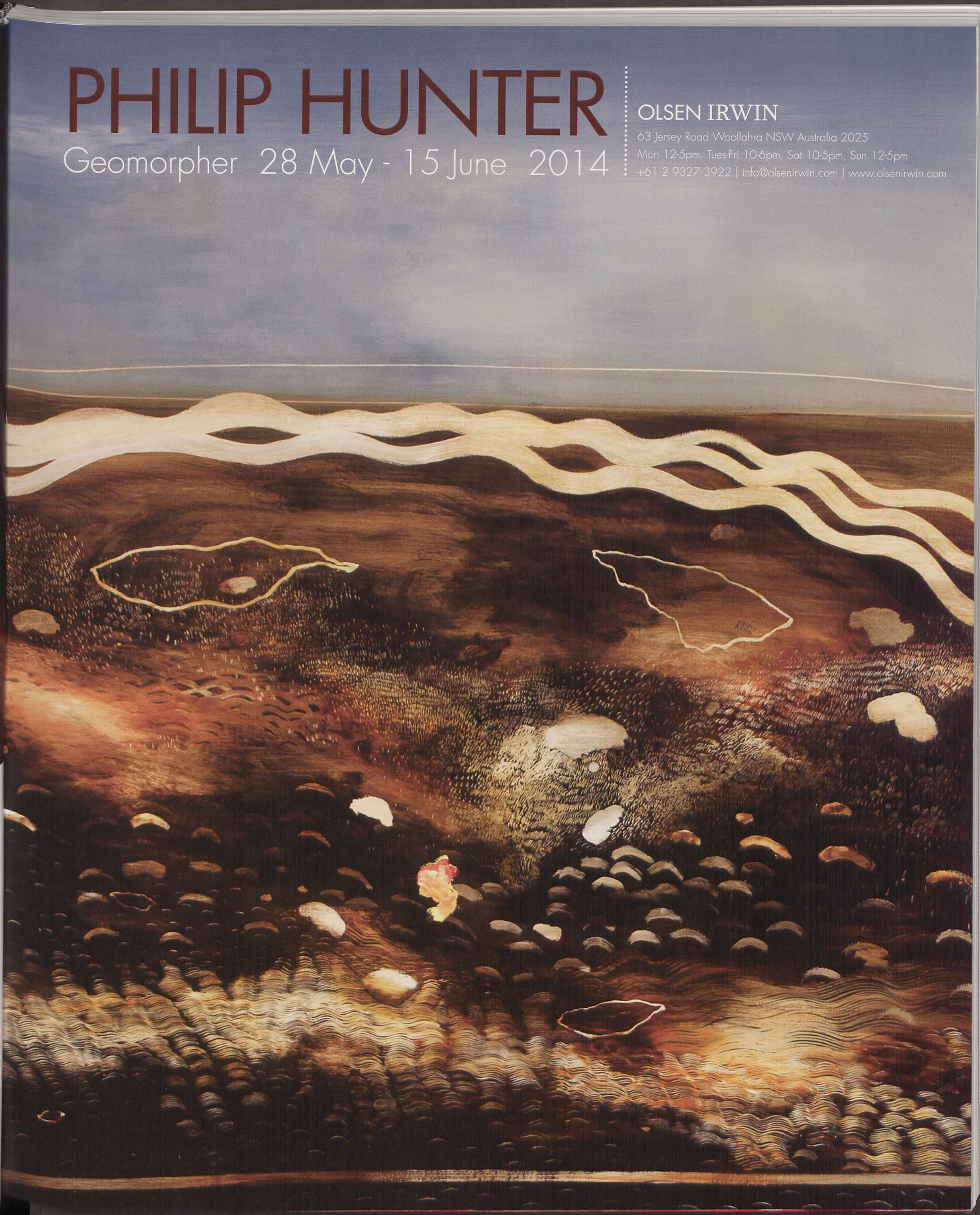

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IMAGE: AES+F *The Last Riot Panorama #4* (detail) 2005-2007, digital print. Collection of Dr Dick Quan. Photo: AES+F.

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Image details: Selby Ginn *Omnipresent Incarnate* 2013 Leather, wire, cotton and wood Height: 210 cm (detail)

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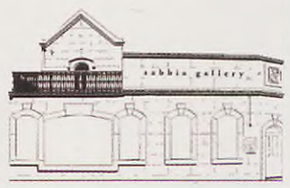

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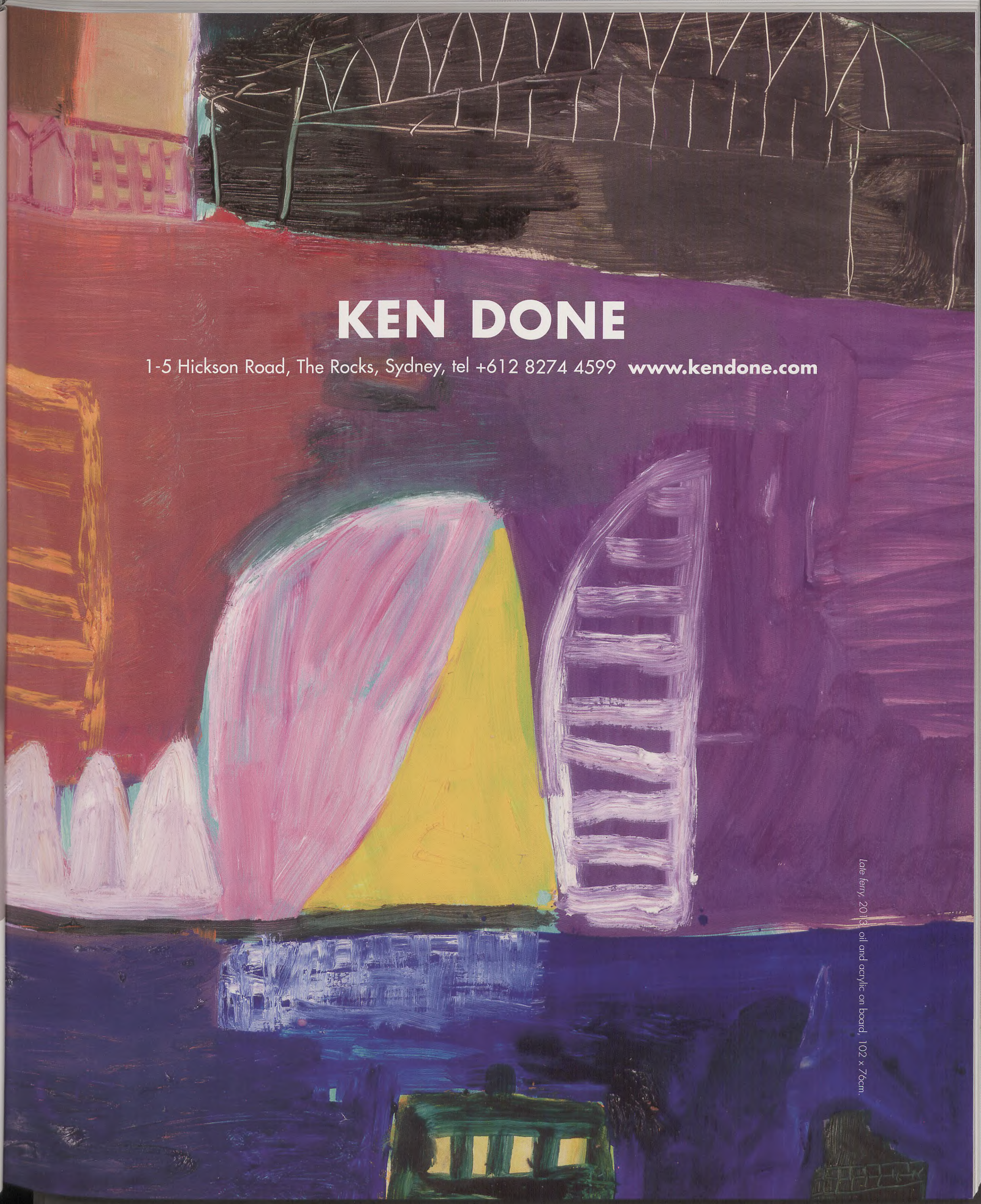
gallery@sabbiagallery.com . Hours Tuesday - Friday 11am to 6pm, Saturday 11am to 4pm, or by appointment

Horizon Dawn, 2014, installation of three, porcelain incised with coloured glazes, 240mm h, 300mm h and 220mm h, photo Robert Frith from Acorn Photo Agency



Late ferry, 2013, oil and acrylic on board, 102 x 76cm.

STUDIOS
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EXHIBITIONS

Abdullah M.I. Syed's studio 2014. Photo Alex Wisser.

STUDIO ARTISTS

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HEATH FRANCO
LEAHLANI JOHNSON
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11 April – 18 July 2014
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University of South Australia

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AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Slow crawl into infinity is a Samstag Museum of Art exhibition generously assisted by Arts SA.
Shaun Gladwell: Afghanistan is an Australian War Memorial Travelling Exhibition, supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Image: Roy ANANDA, *Aether drift* (detail), 2013, timber, aluminium trestles, acrylic paint, fixings, 300 x 600 x 500 cm, image courtesy of the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects. Photograph by James Field

1

VISION

ARTIST AND HEAD OF FINE ART AT MELBOURNE'S MONASH UNIVERSITY, CALLUM MORTON ADVOCATES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF ARTS INTO UNIVERSITY CULTURE. HERE HE SPEAKS ABOUT MENTORS, EXPERIMENTATION AND BALANCING WORK AND PRACTICE.

ENGAGING CRITICALLY, INTENSIVELY AND PERSISTENTLY: CALLUM MORTON

AMITA KIRPALANI
PORTRAIT BY DEREK HENDERSON

While pursuing his art practice, Callum Morton, Professor and Head of Fine Art at Melbourne's Monash University since March 2012, is providing creative direction in teaching and undertaking studio research in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture. With previous teaching roles at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, RMIT University, Deakin University, and at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where he was a visiting instructor, Morton is dedicated to education, striving to integrate the arts into the university's broader culture.[1]

Amita Kirpalani: You undertook a Bachelor of Architecture at RMIT in 1985 before you enrolled in a Bachelor of Fine Art (BA). This grounding is clearly communicated in your work, but I wonder what compelled you to make this decision at the time?

Callum Morton: I had always wanted to study art. My father is an architect and so my studying architecture was as much an Oedipal debt as it was simply something I had grown up with. It turned out I was more interested in architecture than I thought and this interest eventually informed my work as an artist.

AK: What was most rewarding about your art school education?

CM: As Sidney Nolan said of the Gallery School: 'All I learned about was sex and ping-pong!' Being told to keep my brushes clean and being shown how to hammer a nail properly were important moments of technical instruction, so it can be beautifully banal.

One of the most rewarding parts was the community of peers that I met and moved out into the world with. This social reward was very important in the early part of my career. After art school we gathered around a group of established artists who themselves had been teaching at Prahran in the TAFE course (John Nixon, Tony Clark and Howard Arkley). In a sense these artists mentored our development, or, more precisely, we drank with them at the pub. Interestingly, I had never been taught by these figures at art school; they had studios in and around the same complex I moved into or showed alongside us in our various projects.

But the most important thing you learn at art school is to engage critically, intensively and persistently with your own practice. This community naturally dissolves as you develop your practice more completely. There comes a point when you're on your own no matter how many people you have around you.

AK: Who was your most significant teacher? Do you find yourself emulating them to some extent?

CM: I was never one to attach myself to a particular figure, and in fact I have always found this a little unsettling, even though it happens regularly. There are excellent schools based on this very structure of master–student relationship, such as the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Germany. Simon Starling taught there for a decade and talking to him it is clear that this structure – where students are hand-picked to work under the artist's instruction because of their interest in a certain mode of practice – enabled some pretty ambitious student–teacher experiments. We certainly reproduce elements of this at Monash Art and Design (MADA) with our prominent artists as mentors, but we are a bit of a hybrid, pairing select curriculum with a more fluid and open structure.

I remember visiting artists and sessional lecturers making an impression when I did my BA. Mike Parr and Geoff Lowe gave great lectures on their work, and Geoff remains a very good friend and colleague; he is someone I have talked to over the years about art and teaching. Both Geoff and Jacqueline Riva (A Constructed World) are important figures. They have profound views about teaching and merge these directly with their practice. Howard Arkley was a very good teacher and we used to go to his Friday night drawing classes at TAFE. Peter Cripps was my Master of Fine Arts supervisor, and he is a fine educator as well as an excellent artist. All these people had different ideas about teaching – notions of collaboration, pedagogical and conceptual rigour – and, perhaps in the case of Howard, just an easy sense of encouragement and capacity to excite you about making work.

AK: MADA is offering Australia's first curatorial PhD program and an increasing number of artists are undertaking PhDs. Why do you think this is on the rise?

CM: Over the last two decades or so we have seen the rise of higher degree programs at various art schools across the country. With over

200 candidates, MADA has the biggest cohort of MFAs and PhDs in the country. This reflects that art schools are now generally part of a university system rather than being independent entities, which was common in the United Kingdom, parts of Europe, the United States and here until around the mid-1980s. There are a few independent schools still surviving, but they need to have significant philanthropic and government support to be sustainable and this is difficult.

It has taken time to develop and advocate for a practice-based PhD for artists, but there are still problems in terms of both quality and, I would say, intention. We are right to insist that what we do as artists in a studio is valid 'research' just as we accept a scientist's process of lab research. They are not the same, but in institutional terms the connection makes sense. I think this has led to a new dialogue about creative practice, and there are some interesting trans-disciplinary projects developing across Monash between MADA and various other faculties.

Artists undertake PhDs for a number of reasons. It affords them time and space to re-engage with a community of artists and thinkers, and to reflect on their work and where it belongs in the broader field. It enables them to sustain their practice in the short term through scholarships and access to resources, and perhaps long term through teaching. All these factors are completely valid yet there remains an unfulfilled promise that this new culture of better-educated artists will produce better art. That's the challenge. There is the nagging fear that we may be creating a new form of institutionalised artist who is incapable of broader engagement with the world and talks only to the world inside the university. Given this, I would advise an artist to only do a PhD if they have a specific project that can benefit from the context of the university. You also have to be capable and happy to work this way.

AK: You are a member of the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) Council and have been for the past four years. Has the insight that this position brings been reflected in your teaching philosophy?

CM: Perhaps a little. It certainly has helped me to more fully comprehend the mechanics of the institution. In many ways, the NGA is no different from a university. For any institution to survive it needs to be open, flexible and fluid, and if I have a teaching philosophy it corresponds to this. Teaching at art school can simply involve encouraging the students to trust their own knowledge and process while providing experimental contexts in which to work. At other times it needs to be more rigorous and didactic. This depends on the stage and type of the student. The first thing you learn is how to listen.

Like most galleries, the NGA is a big and conservative institution, and it relies on its leaders to drive its identity and, if need be, initiate significant change. I realised very quickly that the role of the council is to oversee the direction and stability of the institution for the sake of the people who work there. The university is no different. I think a true liberal arts university needs fine arts and design to qualify as one, so part of my role at Monash is to advocate and participate in the broader university culture by promoting what MADA does.

The NGA has an interesting collection of work by living artists and plays an active role in the contemporary art community, in particular through its collection program. It caters to a broad audience and needs to strike a balance between historical scholarship and entertainment. But how does one communicate effectively what one does? It's ultimately a perception problem.

When I was asked to join the council I felt it was important that a living artist be there to represent Australian contemporary artists – there was a sense in the community that the NGA wasn't doing a great job at this. But once I got there and took in how the place worked I realised that this was unfair.

This is relevant to MADA because while we know it's a great art school, not everyone else does. We are located in an intimate cultural precinct in Caulfield; we are interdisciplinary, experimental, rigorous and open to change; we have great connections to artists and thinkers here and across the globe who come to us through teaching, residencies and guest lectures. Our permanent staff includes artists Daniel von Sturmer, Emily Floyd, Tom Nicholson, Kathy Temin, Nicholas Mangan and Brook Andrew, writers like Daniel Palmer, and our recently appointed Director of Curatorial Practice, Tara McDowell. We have excellent support from the broader university and we have the Monash University Museum of Art, the best university gallery in the country. We think this, and I believe the art world realises this, but it is not necessarily the perception of high-school kids. We are working on that.

AK: How do you balance your personal practice and the demands of teaching?

CM: My job is very particular. I am Head of Department but I am also a Practice Professor, which means that my professorship was offered to me on the strength of my art practice rather than my experience in the university. I work three days at the university, with significant administrative support, and spend the rest on my work. It doesn't work that neatly, but it works.

I have established a research office inside the university called MAP where I work on public-art and curatorial projects with other artists and designers. The university provides the perfect environment to rigorously investigate the contexts for all cultural production. We are working on some exciting things – a large sculpture park, a set for the Melbourne Theatre Company, a project with the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, temporary work in abandoned shops, and various other things.

But I never got this question when I was teaching sessionally for all those years, which was very time-consuming, or working four days a week in the book trade. This is a much better job and I am dedicated to it. In some respects I see it as part of my practice, a type of project in itself. But some people have said to me 'Oh, you're not showing anymore', which frankly drives me a bit crazy because it's so ill informed.

1 This interview took place in Melbourne on 6 December 2014 and continued via email.

OPPOSITE
Other desert cities, 2013
Timber, steel, glass, light
Set design for Melbourne Theatre Company
Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery
Photograph John Gollings

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM, NEW YORK, AND SENIOR ADJUNCT CURATOR OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART DETROIT, JENS HOFFMANN SEES EXHIBITION-MAKING AS THE CORE OF HIS WORK. HERE HE TALKS ABOUT EXPERIMENTAL MODELS AND WHAT HE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO.

THE THEATRE OF ART: JENS HOFFMANN

NINA MIALL

Born in San José, Costa Rica, and currently residing in New York where he is Deputy Director of the Jewish Museum, Jens Hoffmann has curated more than forty exhibitions internationally since the late 1990s. A restless curiosity, combined with an early education in theatre studies, has shaped a curatorial practice through which he constantly reimagines the traditional format of the exhibition, playing up its capacity for narrative and dramaturgy: 'the exhibition as dramatic construction', as he termed it.[1] This flair for developing new modes of exhibition-making has led Hoffmann to work across a range of contexts simultaneously, from institutions – he was director of exhibitions at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2007–12), and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2003–07) – to independent projects, such as the inaugural People's Biennial (2010–11) and *The Exhibitionist*, a journal of exhibition-making.[2]

Nina Miall: You're a passionate advocate for the importance of exhibition-making as both a craft (for the curator) and a social ritual (for the audience), and in the past have stressed the need to abandon traditional formats – the solo show, mid-career survey or group exhibition – in favour of alternative models that engage with other fields of knowledge. What is it about the exhibition that continues to be relevant today, and where do you see it being most innovatively rethought?

Jens Hoffmann: At this moment a lot of curators think that the only way that curatorial practice can progress is by abandoning the exhibition. I personally cling to exhibition-making as the core of my work and rarely use the terms 'curator' or 'curating' to describe what I do. I think that we have not yet begun to fully understand the potential of exhibitions because we're so used to traditional types. It is hard for many to think beyond the tired typologies of the thematic group show, overview show, solo show, retrospective. There are many other approaches to be explored that will make clear that exhibitions are a very contemporary format for the presentation of art and culture.

For several years now I've been fascinated with the coming together of contemporary art and cultural history, creating exhibitions in which living artists and new work interact with cultural history and historical objects. I am planning to build on that.

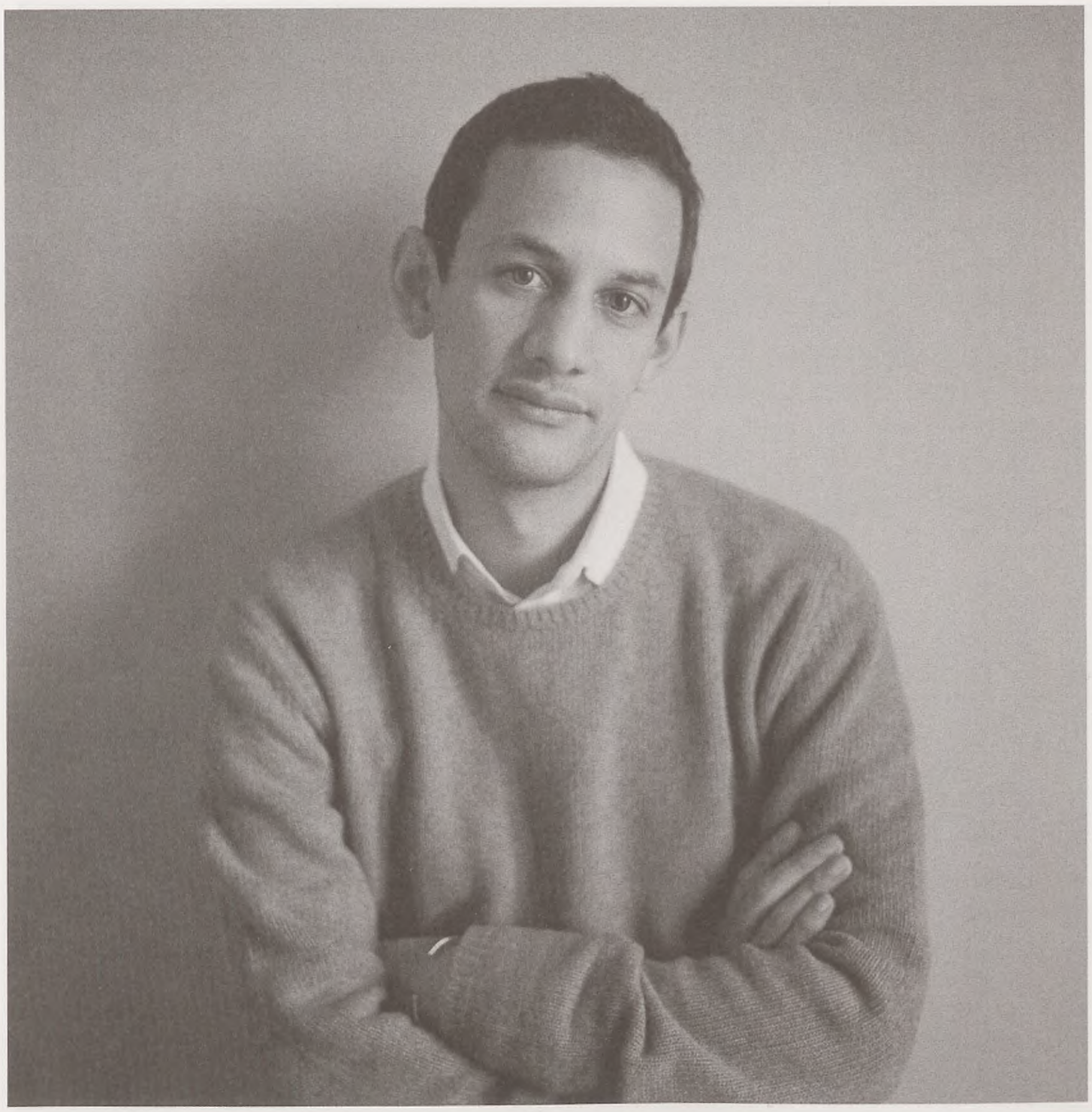
There are a number of incredible spaces working this way. SALT in Istanbul is a good example. Others are BAK in Utrecht, Nottingham Contemporary, Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm, and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris.

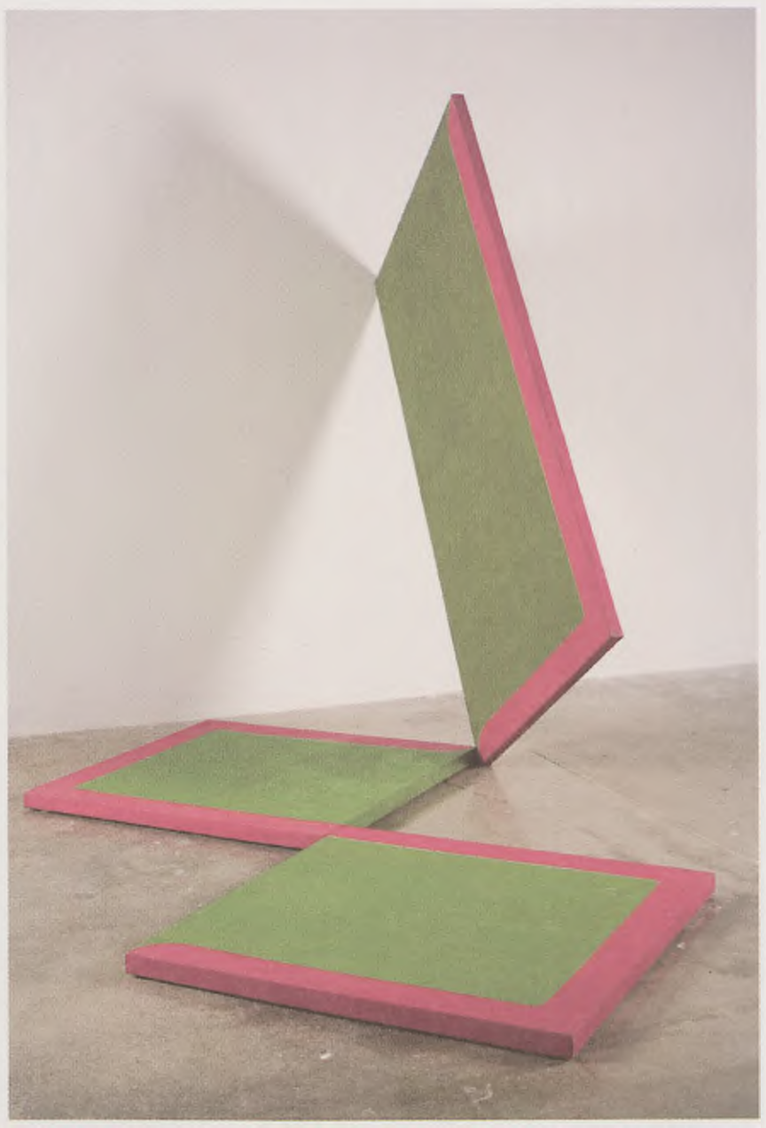
NM: Speaking of exhibition formats, Charles Esche has challenged the definitions of the biennial as 'synchronic, immediate and spectacular' and the museum as 'diachronic, reflexive and intimate'.[3] You've worked readily across both contexts. What does each offer and how does the reception of the audience differ? Does the site specificity of a biennial allow you to address the particularities of place?

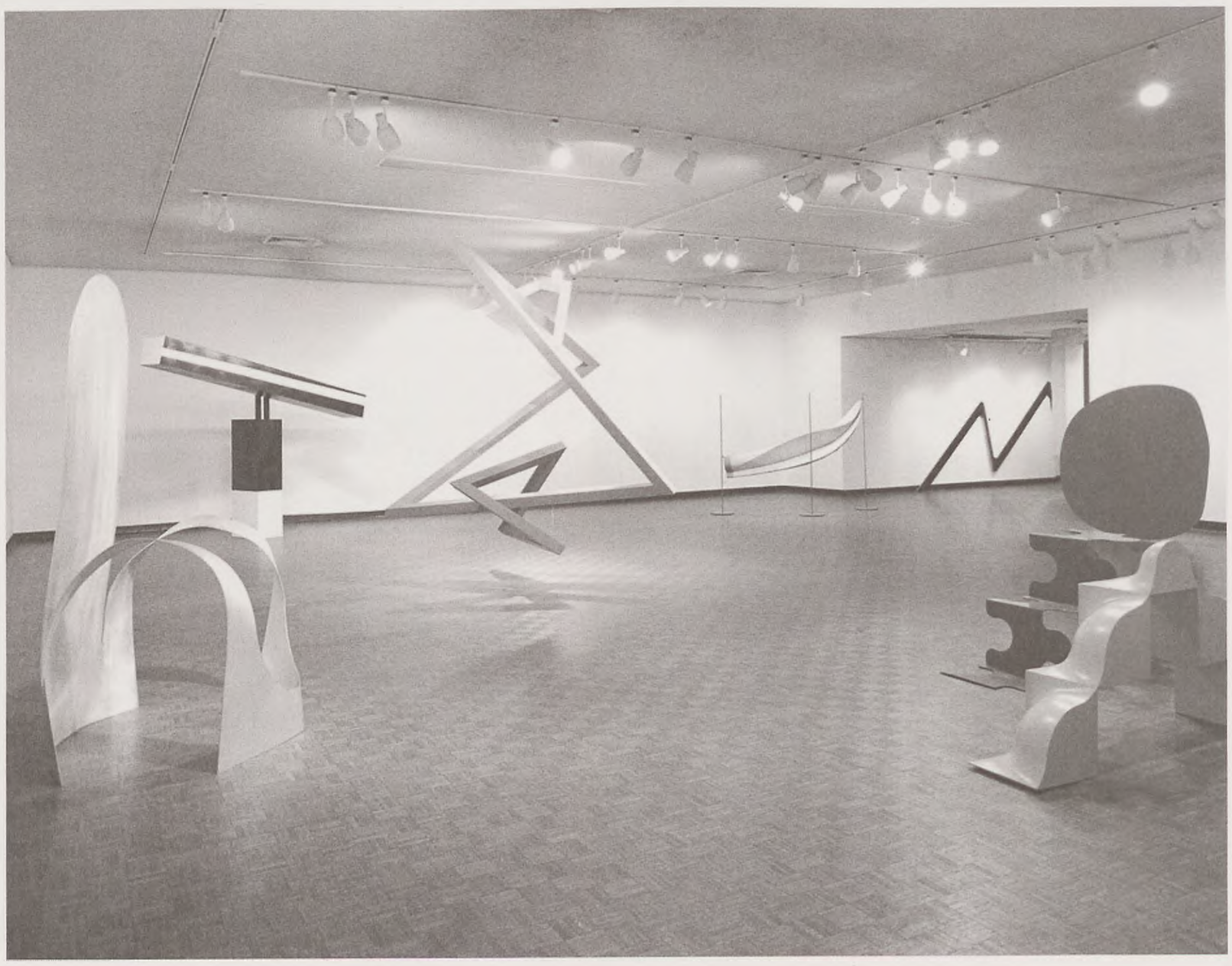
JH: I like what Charles is proposing; I wonder if a biennial cannot also be a bit reflexive and intimate and museums a little more immediate and a tiny bit spectacular. As a curator I personally am more drawn to intimate experiences with art, within a very clearly articulated curatorial framework. A biennial offers you the chance to develop an argument on a much larger scale and in dialogue with a particular site, city, set of political realities and historical context.

Site specificity does not mean that I have to engage with the daily political circumstances of the location the exhibition is taking place in, or situate artworks throughout the city in many different venues that have some particular significance for the political situation. I think that site specificity can also mean reacting to less immediate subjects within that particular history and culture. Félix González-Torres once said that he did not want to make art about subjects he could read about in the newspaper, and as a curator I subscribe to this statement. It is difficult to arrive in a city as an outsider and immediately understand the political circumstances and comment on them in a way that will have real meaning.

NM: You've previously argued for the exhibition space as an extension of the stage, and your style of curating is characterised by an interest in dramaturgy, a strong sense of theatricality and a close and ongoing relationship with artists – Tino Sehgal, Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, or Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset – for whom performativity is a central component of their practice. Can you elaborate on how your background in theatre studies informs this approach?







ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Jens Hoffmann

Alejandro Puente, *Estructura*, 1966
Wood and paint on canvas, 200 x 180 x 100 cm
Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection, Miami
© Estate of Alejandro Puente

'Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors' (1966)
Jewish Museum, New York

PAGE 500
Mark Bradford, *Ahab's revenge*, 2009
Paper, paste and rubber, 41 x 33 x 11.5 cm
Installation view, 'Moby Dick' (2009), CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco
Courtesy the artist
Photograph Johnna Arnold

JH: I studied stage directing and dramaturgy and worked in theatre for about ten years. I continue to follow theatre very closely; it's come to have a lot of influence on my work. My interest is specifically in the idea of creating a parallel reality that sits within ours, and then making it visible. My theatre school in former East Berlin was influenced by Bertolt Brecht's concepts of the epic theatre. There was a focus on the political dimension of art, and on education, which is key to what I do now.

A couple of years ago I did a trilogy of exhibitions in San Francisco based on iconic American novels: 'The Wizard of Oz' (2008), 'Moby Dick' (2009) and 'Huckleberry Finn' (2010). All of them are key to understanding American identity and are connected to essential human experiences. The shows looked at the authors and the political circumstances they lived in; with each I thought very differently about how to translate the narrative of a text to the narrative of an exhibition. They included a lot of historical non-art objects that were either related to the books themselves or to subjects within the books. There was a lot of staging carried out through the graphics, wall colours, carpets, lights and wall texts. These shows were total theatrical productions in which I turned the gallery into a stage and in which the audience became Dorothy, Ishmael or Huck as much as I became Baum, Melville or Twain. It turned the exhibition into a journey full of discoveries and unknown experiences.

NM: You're currently wearing a number of hats: Deputy Director of the Jewish Museum in New York, Senior Adjunct Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD), Professor at the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan, Founding Editor of *The Exhibitionist*, Editor-at-Large for *Mousse* magazine, and adviser to the Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, not to mention biennial curator and frequent contributor to art journals, and writer and editor of over three dozen books, including the 2013 publication *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*. It seems that, in this globalised art world, there's a growing tendency for curators to be itinerant, to have various academic, institutional and commercial affiliations, and to juggle numerous projects simultaneously. How do you work across these different platforms successfully, and is this practice becoming more commonplace?

JH: For me it works well, as the responsibilities are quite different in the two museums. At the Jewish Museum, which really is my main focus, in addition to curating several large shows a year, I oversee the entire program, including exhibitions, public programs, educational activities and publications, the collection (its display and acquisitions), and the New York Jewish Film Festival. I manage the entire curatorial staff of about fifteen people and work with the director on big-picture projects such as our renovation or the launch of our new graphic identity.

It's a big operation compared to MOCAD. In Detroit I curate two shows a year and am working with the director to establish a new clear identity for the museum's programs. The exhibitions are less research-intensive than what I do at the Jewish Museum – mostly quicker group or solo shows of contemporary art. At both museums and on most of the other projects I have a lot of help in all areas. I do not think this style of working is for everyone, as I constantly travel for my jobs, but it keeps me on my toes.

NM: You've built a reputation for actively presenting and promoting Latin American art, but you've also recently curated and co-curated a number of biennials in various parts of Asia: the 9th Shanghai Biennale (2012) and the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011), to name two. Is there a specific region in Asia that you find particularly interesting? And, insofar as one can generalise about these things, where do you see the strengths of contemporary Asian art currently lying?

JH: Two areas in Asia that I know rather well are East Asia (China, Japan and Korea) and the Middle East, mostly due to having curated those two biennials. In addition, I have made a number of trips to South-East Asia, to Australia for the Biennale of Sydney, and to New Zealand for the Auckland Triennial.

Working on the Shanghai Biennale was in many ways extreme and eye-opening. We had only about a year to organise the exhibition in a venue that had not yet been built when we signed the contracts. It was astonishing how the biennale seemed to have no limits at all. The ambitions were high, and everything was done at the last minute, keeping me always very close to the edge. That it all got done was thanks to literally a thousand workers, installers and assistants who in the final week worked day and night not only to install the show but to finish the building. It was like nothing I had seen before.

Both of these biennials were remarkable experiences in terms of the process of putting them together, the research, the development of ideas, and the dialogues I had with artists. But they were also entirely different in regard to how they were organised by the local teams. Istanbul felt fully professional and extremely structured, while Shanghai was high energy, improvisation, and often just chaos. Istanbul became a museum-like show, very precise and reflective. Shanghai was raw energy on an unbelievable scale.

NM: What does 2014 hold in terms of exhibition and publishing projects?

JH: There is my new book, *Show Time* (out in March). It is a history of exhibitions between 1990 and the present, with texts on the fifty most significant exhibitions of that period. It took three years to put together. The history of exhibitions is something I explore in a more curatorial way in the exhibition 'Other Primary Structures' (2014) at the Jewish Museum.[4] Presented in two parts, it is an alternative history of non-western minimal art based on the iconic 1966 exhibition 'Primary Structures', which also took place at the Jewish Museum and effectively introduced British and American minimal art to the world.

There is also the first comprehensive survey in the United States on the actions and performances of the Detroit-born artist James Lee Byars at MOCAD. Composed entirely of new objects, photographs, films and ephemera, the exhibition proposes that it is better to misremember than to re-experience.

Another big upcoming project is 'UnOrthodox', a new annual series of exhibitions at the Jewish Museum that proposes an alternative to the biennial format. It will become the main platform for engagement with contemporary art, culture and theory at the Jewish Museum, with the format strongly theatrical and with prearranged visiting times and spaces. I want to do something that has never been done before with 'UnOrthodox'.

James Lee Byars: I Cancel All My Works at Death, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 7 February – 4 May 2014; **Other Primary Structures**, Jewish Museum, New York, 14 March – 3 August 2014.

1 This quote became the title of Hoffmann's lecture at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, on 4 August 2013.
2 This interview took place over email in December 2013.
3 Francesco Bonami and Charles Esche, 'Debate: Biennials', *frieze*, issue 92, June–August 2005, *http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/debate_biennials/*.
4 'Other Primary Structures' includes Alejandro Puente's *Estructura*, 1966, pictured opposite.

CHRIS SAINES RETURNED TO BRISBANE AFTER NEARLY TWO DECADES AS DIRECTOR OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TO STEER THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY/GALLERY OF MODERN ART, BRISBANE, INTO THE FUTURE. HERE HE TALKS ABOUT HIS PLANS.

CURATING THE FUTURE: CHRIS SAINES

ANNA WALDMANN

Chris Saines CNZM, Director of the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, was born in the Victorian town of Myrtleford, and his first major job in the art world was at McClelland Gallery & Sculpture Park, Langwarrin, as curator, then acting director. Saines worked in education and collection management roles at QAG over 1984–95, returning to Brisbane in early 2013 after directing the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in New Zealand for seventeen years.[1]

Anna Waldmann: After almost twenty years away you have 'skipped' a generation of Australian artists, curators and collectors. What brought you back and what changes have you noticed?

Chris Saines: It was the attraction of leading one of Australia's most confident and ambitious institutions and working on a much larger scale, across two great buildings. Despite their differences, Auckland and Brisbane share a commitment to contemporary New Zealand and Pacific art. I didn't really lose touch with the art world here so the changes I've been most struck by are the changes in Brisbane and its confidence in itself. If anything, living in New Zealand enabled me to see Australian art through an independent lens. What I first noticed was how little had changed for Indigenous Australians – something profoundly delineated in the first exhibition that opened on my watch, curator Bruce McLean's 'My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia' (2013–14).[2]

AW: Established in 1895, the gallery has grown in ambition, scale and the pace at which it operates. How do you see it evolving in the next decade?

CS: I want to enlarge our focus on Australian contemporary art while consolidating the work we are best known for – the art of Asia and the Pacific. I am determined to play forward the elements on which the gallery has built its current reputation, principal among them the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT), building off that to become even more widely recognised as a leader in curatorial, learning and online programs. It's time to shift the production and distribution model, putting major exhibitions that we conceive and curate into wider circulation.

AW: You have guided the Auckland Art Gallery through a $125 million renovation and expansion. In Brisbane you have two campuses. Are there any plans for a third?

CS: I have no plans for another venue but I have opened up a conversation about the QAG building, which I think has one of the best modernist interiors of any art museum anywhere, or at least it did. The back-of-house space has continued to creep into what was formerly public area and I want to reclaim these 'lost' spaces with an interactive and learning-based centre for visitors of all ages.

AW: QAG's inaugural collection comprised thirty-eight paintings, one marble bust and seventy engravings. What are your plans to develop the collection and what will your emphasis be?

CS: I want the gallery to be the leading art museum for the contemporary art of Australia, Asia and the Pacific. While we don't currently have all those bases equally well covered, that's the strategy. Further, we are currently building a contemporary African collection, while simultaneously committing to some of our most significant ever Asian (Cai Guo-Qiang) and Australian (Robert MacPherson) acquisitions. Equally, we will work to grow the modern and historical Australian and international art collections in more targeted ways. For example, the foundation recently conducted a hugely successful appeal to complete our suite of Albrecht Dürer's 'The Apocalypse' series (1511).

AW: How can QAGOMA engage in the international contest for exhibitions of quality and relevance?

CS: We no longer have the special exhibition funding we once had, so we are never going to win a bidding war. We need to address the relevance and quality of our program by increasing our involvement in the 'primary market', producing major exhibitions curated out of Brisbane for audiences both here and beyond. I want us to use our own considerable expertise, relationships and capacity to generate exhibitions, and then to tour them nationally and internationally. We are already committing to a series of internally researched and curated exhibitions of acclaimed living masters, including the American photographer Cindy Sherman (in 2016) and the

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Chris Saines
Courtesy Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane
Photograph Mark Sherwood

Albrecht Dürer, *The beast with two horns like a lamb*, c. 1496–97
From the series 'The Apocalypse' (1511)
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, collection

An My Lê, *Patient admission, US naval hospital ship mercy, Vietnam*, 2010
From the series 'Events Ashore' (2010)
Archival inkjet pigment print on 380gsm, Harman Professional Inkjet paper mounted on sintra, edition of 5, 101.6 x 143.5 cm
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, collection

PAGE 504
Shirana Shahbazi and Sirous Shaghaghi, *Coconut and other things*, 2009
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 596 x 494.6 cm
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, collection

German painter Gerhard Richter (in 2018). To mark GOMA's tenth anniversary we are developing a major project based on the interplay of light, sound, architectural space and the senses (2016–17), commissioning works by the American master of light, James Turrell, and by Jenny Holzer.

AW: Many art museums still favour blockbusters as a way of keeping their institution alive and interesting. What is your opinion?

CS: While I will continue to look for more classically conceived and imported pay-for-view blockbusters, I won't be overreaching to do them as often as in the past. Since I left in 1995 it seems that most major cultural institutions have developed a magnificent obsession with 'exclusivity', largely driven by state tourism development imperatives. In the process, I think we might have forgotten what inter-institutional collaboration can actually do for us, both artistically and in growing our state's cultural economy.

AW: In your welcome speech you said 'we need to work creatively, and take care not to confuse risk management with being risk averse. No-one will thank us for lowering our ambitions and our horizons to meet a common denominator'.[3] How will you accomplish that?

CS: To paraphrase the great New Zealand-born British physicist Ernest Rutherford, we need to make up for what we lack in resources by thinking harder. The current financial climate might impose constraints but these things are cyclical and inevitable – they're not an excuse to do less because you have less to do it with. Moreover, they are a spur to take new kinds of risks and pilot initiatives, seek out new partners and be more adaptive in how you work with current ones, because there are always individuals and organisations for whom the right time is now. I want us to work even harder with our Cultural Precinct partners, with the three Brisbane universities, and even more creatively with our support base of artists, collectors and benefactors. I want to expand and redirect the enthusiasm of our philanthropic community towards programs such as research, travel, exhibitions, learning and conservation.

AW: Museum directors need to be fundraisers, scholars and public-relations experts – what is your forte and what are your challenges?

CS: I am passionate about the work I do and I think that's what makes me an effective relationship builder, good at engaging support for an institution. I think I also bring a deep knowledge and love of art to the role, although would never describe myself as a scholar. The biggest challenge at the moment is that the gallery has considerably less funding to invest in major exhibitions programs and, while that clearly has an effect on the future, I am determined to make it a positive one.

AW: You were at QAG in 1993 for the first APT, a significant event in the region and the first to focus on contemporary art in Asia and the Pacific. How will the APT evolve to maintain its uniqueness?

CS: The APT was founded with the far-reaching vision to re-position Australia and Queensland as part of the broader region it inhabits in the world. That goal has been fundamentally achieved and it's time to further refresh and shift focus. I want to enhance the scope and ambition of APT8 (2015) to more actively privilege a younger generation of artists and to expand our commissions program. Through the agency of a universities consortium, I also plan to reinstate the APT symposium and reinvigorate dialogue between artists, curators and writers around the project. I also want to see a stronger representation of performance, remembering just how extraordinary its effect was on the first two APTs.

AW: In Auckland you established the Auckland Triennial in 2001 and the Walters Prize in 2002. What Australian exhibitions are you planning for the future?

CS: We are presenting a new body of video work by Tracey Moffatt in 2014, curated by Kathryn Weir, and a major and long-overdue Robert MacPherson exhibition in 2015, curated by Ingrid Periz. I would like us to tour both. We are also developing a new signature series that will focus on the art and artists of Queensland, in which I plan to play a hands-on role.

AW: In November 2013 GOMA partnered with the Brisbane International Film Festival to co-curate film presentations. What other national and international partnerships are you working on?

CS: I want us to continue to partner with a range of local festivals, regional galleries and Brisbane-based performing arts companies, and I have been working to reconnect with dealer gallerists, artists, other state gallery directors, benefactors and international colleagues in order to refocus our range of partnerships. We are currently working with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo to co-curate a contemporary Asian project that will end its regional tour in Brisbane, and on similar fronts with the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney and Power Station of Art in Shanghai.

AW: Your forthcoming exhibition 'Harvest' (2014) examines the symbolism of food. Tell us more about the show.

CS: Through our collection, an Australian Cinémathèque program and a publication, 'Harvest' surveys the enduring role of food in art and film, tracing its historical and modern-day production, distribution and consumption as a subject of artistic enquiry. Considering food in every cultural tradition, it runs the gamut from seventeenth-century Dutch still life paintings to politically charged ripostes, from the ubiquity of the global food brand to an exciting new commission by Los Angeles-based duo Fallen Fruit (David Burns and Austin Young) and a major new acquisition by Tomás Saraceno from Argentina.

AW: Which museum directors have influenced and inspired you?

CS: The Tate's Nicholas Serota, as he so clearly and unshakably believes in the power of art to influence and change lives. Glenn Lowry, for his intellectual grace and his strategic deftness in building and rebuilding the Museum of Modern Art, New York. James Mollison, for his far-sightedness and single-mindedness in establishing the National Gallery of Australia from the ground up. And Professor Peter Tomory, who taught me at La Trobe University (and who long-preceded me at Auckland), whose considered injunctions that I make a career in the arts set the course of my life. He is the single most inspiring person with whom I have ever worked.

My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 28 March – 20 July 2014; **Harvest**, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 28 June – 21 September 2014.

1 This interview took place in Sydney on 12 December 2013.
2 Originally on display at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1 June – 7 October 2013.
3 See Chris Saines, 'A new direction', QAGOMA Blog, 1 May 2013, at *http://blog.qag.qld.gov.au/a-new-direction/*.

Cai Guo-Qiang working on
'Falling Back to Earth' (2013–14)
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery
of Modern Art, Brisbane
Photograph Mark Sherwood

CAI GUO-QIANG BECAME AN ARTIST BECAUSE HE DIDN'T WANT AN OFFICE JOB. IN 2011 HE EXPLODED 8300 SMOKE SHELLS IN DOHA'S GULF DESERT FOR *BLACK CEREMONY*. HERE CAI GUO-QIANG TALKS ABOUT PLACE, PERFORMANCE AND DODGING PROBLEMS.

FALLING BACK TO EARTH: CAI GUO-QIANG

NATALIE KING

Despite two failed pyrotechnic 'explosion projects' for the 1996 and 1999 Asia Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art (APT), Cai Guo-Qiang returned for a more grounded invocation with large-scale installations at Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane. A gigantic felled eucalyptus tree lies suspended in the gallery, like an environmental relic, while a menagerie of ninety-nine faux life-sized animals are poised to drink at a blue lake. Biblical in scale, this Noah's Ark suggests a harmonious paradise while the number ninety-nine references infinity in Chinese numerology.

Cai Guo-Qiang grew up in Fujian province, across the strait from Taiwan, and recalls hearing the two sides exchange artillery fire. The son of a traditional calligrapher who would draw miniature landscapes on matchboxes, Cai Guo-Qiang trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy and is renowned for elaborately ambitious pyrotechnics, installations and gunpowder drawings as well as for producing the fireworks for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.[1]

Natalie King: Tell me about the feng shui of your childhood home. Your room faced a well and lane that brought dark energy, so you stole a pair of stone lions and placed them at the entrance of your house. What is the role of place and orientation in your work?

Cai Guo-Qiang: Ever since I was a young boy, my grandmother always taught me that there is a relationship with the unseen world. Where you should dig your well, which direction your front door should face – all these things matter. Feng shui also applies on a macro scale in relation to my hometown, because Quanzhou had two pagodas that were supposed to enhance the destiny of the township. While growing up I didn't think of these pagodas as two great works of architecture; I thought about their significance in terms of feng shui.

NK: You acted in two martial arts films in your twenties. There is a performative power in your work, the way huge numbers of people are mobilised to undertake artistic acts, almost like propaganda.

CG-Q: This process has been complicated. I grew up during the years of the Cultural Revolution, when there were protests and rallies where tens of thousands of people would march through the streets to be part of an event. In one instance, the government wanted everyone to help dig a new river. After the trench was dug and filled with water, everyone went swimming. It was not a foreign idea to me for everyone to take part in a certain activity. If you give people a powerful concept and a goal to strive for, there is a reason to participate. That said, a propagandist approach is not the intention of my art because I feel it's necessary to have dialogue with the local culture.

Often I initiate dialogues with local communities. In Australia I learnt from Aboriginal elders before creating large-scale gunpowder drawings in collaboration with volunteers from local communities. In that sense, I absorb different energies from different specific locations.

My upbringing was different from that of other artists who trained in fine-art institutes and worked in solitude. I was trained in stage design so I am used to working with a large crew of actors, directors and set designers.

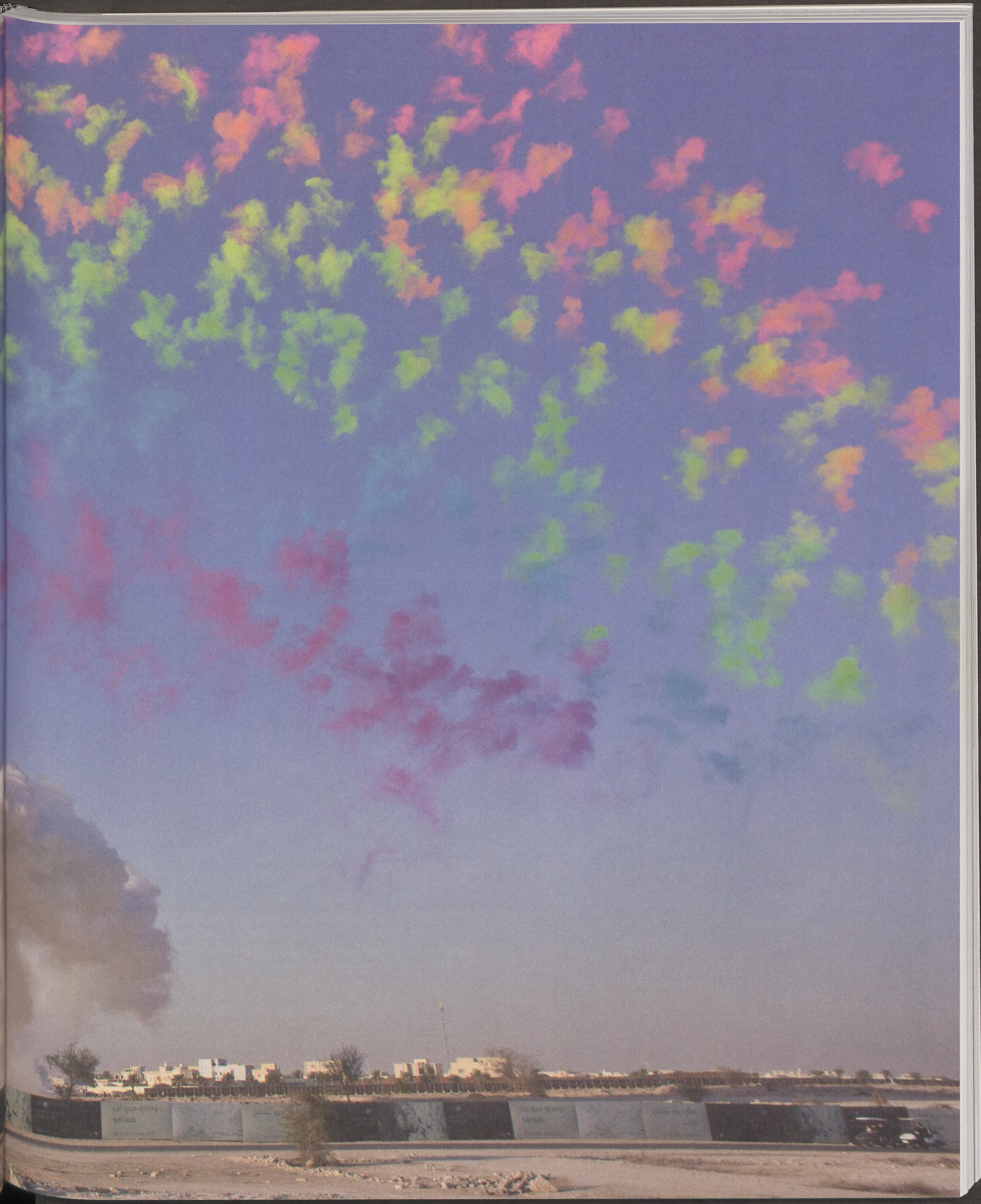
NK: Your 2002 Phaidon monograph is dedicated to your wife: 'I became an artist the day I met her'.[2] How does love figure in your work?

CG-Q: Love warms me up. Growing up in my homeland I was a lonely boy. I met my girlfriend when I was seventeen, and we would hike up to the mountains and make paintings and sketches of the landscape. I confided in her all my ambitions and aspirations in art, or my dissatisfaction towards society and any unfulfilled goals in my life. She was my confidante and now my wife, my partner in life.

NK: Your recent 'explosion event' on the Seine in Paris for 'Nuit Blanche' is *One night stand*, 2013, a fleeting encounter or momentary physical interlude. Your detonations are live art yet brief and often visible at night. What is the role of the nocturnal, the time outside of work hours where we can dream and imagine, in your incendiary practice?

CG-Q: With pyrotechnics you need light to be able to see the work, but I have also made daytime explosion events such as *Black ceremony*, 2011, which saw 8300 black smoke shells explode across 29,500 square metres of the Gulf Desert in Doha, Qatar. These rely on smoke. At night, however, the lack of light disguises the geographical context where the projects take place, allowing for a more direct relationship between the light from the explosion and the universe.


cai guo-qiang :
saraab
سای جوو تشیانغ :
سراب



NK: Your exhibition titles are poetic and utopian: 'Falling Back to Earth' (2013–14) at QAGOMA, 'Ladder to the Sky' (2012) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and 'I Want to Believe' (2008) at the Guggenheim Museum, New York. Can you elaborate on these other-worldly evocations?

CG-Q: Sometimes it's very difficult to make a direct translation from Chinese to English. The title for 'Falling Back to Earth' is derived from the fourth-century Chinese poem *Homeward Bound I Go* by Tao Yuanming. It does have a utopian sense of beauty, but at the same time there is a sense of humour or irony. On the surface, the works might appear to be beautiful but the ideas are somewhat melancholic: the ninety-nine animals in *Heritage*, 2013, all have their heads lowered into the pond, so it looks like they are bowing down, and the scene gives the work a somewhat religious sense of sombreness.

My works are complex and not as simple as they appear. I am a complicated person to start with. I have to maintain a childlike sense of curiosity and channel it into my work. That's probably the reason why my works are popular no matter where they are shown. It doesn't matter if I am English or Chinese; the artworks resonate with people, reminding them of their inner child.

WITH *TRANSIENT RAINBOW*, 2002, THERE WERE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SPECTATORS, AND THE RIVERBANKS ALONG THE EAST RIVER IN NEW YORK WERE COMPLETELY PACKED WITH PEOPLE. EVERYONE CAME FOR THIS MERE FIFTEEN SECONDS – A VERY CONCENTRATED EXPERIENCE. SOMETIMES IF YOU PROLONG THE DURATION, PROBLEMS BECOME MORE APPARENT. AN ART HAPPENING THAT TAKES PLACE VERY RAPIDLY AVOIDS LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS. ART IS MY TIME/SPACE TUNNEL SO I CAN DODGE PROBLEMS.

NK: You have articulated the role of failure in your work, especially in relation to the two unrealised APT projects. Are you the proverbial foolish man moving a mountain[3] and are you tempted to try another explosion in Brisbane?

CG-Q: Yes, of course the temptation is there because I have some unfinished business with the Brisbane River. Maybe I owe it a one-night stand!

NK: The current exhibition, 'Falling Back to Earth', comprises four discrete works that are grounded in landscape and place, partly inspired by your visits to Lamington National Park and Stradbroke Island in Queensland. Do you think you are returning to earth from the heavens?

CG-Q: In the beginning, I did think that I was shifting my focus towards earth. It's only as I worked more and more on the project that I could feel there was a theme related to the universe. The project discusses humans' role and position in the greater universe: what is our planet's destiny?

NK: Has there been an epiphany moment for you as an artist?

CG-Q: When I was growing up my father used to write calligraphy and make paintings, and my grandmother always commented that I was more talented than my father. My grandmother's encouragement and praise made me more confident that I would become a good artist.

When did I know I would become an artist? I have always liked flowers and I would buy them to put in a vase. This was a rare and unusual thing to do in 1970s communist China, and I would constantly worry that as an adult I would have to go to work every day. I tried to control my own fate so that I wouldn't have to work in an office. Somewhere between buying flowers and not wanting to go to work, I decided that I should be an artist.

NK: There is an opulence or spectacle of excess in the huge cost of your explosions that are detonated in a matter of seconds.

CG-Q: With *Transient rainbow*, 2002, there were tens of thousands of spectators, and the riverbanks along the East River in New York were completely packed with people. Everyone came for this mere fifteen seconds – a very concentrated experience. Sometimes if you prolong the duration, problems become more apparent. An art happening that takes place very rapidly avoids logistical problems. Art is my time/space tunnel so I can dodge problems.

NK: What music are you listening to?

CG-Q: I tend to listen to traditional music. On the GOMA radio station, which you can listen to in the museum elevators, I picked songs that I usually hum to myself, like 'Danny Boy'.

Falling Back to Earth, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 23 November 2013 – 11 May 2014.

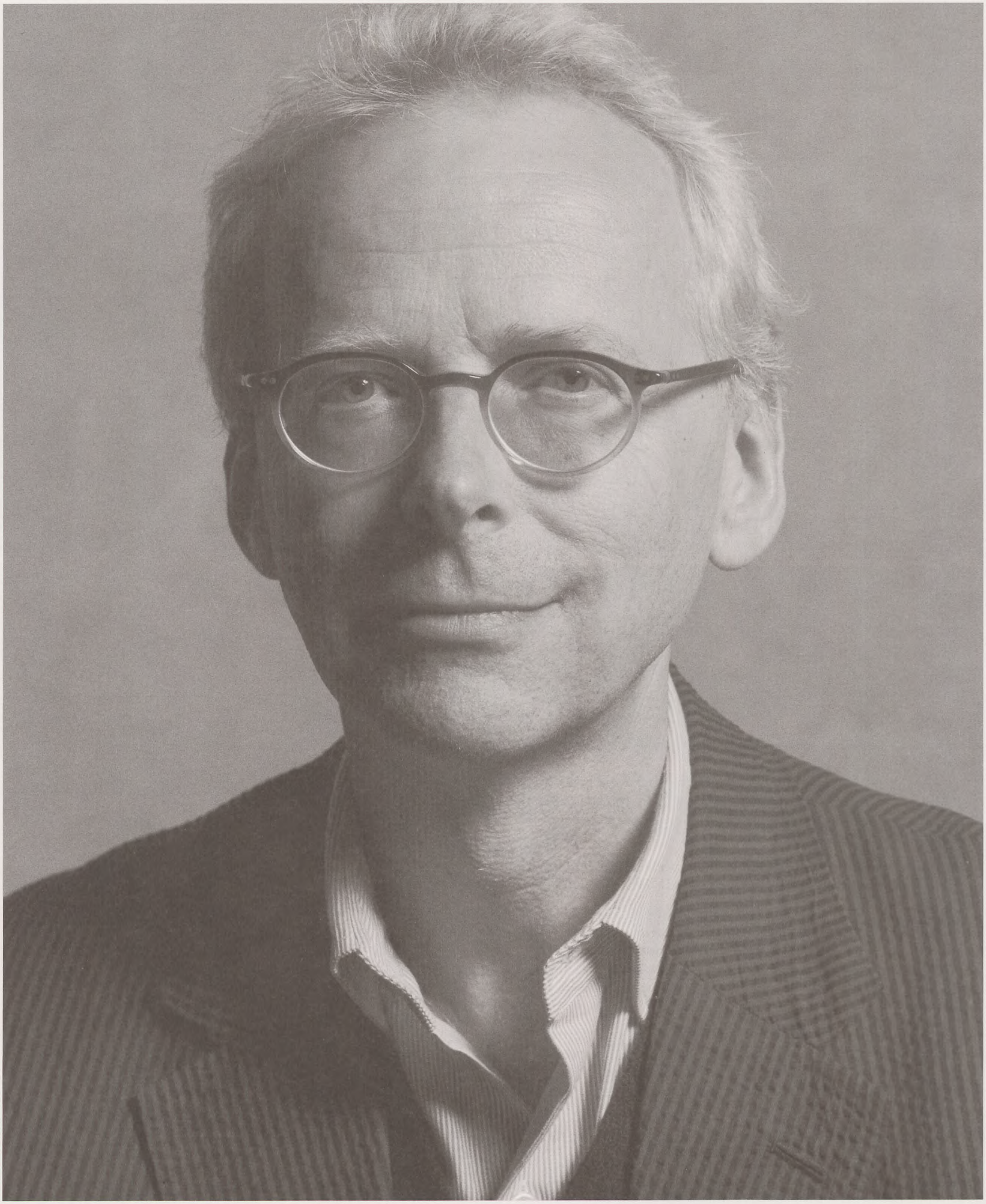
1 This interview took place in Brisbane on 22 November 2013.
2 See Dana Friis-Hansen, Octavio Zaya and Takashi Serizawa et al., *Cai Guo-Qiang*, Phaidon Press Limited, London, 2002.
3 The title of the famous Chinese story 'Yu Gong Yi Shan' translates as 'foolish man moving a mountain'.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Cai Ruiqin, *Untitled (matchbox drawings)*, n.d.
Ink, pen and pencil on cardboard matchboxes, dimensions variable
Courtesy Cai Studio, New York

Cai Guo-Qiang creating an early gunpowder drawing, Quanzhou, China, 1985
Courtesy Cai Studio, New York

Cai Guo-Qiang, *Nine dragon wall (drawing for dragon or rainbow serpent: a myth glorified or feared: project for extra-terrestrials no. 28)*, 1996, detail
Nine drawings, spent gunpowder and Indian ink on Japanese paper, each 300 x 200 cm
Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, collection

PAGES 510–11
Cai Guo-Qiang, *Black ceremony*, 2011
Explosion event commissioned by Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar
Courtesy Cai Studio, New York
Photograph Hiro Ihara



WHEN YOU THROW OPEN THE DOORS, THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS – FROM SURPRISING LOCATIONS TO THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE. CO-DIRECTOR JAMES LINGWOOD EXPLAINS HOW ARTANGEL STRIVES TO LET EXTRAORDINARY IDEAS SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY.

A PARTICULAR AGENCY: JAMES LINGWOOD

ANNE LOXLEY
PORTRAIT BY DEREK HENDERSON

Over the past two decades, the London-based commissioning organisation Artangel has produced some of the world's most resonant contemporary art projects. Regarded by many as peerless, Artangel works across visual arts and performance in the public domain as well as in the medium of moving image and in collaboration with broadcast media. Since starting at Artangel in 1991, co-Directors James Lingwood and Michael Morris have rolled out a staggering number of exceptional and provocative projects in surprising locations. These include Rachel Whiteread's *House*, 1993, the cast concrete sculpture of a Victorian terrace in East London, and Mike Kelley's posthumously completed *Mobile homestead*, 2013, a replica of the artist's family home presented as a relocatable public-art project and community space for his hometown, Detroit.

In February 2014 submissions closed for Artangel's Open, an open process through which the organisation has realised some of its most celebrated projects, including Jeremy Deller's daylong re-enactment (and film) of a violent episode in the 1984 National Union of Mineworkers strike – *The battle of Orgreave*, 2001 – and Roger Hiorns's *Seizure*, 2008, a crystalline installation in an abandoned council flat in London's East End.[1]

Anne Loxley: In your lecture at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) you spoke about Georges Perec's book *Espèces d'Espaces (Species of Spaces)* (1974). You said you should have read it years ago. Would your curatorial practice be any different if you had?

You also emphasised that, for Artangel, 'place' is a material, but I am mindful that 'place' has a geographical specificity while space refers to a more abstract typology.

James Lingwood: There is a geographical and historical specificity to Perec. It's very Parisian, very French, and very much of its time. He writes about different kinds of spaces, but his reflections often lead from a type of space (for example, the bedroom, the street) to a specific place (the bedrooms he has slept in, the streets he walks). Many Artangel projects also gravitate from thinking about kinds of spaces that an artist might need to a particular place that brings with it something specific.

This interest in spaces and places – or spaces becoming places – underpins our work at Artangel. Perec feels like a kind of kindred spirit, not just to Artangel, but to many artists and organisations of recent decades. Together with some of his compatriots, such as Michel de Certeau and Gaston Bachelard, his writing has been quietly influential.

AL: In the lecture you said public art 'has to aspire to a condition of consensus' or consequently 'attention can slip away from it'. I find this observation agonisingly true for long-term and permanent public artworks, yet short-term projects operate within much freer conditions. Compared to the number produced, few recent permanent public-art projects have entered the public consciousness. Do they still constitute a reasonable offer for today's artists?

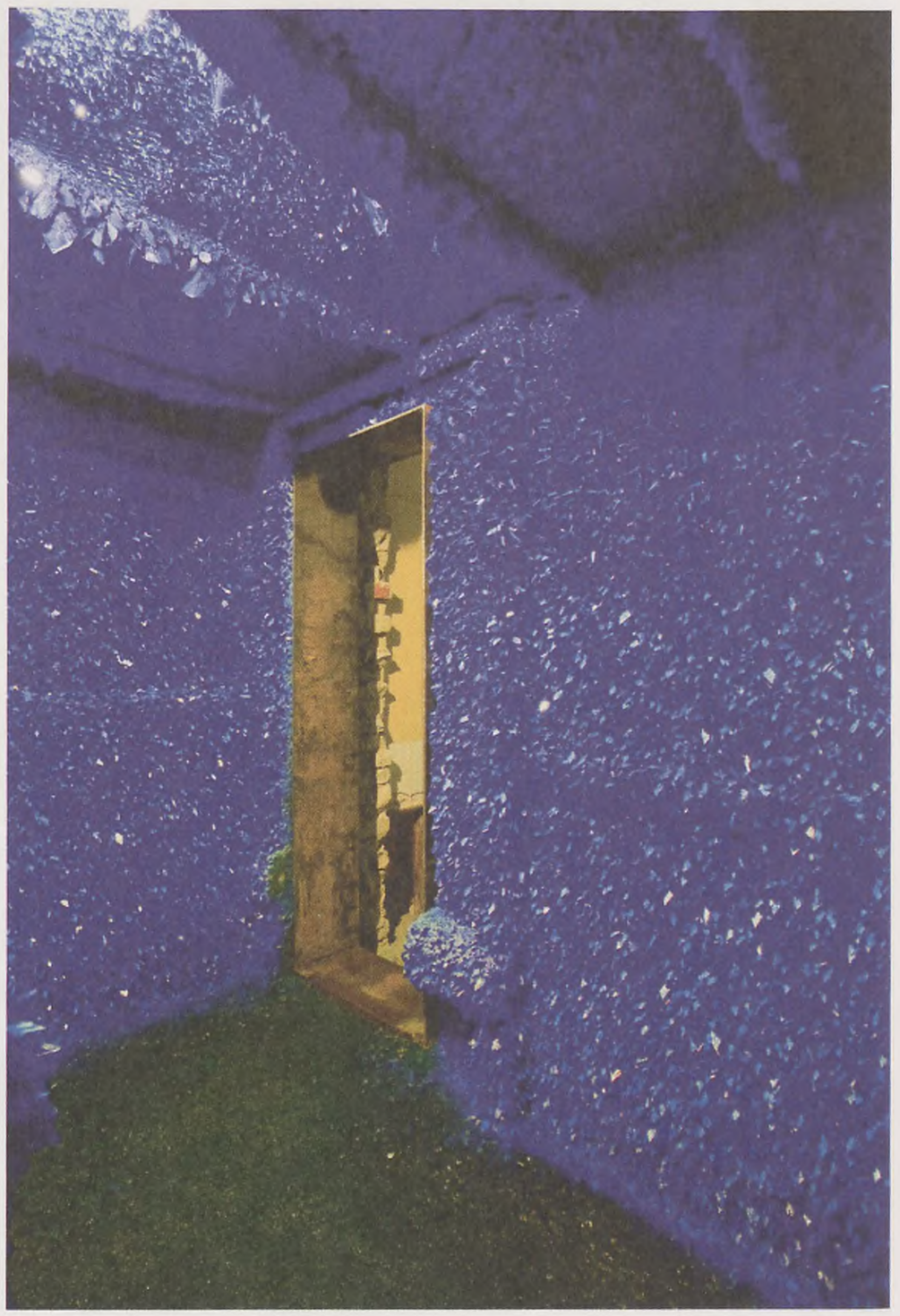
JL: Temporary projects don't have to pass through so many hoops; they don't have to conform, or be so well-behaved. But there's a great deal of unrealised potential in landscaping, lighting and the shaping of civic space, for long-term installations and evolving projects too.

AL: How could public-domain projects realise more of this potential?

JL: Enlightened and decisive civic patronage is key, or enlightened and decisive private patronage – imaginations as large as those that gave rise to the great urban parks of the nineteenth century. It's possible but not common – think of the High Line in New York.

AL: Two of the most highly regarded permanent public-art projects of recent times are Antony Gormley's 54-metre high, 200-tonne sculpture *Angel of the north*, 1998, and Anish Kapoor's *Cloud gate*, 2004–06, which stands at 20 metres and weighs 100 tonnes. Both are monumental in scale, and while Gormley's functions as a heroic symbol, Kapoor's plays with viewers. These functions are worlds away from the profoundly reflective nature of any Artangel project. Should our aspirations for permanent projects differ from those for temporary ones?

JL: On one level, yes. An aspiration to make, or remake, a new public space such as the High Line is going to be different from a temporary project. But whatever duration a work is conceived for, you want it to work on the mind, to be thought-provoking.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Catherine Yass, *High wire*, 2008
An Artangel commission
Photograph Angie Catlin

Jeremy Deller, *The battle of Orgreave*, 2001
An Artangel commission
Photograph Martin Jenkinson

Roger Hiorns, *Seizure*, 2008
An Artangel commission
Photograph Nick Cobbing

Mike Kelley, *Mobile homestead*, 2013
An Artangel commission

AL: Can we talk about Artangel's relationships with funding institutions as well as its production partners?

JL: Artangel has a grown-up relationship with the Arts Council England and a strong connection with a good range of generous private patrons. We also receive occasional support from charitable foundations, sponsors and the like. We have two ongoing production partnerships through which we co-commission new moving-image works with the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, two of the most significant arts institutions in the United Kingdom.

AL: Would you talk about Open, Artangel's partnership with BBC's Radio 4.

JL: We recognise that however good our connections might be, however much we see or hear, our field of information is fundamentally limited. As we primarily operate through invitation, it is important to throw open Artangel's doors from time to time and consciously invite proposals.

It began this year by launching Open directly after Radio 4's 9 a.m. news. We presented three-minute audio works by five artists: Christian Marclay, Ruth Ewan, Peter Strickland, Susan Hiller and Mark Wallinger. These works generated a degree of interest, some outrage (synthetic or otherwise, it's hard to say!), and expectation. We initiated these as a way of getting artists thinking, to tune in to different possibilities.

Radio 4 want to find ways of bringing new voices to radio, of making different kinds of programs. The Artangel Open projects don't have to materialise on radio, but it is very likely that the first two commissioned artists, Katrina Palmer and Ben Rivers, will find ways of working with the medium.

AL: You have said that most cities develop their own ecology for culture. It strikes me that Artangel's singular attitude to working with artists, and to ensuring that the potential of each project is not 'circumscribed', is profoundly linked to London's cultural ecology. Notwithstanding London's huge pool of artists and substantial cultural infrastructures, the best of my London-based arts-producing peers seem at once relaxed and serious, distinguished by an enabling combination of savoir faire and ambition. Could another city have produced Artangel?

JL: It's really to do with the ambitions of artists, the expectation of audiences and the potential to find a good level of resources. All of these have been integral to Artangel, our work in London and elsewhere. Something like Artangel, though not exactly like Artangel, could emerge in another city, if the right conditions were there.

AL: Jeremy Deller said 'Artangel lets artists do what no-one else will. It's as simple as that'. Deller is an artist who has been commissioned to stage countless ambitious projects, and yet he unequivocally regards Artangel as singularly supportive and visionary.

JL: Jeremy is perhaps right in the sense that when we worked together on *The battle of Orgreave* it's unlikely that another organisation in Britain would have taken the idea on. Artangel exists because we believe artists have exceptional ideas that need a particular agency to bring them into the world.

Our job is to build a microclimate of credibility around each project. Michael and I have always felt that Artangel should adapt and change shape in relation to each new project – we're a means to an end.

AL: Michael Morris and you have said that without the constraints of a building, a schedule and a budget, you hope that 'artists can step up a gear when they come to talk to us'.[2] Artangel works with some of today's best artists. Why do you want them to raise the bar? And is the absence of a public building a key element of Artangel's success?

JL: Maybe raising the bar isn't quite the right way of putting it. But we do have to aim as high as possible. There are lots of potentially extraordinary ideas out there that don't see the light of day. It's Artangel's job to identify them, to ensure that adequate resources – time as much as money – are there, and to bring them out of the darkness and into the light. You only have one shot at these projects.

As for the absence of a building, certainly Artangel's identity has been built on each project in turn being its own centre, whether it's the City of London (Whiteread's *House*), a mining village in Yorkshire (Deller's *The battle of Orgreave*), downtown Detroit (Kelley's *Mobile homestead*), or a small coastal town in Iceland (Roni Horn's *VATNASAFN/LIBRARY OF WATER*, 2007–). We also have a different kind of centre now, the Artangel website, which is very important to us.

AL: While Artangel has produced projects of great lyricism, such as Francis Alÿs's *Seven walks*, 2005, and the group project *A room for London*, 2012, it strikes me that there is more threat and danger in your average Artangel project than those commissioned by your peers. While Roger Hiorns's *Seizure* was menacing, real violence seemed very possible in Jeremy Deller's re-staged miner's strike, and in Catherine Yass's *High wire*, 2008, the tightrope walker became so terrified that he retreated from the wire. Why is it that raising the bar for artists can quite frequently lead to situations that are profoundly disquieting, if not unsafe?

JL: We don't know how some of the projects we produce are going to work out, or what meanings they might accrue over time. *High wire* wasn't intended to be a work about existential doubt. It was envisaged as transcendent and optimistic. Contingency often plays a big role in how a work turns out, and we've learned to embrace that. We don't avoid situations because they have the potential to be tough or challenging both for the people making the work and for those who will then experience it. Being 'quieting' – if that's the alternative to disquieting – isn't very interesting. Although one aborted highwire walk is quite enough for a lifetime ...

AL: Being here in Australia, do you see any local synergies with Artangel?

JL: There are exceptional projects happening in Australia. Lindsay Seer's *Nowhere less now*, 2012, was co-produced by Artangel and the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Hobart, where Kutlug Atamans installation *Küba*, which we commissioned in 2005, also appears – there is a synergy there.[3] You have several spaces with significant international presence – the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, MCA, MONA, Carriageworks. Each is doing exceptional work, and I'm impressed by their dynamic and reflective cultures.

John Kaldor's work in the 1970s, and again in the past decade or so, has been extraordinary. He is an exemplary figure. From his work with Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 1969 to Thomas Demand in 2012, Kaldor shares with Artangel a real decisiveness in going with a particular project, in pushing it all the way.

This interview is a development from the author's 2012 travel to London and New York to research recent public art, assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

1 James Lingwood's trip to Australia was funded by the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and Carriageworks, Sydney. This interview took place in Sydney in June 2013 and continued via email.

2 Rachel Cooke, 'Unsung eleven: Meet the art world's new pioneers', *The Observer*, 7 October 2007.

3 Both works featured in 'The Red Queen' (2013–14) at the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart.

AS 'IN SPECULUM' WRAPS UP ITS TOUR, SCOTTISH ARTIST SIMON STARLING DESCRIBES HIS METHOD FOR 'GIVING THINGS A SECOND LIFE'. HE LIKES TO STEP OUT OF THE STUDIO AND MAKE THE WORK IN THE WORLD, WHATEVER THE COMPLICATIONS MAY BE.

MECHANISMS OF MAKING: SIMON STARLING

DANIELLE SMITH

Since his work was first shown in Australia at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, in 1998, Simon Starling's interest in discovering and reappropriating the histories of certain objects has seen him transport plants from Scotland back to the site of their original cultivation in Spain (*Rescued rhododendrons*, 2000), model sculptures on silver particles extracted from albumen photographs from 1875 (*The Nanjing particles*, 2008), and transform a dilapidated shed into a boat and back again (2005's Turner Prize-winning *shedboatshed*). Fresh from receiving the Tate Britain Commission 2013 with *Phantom ride*, he returned to Australia in 2013 to focus on a significant local object for his first solo exhibition in the region.

'In Speculum' (2013–14)[1] functions both as a career survey and an opportunity for Starling to engage with Australian geography and history in a site-specific manner, combining revisited sculptural works with a new photographic- and film-inspired response to the Great Melbourne Telescope and its recent restoration at Melbourne's Museum Victoria. An examination of 'the processes of making' in art and science, Starling calls the show a method of 'giving things a second life in relation to each other'.[2]

Danielle Smith: Tell me about 'In Speculum' – how did it develop?

Simon Starling: I have had quite a long relationship with curator Max Delany. I met him at Heide where there was a big group show of Australian and Glasgow-based artists. I built a radio-controlled model airplane to fly above the museum for the exhibition opening,[3] sourcing the balsa wood to build the airplane from Ecuador rather than from the model shop down the street. I was based in Europe, coming to Australia, using balsa wood from South America – I was thinking about hybrid geographies and the mechanisms of those working together.

For 'In Speculum' I selected existing works that are all staged in different kinds of workshops. There's a film work playing on loop that is about the very company of metal fabricators that built the loop machine, and then there are sculptural works: the airplane project from Heide, and another work called *Three white desks*, 2008–09, a collaboration with three carpenters in Sydney, Berlin and London. I gave the first carpenter a photograph of a desk that was designed by Francis Bacon for Patrick White, the Australian writer. He had commissioned the desk but then sold it, regretting it immediately. White took a photograph of the original to a carpenter in Sydney and asked him to make a copy, but the result was a very poor provincial version of what was an elegant modernist piece. And so I took that idea, and gave Patrick White's original photograph to a carpenter in Berlin, who built a desk based on what he saw. He then photographed it with his mobile phone and sent it to a carpenter in Sydney, who built a desk based on that, and so on. Again, it is about a workshop, not present directly but within the work.

DS: Do you consider there to be an ongoing dialogue between your pieces, even if they might have originally been designed as stand-alones?

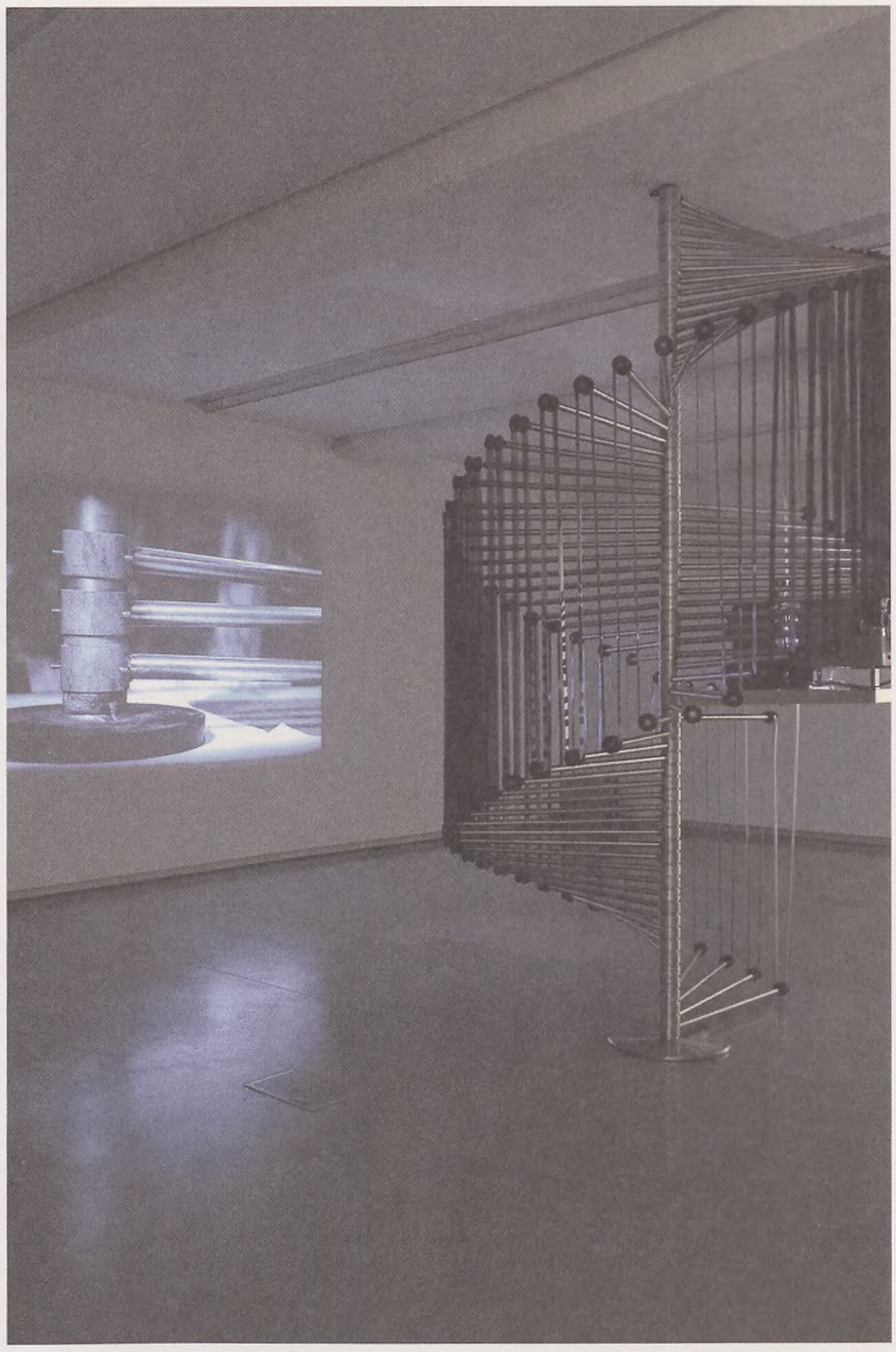
SS: A lot of my works are made for very specific exhibitions, galleries or cities, so one of the nice things about making these bigger exhibitions now is having the opportunity to bring them together and think about one's relation to another.

DS: And relative to the site-specific nature of your practice, there seem to be persistent themes of distance and journey.

SS: I suppose I've always had a slightly ambiguous relationship to the studio, to the idea of having a central point of production. I do have a studio, but it's more a space where things get organised and thinking happens. I've always liked to make the work in the world, and test it in the world, which brings with it its own complications. When I started my career I was living in Glasgow, which was a fairly provincial situation in the early 1990s. It wasn't really known as a centre for art. A lot of artists were thinking proactively about their geography, about who they wanted to connect with in the world, drawing their own maps in a sense. That thinking has always been a driving force in the way that I make work, trying to create these webs of connections across geography and through time.

DS: It seems like that would apply to working in Australia as well.

SS: I think my work has some resonance here because of the way it considers the idea of working on the periphery. From the start, Max and I spoke about this being an interesting aspect of my process to tease out in Australia.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Venus mirrors (05.06.12, Hawaii & Tahiti (inverted)), 2012
Two drilled 60 vm telescope mirrors, stand

Wilhelm Noack oHG, 2006
Mixed media, dimensions variable

Le jardin suspendu, 1998

All images installation views, 'Simon Starling: In Speculum' (2013), Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne
Photographs Christian Capurro

PAGE 518
The long ton, 2009
1 Chinese marble block, 90 x 120 x 50 cm;
1 CNC Carrara marble block, 59 x 74 x 31 cm;
pulley system, clamps, rope, shackles
Courtesy the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin
Photograph Jens Ziehe

DS: 'In Speculum' also seems to speak in a very timely way to the expanding relationship between art and science.

SS: That's been an ongoing interest of mine, and I've used science to interrogate artmaking, and vice versa. I've tapped into working with electron microscopes to examine the micro-geology of photographs – to me, they're completely complementary and at times interchangeable fields.

One of the works in the show is a film called *Black drop*, 2012, about the Transit of Venus observations and their relationship to the evolution of early cinema. Through that I found the Great Melbourne Telescope, which was used for a transit observation. The film, which is shown in relation to the speculum mirror of that telescope, is an almost impressionistic look at the way that I work with images. It was made in my studio using a telescope mirror as an editing device, so the mirror swung around the space and a camera tracked the surrounding images that it picked up. It was all done in a single four-minute take, one roll of film. My previous films took years to make and were very complicated, but this took just four minutes. It's liberating to do that at a certain point.

I SUPPOSE I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SLIGHTLY AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP TO THE STUDIO, TO THE IDEA OF HAVING A CENTRAL POINT OF PRODUCTION. I DO HAVE A STUDIO, BUT IT'S MORE A SPACE WHERE THINGS GET ORGANISED AND THINKING HAPPENS. I'VE ALWAYS LIKED TO MAKE THE WORK IN THE WORLD, AND TEST IT IN THE WORLD, WHICH BRINGS WITH IT ITS OWN COMPLICATIONS.

DS: Did you have a particular interest in astronomy or that area of scientific exploration before this?

SS: I've not been so preoccupied with that. 'In Speculum' actually came through an invitation from the University of Oxford and Modern Art Oxford to respond to the Transit of Venus, which happened in June 2012. I started to do a little bit of reading about the transit observations and the history of those things, and suddenly this link to cinema and photography appeared.

DS: Both 'In Speculum' and your recent Tate Britain exhibit were developed in response to museum collections. What's your approach to working within an institution and the history contained therein?

SS: It's something that comes very naturally to me. I've always made works with, and about, other people's artworks, and this practice does have a sort of curatorial sense to it anyway. It's like having a set of parameters to work within.

I curated an exhibition at Camden Arts Centre called 'Never the Same River (Possible Futures, Probable Pasts)' (2010–11), which dealt with notions of time. I decided to reinstall works that had already been shown in that space over a period of forty-five years or so, and to put them back exactly in their original exhibition place. It was like a sort of haunting of the space with its own past. And that led to things like *Phantom ride* at Tate Britain, which was made in the form of a film, using a motion-controlled camera that allows you to collage time and space in an extraordinary way.

DS: What's the process of that locating? Do you start with an idea that leads you to a certain place or pre-existing work, or vice versa?

SS: It just depends. I'm working on a project in two parts in Chicago at the moment. Titled 'Metamorphology', one component is at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and the other is at a place called The Arts Club of Chicago, which has had an incredible history over more than a century. They've done very important exhibitions – Constantin Brancusi made one of his first big exhibitions in the United States there.[4] Again, it's a set of parameters that I'm investigating and that I'll respond to in some way. It's constantly evolving. What I've tried to do over the years is keep the practice constantly moving forward, to not get stuck in a stable methodology. It's about always pulling the rug from under your feet.

Simon Starling: In Speculum, City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi, 22 February – 18 May 2014; **Metamorphology**, The Arts Club of Chicago, 5 June – 20 September 2014, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 7 June – 2 November 2014.

1 'In Speculum' showed at Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, and the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, in 2013.
2 This interview took place in Brisbane on 21 July 2013, ahead of the opening of 'In Speculum' at Monash University's Museum of Art, Melbourne, in July 2013.
3 This installation, titled *Le jardin suspendu*, 1998, incorporated various studio materials, a photograph of the garden at the Heide Museum of Modern Art, and the model airplane.
4 Held in 1927, this exhibition of Brancusi's sculpture was installed by Marcel Duchamp.

THE LATE ARTIST MARTIN SHARP WAS DRAWN NOT ONLY TO CRESSIDA CAMPBELL'S 2002 PRINT *NASTURTIUMS*, BUT TO ITS 'NEGATIVE', A CARVED AND PAINTED PLYWOOD BLOCK. 'CRESSIDA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS', SHARP CALLED IT, IN THIS ISSUE'S 'ARTIST'S CHOICE'.

ARTIST'S CHOICE: CRESSIDA CAMPBELL'S NASTURTIUMS

MARTIN SHARP

When Christine France first invited me to write for this publication I immediately thought of Justin O'Brien.

My mother Jo took me to see my very first art exhibition in 1951. It was the initial Blake Prize and the winner was *The Virgin enthroned (altar piece triptych)*, 1951, an incandescent masterpiece by Justin.

Later he became my art teacher at Cranbrook School, and then a lifelong friend.

I regard him as my Art Father. However, Brian Dunlop had written an 'Artist's Choice' text about Justin. (Should be interesting!)[1]

Who should I choose? I thought of the two Peters whose works I admired so much. Peter Kingston for his amazing chess set[2] at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney, and Peter Powditch's great and elegant figures and nudes. Rather than choose between them. (I would be pleased to write about them anytime) ...

I have chosen to write about Cressida Campbell, an artist close to my heart, and her *Nasturtiums*, 2002, donated to AGNSW by her great admirer, the late Margaret Olley.

Cressida's unusual creation of unique prints where she carves a plywood block. Paints it with water-soluble paints, moisturises the painted block and takes a single impression. Creating the print.

It is through the desire to create the print that she carves the block. Personally I prefer the carved block ... equally as many prefer the print. 'Cressida through the looking glass.'

I have observed Cressida's work since she was a girl to her honoured position today.

She is both a contemporary and a traditional artist.

I'm looking through Cressida's and her late husband Peter Crayford's beautiful publication *The Woodblock Painting of Cressida Campbell* (2008).

I discover *Nasturtiums*, reuniting the image I am seeking, the very page serendipitously bookmarked with an article about the book.

'A GIFT FROM THE HEART' by Peter Crayford.

Peter is dying ... this book is his farewell gift to her. Of course he gave her much more ... he gave her the time and space to become the great artist she is.

Peter mentions that because of his first dose of radiotherapy for his illness when he was only twenty-one years old he could not become a father. Some artists don't have children, their art is their gift to the world.

Cressida has been blessed with the ability to earn a living from her art without compromising her creativity. It is not easy work. It takes great discipline and focus to create such simple beauty.

She is avidly collected. A successful artwork contains its energy, it does not loose its strength, but keeps on giving. Such excellence can only be achieved through a diligence that would daunt most.

The eloquent art critic John McDonald wrote an excellent review of Cressida's 2009 retrospective, 'Timeless: The art of Cressida Campbell', at the S.H. Ervin Gallery.[3] I commend his words as someone who has understood her art and its relevance.

After seeing the catalogue of Cressida's latest exhibition, in 2013 at Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane, with its lovely image of flannel flowers against a blue sky, I was gently reminded of Vincent van Gogh's gift to his nephew, godson and namesake, of the apple blossom against a similar (the same?) blue sky.

Cressida's woodblocks and accompanying prints are beyond fashion; they will remain forever fresh, always bringing beauty and order into the world.

This text was written in October 2013. *ARTAND Australia* thanks Christine France for her assistance in its development.

1 See Brian Dunlop, 'Justin O'Brien: Composition', *ARTAND Australia*, vol. 18, no. 4, Winter 1981, pp. 368–9.
2 Peter Kingston's *Australia v England chess set*, 1976–78 (reworked 1981, 1985 and 2008) was gifted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, in 2007.
3 John McDonald, 'Beauty far beyond fashion', *Spectrum, Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 2009, p.18.

OPPOSITE
Cressida Campbell, *Nasturtiums*, 2002
Colour woodblock, 58.4 x 60 cm
Courtesy Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

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2

AND


40

INGE KING: AN OBDURATE CERTAINTY

GRAEME STURGEON

In 1978, the late Graeme Sturgeon placed Inge King's work midway between 'the sculpture of the past' and 'those sculptors for whom the process itself ... constitutes the work'. To celebrate 'Inge King: Constellation', the 2014 comprehensive National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, survey that charts nearly seventy years of the artist's practice, *ARTAND Australia* looks back, with a major essay from its archive.

In a long interview published in the Melbourne *Age* at the time of her April 1977 exhibition at Realities Gallery, the interviewer, a woman, attempted to lead King into a discussion of women-versus-men in the visual arts, but was brushed aside with the comment, 'I'm a sculptor, and that's that'.

It might well have been that, being a woman working in what continues to be predominantly a male area of achievement, King had some acerbic comments to make about the treatment given her by her male colleagues, but she has always realised that the real battle was with widespread ignorance of, and indifference to, sculpture itself.

Born in Germany and arriving in Australia in 1951 as a young sculptor accustomed to the availability of technical facilities and, more importantly, direct contact with an energetic, creative and supportive peer group, King found the total lack of any of these things here a great shock, because it severely inhibited her activity as a sculptor and forced her, for the time being, into other, non-sculptural activities. This is hardly unique. As for so many other creative people returning to Australia after a period of study abroad, the sudden lack of stimulus combined with the indifference or hostility of the public was a traumatic situation. This was overcome, in this case, only through King's obstinate belief in her own ability and her determination to pursue sculpture as a career, regardless of the strong possibility that no buyer would be found for the work she produced.

King's early work was characterised by a stylised figuration that was at base anthropocentric and symbolic, but which gradually but consistently moved to the opposite pole. This development was one of a slow unfolding, rather than a sudden and radical shift; the only apparent disjunction came after 1960, when a change of technical means (she learnt to weld) allowed her to begin to make a clearer exposition of her inner vision of what constituted sculptural truth. The concern with human problems of existence, of hope and despair expressed through a variety of organic forms was replaced by a cool formalism that came to avoid symbolism of any kind, and concentrated entirely on a limited range of formal problems and formal means.

In the 1964 Mildura Prize for Sculpture King exhibited a large, 250 centimetre-high welded-steel sculpture entitled *Flight arrested*, 1964, which consisted of a vertical trunk supporting an asymmetrically positioned 'wing'. Although in fact an abstract arrangement of planes established in static/dynamic opposition, the given title indicated a residual figuration in King's thinking, if not in her sculpture. The naming of individual works continues even today, but now the titles act largely as a means of identification, or as a clue to her thinking in relation to a work, rather than a means of imposing a particular way of looking at it.

King is a traditionalist insofar as she works within the accepted boundaries of sculpture, albeit in a modern idiom, firm in her belief that such object-making still provides a viable area of investigation. This is largely a generational attitude; the loss of faith in object sculpture occurred among those young American artists dissatisfied with the exploitative commercialism of the art world and disillusioned by their country's aggressive interference in Vietnam who sought to create new, simpler and uncorrupt systems of living and working.

King's work must then be understood in relation to her generation. Although obviously she is aware of recent developments in sculpture, her allegiance is to the work of men like David Smith, Donald Judd and Anthony Caro, whose work in welded metal has parallels with her own work and from whom she has on occasion borrowed ideas. Of the three, it is Smith who exhibits the same determination as King to produce work dominated by a sense of scale and monumentality, and to relegate structure to a secondary role. This is perhaps the overriding consideration for King; certainly it is the direction in which her most important pieces are cast. It is only comparatively recently that she has been able to see a number of her maquettes carried out to the scale originally envisaged.

This aspect of King's work would seem to presuppose a belief that there is still a need in the twentieth century for such large-scale works, but, despite the fact that she has carried out commissions for specific

KING IS A TRADITIONALIST INSOFAR AS SHE WORKS WITHIN THE ACCEPTED BOUNDARIES OF SCULPTURE, ALBEIT IN A MODERN IDIOM, FIRM IN HER BELIEF THAT SUCH OBJECT-MAKING STILL PROVIDES A VIABLE AREA OF INVESTIGATION.

memorials, the sculptures themselves have invariably been an integral part and product of her sculptural concerns at the time each piece was created. They are monumental in their own plastic terms, and make no concessions to or attempt to incorporate any pictorial or literary aspect of the organisation commissioning the work.

The second important characteristic of King's work, one which she shares with a number of contemporary sculptors, is its total commitment to twentieth-century materials and methods of fabrication, ideas which derive originally from Picasso's cubist sculpture and from the Russian constructivists. The look of this 'constructed' sculpture has become such a commonplace that it is necessary to make an effort to appreciate what a transformation has been effected. In the work of Henry Moore, the major representative of the alternative approach, there is a deliberate archaising, a looking back to some remote age in which tools were few and primitive, and the resultant sculpture crudely finished but powerful. In the back of the mind of such sculptors is the desire to achieve the same visual potency as the work of primitive sculptors by emulating their technical approach – obviously a bad case of the cart before the horse.

For King and the other makers of welded-steel sculpture, there is a wholehearted acceptance of the machine ethic. Not only are their works created from machine-manufactured materials and constructed with the aid of contemporary technology, but also the look of the work is to a large degree determined by the medium and the method of fabrication. As a result of this new approach the role of the artist in relation to the finished work has undergone a dramatic change. Now the artist's role consists only in the creation of the small maquette; the laborious task of translating the model into the size originally conceived can be passed to skilled technicians. Not all sculptors making steel sculpture work in this way. King and Clement Meadmore both do, whereas Lenton Parr, David Wilson and Clive Murray-White produce work of a complexity that largely precludes such an approach. *The welding was not hard to learn, but it takes time to express yourself in a new medium. It took me a few years to find my way.*[1]

The early welded sculpture of King was constructed of flat sheets cut to size and roughly welded in a way that emphasised the method of construction and the fact that it was not produced by some mechanical process; that is, she was concerned to lay stress on the role of the artist in the creation of the finished work.

Gradually the blunt angularity of these works was replaced by a more rounded, swelling configuration (*Oracle*, 1966, and *Great boulder*, 1967). At this stage King was consciously basing her work on natural forms with, in some cases, strong anthropomorphic overtones. By 1969, however, she had moved away from this position and was concerning herself entirely with formal relationships. A series of small wall sculptures mark the transition from the quasi-organic work that she was forcing her medium to follow to a more severe and mechanically precise approach in which she accepted the inherent qualities of her medium and began to take advantage of them. For all that, *Black wall sculpture*, *Wall sculpture 1* and *Behemoth* indicate that King had temporarily lost her way and was casting about for new ideas. Apparently unable to accept the severity of the new work that her development had led to, she introduced a range of effects: polished and ground surfaces, applied colour, and an arrhythmic distribution of standard units and suavely curved planes, with the intention of softening the final effect. These were to a large extent superficial decorative features that she had plucked from currently fashionable work being made in the United States. Much of this work was exhibited at her solo exhibition at the Powell Street Gallery, where she included photographs of the models, which aimed to show the effect of the piece if carried out to full size.

This realisation, that to achieve its full power her work must be executed on a monumental scale, was confirmed by a trip through Europe and the United States. Increasingly confident in her direction, on her return she began to produce maquettes that were truly sketches for large-scale works to be made in the factory, and that took full account of the limitations and advantages that this implied.

Unlike those sculptors who construct their work from prefabricated steel units, which although integrated within the works remain recognisably what they are, King uses flat sheet steel, which is cut, rolled and shaped to her needs. The inherent qualities of the material, the weight, density and surface quality, are of course still apparent, but such industrial or mechanical overtones as there necessarily are derive from the medium, and her handling of it, not from any accidental implication of an alternative function. Put another way, King's freedom to move is considerably greater than that of those sculptors using I-beams. In their cases the powerfully assertive nature of the industrial components lends it own visual strength to the work, but concurrently imposes a feeling and a look that may not be part of the creator's intention, but which is almost impossible to suppress.

To date, King has completed four large-scale commissions that reveal the scope of her intentions, and the degree of her achievement. Chronologically they are the *Sir Fred Schonell Memorial Fountain* at the Queensland University, 1972, the *RAAF Memorial*, Canberra, 1973, *Forward surge*, commissioned for the Victorian Arts Centre Plaza, 1974, and a large outdoor work for La Trobe University, 1976. Each of these pieces works in opposition to nature, existing as a sculptural proposition referring only to its own inherent logic for its justification. Each is set up outside in a public space, and each is deliberately located within or against a man-made environment. The open space together with a formal and unobtrusive architectural surround means that the work is free of any competing formation that might distract attention from, or in any way interrupt, the formal relationships within the work itself.

Of the four works *Forward surge* is the largest, the most imposing and the only one not yet installed. Originally exhibited as one of a group of maquettes for monumental sculpture, it was commissioned by the Building Committee of the Victorian Arts Centre, and will, on completion of the spire and theatre complex, be installed on the plaza between that and the art gallery. The four giant vanes will rise from the bluestone paving like four vast steel waves, under and between which the public will be able to pass. The finished work will cover a distance of 15 metres, but quite apart from its imposing size the impressive aspect of this work is its unpredictable relationship of parts. As in the best work of Smith and Caro,

LEFT
Wall sculpture 1, 1968
Yellow synthetic polymer paint and lacquer on steel, 205 x 51 x 23 cm
McClelland Gallery & Sculpture Park, Langwarrin
Courtesy Australian Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney
© Inge King

PAGE 526
Inge King with *Dialogue of circles install 1*, 1976
Photograph and courtesy La Trobe University, Melbourne
Courtesy Australian Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney

PAGES 528–9
Silent gong, 1989
Black and blue enamel paint on steel, 152 x 115 x 25 cm
Private collection, Melbourne
© Inge King

Echo, 1975
Black enamel paint on steel, 32.7 x 73 x 44.5 cm
Collection of the artist, Melbourne
© Inge King

ALTHOUGH KING IS AT PAINS TO COUNTER THE DEADENING EFFECT OF GRAVITY, HER SCULPTURE IS ALWAYS VISUALLY SET IN SYMMETRICAL BALANCE, A PRACTICE THAT TENDS TO MAKE A GROUP OF WORKS VIEWED TOGETHER SEEM MONOTONOUS AND PREDICTABLE AND FAILS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TENSILE STRENGTH OF HER MATERIAL.

we are denied any sense of formal predictability; the complexity of the relationship, and the distinctiveness of different views, mean that the work eludes our intellectual grasp, constantly renewing our interest as we move about it.

In the past, sculpture was conceived as volume surrounded by space, but the introduction into the sculptor's vocabulary of welded steel, with its qualities of great strength and great volume, has encouraged the creation of sculpture that articulates space without displacing it. In *Forward surge* King has so arranged the work that the space not only penetrates the sculpture, it becomes indivisibly part of it. The great curved planes, cut abruptly by the sweeping lines of the edges, define and animate the space, which in turn permits each segment of the work to develop its full amplitude.

While each of King's works is a discrete entity it also takes its place in the logical sequence of her development. Our appreciation of any single work will be heightened if we are familiar with the group of works to which it belongs, and in which she can be seen to be circling about the one problem, proposing various solutions.

In her 1977 exhibition at Realities Gallery King showed eleven maquettes, seven of which were intended for realisation on a monumental scale, plus two full-size works, *Templegate* and *Great planet*. The only elements common to each of the works shown were a circular unit of some kind generally juxtaposed to a rigid bar or frame, and an all-over coat of black paint. Exhibited in the elegantly bare white box of the gallery, the uniform coat of black revealed each work as a flat silhouette of considerable graphic impact. The tendency for those areas dependent on subtleties of surface rather than edge to become lost was to a degree overcome by the lighting.

The one consistently recurring theme in King's sculpture is her concern with gravity, or rather her constant search for a means of animating the inert nature of her material by giving it a visual energy that denies the downward pull. Although King is at pains to counter the deadening effect of gravity, her sculpture is always visually set in symmetrical balance, a practice that tends to make a group of works viewed together seem monotonous and predictable and fails to take advantage of the tensile strength of her material. Among her works in this area *Templegate* offers the most successful solution; it consists of two vertical and emphatically stable slabs of steel between which are suspended three great discs of steel, one of which is pierced by a large, centrally placed, circular hole. Because these discs are curved laterally and are attached to the supporting uprights high up and at various angles, they have a liveliness and a springing lightness that deny the gravitational pressure of the material without in any way diminishing the grandeur and imposing dignity of the work.

In *Echo* comparatively simple means are used to produce a structure of some visual and spatial complexity. Four rings of equal size are distributed irregularly, and at various angles of inclination, along and around a comparatively narrow rod attached at one end to a flat disc. This rigid 'plunger' provides the necessary stability and order in a work that would otherwise be chaotic. In this case the monochromatic black surface has an appropriately unifying function, which is less easy to justify in the case of *Great planet*. The essence of this work lies in the gentle curve of the simple unitary form, which, when seen from any other position than from directly in front, produces a variety of subtly different views. From every angle the work is dominated by the elegant and sweeping lines of its edges, which unfold rhythmically as we move around. The overall black surface is far too emphatic and works in opposition to the subtlety of the work itself.

Although King is always concerned to produce a 'finished' work, self-contained and complete in itself, the method of construction is immediately apparent. Our knowledge of the process of its creation forms part of our appreciation of the finished sculpture. This places King's work midway between the sculpture of the past, in which the process was only the means to the end result (and in which all the steps along the way to the finished work were concealed), and those sculptors for whom the process itself, that is, the action of the artist over a period of time, constitutes the work rather than any resultant configuration.

Throughout her career, and especially in her recent works, King has adopted a philosophical position that, while it recognised the importance of the process itself, saw the creation of a monumental dignity and solemn majesty as the dominant aim of her work. Intimately tied to this is her concern with the challenge posed by the Australian landscape – how to create sculpture that could survive the vast space and strong light of an open-air location. In each successive stage of her development, King has held fast to the certainty that great monumental sculpture was still possible and that she had within herself the creative power to produce it.

Inge King: Constellation, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1 May – 31 August 2014.

(Reprise, with minor amendments, of Graeme Sturgeon, 'Inge King: An obdurate certainty', *ARTAND Australia*, vol. 16, no. 2, Summer 1978, pp. 145–51.)

1 Inge King quoted in the *Age*, 9 April 1977, p. 16.

OPPOSITE
Rings with orange, 2009
Black and orange enamel paint on steel,
40.6 x 60.6 x 110.9 cm
Collection of the artist, Melbourne

THE MICHAEL BUXTON COLLECTION

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARREN SYLVESTER

In the second instalment of the ongoing 'Collect' project, bringing contemporary artists together with contemporary collections, *ARTAND Australia* commissioned artist Darren Sylvester to photograph the Melbourne-based Michael Buxton Collection.

Property developer Michael Buxton speaks about building a collection of influential Australian artists:
I started The Michael Buxton Collection of Contemporary Art in 1995, with the aim of creating a museum-quality collection based on the six best artists of the day. The first six were Howard Arkley, Mike Parr, Bill Henson, Tony Clark, Peter Tyndall and Peter Booth. The idea was then to review the considered best six every three years. Overseen by our Art Board, this model is still followed, but the review period has become shorter, and now takes place annually.

We seek to collect each listed artist in depth and across media, even if this requires going back ten to twenty years to increase the breadth of that particular artist's representation. This commitment to our artists is one of the defining features of the collection and can be seen in the works by Mike Parr, Juan Davila, Ricky Swallow, Patricia Piccinini, Tony Clark and many others – some forty contemporary Australian artists whose works now form the collection.

Numbering about 500 artworks, the collection is primarily housed in what we call The Art Factory, not only our storage facility but also the office of the collection, with other parts on display in our homes and office. Importantly for us there are also many pieces on loan to Australian and overseas institutions for exhibition purposes: for example, a major work by Juan Davila is on loan to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, and one by Hany Armanious has just been loaned to the Museu Picasso in Barcelona. In Australia works have recently been loaned around Melbourne and Victoria to the Monash University Museum of Art, Heide Museum of Modern Art, TarraWarra Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Victoria as part of 'Melbourne Now' (2013–14), and the Ian Potter Museum of Art. We constantly receive loan requests and are happy to see the artists' works exhibited regularly. We believe this reflects the significance of the collection.

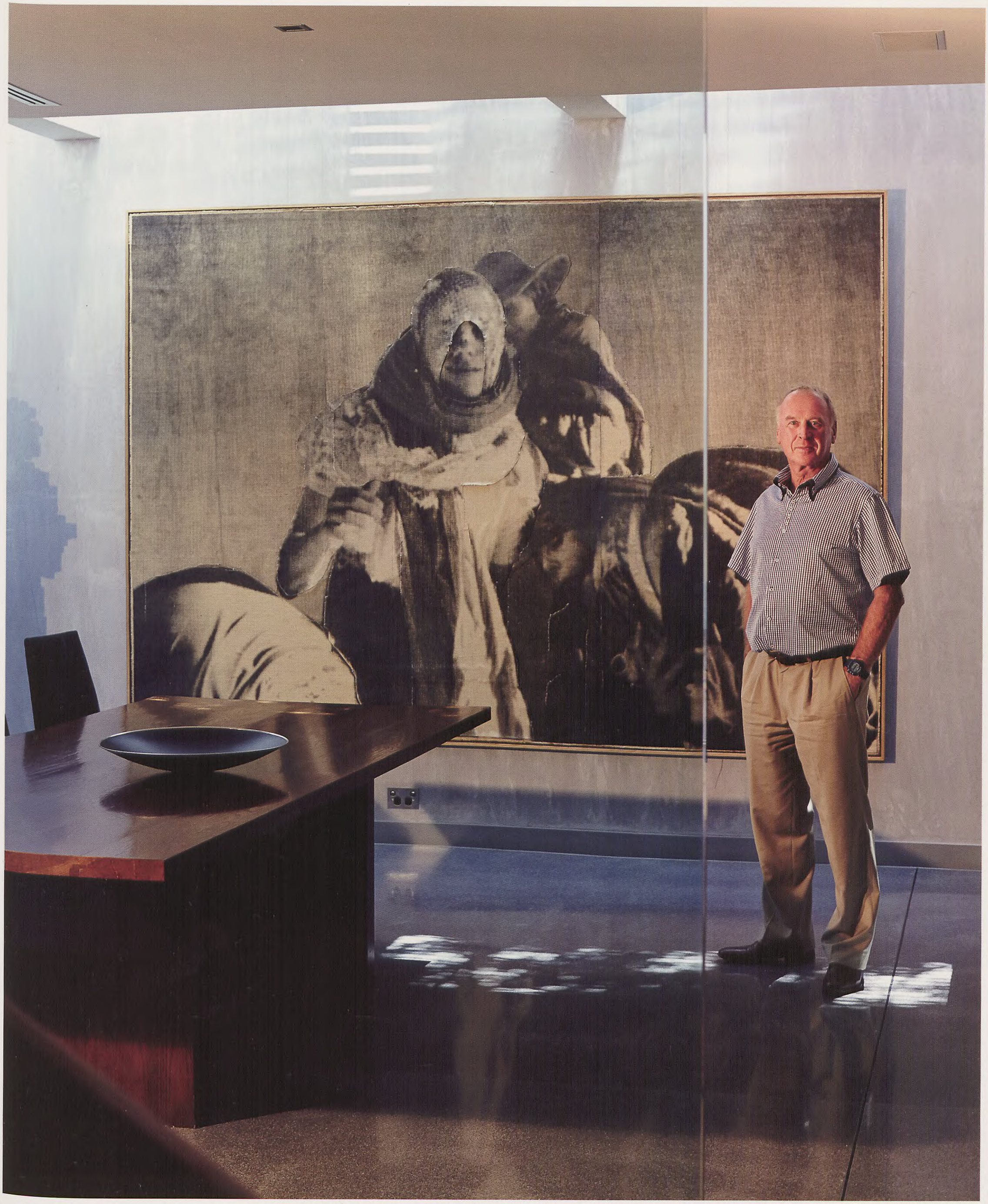
The series Darren Sylvester produced for *ARTAND Australia* is by far the most artistic approach to photographing parts of the collection that we have seen. These pieces are very much part of our life; we see them on a daily basis in our home. Using light and shadow to add a new excitement to the works, Darren has captured the essence of each in a most compelling way, transforming what we see every day into something different.

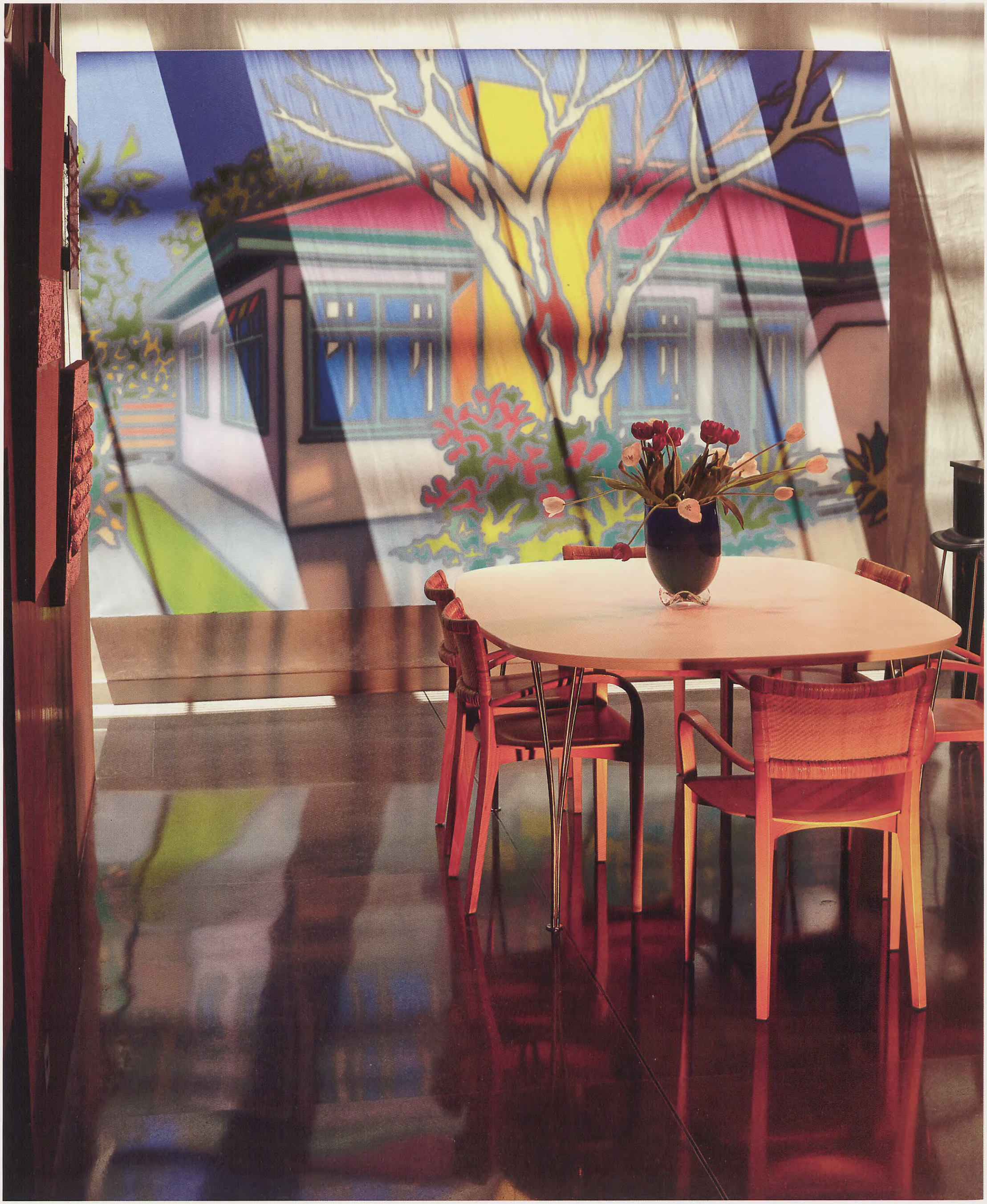
Invited by *ARTAND Australia* to photograph Michael Buxton alongside his collection, artist Darren Sylvester here reveals his approach and process:
The collection is spread out within Michael Buxton's house and, as all of us with personal collections know, the very act of displaying artworks in a living space becomes 'home decorating' to an extent. We must negotiate the decisions of space, practicality, pets and partners before anything can be positioned. With this in mind, I wanted to show as much of the surrounding interior as possible, photographing each artwork from the furthest perspective to fully reveal the different spatial contexts. I thought it was great that while I was there the collection was being rearranged and updated – I find that once I place an artwork at home, that is where it remains. Moving artworks around allows them to speak to you again and reinvigorate the room.

Photographing in this context, I was primarily interested in how the works sat within a domestic setting: how the sunlight streaming through the trees gave the Howard Arkley painting an ever-changing composition; how Gregor Kregar's *Large wise gnome*, 2008, caught the external light and became a kind of beacon or shrine to the kitchen; and how a Dale Frank painting provided an apocalyptic backdrop to an Antony Gormley sculpture. The artworks and the space they inhabit began to speak to one another.

I use a lot of lights and gels in my own photography, and here I found that highlighting aspects of the rooms in this way gave an interesting twist to a natural shot. I like how dramatic the floors and chairs and walls became – Michael's red couch was given an accompanying red floor with a floodlit kitchen to match, while the sepia in David Noonan's untitled 2008 work popped when a cool blue was added to the surrounding concrete walls.

PAGES 535–9
Michael Buxton with David Noonan, *Untitled*, 2008; Gregor Kregar, *Large wise gnome*, 2008; Antony Gormley, *Turn*, 2007, with Dale Frank, *Silence is a word that has to be spoken*, 2007, at back; Howard Arkley, *A large house and garden*, 1997; Michael Buxton with Juan Davila, *Sic*, 1988.



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ESSAY


DIEU · ET · MON · DROIT

KARLA DICKENS

CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE
JEANINE LEANE

DICKENS'S ART IS PART OF AN EXPANDING BODY OF WORK BY ABORIGINAL ARTISTS AND WRITERS THAT 'PERFORMS A DIFFERENT REALITY' TO THE EXISTING HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY FOR ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS. IT IS THROUGH HER TRANSFORMATION OF WASTE AND SURPLUS FROM THE CONTINUING COLONIAL PROJECT INTO ABORIGINAL CREATIONS AND STATEMENTS, AND REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK WOMEN, THAT PARALLELS CAN BE DRAWN BETWEEN HER PRACTICE AND THAT OF SOME ABORIGINAL WOMEN WRITERS.

Karla Dickens's artworks are the result of a continuing dialogue between the past and the present, a conversation grounded in her Aboriginality and sexuality. An 'ongoing connection' to her Aboriginal grandmother, Myrtle, and her immigrant grandfather, Tom, 'fuels much of her work'.[1]

Dickens is a Wiradjuri woman born in Sydney in 1967, the year of the referendum that theoretically gave human status and equal rights to the nation's First People. But the gap between theory and practice is something that most Aboriginal Australians are still confronted with today. The use of the term 'gap' is well-worn by white academics, policy-makers and theorists to describe what they see as Aboriginal 'deficit' – the gap in educational achievement, the gap in employment, the gap in income. Dickens's work is part of a growing body of Aboriginal creative expression that interrogates this gap as a colonial, rather than Aboriginal, deficit.

Growing up in Mascot and Maroubra, as a child Dickens had dreams of becoming an artist and living on a farm. She left school at seventeen and worked in a series of part-time unskilled jobs. Her main objective during that time was to 'create as much art as possible', and in her early twenties she attended the National Art School in Darlinghurst, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts.

To attempt to categorise Dickens as an artist would be reductionist. Her impressive array of work makes use of many mediums to convey a strong, resilient story of contemporary Aboriginality in Australia. Layering of mediums to represent stages of time and experience is a central feature of her work. Dickens uses fabric, leather, paper, paint, feathers, photographs, plastic and 'all things discarded and fossicked from rubbish tips' such as old baseball masks, fishhooks and reel, twine and bone to create two- and three-dimensional pieces. Dickens creates collages using an appliqué technique with cloth and paper, while her three-dimensional sculptures are made by rearranging and re-positioning recycled items – an old planer that is inverted to form a cage or cell in the 'Black Madonna' series (2009–11) for example.

Dickens's artistic practice is dictated by the deep and prevalent feelings she has about issues that have long preoccupied her thoughts: *I often have a topic in mind for ages and I mull it over for some time. I don't dismiss it – I just let it hang there. Then, sometime when I am walking or foraging through the tip, I'll find something ... something that nobody else wants and I'll know straight away that this is the material or object I need to express a long-held thought or as yet unexpressed feeling.*

I come to this discussion of Dickens's work not as an artist or art critic, but as a Wiradjuri scholar whose formal background is in western literary history and its long trajectory of representations of Aboriginal people. Murri scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson argued that 'representations are more than mere symbols. They are ways by which we come to know, embody and inform reality'.[2] For nearly two hundred years, it was white Australians who controlled and generated visual and literary representations of Aboriginal people. Such depictions were usually grounded in deficit and manifested the unequal power relationships consistent with times and places of production in the colonial project.

Aboriginal people have never been complicit in or passive towards the invasion and encroachment of the British diaspora on our country, despite the official colonial history that, until recently, denied this. During the 1960s, however, it became increasingly difficult for non-Aboriginal Australians to ignore this truth. Aboriginal scholar Clifford Watego asserted that the most important waves of social change filtering from abroad were the ascendancy and activism of the Blacks in the United States and the swiftness of the media to report on such events.[3] Watego went on to say that during the 1960s many educated Australians were conscious of the indications of change despite the conservatism of the Menzies era; indeed, it could not be discounted that the prevailing mood abroad had exercised a profound influence on race relations at home. The 1963 Yolngu bark petition, 1966 Wave Hill walk-off, 1965 Freedom Rides, 1967 referendum and the re-establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy

in Canberra in 1972 are evidence of this. Activism continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1988, the 200th anniversary of the British invasion, bus-loads of Aboriginal people came to Sydney from all over Australia to protest the re-enactment of the arrival of the 'tall ships', which forced many settlers to confront the Black history that they had either misrepresented or ignored. Aboriginal creative expression has played a key role in the post-invasion, post-Mabo, post-sorry sociopolitical climate by speaking back to our histories and *re-presenting* them respectfully, meanwhile *presenting* our aspirations for the future.

Dickens's art is part of an expanding body of work by Aboriginal artists and writers that 'performs a different reality' to the existing historical trajectory for Aboriginal Australians. It is through her transformation of waste and surplus from the continuing colonial project into Aboriginal creations and statements, and representations of Black women, that parallels can be drawn between her practice and that of some Aboriginal women writers.

Dickens makes much use of what may be from a colonial perspective described as rubbish or waste.[4] Old dog muzzles, a planer, baseball gloves and a discarded fish reel have been reworked into three-dimensional sculptures that symbolise both traditional and contemporary aspects of Aboriginality. In this way her work calls into question culturally specific notions about disposability and permanence. I am reminded of Waanyi writer Alexis Wright's award-winning novel *Carpentaria* (2006). By depicting waste in a manner in keeping with Aboriginal ontology, where the concept of objects having no value is foreign, Wright recasts colonial waste as Aboriginal resources and in doing so contests notions of excess and the 'no-value' status of rubbish. An Aboriginal approach to waste is restorative and recuperative; what does not have use for one entity may be useful to another, whether they are human or animal. In Wright's work, the garbage dump takes on a central role as an important site of cultural exchange.

This approach to excess and waste resonates strongly with Dickens's art. Some rusty metal, cow teeth and black and red twine are woven together in her two-dimensional 2013 series 'Masks'. Resembling traditional masks worn in Aboriginal ceremony, the faceless spaces within these objects create shadows that stare out as a solid reminder of the continuing presence and guidance of Elders pervading the present.

Shadows are a recurring theme in much of Dickens's work. Shadows may be barely visible, and silent, but they are inescapable, like the past. Shadows, in such works as 'The Black Dogs' series (2013), symbolise unresolved issues that characterise much of contemporary Aboriginal life due to the history of removal of children and the relocation of many families from their traditional Country.[5] The shadows serve to remind us of the unfinished business that exists between Aboriginal and settler Australians that needs to be addressed if a genuine state of reconciliation is to be realised in the twenty-first century.

The widespread and profound symbolism of the Black Madonna is a central concern of Dickens's painting and sculpture. The Black woman in Australian colonial literature has until recently been represented as a 'dejected plodder'[6] or as a temptress, a sexual object whose desires are more in keeping with animal instincts than human rationalism.[7] For settler women, the Black woman is the 'dark secret in the colonial closet'. Dickens's constructions refuse such assimilation. Her two- and three-dimensional images of the Black mother emit a dignified reverence that is in keeping with Aboriginal matrilineal culture. This resonates with my own collection of poetry, *Dark Secrets: After Dreaming*,[8] inspired by Wiradjuri women's stories from campfire to captivity, to confinement and on through colonialism. With our continuing presence and our representations of our past, present and future, like Dickens's work, it challenges colonial secrecy:

Millennia of clothing, centuries of science,
brains and hearts under the microscope,
decades of colonial corsets pulled tight
will never restrain or contain this
Dark Secret.

Dickens's work is an ongoing testimony to the continuing role of Aboriginal women as keepers of stories, custodians of the past, *and* carriers of a living, dynamic contemporary Australian Aboriginal culture. It is a palimpsest of diverse layers that symbolises continuity and change and the ongoing dialogue between the two.

Hereby Make Protest, Carriageworks, Sydney, 17 June – 18 July 2014; **TarraWarra Biennial 2014: Whisper in My Mask**, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, 9 August – 16 November 2014.

1 All Karla Dickens's quotes are taken from a conversation with the author, 3 February 2014.
2 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000, p. xxii.
3 See Clifford Watego, 'Backgrounds to Aboriginal literature', in Emmanuel Nelson (ed.), *Connections: Essays on Black Literatures*, Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1988, pp. 11–25.
4 Karla Dickens's work sits in dialogue with non-Aboriginal Australian artists, including Rosalie Gascoigne and Robert Klippel, who have made and continue to make art from waste materials, perhaps for aesthetic rather than ontological reasons.
5 In Aboriginal ontology, Australia as we know it today was a landmass of many countries, including Wiradjuri, Dhurug, Yorta Yorta, Waanyi, etc.
6 See Patrick White, *A Fringe of Leaves*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1976.
7 See Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Coonardoo*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1929; Arthur Upfield, *Bony and the Black Virgin*, Heinemann, London, 1959; and Leonard Mann, *Venus Half-Caste*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1963.
8 Jeanine Leane, *Dark Secrets: After Dreaming (AD) 1887–1961*, PressPress, Berry, 2010, p. 32.

OPPOSITE
Guardian 1, 2013
Mixed medium, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

PAGE 542
Black Madonna, VI, 2009, detail
Mixed medium on canvas, 102 x 92 cm
Courtesy the artist

PAGE 545
Guardian 3, 2013
Mixed medium, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

PAGES 546–7
Holy Mother 1, 2010
Mixed medium on canvas, 150 x 102 cm
Courtesy the artist

SO HOT RIGHT NOW? CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS AND CONTEMPORARY ART

GLENN BARKLEY

I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISSOLVE THE BARRIERS BETWEEN ART AND CRAFT, AS FOR THE MOST PART THEY ARE ARTIFICIAL. BUT I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ARTIST AS CRAFTSPERSON AND THE ARTIST USING CRAFT NEEDS TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED (AND THEN, PARADOXICALLY, IGNORED).

I guess pottery is a bit of a sect.[1]

Ceramics, for a long time the forgotten cousin of contemporary art, seems to be going through a re-evaluation. Its presence has been felt in such important events as the last Venice Biennale (2013) where curator Massimiliano Gioni privileged artmaking of an obsessive, humble and genuine kind over the increasingly cynical and market-driven spectacle art that we have come to associate with fairs and mega-exhibitions. This return to craft and the increasing interest in rapidly disappearing and obsolete ways of making can be tracked across disciplines, and is comparable to more prosaic activities like artisanal beer and bread-making, and slow food. But it's important to note that an unclear division exists between 'ceramic artists' and those who could be called artists who use ceramics. Artist Stephen Bird told me of a critic who 'could not make his mind up as to whether [Bird] made crafty art or arty craft', and this is the ongoing conundrum for ceramics. (As often happens in Australian contemporary art the division can depend on what commercial gallery an artist shows with – a slightly cynical view, but one worth pondering.)

Curators and their personal interests, education and networks are an important part of this division. As are the old media-based lines under which many large galleries and institutions operate. When artists move from media to media – each being a vehicle for similar ideas – how does this play out in the silo-driven acquisition policies and strategies of collecting institutions? When artists use ceramics but are equally comfortable with two-dimensional or moving-image forms, where and how is the work collected and could this lead to disjointed representation? Does this now render the idea of 'decorative arts' obsolete? With the notable inclusions of Alan Constable, Angela Brennan, Brendan Huntley and Prue Venables, the National Gallery of Victoria's recent 'Melbourne Now' exhibition (2013–14) was a barometer of where ceramics belongs right now, with all the complexities of this positioning.

Alan Constable works in a primal way, constructing cameras from clay. Often the cameras, both film and still, are old-fashioned, and there is a sense that we are encountering some sort of modern ruin. Ceramics are regularly employed as a way to understand the past, and here Constable offers a small tribute to the camera, its rise and its demise; all are 'mute' forms, more about touch than sight.

Known primarily as a painter Angela Brennan has been making ceramics since 2012, transforming her very particular aesthetic into three dimensions. It is a personal practice built on observation and an interest in small gestures that sometimes looks towards the found or amateur as subject, with menus, recipes or handwritten notes taking on the profundity of Colin McCahon. This is carried across

into Brennan's ceramics, which possess an innocence that can come only from fresh eyes and the discovery of a new material. The works are unpretentious and disarming in their simplicity and one such as *Bust with pot*, 2013, feels like a dream and appears to have come together in a creative fugue state.

'Melbourne Now' also included the work of artists positioned within a craft tradition, the display adhering to traditional departmental lines. This is emblematic of the contemporary art world, which speaks of openness but still depends on art-historical belief systems and methods of display – which is not necessarily a negative. But it is within this space between nomenclature and tradition that a number of artists work. Based in Sydney, Stephen Bird originally trained as a painter and turned to ceramics in the 1990s, his work combining polished technical skill with wit and an element of the grotesque. Taking on many of the tropes of popular ceramics, such as toby jugs and kewpie dolls, Bird recasts them as mutant ensembles.

Over the course of a long career, Toni Warburton has been making beautiful nuanced forms animated by observations of the natural world but tempered by her own personal politic. Her work combines found objects and made forms through an intuitive and well-honed technique. For Peter Cooley, however, ceramics and painting function as parallel practices: in terms of subject, both mediums are united by the artist's interest in landscape and native flora and fauna, sometimes finding inspiration in kitsch or baroque treatments of Australian icons. Such influences give Cooley's work a conceptual charge that is *about* the handmade as well as about being handmade. And clay is used as a vehicle to investigate two- and three-dimensional properties. Cooley's forms are inherently painterly – they can be flat like a piece of card yet robust and voluminous.

To my eye these three artists – Cooley, Warburton and Bird – are models for younger contemporary artists working with ceramics. They share an interest in low, primitive, folk and marginal artforms investigated with a flamboyant sense of style and grace. They also tread the fine line of knowing good technique but not being overwhelmed by it – to lean on it when you need, while at other times letting it go. (You find this also in good musicianship – to be equal parts concert pianist and garage band.)

It is in this spirit that the recent re-evaluation of ceramics should be understood. As a curator I think it is important to dissolve the barriers between art and craft, as for the most part they are artificial. But I also believe that the distinction between the artist as craftsperson and the artist using craft needs to be acknowledged (and then, paradoxically, ignored).

Brendan Huntley seems to have overcome some of the petty prejudices pitted against ceramics. Huntley's work is imbued with an intuitive sense of texture and form, and his inclusion in 'Primavera 2013: Young Australian Artists' at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, alongside the work of Juz Kitson, an artist who uses ceramics on a grand and ambitious scale, is worth analysing.

In essence Huntley's work is closer to craft traditions than it may seem; his mother was a production potter who taught Huntley, and this is integral to the works' meaning and aesthetic. Importantly, he didn't study ceramics in a formal sense, which may have caused him to bypass some hardline technical and process-driven boundaries. Huntley explained:

Dad taught me to paint and Mum taught me to throw. So the forms I use are often based on her forms. I continue to use a lot of these forms as a homage; it's just part of my life. They're the shapes I've grown up with, the flowers in the vases, the cereal, soups and salads in the bowls, the tea in the mug.

I think because I didn't study ceramics in school I come at it more casually, leaving me more open to the ideas of experimentation. And not giving a damn for all the usual craft rules. I think that's the difference (I could be wrong), but I think a lot of 'potters' are harder on themselves: 'this one's warped, this one's glaze has bubbled, chuck them in the bin'.

I say embrace it, put it on a plinth.[2]

Is this a watershed moment where ceramics is finally brought into the contemporary context? Or is it just that – a 'moment' – a brief time for ceramics to shine before the contemporary art world, with its voracious appetite for newness, moves on? Considering the conundrum of contemporary ceramics, I can't help but think of an artist like Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, who long made work outside the mainstream, achieving unparalleled success as both *ceramicist* and *artist*. Hers is a singular career, difficult to achieve and the finest of balancing acts.

Interest in the evidence of the artist's hand is a refreshing restoration of first principles in artmaking. The era of the high-flying artist-assistant may be coming to an end, with a return to the grounded, humanist ideas and techniques that drew many to art in the first place. Ceramics and all that it brings, from the beautiful, restrained and elegant to the common, vulgar and handmade, is the perfect vehicle through which this return can take place.

1 Both Stephen Bird quotes are taken from email correspondence with the author, 17 February 2014.
2 Taken from email correspondence with the author, 20 February 2014.

PAGE 550
Peter Cooley, *Cassowary 4*, 2013
Earthenware, 62 x 52 x 46 cm
Courtesy the artist, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, and Gould Galleries, Melbourne

PAGES 554–5
Alan Constable, *Not titled (orange movie camera)*, 2007
Ceramic, 24 x 12.4 x 12.4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

Alan Constable, *Not titled (green SLR AH)*, 2008
Ceramic, 21 x 29.5 x 15.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

PAGES 556–7
Angela Brennan, *Bust with pot*, 2013
Wheel-thrown and hand-built, underglazed terracotta and earthenware, 40 x 60 cm
Courtesy Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

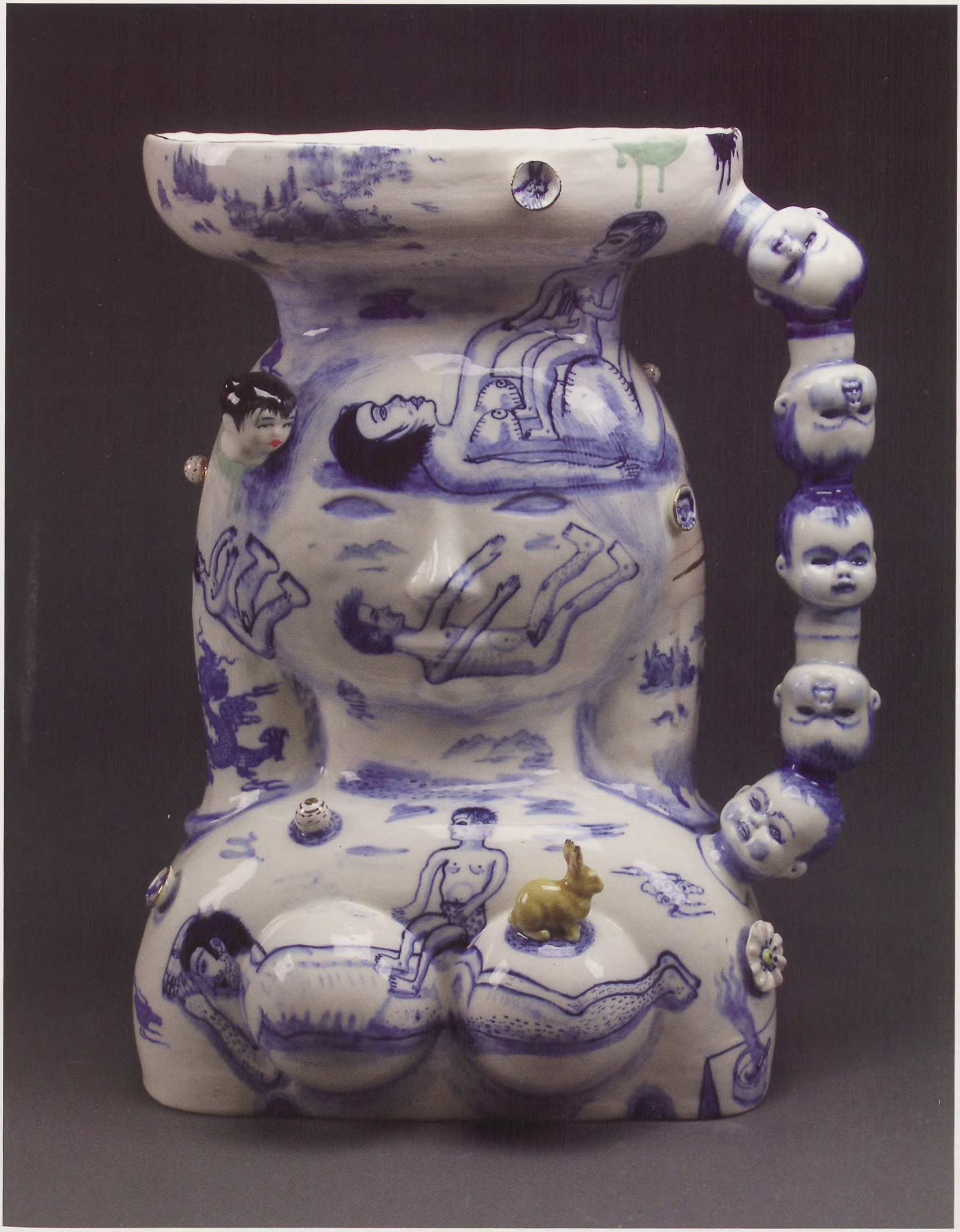
Angela Brennan, *Jug with two handles*, 2013
Stoneware, 41 x 24 x 16 cm
Courtesy Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Photograph Christian Markel
© Angela Brennan

PAGES 558–9
Brendan Huntley, *Untitled*, 2012–13
Stoneware, terracotta, raku, slip, glaze and enamelled wooden bat, 43 x 34 x 34 cm
Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Brendan Huntley, *Untitled (SEPARATE WAYS)*, 2011
2 parts, ceramic on linen, 70 x 19 x 19 cm, 73 x 21 x 18 cm
Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne
Photograph Christian Capurro

PAGES 560–1
Toni Warburton, *Vase for sea water (black button periwinkles)*, 2009
Hand-modelled terracotta painted with ceramic engobes, pigments and glazes, 38 x 24 x 24 cm
Courtesy the artist

Stephen Bird, *Loving cup*, 2009
Clay, pigment and glaze, 40 x 31 x 20 cm
Courtesy the artist



ILKARI MUNU MANTA

SKY AND COUNTRY
NYURPAYA KAIKA-BURTON

I HAVE BEEN THINKING THAT MY TREE IS REALLY QUITE LIKE WATI TJILPI – A SENIOR ANANGU MAN – IN THAT IT'S STRONG AND PROUD AND FULL OF KNOWLEDGE. THE BRANCHES OF MY TREE REACH OUT TO PROTECT EVERYTHING IT STANDS IN FRONT OF – TJUKURPA (LAW), WALYTJA (FAMILY) AND MANTA (COUNTRY), THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS.

What wheels and soars high in the sky? Old Man Eagle. Gifted with great intelligence, and beautiful sharp eyes with which to observe, he ascends to the skies to look down on his prey, bent over the grasses as they feed. From up there, he will give a cry: 'kii'. He descends in a flash, wings stiffened, dropping down to the ground to land on a nearby tree. He sits there watching, and then suddenly he flies again, spreading his feathers wide. The poor kangaroo is blinded by the eagle's outstretched feathers, as great feet grip it tightly around the middle and sharp claws are planted deep into its body. Impaled by claws, the kangaroo is picked up and carried off to the eagle's nest for his offspring and partner, who feed on it for many days. Back on the ground, the kangaroos – poor things – are hiding fearfully in shrubby thickets, trying to save their lives. By the late afternoon, when the sun has descended and the air is cooling down, they know they can come out from the bushes and back into the open. They emerge from hiding and eat grass until dawn, when, fearing for their lives, they quickly go and hide in the thickets again. With full stomachs, after a long night of eating and no rest, they go to sleep. The young kangaroos play happily in the shade of the shrubs all day, while their fathers and mothers sleep. That is all.

My name is Nyurpaya Kaika Burton. I am an artist. I paint on canvas and make tjanpi (tussock) grass sculptures, and I have also recently diversified into writing and recording on paper the culture that informs my art. One of my recent tjanpi grass installations was Old Man Eagle, made as part of the 2011 collaborative installation *Paarpakani (take flight)*,[1] and once I'd finished making him, I decided to document the way I go about weaving a tjanpi sculpture.

When I am ready to start, I take a specifically shaped, curved but strong branch. I position it and then cover it entirely with tjanpi grasses. I then take a long needle and, compressing the grasses, stitch them all together with a strand of raffia, encircling the whole form with the stitches to make it sturdy. Once the branch can no longer be seen, I layer smaller bunches of tjanpi, binding them into place with wool. I wrap the wool around and around, up the neck and around the head, and then, after that, the body. I highlight the contours with tjanpi and raffia, and where there are gaps I fill those with shorter lengths of raffia and stitches, so the entire piece becomes tight. I make the two lower legs very securely, and the two feet just the same. I stitch everything together so that the Old Man is as robust as he is in real life. When he has finally taken shape I use grasses and wool to make his wings and feathers, sewing them on in layers, right up to his tail. I sew on both his eyes from the inside, so that they are embedded and fixed in place. Old Man Eagle is now ready to fly up into the sky and cry out into the wide, open spaces. But, oh, that's right – this Old Man Eagle is made only of grass! I can't help pretending he is real, and I laugh as I write this. Working with tjanpi really is inspiring.

A couple of years ago the men of Tjala Arts started a project, painting all different kinds of trees and also weapons. Trees have always played a very significant role in several important cultural stories, in Tjukurpa. On this occasion the men were making a fence with their artworks – they saw the trees as a fence standing strong to protect our culture. This is what the exhibition 'Punu-ngurru (From the Trees)' (2012) was about. The men started this project and then the women followed, making sculptures of trees, and joining them in making this fence.[2]

As part of this project I created a standing tree with many branches. In the spaces between the forks of the branches I built birds' nests of emu feathers and fine twigs, and sculpted a number of birds to perch beside the nests. My tree looked very realistic. This tree is now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. If you would like to see it, please go along and have a look.

My tjanpi tree is large, strong and masculine. It stands out proud in this group of women's sculptures because of its scale and strength. I have been thinking that my tree is really quite like Wati Tjilpi – a senior Anangu man – in that it's strong and proud and full of knowledge. The branches of my tree reach out to protect everything it stands in front of – Tjukurpa (Law), Walytja (Family) and Manta (Country), the three most important things.

In the same group of artworks, there is a sculpture of a man inside a tree.[3] Anangu have lots of important stories, some so important we can't share them with outsiders, but this one I can tell you.

That man in the tree was hunting for meat, chasing a possum, when he fell, suddenly, inside the tree. The top of the trunk closed above his head, trapping him within. He was really stuck inside the tree, with absolutely no way to get out.

His two wives were waiting at home completely unaware of what had happened. His feet were exposed under the tree and he was able to move, so he shuffled and shuffled, inching himself and the enormous

tree home to seek help from his wives. Seeing the tree approaching their home, his wives cried, 'Hey! Hey! Hey! What is this tree coming our way! What's going on?' The husband called out to his terrified wives, telling them he was stuck inside.

The wives immediately called for a Ngangkari,[4] but the special powers of the Ngangkari were unable to remove the man from the tree. The man called for another, more powerful Ngangkari who lived far away. This Ngangkari took a long time to reach the man, and when he did arrive, he went to work immediately. The Ngangkari blasted that tree with his powers, splitting it in half down the length of the trunk. Sadly, by this time, however, the man had perished; he was nothing but a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones.

Our grandparents were extremely cautious with fire during stormy and windy weather, in case the wind blew to cause a raging wildfire. They simply, quietly and carefully managed the land. Their children became adults and, in turn, took over care of the land. But too many white people know nothing about our culture. They go onto our land without permission and leave burning firesticks and hot coals lying on the ground, which later reignite and start a bushfire. The wildfire grows and burns all the grasses, spreading further until the whole country is on fire. These same people have cameras, and when they see a beautiful tree, they take photographs of it and show it to us. But the senior men do not like white people going wherever they please on our land without permission. You see, there are a great many restricted areas of high cultural value, which are sacred to all senior old men. They value this culture highly, and so, please, if you are travelling through our lands, never enter any of these areas unless you are accompanied by some of the old men.

Our grandfather's and grandmother's generation were all bush people, who cared greatly for the lands that their ancestors had handed down to them, as well as the food plants and trees, and the bushes that provided shady branches so essential for their survival. They maintained sacred areas whenever they were hunting nearby, carefully uprooting and clearing the plants from around the sacred trees and throwing the vegetation away to one side, making the ground clear and smooth. When they had done this, they would continue their hunt, so as to bring home meat for the children.

After I made the tjanpi tree, I had a heartfelt feeling, 'Ai, I should write down the intensity of my feelings towards plants and trees, and let them be known'. You see, on our lands we have many, many different trees. Some are food-bearing trees, which our people have subsisted on since the early days; many, across the wide, open country, are the holders of important and ancient stories, which children down through the ages see and learn. When they grow up, it becomes their turn to safeguard and take care of the trees.

String Theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 8 March – 13 July 2014.

Translated from Pitjantjatjara by Linda Rive.

1 *Paarpakani (take flight)*, made by the author and artists Naomi Kanturiny, Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken, Paniny Mick, Yaritji Young, Niningka Lewis, Tjunkaya Tapaya and Rene Kulitja, appeared in the 2012 exhibition 'Deadly: In Between Heaven and Hell' at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide, and then in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, exhibition 'Heartland' (2013). The work was made through Tjanpi Desert Weavers, a social enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, which was created to enable women in the remote Central and Westerns Deserts to earn their own income from fibre art.

2 The exhibition 'Punu-ngurru (From the Trees)' was held at Raft Artspace, Alice Springs, in March 2012, and featured an installation of tjanpi works titled *Tjanpi punu*, 2012, created by the author and artists Naomi Kanturiny, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Rene Kulitja, Paniny Mick, Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken and Yaritji Young. *Tjanpi punu* was then featured in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, exhibition 'Heartland' (2013).

3 This work was made by Naomi Kanturiny as part of *Tjanpi punu*, 2012. Similar works by the author and Tjanpi Desert Weavers artists Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken, Niningka Lewis, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Tjunkaya Tapaya, Carlene Thompson and Yaritji Young; Mary Gibson, Jubia Jackatee, Tjukaparti James, Nyinku Kulitja, Pantjiti Mackenzie, Patricia Orgula, Martha Protty, Rosalind Yibardi and Yvonne Yibardi; Dorcas Bennett, Annie Farmer, Dianne Ungukalpi Golding, Bridget Jackson, Nancy Jackson, Anna Porter, Eunice Yunurupa Porter, Tjawina Porter and Dallas Smythe; and Naomi Kanturiny featured in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, exhibition 'String Theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art' (2013).

4 A Ngangkari is a traditional healer.

OPPOSITE
Birds by Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton (top) and Tjunkaya Tapaya and Rene Kulitja (bottom) from *Paarpakani (take flight)*, 2011, with Naomi Kanturiny, Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken, Paniny Mick, Yaritji Young and Niningka Lewis
Mixed media, dimensions variable
© Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council
Photographs Mick Bradley

PAGE 562
Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton on artists' camp near Amata, South Australia, 2011
© Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council
Photograph Jo Foster

PAGE 564
Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton's work from the installation *Tjanpi punu*, 2012, with Naomi Kanturiny, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Rene Kulitja, Paniny Mick, Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken and Yaritji Young
Mixed media, dimensions variable
© Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council
Photograph Mick Bradley

PAGES 566–7
Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton, Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken, Niningka Lewis, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Tjunkaya Tapaya, Carlene Thompson and Yaritji Young, *Minyma punu kungkarangkalpa*, 2013, detail
7 parts, mixed media, dimensions variable; technical assistance Jo Foster, Claire Freer
Installation view, 'String Theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art' (2013), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
© Tjanpi Desert Weavers, NPY Women's Council
Photograph Alex Davies

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FOCUS

PROJECT: POETRY

OPPOSITE AND PAGES 574–5
Shinichi Sawada, *Untitled*, 2006–10
Clay, natural glaze
Courtesy the artist

JAPANESE OUTSIDER ART

COLIN RHODES

Forty years after the legendary curator Harald Szeemann mixed outsider and contemporary art at documenta 5 (1972) in Kassel, Germany, Massimiliano Gioni based the curatorial premise of his 2013 Venice Biennale exhibition, 'The Encyclopedic Palace', on a piece of outsider art. The work by Marino Auriti – an architectural model for a 136-storey museum that would house all worldly knowledge – encapsulated Gioni's desire to focus, as he said, 'on the realms of the imaginary and the functions of the imagination'. Arguing that in their practices artists commonly attempt to actively make the world, he asked 'What room is left for internal images – for dreams, hallucinations and visions – in an era besieged by external ones?' The result was a breathtaking accumulation of outsider, self-taught and other art from non art-world places, presented together with a rich offering of recognised contemporary art, but without imposed hierarchy, and each in conversation, so to speak, with the other. It got a lot of people talking about outsider art – many for the first time.

In this context, two Japanese artists included in Gioni's exhibition are of particular interest – Shinro Ohtake and Shinichi Sawada. Though their works are strikingly different from each other stylistically, both appear to fit comfortably within a recognisable outsider art aesthetic, characterised by spontaneous production and a kind of obsessive, internally driven world-making. Yet Ohtake (born 1955) is the product of a regular art school and has operated successfully within the contemporary global art world since the early 1980s, even enjoying a career retrospective at Tokyo's Museum of Contemporary Art in 2006, while Sawada (born 1982) works in a supported studio and belongs to a social group not usually associated in the public mind with a presence in the art world.

First theorised by major French artist and collector Jean Dubuffet as art brut in the 1940s, outsider art is most commonly identified as work that is unconnected to the structures of training, career development and primary reception that make up the global contemporary art world. This distance means that individual bodies of outsider art rarely conform to the aesthetic norms of their day and their makers tend to belong to groups that at various times have been socially marginalised through race, class, education, mental health, learning and intellectual disability and world view, though the defining qualities of the art are neither measured nor bound by this. Instead, outsider art's apologists (following Dubuffet's lead) argue that it uniquely shares qualities of freshness, inventiveness, insightfulness, vision, directness, rawness and honesty, qualities that, they further claim, are obscured or compromised in the art of trained career artists – 'cultural art', as Dubuffet dismissively described it.[1]

While this might have held for the dominant late modernist and postmodern scenes between the mid-1960s and the mid-1990s, it is less easily justifiable as a distinguishing mark in contemporary art. And Gioni's inspired – and very contemporary – Venice project shook things up even more, with almost everything having something like a family resemblance. Note, though, that most of the outsider art in Venice, which fitted so well with a contemporary art aesthetic, was produced in the *first* six decades of the twentieth century. Sawada's was one of the very few twenty-first-century outsider art contributions to the show.

The history of Japanese outsider art is a recent one. Though there have been a number of significant exhibitions of European and American outsider art in Japan in the last couple of decades, the idea of a specifically Japanese outsider art is relatively new. In an article published as recently as 2008 in the specialist outsider art magazine *Raw Vision*, Edward M. Gomez described it as 'the new frontier', and Asia as 'a territory just waiting to be explored'.[2] He was talking from the Euro-American context of an already institutionalised notion of outsider art and a specialist market keen for new 'discoveries'. But he was also writing at a moment when Japan was examining the outsider art category, and beginning in earnest the job of imagining whether there could be a Japanese outsider art and what it might look like.

The Japanese paradigm was set early on in this process, with European and American galleries foregrounding work by self-taught obsessives and art produced in supported studios by individuals with intellectual and learning disabilities. The paranormal visual productions of mediums and artists living with mental illness – the two classic groups of outsider art producers in Europe – were seemingly absent. And this in spite of Japan having, like other modern industrialised nations, a busy mental health system, as well as a strong mystical and visionary tradition that is present in its visual art production and other aspects of life. Perhaps the normalising of the latter in Japanese culture and its more central place in the creative realm accounts for its invisibility in an emerging outsider art canon. The absence of artists with severe mental health issues, though, is more challenging, relating perhaps to both a less accepting public attitude towards it and, it must be said, much less of an impulse to exoticise the visual products of mental illness than has been the case generally in the West.

While one might presume that Yayoi Kusama's late work, produced in the context of her residence in a psychiatric hospital since 1977, presents

Shinro Ohtake, *Scrapbooks #1–66*,
1977–2012, detail
Mixed-media artist books
Installation view, Venice Biennale (2013)

Shinro Ohtake, *Mon cheri: A self-portrait as a scrapped shed*, 2012
Mixed media, timber, electronics, sound, steam
Installation view, dOCUMENTA (13) (2012),
Kassel, Germany

a case for inclusion in the outsider art category, its public presentation remains securely embedded in the mainstream 1960s New York pop art culture of her early career. On the other hand, in 2002 pioneering dealer Phyllis Kind introduced American audiences to the drawings of master chef and artist Hiroyuki Doi through the lens of the outsider art paradigm, based on his being self-taught as a visual artist and because of the obsessive and visionary qualities of his work. Around the same time Kind was also one of the first to exhibit artists with intellectual impairments working in the Kyoto supported studio Atelier Incurve, which self-consciously marketed the work of its members as outsider art. The parameters for the future reception of Japanese outsider art in the United States and Europe were thus effectively set.

Curator Shamita Sharmacharja has put forward the argument that the history of outsider art in Japan is closely aligned with public health and education reform since 1945, when the introduction of 'a highly developed social welfare system ... paved the way for the production of personal artworks within an institutional context' for people with severe learning and intellectual disabilities.[3] The production of these groups, she said, is central to the emergence of a Japanese outsider art canon, which seems to have been consolidated in two landmark European museum exhibitions in 2008 and 2013. The first, titled simply 'Japan', was held at the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland, which is the final resting place of Dubuffet's paradigm-forming collection of outsider art. The show was presented (perhaps unintentionally) as the result of something like a pioneering ethnographic expedition, much like those of the late colonial period. 'The recent research undertaken in Japan', they announced on their return, 'turned out to be abundant and fruitful. For the first time in Europe, the Lausanne museum is presenting these works from various Japanese cities'[4]. Works were drawn exclusively from artists with learning and intellectual disabilities working in supported studios across Japan, and included Masao Obata, Takashi Shuji and Shinichi Sawada. The key Japanese partner was Kengo Kitaoka, at the time the most senior official in the department of social services for the Shiga Prefecture, a private arts patron and head of the Borderless Art Museum NO-MA, a non-profit art organisation that promotes outsider art and which maintains close collaborative ties with the Collection de l'Art Brut. In this way an intimate connection between a particular construction of Japanese outsider art, the founding collection in the field, and the nature of its export was established.

The second landmark European exhibition, 'Souzou: Outsider Art from Japan', was held in London at the Wellcome Collection in 2013. Although a version had been shown in 2012 in Haarlem, the Netherlands,[5] it was the London outing that attracted extensive coverage in both popular and specialist art and science media. Once again, the Borderless Art Museum NO-MA played a major curatorial part. And, not surprisingly, 'outsider art' was presented as synonymous with work from supported studios. There were clear signs of the emergence of a canon; as in Lausanne, artists included Masao Obata, Takashi Shuji and Shinichi Sawada, whose presence in Venice the same year sealed his pre-eminent position – all of which is a little disconcerting in a field that views career development as belonging only to the mainstream art world.

Sawada's ceramic sculpture is the visual outpouring of an interior personal world, otherwise rendered more or less inaccessible by the artist's severe autism. Some have made comparisons to the creatures and daemons of Japanese mythology and even Kongo *minkisi*. However, Sawada's condition renders all attempts to interrogate his intentions supposition. Physically, every piece is both sumptuously tactile and yet resistant to the viewer's caress. His usual subjects are amiable-looking creatures, totemic vessels and casket forms. Faces with distant forlorn expressions are common. But the sense of openness or reaching out to fellow beings is contrasted with the addition of a kind of armour of knobbles and rounded, protruding spikes that act as distancing mechanisms, if not really dangerous.

Shinro Ohtake's work, in the western context, speaks both to outsider art and the dada and Fluxus spirit of artists like Kurt Schwitters or early Claes Oldenburg, with works such as *The store*, 1961. Ohtake was represented in Venice by around sixty handmade books produced incrementally since 1977. They bring to mind volumes by Josef Heinrich Grebing, Oskar Dietmeyer and others in the famous Prinzhorn Collection of psychiatric art in Heidelberg, Germany, as well as works by contemporary self-taught artists such as Purvis Young and Anne Marie Grgich. Individually and as a totality, Ohtake's books seem to embody all the qualities of outsider art: they are highly personal, near-hermetic yet seemingly desperate to communicate, obsessively produced, and constructed from a dizzying melange of found materials, collaged, painted, glued and sewn into fascinating and intensely physical objects. They share the use of 'poor' or inartistic materials with outsider art, though the act of choosing a medium separates Ohtake's practice emphatically from what is most often a necessity in outsider art – the lack of good quality art materials, either because of expense or physical circumstances. Though Ohtake's impulse to begin these books was the purchase in London of a collection by an old man who had obsessively collected matchbooks and glued them into the pages of a notebook, his project is not pastiche. There is a singular, sincere process at work here. But were it not for current art-world interests in the poor and unmade, and accumulations of material mass culture as practice, Ohtake's books would likely not find themselves exhibited in the art museum.

In answer to the rhetorical question 'Why is Art Brut becoming popular in our country now?' Yoshiko Hata, Artistic Director of the Borderless Art Museum NO-MA, said, 'We believe that in today's fast-paced society, people are looking for an immovable, and yet unyielding strength. The strength, to "me and only to me", seems to be true and comes to "me" from the inside'.[6] Such single-minded determination to create out of the self, to 'dream another reality', as Gioni put it in Venice, surely unites the practices of Sawada and Ohtake. They are separated, perhaps, by the nature of their 'dreaming' and the conditions under which their art is produced. And not least by their journeys into the art world, and each artist's fundamentally different engagement with the exhibition and reception of his work.

1 Jean Dubuffet, 'Art brut in preference to the cultural arts', *Art & Text*, no. 27, December 1978 – February 1988, pp. 31–3.
2 Edward M. Gomez, 'Japanese self-taught artists emerge', *Raw Vision*, issue 64, Autumn 2008, p. 42.
3 See the introduction to the exhibition 'Souzou: Outsider Art from Japan', curated by Shamita Sharmacharja and presented at the Wellcome Collection, London, at *http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/exhibitions/souzou/introduction.aspx*.
4 See the introduction to the exhibition 'Japan' at *www.artbrut.ch/en/21017/25/japan*.
5 'Souzou: Outsider Art from Japan' was organised in collaboration with Het Dolhuys, Museum of Psychiatry in Haarlem, the Netherlands, and the Social Welfare Organisation Aiseikai in Tokyo.
6 See the text 'What is art brut?' at *http://www.no-ma.jp/english/about.html*.

Ni Tanjung, *Bali*, 2012
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, archives
Photograph Lucienne Peiry

THE WILD UTOPIAN DREAMS OF OUTSIDER ART

LUCIENNE PEIRY

From Bali to Benin via Germany, three ingenious self-taught creators are imagining fantastic worlds through drawing and sculpture without care for the critics' or other people's opinion. In Bali, Ni Tanjung builds a dreamlike theatre to enchant her empty and solitary nights; Ezekiel Messou, in Benin, pencils sewing machines into secret notebooks; while, deep in the German countryside, Gustav Mesmer constructs flying machines and dreams of taking off to touch the sky.[1]

Outsider creators avoid artistic conditioning and social conformism. Self-taught, they create their own systems of expression from scratch and produce non-standard paintings, drawings, sculptures, embroideries or written works. Unaware of art-historical conventions and resistant to cultural customs, they break with established rules – intentionally or not – and freely invent a symbolic world: works where they imagine iconographic subjects, modes of representation and figuration, perspectival structures and technical principles. As most of them are destitute, they often use humble practical means, salvage old materials and include them in unusual structures and combinations. They prove themselves to be clever, insouciant inventors.

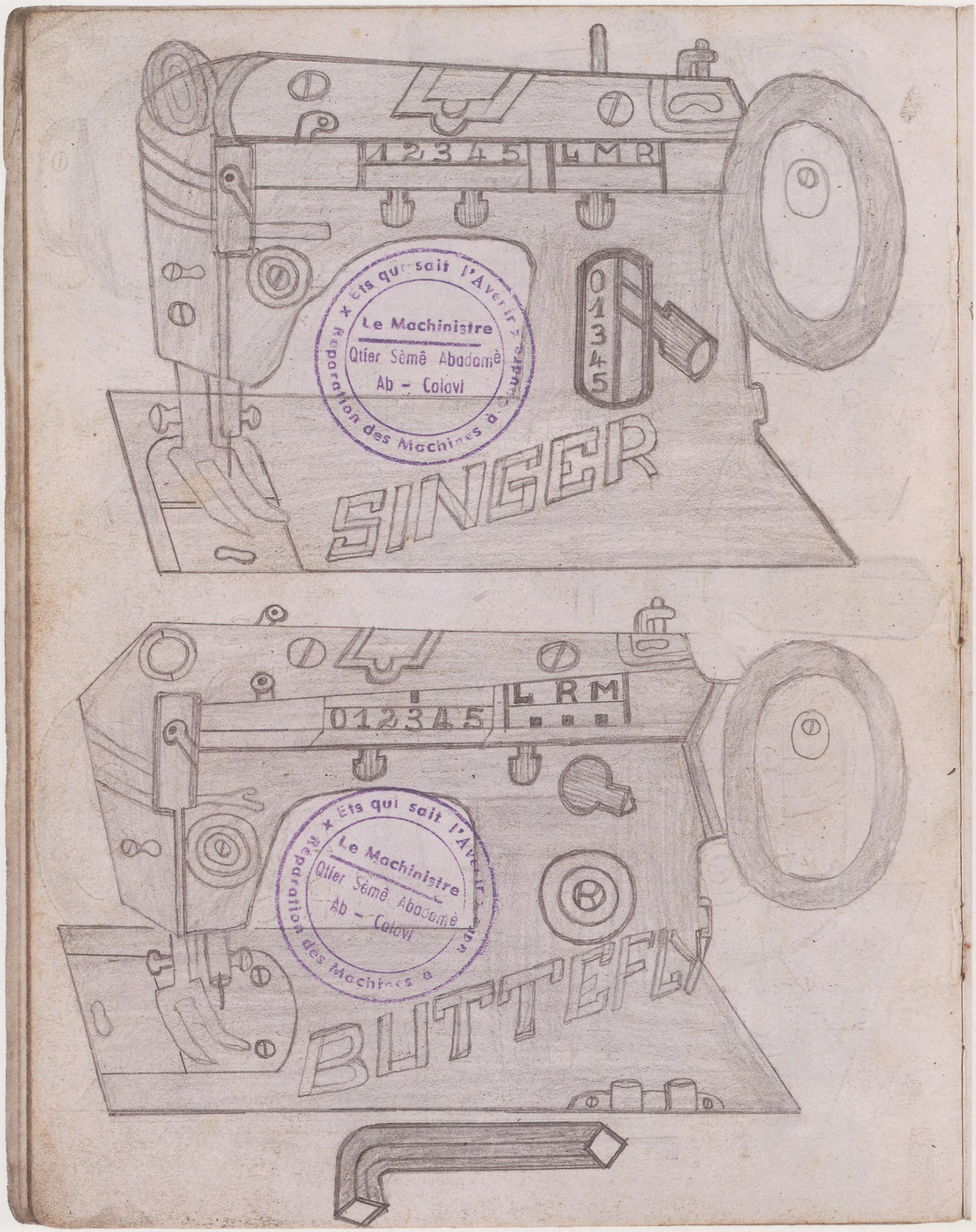
On the fringes of society, impervious to common values or sheltered behind rebel positions, outsider creators are psychiatric patients, prisoners, spiritualists, eccentrics, loners and outcasts. They often experience social exclusion, repression, and as such find their raison d'être in fiction and fantasy, creating in secrecy, silence and solitude. Going against the grain, they don't feel the need for recognition or social and cultural approval. Each practises their art in isolation, free from expectation and ambition, making work for their own purposes; the works are not meant for anyone because the authors have only themselves to refer to. Unfamiliar with educated circles, they operate outside the institutional environment, far away from the official art scene.

In eastern Bali, in a small village near Mount Agung – believed to be home of the gods – Ni Tanjung exists within the depths of a darkened room with no window. In the tiny bedroom where her bed plays a major role, the overhead bulb casts a dim light. Nearly eighty-five years old, Ni Tanjung is an invalid, too frail to stand up and support her emaciated frame. She leads a secluded existence in this narrow, dark space where no exit is possible. Lying down or sitting, she curls up and manages to enchant her nights by feverishly drawing and carefully cutting out coloured figures. In the half-light, Ni Tanjung installs a private night theatre and devotes herself to disconcerting performances directed with strength and delicacy, forgetting her isolation.

When we arrive, Ni Tanjung animates a tree-like structure, turning around a series of drawings tied to stalks and arranged in bunches, so that the figures face us. In an almost rehearsed gesture, she grabs her paper creations, placing some of them evenly on the bed and hanging others on the lines around the room like garlands. Looking at the drawings indirectly, through her mirror's reflection, Ni Tanjung surrounds herself with an imaginary crowd – a set-up that also allows her to include the image of her own face within the composition. She gazes at herself among these drawn faces, which could be self-portraits or representations of her ancestors.

Unlike the isolated context in which Ni Tanjung makes her art, the young Ezekiel Messou lives in the heart of Cotonou, Benin, where he repairs sewing machines for people in his community, an important social role. But behind this public role he also secretly creates in silence and solitude.

Messou started to draw out of necessity. Before breaking apart the sewing machines his clients brought him to repair, he would draw outlines of them and their component parts on the walls of his workshop to keep a record of original shapes and matchmarks; this would assist him when eventually reassembling the complex multitude of parts. Messou gradually paid more and more attention to the sewing machines, carefully drawing on lined or gridded paper the main body, the base and all parts of the machinery – handles, knobs, screws and castors. Using a pencil, he would sometimes reduce the machine to its simplest bi-dimensionality or achieve a sense of volume with chiaroscuro. When all the walls of his atelier were full, covered with over fifteen plans of sewing machines, Messou kept drawing in cheap


1 2 3 4 5 L M R
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Le Machinistre
Qtier Sèmê Abadamè
Ab - Calavi
Ets qui sait l'Avenir
Réparation des Machines à
SINGER
0 1 2 3 4 5
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BUTTEFLY


BUTTERF
Ets qui sait l'Avenir
Le Machinistre
Qtier Sèmê Abadamé
Ab - Ouévi
Reproduction des Machines

plain notebooks. His graphic creations had no artistic purpose in the beginning, they were simply technical and professional; but as time went by, Messou kept drawing at night, alone in his workshop.

Messou – the machinist, as people in the neighbourhood call him – has built up a personal symbolic collection in secrecy and with jubilation. He indexes the machines, which fascinate him beyond their mechanical qualities.

Gustav Mesmer also perceives an amazing poetry in his machines. Unique and infused with humour, they are made of bicycles equipped with one or two sets of wings composed of supple branches, second-hand sheets and old umbrellas. Committed to a mental institution for forty years or so, Mesmer dealt with his exclusion from society by making impressive plans to fly; in short, to be free. He has created thousands of models, sketches and drafts, carefully drawn and finely coloured. They exhibit a wild inventiveness in conceiving ingenious systems to go up, move in the air and reach other realms. He has built many spectacular flying machines in his striving for utopia. That none of them will ever take off or land does not matter. The boundless fantasy of this unconventional astronaut goes far beyond the idea of actually taking flight. But neither these graphic, pictorial and sculptural creations nor the quixotic performances satisfy him. Mesmer also tackles writing with extravagance. In his long autobiography, he daringly goes beyond orthographic and grammatical rules and creates new linguistic structures and rhythmic sound effects, injecting a dreamlike lightness into his many poems by disrupting word order.

May You one time Fly!
going up on a hill.
Going up in the altitudes
ah would This be for You so superb
to be as free as the bird,
going also through the sun
the last space in earthly sphere
like nature blossoming
When I float in the air
What a delightful feeling
our wish of humankind consummates
we only have to resuscitate
The space in the air still free for You,
Imagine Yourself quickly with a wing pair
They should make you free
You could hover in the air
Ah what a joy it would be for you!

Denied a voice by society but stimulated by their own rich potential, outsider artists instinctively venture into artistic creation, taking hold of art-world conventions with an anti-Establishment spirit and rebellious attitude. Flying machines for freedom, detailed drawings that show a rigorous understanding of mechanics, and a theatre of isolation and imagination, Mesmer's, Messou's and Ni Tanjung's utopian dreams are at once infinitely poetic and necessarily revolutionary. By responding to intuitive expressive urges their work revives the magical, spiritual and therapeutic qualities of the creative act, striking what the Swiss writer Charles-Albert Cingria has termed the 'soul drum', and summoning well-deserved appreciation from committed audiences wherever it is shown.

L'Art Brut dans le Monde (Art Brut Around the World), Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, 6 June – 2 November 2014.

Translated from French by Claire Monneraye.

1 I would like to gratefully acknowledge the people who introduced me to these creators and their works: Lise and George Breguet (Ni Tanjung), Leo Ramseier (Ezekiel Messou) and Stefan Hartmaier (Gustav Mesmer).

OPPOSITE
Gustav Mesmer, *Untitled*, n.d.
Pen and gouache on paper
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, archives
Gustav Mesmer Foundation, Kirchentellinsfurt, Germany
Photograph Lucienne Peiry

PAGES 580–1
Ezekiel Messou, *Singer; Butterfly*, n.d.
Lead and ink on paper, 29.7 x 23.5 cm
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne
Photograph Kevin Seisdedos

Ezekiel Messou, *Butterfly*, n.d.
Lead and ink on paper, 29.7 x 23.5 cm
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne
Photograph Kevin Seisdedos

OUR STORY BEGINS:
PRUDENCE FLINT AND ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

Introduction by Johanna Featherstone
The Red Room Company creates unusual and useful projects that transform expectations of and experiences with poetry. Supporting the work of young and emerging writers, we are the pre-eminent commissioner of contemporary Australian poetry, developing imaginative contexts in which it can be creatively and critically explored. We try to make poetry accessible to all.

This is the first time The Red Room Company has joined forces with *ARTAND Australia*. Inviting poets and artists to swap words and pictures with one another to create new works, the brief was broad. The only definite was the result – publication in *ARTAND Australia* and a public performance, to be held at this year's Sydney Writers' Festival.

Together we selected poets whose personal experience and body of work are already in dialogue with the visual arts. Poet and critic Ken Bolton runs the Australian Experimental Art Foundation bookshop in Adelaide, and makes collages, his own books and drawings. Elizabeth Campbell's poems are laced with references to the visual arts and include, as their subjects, artworks and personae from paintings. We chose artists whose work has a relationship with text, whether it is conceptually or physically incorporated into their practice.

Most poets see their poems in their heads: moving images where metaphor takes on a physical body. Poems are already visual artworks – lettering and shapes that pattern a white page with spaces, line breaks, straight or slant, left or right. Using the eye to enlarge the fields of verbal meaning.

Could this project revolutionise the traditional illustration of words? Would it help each artist to see themselves and their work anew, breaking open previous ways of cross-form collaboration to reveal a totally original genre of poetry-and-art pairings? And might we read the poems as artworks and the artworks as poems?

Or does this project allow the artists, Prudence Flint and Jenny Watson, to make something that balances the power of the word with the potential of the image delicately enough so that both forms might be viewed as perfect alone or complete in each other's company? An image that sits, as Prudence said of her painting, 'quite simply', beside the writing.

Sydney Writers' Festival, Walsh Bay and other venues, 19–25 May 2014.

Prudence & Elizabeth
The speed of our known world recedes and we pause ... to listen to the bristles on unseen teeth, feel the soap before it slips, refresh on cool tiles before the bath is drawn. We're lured into a crystalline moment of very quiet thinking and doing. We need to be fearless to enter the ambivalent space of the female body, and the bathroom, crossing boundaries of beauty and reflection, of privacy and being 'sprung'.

Elizabeth's poem is similar – a slow but active layering of narrative. 'Tooth' is a graceful procession of three-line stanzas with a storyteller who may be the poet, the tooth fairy, or the tooth guiding us through these spaces and domestic rituals.

Prudence's painting possesses an astute formality; a seriousness shapes the flesh and materials that we float, struggle and pause in, on the brink of opening a mouth and screaming, or spitting. The space is spookily still, almost silent.

But the poem offers us a way to speak through the shyness of the woman. Elizabeth's phrases are evocative and explorative, sometimes even haughty, presenting possibilities for play rather than a direct positioning of the scene.

Of the collaboration, Elizabeth and Prudence tell me theirs was a perfect match. Two autonomous artists energised by the chance to dip into each other's practice, conscious not to lose their own voice in the process of poems painting pictures or pictures painting poems. And perhaps it is through this sharing of voice and vision that the work shapes its own story.

OPPOSITE
Prudence Flint, *Toothbrush*, 2013
Oil on linen, 107 x 91.5 cm
Courtesy the artist, Australian Galleries,
Melbourne and Sydney, and Bett Gallery, Hobart

TOOTH

ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

The great drain of the house
is a centre without clothes
where the eye deeps the mirror, a fished-out lake.

There is a signpost on the sea,
at the apex of Cape Leeuwin: one way Southern Ocean,
the other Indian. You can continue with your eyes

its line dividing handless sea.
Who owns herself, the self she caused
carefully all day? The hand

must travel a long way
around its corner to the face which watches as the hand approaches.
The dream-book says that when you dream

a house you dream your mind.
You dream rooms they are divisions in your mind.
When you dream your body

it means rooms full of people.
What can you say of her? that she was prone
to apprehension

of a largeness when brushing
against another person – something like the parting
of curtains or clouds and then

the doors of the wind would close, leaving
her looking at a face with one.
Who sees her self, the self that earns

its rest and is unwound
by dreams, her life the racing bobbin her frozen foot
chases down till the last inch leaps free?

Teeth dissolve in the dream like a cliff-edge
and your body's falling image stamps
the eyes of the horrified tourists.

Dream dissolves in light but there she is
in the mirror you rent with the house.
It's wrong to say you see yourself:

both eyes look at one eye and then they swap.

OUR STORY BEGINS: JENNY WATSON AND KEN BOLTON

Jenny & Ken

Ken and Jenny knew each other a little before this project began. To give Jenny a taste of his work, Ken posted her a package consisting of several envelopes, each containing a new poem, and each listing the images/ideas/moods held within the corresponding poem.

It is a nerve-racking thing for a poet to do – post little bits of their soul in envelopes.

Jenny was travelling through Japan during the course of the project, and so, in return, two postcards arrived at Ken's place bearing Jenny's illustrations. Small traces of the directions she was to take Ken's poems in.

The next arrival for Ken was ten finished artworks. His poems, then, were written blind to new images but rich with his knowledge of Jenny's previous work, along with all the other artistic associations that buzz in his mind and poems. These poems chat along, collecting characters, conversations, recollections and jokes. A collection that constitutes the poet. Ken as a kid, as a 1960s rock'n'roller. Ken as a husband, dad, master of a dog. Ken welcomes you in, to know his moods, his melodies.

Ken's poems are also mini-critiques of art and poetry. What is a relaxed yak about the alleyways of Ancient Greece is also a thoughtful meditation on the fragility of language and manhood. They take on the body of their subject, lifting language out of the confines of letters into works of art themselves. Ken has said:

I particularly like the way they often look assembled, & involve collage or quotation, & often have semi-discrete passages or areas. This is compatible with my own way of writing. Most often my poems do a bit of thinking & looking & remembering & factor in a good deal of distraction.

Portable and pocket sized, affectionate and alert also describe the images Jenny has created in response to Ken's poems. On small notepaper she has joined Ken in his playfulness. Her works capture Ken's cool and make the poems calmer, taking away some of the anxiety and angst of the writing read alone. Jenny's watercolours do not incorporate the actual text of Ken's poems, but rather drink in Ken's stories, and accompany them on their journeys.

OURSTORYBEGINS

IMAGE 10
Jenny Watson, *Poet reading*, 2014
Sakura watercolour on notebook paper, 21 x 13.5 cm

IMAGE 9
Jenny Watson, *3 tech teachers*, 2014
Sakura watercolour on notebook paper, 21 x 13.5 cm

IMAGE 8
Jenny Watson, *Man jumping off Eiffel Tower*, 2014
Sakura watercolour on notebook paper, 21 x 13.5 cm

IMAGE 4
Jenny Watson, *Bird eating crumbs in front of a foot*, 2014
Sakura watercolour on notebook paper, 21 x 13.5 cm

IMAGE 2
Jenny Watson, *Man with a cigarette and a beer*, 2014
Sakura watercolour on notebook paper, 21 x 13.5 cm

All images courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

NOTE
Ken Bolton's poem 'Beginning At Basheer's Coffee Shop' appears here in excerpted form.

SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

THE RED ROOM COMPANY

ARTAND
AUSTRALIA

Beginning At Basheer's Coffee Shop

Ken Bolton

I talk to Basheer briefly
How-did-the-launch-go?
etcetera.
The anarchists enter
—at least, three guys with beards,
glasses, one steel-rimmed, tech
teachers, I think.

They always sit there.
I sit here, or here.

The women
from the Arts Dept sit *there*, always
but their numbers
require it

a deal is stitched up
much laughter.

I read the poems
Tranter has sent.
I like them, tho I know
nothing
of the sources
I think I've never read Ern Malley
even,
in his entirety
or Biggles
Lyn! I hear
John call out,
he has really read nothing except
Frank O'Hara!

"And Ted Berrigan, John,"
Lyn's moderating tones
"and you, & Pam, & Forbes & Laurie."
Sometimes I
wonder, I hear John subsiding.

It's true tho,
isn't it?

Joyce I am reading at the moment,
playing catch-up.

Am I taking it in?

"My point
entirely," I hear John again,
an imaginary John

Are all my friends imaginary?

The women
laugh again, loudly.

My vision of John is cartoon
John stands by
a pool
back to me, pretty much
— chinos? not
cargo pants! —
a striped shirt,
sipping a daiquiri
watching the
pool cleaner chug back & forth
against the tiles
dreaming of a machine that would write the
terminals for him (*The Terminals*)

automatically.

"Automatically"
it's beginning to seem a word
you don't hear anymore
the past's dream of the
future
—we're there *now*—
like my dream of JT

tho *do* they happen automatically

— like everything else
these days?
so it "goes without saying"? —

The real John I saw

a few weeks ago
and now I have his book
where
Biggles meets Ern Malley
as does Louisa May Alcott
"They spoke so frankly in the past" — is one effect
via John's coupling of the texts
or "lingos"
if I may
permit myself an Australianism

I guess I am an Australian?

& a wistful, unrepentant modernist
'of some stripe or order'
with the old-fashioned ideas of modernity
(tail fins?)

the anarchists,
I reflect,
resemble the Marx Brothers
as, bearded, they
arrive in America
with identical long
beards
— I remember a beard coming unstuck
as Chico or Harpo drinks water—

this is not quite modernity
or it's the joke
of one part catching up with the other:
Europe
—Eastern Europe—
(smelly, bearded, un-cool
unsophisticated)
arriving in America
the 'New' world, ha ha

America &
'the Other'

& here my essay begins

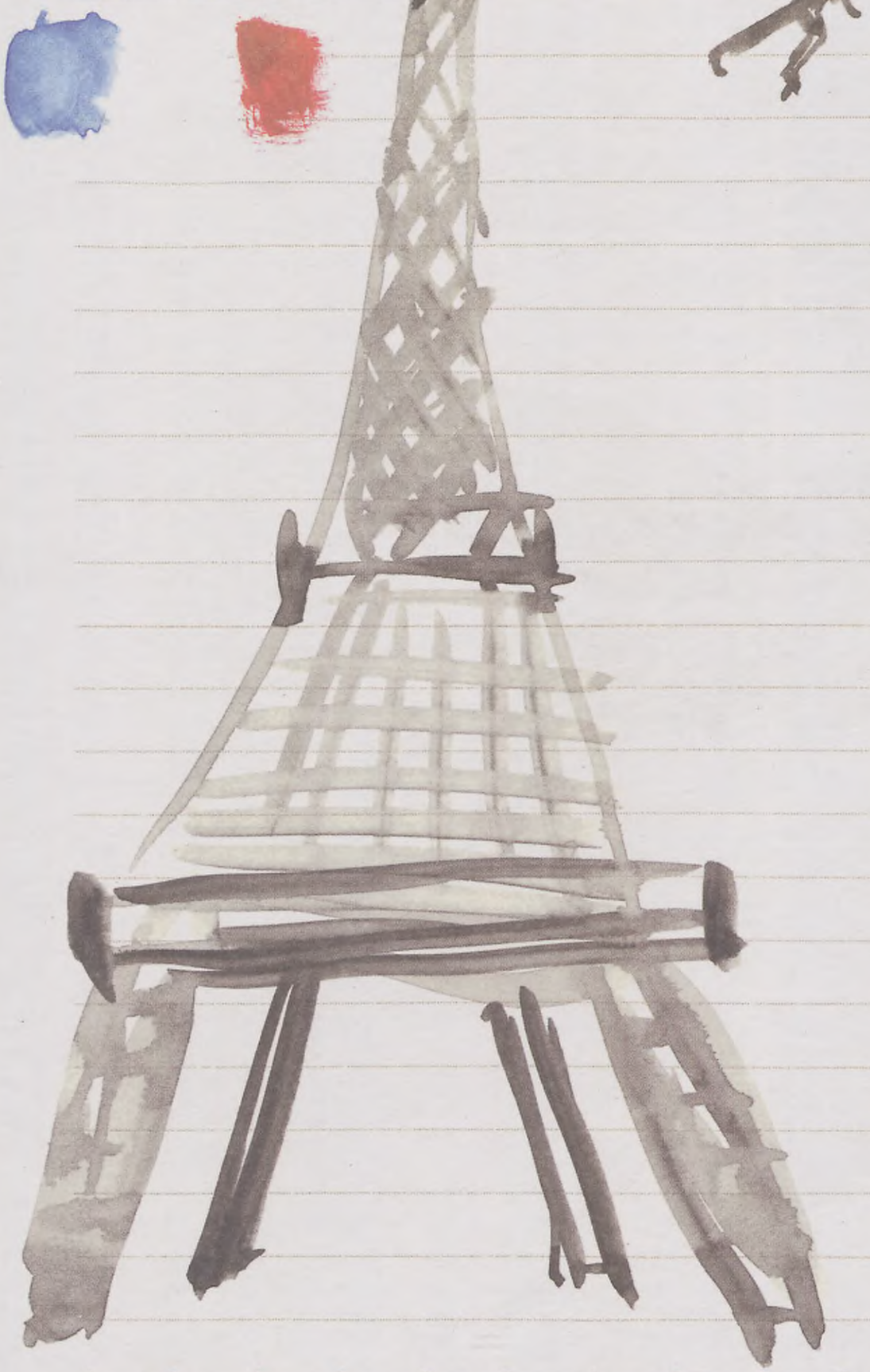
the Lars von Trier
vision

Padgettwise

Ken Bolton

"Vorwartz!" — General Blutcher

Ron Padgettwise,
a manner Ron Padgett
himself never had
to affect,
is sometimes
the best way out of here
where 'here' is
ich macht right nowen,
mit und pigfoot &
a bottle of beer
("A double, barkeep!"),
or so I find.
Standing on
'the shoulders of a giant'—
with my head into the wind
my scarf blowing
cigarette held
that continental way,
pinched between
forefinger & thumb—
you can do it—
& the beer, which
you've had,
imbibed,
why,
the spirit soars you'll notice—
to the mind's applause—
a bit, a fraction—
& you step off the tower Eiffel,
or some tower,
in Potsdammerplatz—
or *off the gutter*
merely—safe, because
Padgettwise;
'safe' really because
Stacey & Gabe detect
your inner Kirchner
your inner Beckmann
(beer & cigarette,
respectively)
& are at hand,
& the
sophisticated Walter Brennan
(the Padgett aura),
running interference—
a warning device.
In any case you are
On The Other Side
—of the road merely—
'merely'—but that's all that
counts, you got where
you wanted to—
alive—in the next
phase of your life
(which will resemble very much
the last, as one cigarette,
inevitably
resembles very much
another: ideally, too)
& light up—
& order another, for
this is Germany,
& carry on
in orderly fashion,
Padgettwise. I
recommend it.



OURSTORYBEGINS

At the lights (Les Temps)

Ken Bolton

Childcare?
Hmm, I tell her,
I'd get out
of that.
Well, she is.
Well out.
Lost her job
& looking
for factory work
or maybe cleaning.
The lights
change. We walk
together further up
the street.
One factory doesn't
train you for another:
it's not an industry,
I say. I wonder if
I'm right. We talk
politics a bit. (The
government has changed
hands—
not good for the
childcare business.
You don't happen
to own a coalmine?—
But I don't ask her that.)
She asks about
my employment history
—bookshop, the arts.
'Adult' bookshop?
We laugh. Well, *for*
grown-ups
I tell her, but no &
I describe our specialties
She says she could have
guessed
arts—you look an arty
sort of guy. We laugh
Well I've been hanging
round with them
a long long time. 1982?!
I was *born* just then.
So she's 31.
Thirty years in one job
it's not very usual
anymore.
I tell her Yes,
I've hung on.
I wish her luck
with the job we
part & I go & have
coffee read there
these essays on
Frank O'Hara
—the step, prosody,
thought—
not finding them
a lot of fun. My
mood. Read
an old letter from
Sylvia Esposito someone
I knew in Rome
the letter living
all these years in
the pages of this book
I wonder where
Sylvia is living now?
It was a new apartment
maybe she is there still.
A letter from Yumiko
evidently I placed
both letters here,
at the same time, tho
the Yumiko one is from
1998—Sylvia's
from 02. Time.
The David Herd article
—time, prosody
—thought.
I feel
a little down. Tho
there are reasons for that
—aside from what
I was thinking a moment
ago
was the reason—a
worry I put behind me
in a practiced way
What, *me* worry?
tired might be it:
finishing after twelve
last night. Tired
but calm. I never
remember
when O'Hara *died*—
except I know he heard
the Beatles, was 'around'
then—
tho whether he'd care
about them I don't know—
1964? 65? more in
to Rachmaninoff,
Poulenc—two
romantic words
for me, Frank's—
that have terrific
pace to them, weight
#
It all passes.
#
Hindley Street even,
changed.
#
I like
the continental flavour of
The Boulevard—a little
world,
changeless, briefly—but
prefer it here
at *Tempo*
—that name!—
where no comfort
is given, no
meaning, nothing.
Bleak? I'm
up for it. A
small bird,
near my feet,
eating crumbs.
Then we leave.

At the Penang

Ken Bolton

eating
Asian food alone
I often feel
like a spy or
detective—mid-
century, on
my day off or
perhaps between cases.
Still, nice
to have a job—
& nothing much to
do. I pull
the envelope out
with the plan
for the next few readings—
names scribbled, scribbled-
out, reinstated, moved
around from week to
week. I wonder
how Lee Marvin
organised readings—
gun on the table,
hat upturned
on the floor,
flicking lit matches
into it? And then?
The names in the hat
that had burned
were in? out?
or just prominent
& suggestive & then,
like me, he grabbed
an envelope from
the desk (beside the bed
in his hotel room)
& scrawled them down. May
be?
I saw Marvin once,
at the *Malay* restaurant
near Central station where I usually
had the laksa—where
I *first* had laksa.

He was sitting with another man
& wearing a white
linen suit, quietly
in a corner. Not
much talk. He was
here, I think,
for Marlin fishing.

I'm here
for an hour
eating, reading, then
back to work—
where I pour some drinks,
(turn on the lights), check
the mike & soon the
poets drift in
& we do the reading.

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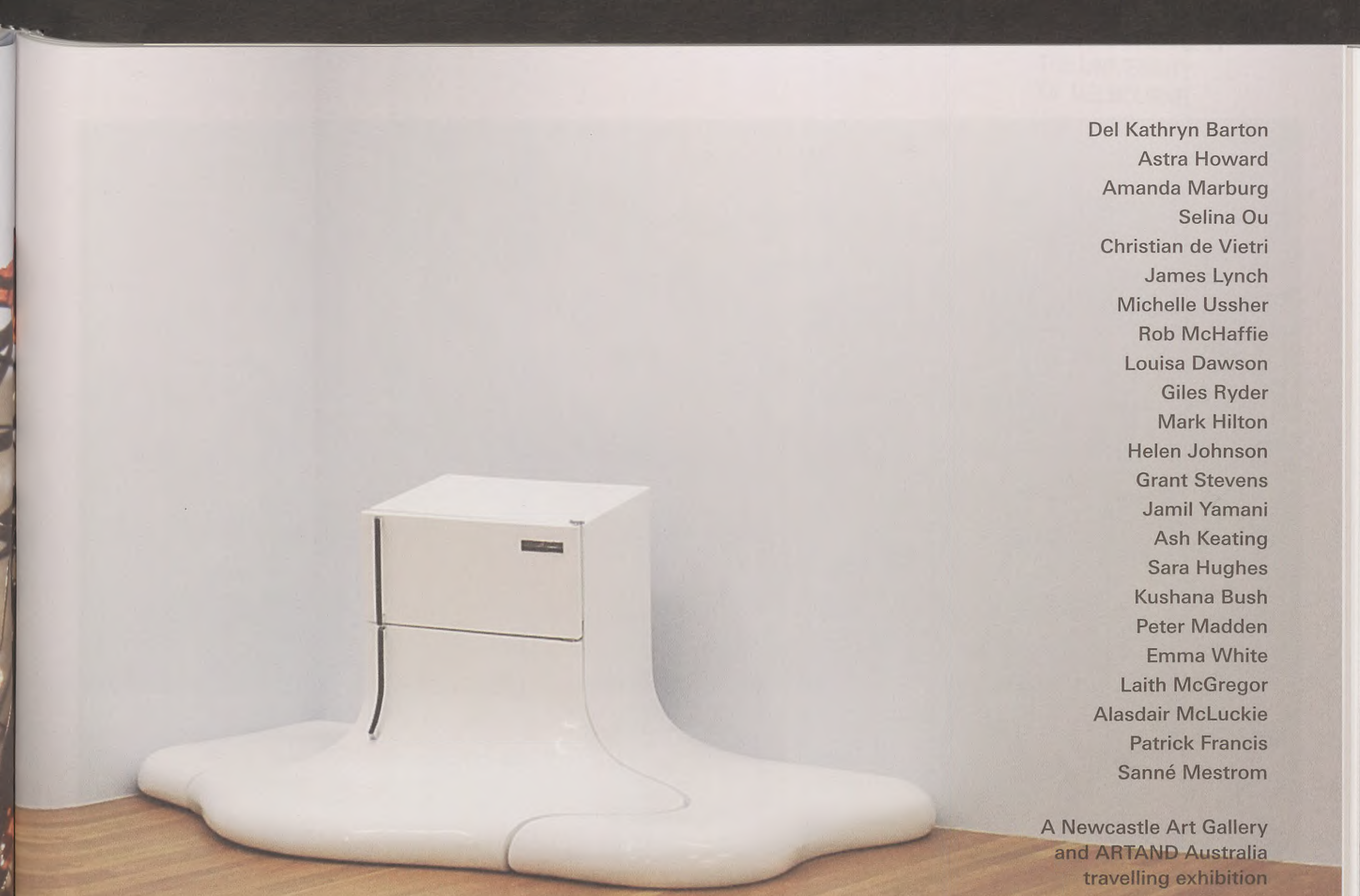

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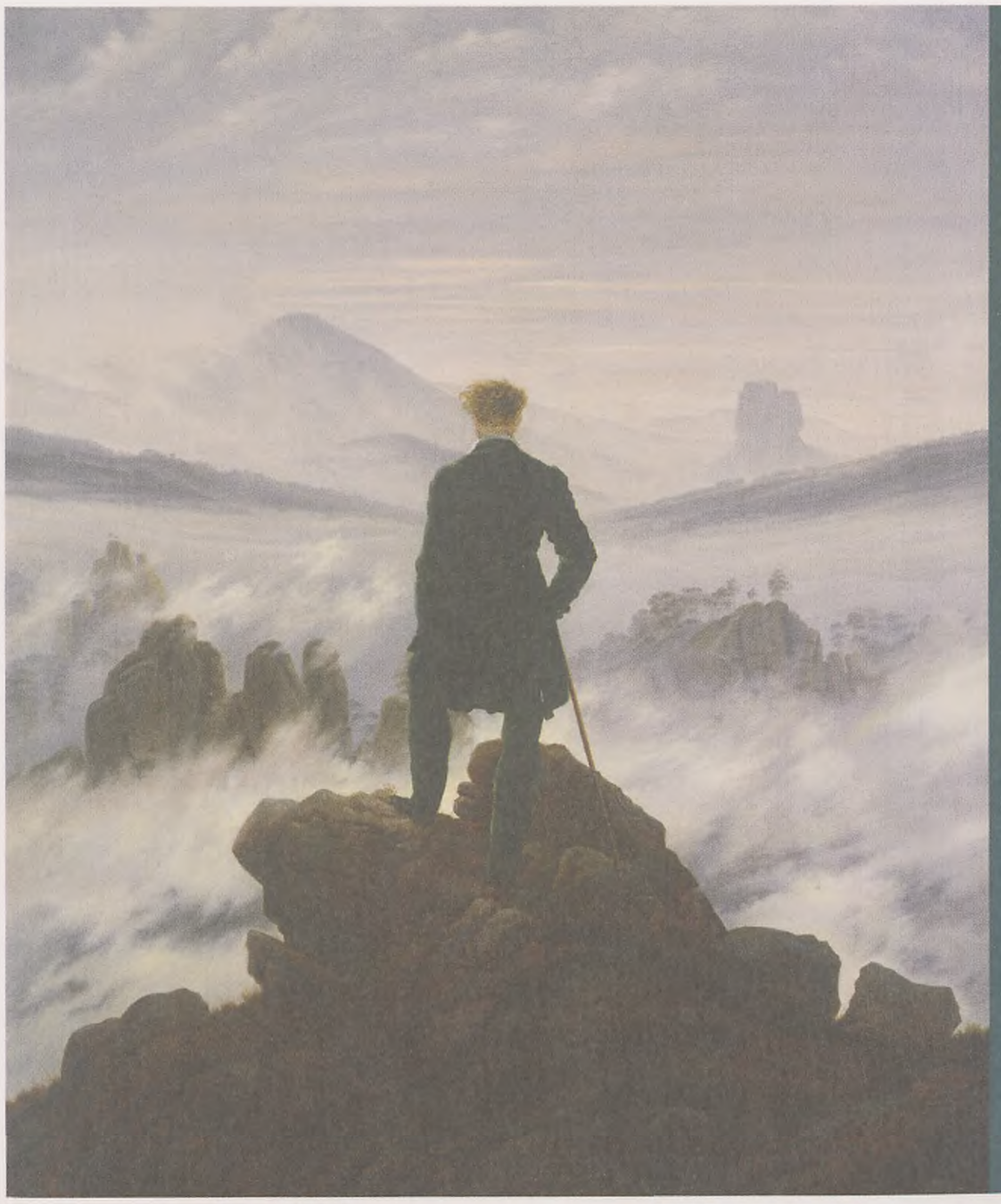

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Image: Beryl Wood, *She Puts the Left Leg In*, 2013
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Tel 07 3252 5750 Fax 07 3252 5072
www.ima.org.au
Directors: Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh
Tues–Sat 11–5, Thurs until 8

Jan Murphy Gallery
486 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley 4006
Tel 07 3254 1855
jan@janmurphygallery.com.au
www.janmurphygallery.com.au
Director: Jan Murphy
Artists include: Kim Buck, Lara Merrett, Ben Quilty, Victoria Reichelt and Alex Seton.
Until May 17: Rhys Lee
Until May 18: Art Basel Hong Kong: Danie Mellor
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Logan Art Gallery
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Tel 07 3412 5519 Fax 07 3412 5350
artgallery@logan.qld.gov.au
www.logan.qld.gov.au/artgallery
Director: Michael Wardell
16 May – 21 Jun: Open Books +; Liz Horrigan, Sandra Johnson and Vikki Kindermann; Susan Wellingham.
27 Jun – 2 Aug: Don Waters; Easter Austin; Shibukawa and Logan Sister Cities childrens' exhibition.
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Philip Bacon Galleries
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artenquiries@philipbacongalleries.com.au
www.philipbacongalleries.com.au
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QUT Art Museum
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Tel 07 3138 5370
artmuseum@qut.edu.au
www.artmuseum.qut.edu.au
Senior curator: Vanessa Van Ooyen
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Suzanne O'Connell Gallery
Australian Indigenous Art
93 James Street, New Farm 4005
Tel 07 3358 5811 Fax 07 3358 5813
Mob 0400 920 022
suzanne@suzanneoconnell.com
www.suzanneoconnell.com
Director: Suzanne O'Connell, ACGA
Representing Indigenous artists and art centres in North Queensland, Great Sandy Desert, the Kimberley, Central and Western Desert, APY lands, Arnhem Land and Tiwi Islands. Paintings, works on paper, sculpture, fibre objects and ceramics.
Wed–Sat 11–4 or by appointment

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery
531 Ruthven Street, Toowoomba 4350
Tel 07 4688 6652
art@toowoombaRC.qld.gov.au
www.toowoombarc.qld.gov.au/trag
Curator: Diane Baker
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New South Wales

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art
181–187 Hay St, Haymarket 2000
Tel 02 9212 0380
info@4a.com.au
www.4a.com.au
Director: Aaron Seeto
4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art is a non-profit organisation established in 1996. 4A is committed to Asian and Australian cultural dialogue through its innovative program of exhibitions, talks, performances and community projects featuring local and international artists.
Tues–Sat 11–6

Alison Renwick Art Consultancy
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Tel 0412 363 431
info@alisonrenwickartconsultancy.com.au
www.alisonrenwickartconsultancy.com.au
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www.annaschwartzgallery.com
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Visit our website for updates on exhibitions, education programs and to view the entire permanent collection.
Tues–Sat 10–5,
Sun and public holidays 11–2

Blue Mountains Cultural Centre
30 Parke Street, Katoomba 2780
Tel 02 4780 5410
info@bluemountainsculturalcentre.com.au
www.bluemountainsculturalcentre.com.au
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info@gallery9.com.au
www.gallery9.com.au
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Wed–Sat 11–6 and by appointment

Glasshouse Port Macquarie Regional Gallery
cnr Clarence and Hay Street,
Port Macquarie 2444
Tel 02 6581 8888 Fax 02 6581 8107
info@glasshouse.org.au
www.glasshouse.org.au
Curator: Naomi Sands
The Glasshouse Regional Gallery presents an engaging program of touring and curated exhibitions from international, national and local artists as well as heritage exhibitions. Please see the website for current exhibitions.
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat–Sun 10–4

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre
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hazelhurst@ssc.nsw.gov.au
www.hazelhurst.com.au
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gallery@done.com.au
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art@kingstreetgallery.com
www.kingstreetgallery.com
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Tel 02 9850 7437 Fax 02 9850 7565
artgallery@mq.edu.au
www.artgallery.mq.edu.au
24 Apr – 23 May: Macquarie Visions
30 May – 11 July: 50 Highlights of the Macquarie University Collection will look at the changing and ongoing role of art within a university learning, teaching and research environment.
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www.mrag.org.au
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West Esplanade, Manly 2095
Tel 02 9976 1420
artgallery@manly.nsw.gov.au
www.manly.nsw.gov.au/attractions/art-gallery-museum
2 May – 8 Jun: The Course of Objects; 501 Little Dishes: A childhood memoir: Ceramics of Christine Ball
20 Jun – 7 Sep: The Making of Midnight Oil, Curated by Ross Heathcote with Midnight Oil drummer Rob Hirst and exhibition design by Wendy Osmond.
Tues–Sun 10–5, closed public holidays, Free admission

Minerva
4/111 Macleay Street, Potts Point 2011
Tel 02 9357 3697
gallery@minervasydney.com
www.minervasydney.com
3 May – 6 June: 'Ex-execs' Helen Johnson, Front Gallery; 'NAIROBI HIGH' Guy Benfield, Central Gallery.
Opening reception: 3 May, 4–7pm
14 June – 26 July, James Deutsher.
Opening reception: 14 June, 4–7pm
Wed–Sat 12–6

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25 Frome Street, Moree 2400
Tel 02 6757 3320
moreeplainsgallery@bigpond.com
www.moreeplainsgallery.org.au
Moree Plains Gallery in north-west New South Wales features solo shows by artists from the region and the gallery's collection, especially the Ann Lewis gift of seventy works by contemporary Australian Aboriginal artists.
Mon–Fri 10–5, Sat 10–1, Free admission

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www.roslynoxley9.com.au
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utopiaartsydney@ozemail.com.au
www.utopiaartsydney.com.au
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Tues–Sat 10–5

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www.wattersgallery.com
Directors: Frank Watters, Geoffrey Legge and Alex Legge
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18 Jun – 5 Jul: Euan Mcleod
9 July – 26 July: Paul Selwood
30 Jul: John Bartley; Richard Larter

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Tel 02 6801 4444 Fax 02 6801 4449
info@wpccdubbo.org.au
www.wpccdubbo.org.au
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www.wollongongcitygallery.com
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Until 20 Jul: Mann-Tatlow Collection of Asian Art: 10th anniversary
17 May – 29 Jun: The Nancye Dryden Collection of South-East Asian Textiles
17 May – 6 Jul: Tania Maria Mastroianni
7 Jun – 6 Jul: Lisa Anderson
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat–Sun 12–4, closed public holidays, Free admission

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ANU Drill Hall Gallery
Kingsley Street, Acton 2601
Tel 02 6125 5832 Fax 02 6125 7219
dhg@anu.edu.au
www.dhg.anu.edu.au
Until 18 May: Contemporary Australian Drawing: 20 years of the Dobell Prize for Drawing
23 May – 29 June: Kensuke Todo: A Survey
4 Jul – 10 Aug: Araya Rasdjarmearnsook: Story Tellers of The Town
Wed–Sun 12–5, Free admission

Beaver Galleries
81 Denison Street, Deakin, Canberra 2600
Tel 02 6282 5294 Fax 02 6281 1315
mail@beavergalleries.com.au
www.beavergalleries.com.au
Directors: Martin and Susie Beaver (ACGA)
Canberra's largest private gallery. Regular exhibitions of paintings, prints, sculpture, glass and ceramics. Artists exhibiting this quarter include: Robert Boynes, David Frazer, Daehoon Kang & Joung Mee Do, Christina Cordero, Amanda Shelsher, Sue Lovegrove and Fiona Hiscock.
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat–Sun 9–5

National Gallery of Australia
Parkes Place, Parkes, Canberra 2600
Tel 02 6240 6502
information@nga.gov.au
www.nga.gov.au
Director: Ron Radford AM
From 13 Jun: Bali: Island of the Gods presents Balinese sculpture, painting and textiles.
Until 22 Jun: Garden of the East: Photography in Indonesia 1850s–1940s showcases photographs taken during colonial rule in the former Dutch East Indies.
Daily 10–5

Victoria

Anna Schwartz Gallery
185 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000
Tel 03 9654 6131
mail@annaschwartzgallery.com
www.annaschwartzgallery.com
Established in 1982, Anna Schwartz Gallery exhibits the ongoing practice of local and international represented artists and interventions of curated projects.
Tues–Fri 12–6, Sat 1–5, groups by appointment

ARC ONE Gallery
45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000
Tel 03 9650 0589 Fax 03 9650 0591
mail@arc1gallery.com
www.arcone.com.au
Directors: Fran Clark, Suzanne Hampel
Located in the heart of Melbourne's arts precinct, ARC ONE Gallery represents some of Australia's most highly respected contemporary artists across a spectrum of disciplines that includes painting, sculpture, photography, video and electronic media.
Tues–Sat 11–5

Arts Project Australia
24 High Street, Northcote 3070
Tel 03 9482 4484 Fax 03 9482 1852
info@artsproject.org.au
www.artsproject.org.au
Director: Sue Roff
Arts Project Australia is a centre of excellence that supports artists with disabilities, promoting their work and advocating for inclusion within contemporary art practice.
Mon–Fri 9–5, Sat 10–5 and by appointment

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
111 Sturt Street, Southbank 3006
Tel 03 9697 9999 Fax 03 9686 8830
info@accaonline.org.au
www.accaonline.org.au
Executive Director: Kay Campbell
Artistic Director: Juliana Engberg
Melbourne's premier contemporary art space presenting a changing program of exhibitions, events and education programs. Visit the website for updates.
Daily 10–5, Wed 10–8, Free admission

Australian Tapestry Workshop
262–266 Park Street,
South Melbourne 3205
Tel 03 9699 7885
contact@austapestry.com.au
www.austapestry.com.au
Director: Antonia Syme
Changing exhibitions of contemporary tapestries by Australian and international artists, displayed in a workshop setting where the public can view weavers at work.
Tours $10, bookings essential
Tues–Fri 10–5, Free admission to galleries, entry to viewing mezzanine $5

Bendigo Art Gallery
42 View Street
Bendigo Victoria 3550
Tel 03 5434 6088 Fax 03 5443 6586
bendigoartgallery@bendigo.vic.gov.au
www.bendigoartgallery.com.au
Established in 1887, Bendigo Art Gallery is one of the oldest and largest regional galleries in Australia. The Gallery's collection is extensive with an emphasis on 19th century European and Australian art from 1880s onwards, alongside a strong collection of contemporary art.
Daily 10–5, closed Christmas Day

C.A.S. Contemporary Art Society of Victoria Inc.
PO Box 283, Richmond 3121
Tel 03 9428 0568 Mob 0407 059 194
mail@contemporaryartsociety.org.au
www.contemporaryartsociety.org.au
Founded in 1938, C.A.S. is a non-profit organisation run by and for artists across Australia.
Until 30 Jul: The Australian National Brooch Show, Toorak-South Yarra Library, 340 Toorak Roadd, South Yarra
Changing exhibitions, Decoy Café Bar Gallery, 303 Exhibition St, Melbourne
Online: view 600+ artworks

dianne tanzer gallery + projects
108–110 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy 3065
Tel 03 9416 3956
dtanzer@ozemail.com.au
www.diannetanzergallery.net.au
Director: Dianne Tanzer
dianne tanzer gallery + projects is a hub for professional artist development within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.
13–18 May: Art Basel Hong Kong: Natasha Bieniek
31 May – 21 Jun: Yhonnie Scarce, Janelle Low
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat 12–5

Flinders Lane Gallery
137 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000
Tel 03 9654 3332
info@flg.com.au
www.flg.com.au
Director: Claire Harris
Ackland, Baird, Blackwell, Breen, Bridge, Brooks, Cowell, Davenport, Eiseman, Ekholm, Hastings, Horstmans, Kalabishis, Maas, Pumfrey, Quinlivan, Rannersberger, Rawkins, Robbins, Ryan, Schawel, Smith, James Smith, Stibio, Walker, Warlukurlangu, Willcocks, Wollmering, Yamanaka
Tues–Fri 11–6, Sat 11–5

fortyfivedownstairs
45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000
Tel 03 9662 9966
info@fortyfivedownstairs.com
www.fortyfivedownstairs.com
fortyfivedownstairs is a not-for-profit theatre and gallery showcasing independent, experimental and thought-provoking visual art, theatre, live music and discussion. As an unfunded and not-for-profit organisation we strive to make money for artists, not from them.
Tues–Fri 11–5, Sat 12–4

Gallerysmith
170–174 Abbotsford Street,
North Melbourne 3051
Tel 03 9329 1860 Mob 0425 809 328
marita@gallerysmith.com.au
www.gallerysmith.com.au
Director: Marita Smith
Gallerysmith works with art consultants, collectors, curators and enthusiasts to develop strong and culturally significant collections. Artists include Eric Bridgeman, Mike Chavez, Dadang Christanto, Lucas Grogan and Christopher Pease.
Tues–Sat 11–5

LUMA La Trobe University Museum of Art
La Trobe University, Bundoora 3086
Tel 03 9479 2111 Fax 03 9479 5588
www.latrobe.edu.au/luma
LUMA engages in historical and contemporary art debates and seeks to make a significant contribution to contemporary critical discourse. LUMA also manages the University Art Collection, which charts the development of Australian art practice since the mid-1960s.
Mon–Fri 10–5

Lauraine Diggins Fine Art
5 Malakoff St, North Caulfield 3161
Tel 03 9509 9855 Fax 03 9509 4549
ausart@diggins.com.au
www.diggins.com.au
Director: Lauraine Diggins
Specialising in Australian colonial, impressionist, modern, contemporary and Indigenous painting, sculpture and decorative arts. We buy and sell artworks including European paintings. Lauraine Diggins is an approved valuer under the Cultural Gifts Program.
Tues–Fri 10–6, Sat 1–5

McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park
390 McClelland Drive, Langwarrin 3910
Melways ref. 103 E3
Tel 03 9789 1671 Fax 03 9789 1610
info@mcclellandgallery.com
www.mcclellandgallery.com
100 outdoor works in 16 hectares of landscaped gardens in Langwarrin. Home of the McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award, the gallery presents a vibrant program of exhibitions and public programs.
Guided tours: Wed, Thu 11 and 2, bookings essential
Tues–Sun 10–5, Entry by donation

Monash Gallery Of Art
860 Ferntree Gully Road,
Wheelers Hill 3150
Tel 03 8544 0500
mga@monash.vic.gov.au
www.mga.org.au
Director: Shaune Lakin
Monash Gallery of Art is one of Victoria's leading public art galleries and maintains a nationally significant collection of Australian photography, the only specialist collection of its kind in the country.
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat–Sun 12–5, closed Mondays and public holidays

Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA
Ground Floor, Building F,
Caulfield Campus
900 Dandenong Road,
Caulfield East 3145
Tel 03 9905 4217
muma@monash.edu
www.monash.edu.au/muma
3 May – 5 Jul: Concrete: a solid state, an aggregate of parts, a notion built upon the actual. Curator: Geraldine Barlow.
Tues–Fri 10–5, Sat 12–5, Free admission

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
Civic Reserve, Mornington-Tyabb Road,
Mornington 3931
Tel 03 5975 4395
mprg@mornpen.vic.gov.au
www.mprg.mornpen.vic.gov.au
Director: Jane Alexander
MPRG is the region's major public art gallery. It presents a dynamic program of exhibitions and events.
Tues–Sun 10–5

Mossgreen Gallery
310 Toorak Road, South Yarra 3141
Tel 03 9826 0822 Fax 03 9826 1255
mail@mossgreen.com.au
www.mossgreen.com.au
Directors: Paul Sumner, Amanda Swanson
Mossgreen Gallery represents emerging, mid-career and established Australian painters, ceramicists and sculptors with exhibitions changing monthly. The Gallery also stages retrospective selling exhibitions for Australian and international artists.
Mon–Fri 10–5.30, Sat 10–4

National Gallery of Victoria
The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia
Federation Square, cnr Russell &
Flinders Streets, Melbourne 3000
Tel 03 8620 2222
www.ngv.vic.gov.au
Director: Tony Ellwood
From 9 May: David McDiarmid; Fashion Detective
From 30 May: Mid-Century Modern: Australian Furniture Design
Until 20 Jul: StArt Up: Top Arts 2014
Until 24 Aug: Sue Ford
Until 31 Aug: Inge King: Constellation
Daily 10–5, closed Mondays

National Gallery of Victoria
NGV International
180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004
Tel 03 8620 2222
www.ngv.vic.gov.au
Director: Tony Ellwood
16 May: Italian Masterpieces from Spain's Royal Court, Museo del Prado; admission fees apply
Until 9 Jun: Three Perfections
4 July: Bushido
Daily 10–5, closed Tuesdays and Christmas Day

Niagara Galleries
245 Punt Road, Richmond 3121
Tel 03 9429 3666 Fax 03 9428 3571
mail@niagara-galleries.com.au
www.niagara-galleries.com.au
Director: William Nuttall (ACGA)
Modern and contemporary Australian art; extensive stockroom; collection advice.
Until 24 May: Clarice Beckett and Ian Fairweather
27 May – 21 Jun: Angela Brennan and Liu Zhuoquan
24 Jun – 19 Jul: Gunter Christmann and Neil Taylor
Tues–Sat 11–6 or by appointment

TarraWarra Museum of Art
311 Healesville–Yarra Glen Road,
Healesville 3777
Tel 03 5957 3100 Fax 03 5957 3120
museum@twma.com.au
www.twma.com.au
Director: Victoria Lynn
Did you know that the TarraWarra Museum is only one hour from Melbourne? Located in the Yarra Valley in Victoria, the Museum presents vibrant modern and contemporary exhibitions of Australian and international art.
Admission $5 (pensioners, students, children free)
Tues–Sun 11–5

Ten Cubed Collection
1489 Malvern Road, Glen Iris 3146
Tel 03 9822 0833
info@tencubed.com.au
www.tencubed.com.au
A private collection of contemporary art, open to the general public
Tues–Sat 10–4, free admission

William Mora Galleries
60 Tanner Street, Richmond 3121
Tel 03 9429 1199 Fax 03 9429 6833
mora@moragalleries.com.au
www.moragalleries.com.au
Contemporary Australian and Aboriginal art. William Mora is an accredited valuer under the Australian Cultural Gifts Program.
Tues–Fri 10–4, Sat 12–4 and by appointment

South Australia

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
55 North Terrace, Adelaide 5000
Tel 08 8302 0870 Fax 08 8302 0866
samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au
www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum
Director: Erica Green
Until 16 May: Shaun Gladwell: Field Recordings
Until 18 July: Shaun Gladwell: Afghanistan
Until 18 Jul: Roy Ananda. Slow crawl into infinity
Tues–Fri 11–5, Sat 2–5, Free admission

Art Gallery of South Australia
North Terrace, Adelaide 5000
Tel 08 8207 7000 Fax 08 8207 7070
agsainformation@artgallery.sa.gov.au
www.artgallery.sa.gov.au
Director: Nick Mitzevich
Until 11 May: 2014 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Dark Heart
Open 14 Jun: Dorrit Black: Unforseen Forces
Open 14 Jun: Mortimer Menpes
Daily 10–5, Bookshop and Art Gallery Food + Wine, daily 8–4.45, Free admission, charges may apply to special exhibitions

Flinders University City Gallery
State Library of South Australia
North Terrace, Adelaide 5000
Tel 08 8207 7055 Fax 08 8207 7056
www.flinders.edu.au/artmuseum
Director: Fiona Salmon
Located in the heart of Adelaide's cultural precinct, the City Gallery presents historic and contemporary art, craft and design through collection-based shows, commissioned projects and exhibitions drawn from the national touring network.
Tues–Fri 11–4, Sat–Sun 12–4, Free admission

Greenaway Art Gallery / GAGPROJECTS
39 Rundle Street, Kent Town 5067
Tel 08 8362 6354 Fax 08 8362 0890
gag@greenaway.com.au
www.greenaway.com.au
Director: Paul Greenaway OAM
Established 1992 as Greenaway Art Gallery. Spaces in Adelaide & Berlin. 22 years of Art Fairs. Collection advice and valuations. Artists include Sierra, Collishaw, Rentmeister, Tillers, Valamanesh, Smart, Watson, Bezor, Paauwe, Shead, Hassan, Kitson.
Tues–Sun 11–6

Peter Walker Fine Art
101 Walkerville Terrace,
Walkerville 5081
Tel 08 8344 4607 Fax 08 8364 5817
info@peterwalker.com.au
www.peterwalker.com.au
Director: Peter R. Walker
Specialising in rare Australian and international art.
Thurs–Sat 11–5 and by appointment

Western Australia

Artgeo Cultural Complex
4–7 Queen Street, Busselton 6280
Tel 08 9751 4651
artgeo@artgeo.com.au
www.artgeo.com.au
Coordinator: Diana Roberts
Where art and heritage meet, Artgeo Cultural Complex hosts an ever-changing program of exhibitions in an historic precinct, and retails art and craft from around the South West of Western Australia.
Daily 10–4

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)
Perth Cultural Centre, James Street,
Northbridge 6000
Tel 08 9228 6300
info@pica.org.au
www.pica.org.au
PICA is one of Australia's leading centres for the development and presentation of contemporary art, with a year round program of changing exhibitions, seasons in dance, theatre and performance and a range of interdisciplinary projects.
Tues–Sun 10–5, Free admission

Tasmania

Art Mob – Aboriginal Fine Art
29 Hunter Street, Hobart 7000
Tel 03 6236 9200 Fax 03 6236 9300
euan@artmob.com.au
www.artmob.com.au
Director: Euan Hills
Tasmania's only dedicated Aboriginal fine art gallery exhibiting works from many Australian communities including local Tasmanian artists. Located in Hobart's historic wharf precinct. Monthly schedule provides a vivid spectrum of works.
Daily from 10

Northern Territory

Muk Muk Fine Art
14 Lindsay Ave, Alice Springs 0871
51 Smith Street, Darwin 0800
Tel 08 8953 6333 Fax 08 8953 1941
admin@mukmuk.com
www.mukmuk.com
Managing Director: Mike Mitchell
Showcasing Indigenous art from Utopia and the Central and Western Deserts and selected contemporary Australian art.
Alice Springs: Mon–Wed 9–5, Thurs–Fri 9–7, Sat 10–2
Darwin: Mon–Fri 9–5 and by appointment

5

PLATFORM

PLATFORM *Introduction.* JASMIN STEPHENS, *independent curator.*

PERTH IS A CITY IN WHICH ARTISTS, APOLOGETICALLY, ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN TO BERLIN AND THE VENICE BIENNALE THAN TO BRISBANE AND CANBERRA. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THEIR CAREERS, MANY ARE ACTIVE IN PERTH'S ARTIST-RUN (ARI) SCENE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME APPLYING TO EXHIBITION SPACES IN MELBOURNE AND BEYOND. IF THE TERM 'EMERGING' DESIGNATES ATTENTION FROM THE ART WORLD, THEN THESE ARTISTS ARE GRADUATING WITH A SENSE THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO COUNTER THE PHENOMENON THAT CURATOR GLENN BARKLEY HAS DESCRIBED AS 'EMERGING LATER'.

LOOKING DOWN MY ORIGINAL LIST OF TEN ARTISTS, FROM WHICH FOUR WERE CHOSEN FOR *ARTAND AUSTRALIA*'S PLATFORM, NOT ALL ARE YOUNG OR NECESSARILY RESIDE IN PERTH. THEY DO MAINTAIN EXHIBITION PROFILES, COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND GALLERY REPRESENTATION IN THE WEST, HOWEVER. A BUNDLE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES ALSO EMERGES AS HAVING BEEN IMPORTANT TO THEIR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. CURTIN UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO SEND A STUDENT TO THE ANTONIO RATTI FOUNDATION'S ADVANCED COURSE IN VISUAL ARTS IN COMO, ITALY, EACH YEAR AND THE HOSPITALITY EXTENDED BY THE PERTH INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS TO NEW GRADUATES WHO TRAVEL FROM ACROSS AUSTRALIA FOR ITS 'HATCHED: NATIONAL GRADUATE SHOW' ARE PART OF THIS MIX. AS IS THE INFLUENCE OF PERTH'S MORE SENIOR ARTISTS, A FACTOR THAT CAN BE DISCERNED AS RECENT GRADUATES JOIN THE OVERLAPPING INVIGILATION, INSTALLATION AND EVENT CREWS THAT STAFF THE CITY'S VENUES, FESTIVALS AND STUDIOS.

DAVID ATTWOOD

Born 1990, Melbourne
Lives and works in Perth

David Attwood aligns his artistic intentions with Lawrence Weiner's desire not only to 'fuck up someone's day on their way to work', but to 'fuck up their entire life'.[1] For Attwood, this intent is not nihilistic but relational, as by situating his works within familiar Perth suburbia, he can more readily 'change the way people view their place in the world',[2] and forge meaningful connections with audiences. Attwood is particularly drawn to suburbia, to footpaths and car parks and alleys and playing fields, more than to the natural environment, as suburbia has 'a social dimension that the natural environment doesn't have, and people are important to my work even if they don't always feature'.

Attwood's fascination with the praxis of suburban life manifests in 'In Two Places at Once', a 2011 photographic series that emerged from his daily commute to art school. He summarised: 'One day I picked up a Strongbow Cider bottle cap, and then documented every bottle cap I found thereafter before finding an identical cap'. Reminiscent of Fluxus event scores, the work is both a monument to minutiae and a map, as, ultimately disposable, 'the documentation of each cap might collectively function as a map of things no longer there'.

> DAVE'S PRACTICE IS SO EPHEMERAL THAT IT'S EMPHATICALLY PHILOSOPHICAL. ALONGSIDE HIS MINIMAL FORMAL INTERVENTIONS, HE'S CANNILY ALSO PRODUCED SOME BEGUILING PAINTING INSPIRED BY THE FORMER NEWTOWN JETS FOOTBALL JERSEY.
> —JASMIN STEPHENS

A similarly arbitrary, obsessive impulse emerges in Attwood's video *Points on a line*, 2012. As indicated by its title, the work records the artist's process of placing five random discarded objects – a cardboard roll, soft drink can, chip packet, gum wrapper and beer bottle – on a bench at the points at which the horizontal bench intersects with the surrounding bus shelter's vertical slats. The green surface of the shelter speaks of abstract colourfield works, positioning Attwood's process as a kind of embodied painting. The title's reference to geometric ordering systems and the subsequent imposition of governing structures on real-world phenomena is playfully contradicted by the detritus's casual distribution and the absurdity of the artist's quest.

Humour manifests in several of Attwood's works, including *Pissing on the peril (yellow on yellow)*, 2014, which sees the artist pissing on Ron Robertson-Swann's infamous sculpture *Vault*, 1980, referred to colloquially as the Yellow Peril. The sculpture holds an important place in Australian art history: commissioned for the Melbourne City Square in 1978, it caused so much of an uproar among the general public that the council had it removed shortly after it was installed. Kept in storage for years, it was eventually reinstalled outside the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.[3] Attwood's action aims to agitate this relationship between Australian modernism and public art with the general public.

This action piece serves as a visual expression of art historian Ursula Panhans-Bühler's concept of 'impure minimalism'. Now more commonly referred to as 'dirty minimalism', this idea denotes the synthesis of minimalism's pictorial conventions with conditions that disrupt its internal logic, and with it, the historical modernist claims to rationality, autonomy and sterility. In *Pissing on the peril*, destabilisation occurs through the introduction of abject materials, as the yellow pigment of the structure is separated from its non-objective origins and becomes irrepressibly connotative of the colour of urine. Similarly, Attwood's 2013 mural for the former Newtown Jets rugby league team subverts the claims to ideological purity prevalent within minimalist discourse. Placed in a public arena, the mural gains its symbolic currency from local folklore, as its design, while visually austere, is an enlarged representation of the players' signature blue jerseys.

This idea of 'dirtying' minimalism served as Attwood's curatorial mandate for the 2014 exhibition 'Dirty', at Melbourne's KINGS ARI, co-curated with artist Shannon Lyons and including works by Attwood, Lyons and fellow Perth-based artist Rebecca Baumann alongside Marco Bruzzone and Thomas Rentmeister, both from Berlin. Attwood's interest in facilitating social relationships is further evidenced in his role as Co-Director of APPLECROSS, an artist-run initiative that he and Lyons founded in the front room of their Perth apartment. B.P.

Green and Gold, Fremantle Arts Centre, July 2014.

1 'Sharon Hayes and Lawrence Weiner in conversation at Weiner's studio in May 2010', *BOMBSITE*, *http://bombsite.com/issues/999/articles/3597*.
2 All David Attwood quotes are taken from email correspondence with the author, 13 February 2014.
3 See *http://www.accaonline.org.au/about/vault*.

Pissing on the peril (yellow on yellow), 2014
Documentation of an action, Melbourne
Courtesy the artist

THEA COSTANTINO

Born 1980, Kalgoorlie
Lives and works in Perth

By investigating the aesthetic and ideological aspects of our relationship with the past, Thea Costantino's interdisciplinary practice explores history, its representation and legacies. Across her varied body of work is a discernable interest in misconceptions, gaps, superstitions and myths – what lies hidden beneath the surface. Through appropriation, alteration and sound, the artist asks us to reconsider the legitimacy of the so-called official story.

Now based in Perth, Costantino grew up in regional mining towns around Western Australia, this context informing her investigation of concealed histories and their ongoing implications. The artist proposes the 'historiographic grotesque' as a counter-historical critique of European modernity, with colonialism at its centre:
The grotesque is structurally connected to the atavistic and spectral return of historical material. Since at least the Renaissance the grotesque has been inherently entangled with the sudden return of dormant histories at moments of historical rupture. I try to mine this quality in my work to examine the complex interplay of power, desire and identity that emerges from historical narratives.[1]

Costantino is perhaps best known for her detailed graphite drawings. In 'Diseased estate' (2010), the creative component of her doctoral thesis at Curtin University, Perth, she uses photographs appropriated from a range of historical sources – mugshots, war and medical documentation, memorial portraits. These disproportionate, fragmented drawings are devoid of focal point, disrupting the nostalgic appeal of the photograph and suggesting an alternative way to read the image. *The fold I* and *The fold II*, both 2011, bear remarkable resemblance to nineteenth-century photographs – the kind found in antiquated museum archives. A measured fold across the eyelids disguises the identity of the two men, while the use of heightened realism makes this distortion ever more grotesque. The effect is one of estrangement, the viewer wary of what they see.

The recent series 'The Ancestors' (2012), shown at Perth's Galerie Düsseldorf, makes a departure from drawing. Featuring live figures resplendent in wax headpieces – their presence majestic as they stand in elaborate vintage clothing – the photographic imagery is theatrical, funereal and religious, and satirically nods to European imperial portraiture. Costantino explained:
The exaggerated or anachronistic qualities of the costumes I use, including the ruined and stained parts, suggest an alien quality to the past. When I work with decidedly non-naturalistic and elaborate modes like opera I find that it draws more attention to the construction of a narrative.

> AN ELABORATE FORMALITY, AN EMOTIONAL WITHDRAWAL, SEEMED TO HINT AT DARK SECRETS – PRIVATE AND COLLECTIVE – WHEN I MET THEA'S 'RELATIVES'. I SOON REALISED THAT I HAD OVERESTIMATED PERTH'S CAPACITY TO ABSORB THE PAST. – JASMIN STEPHENS

These strategies of de-familiarisation – cloaking, alteration and the use of masks – are associated with early modernism, particularly surrealism. Although marginal to the surrealist movement, the work of Hans Bellmer and his life-sized grotesque female dolls are undeniably a reference.

Costantino is fascinated by the way modern art mined psychoanalytic themes to envision the irrational, erotic and rampantly violent underbelly of society. In an investigation into the mentally ill and the language of hysteria, Costantino and artists Tarryn Gill and Pilar Mata Dupont (the three collaborate as Hold Your Horses) worked with composer Tim Cunniffe on *The soloists (a case study)*, 2011. Presented at Fremantle Arts Centre, the work tells the story of Dora, Freud's famous 'failed' case of an eighteen-year-old diagnosed 'hysteric', through opera, with testimonies from the characters involved in the study competing with a sound piece of human voice.

Another ephemeral sound installation, *Siren*, 2012, explores the imagined sound of loss. It was created for the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and travelled to San Francisco as part of the Ethnographic Terminalia's Audible Observatories program. Working in collaboration with Cunniffe and an amateur choir, Costantino based the libretto on the choir's own thoughts about loss and memory – the haunting sounds and bodiless voices flooding the night air to evoke ghostly imaginings of past sailors lost at sea. L.R.

Thea Costantino, Turner Galleries, Perth, 3 October – 1 November 2014.

1 Both Thea Costantino quotes are taken from email correspondence with the author, January 2014.

Ancestor I, 2012
Archival ultra-chrome pigment ink 9 Giclee print on cotton canvas, edition of 3, 82 x 55 cm
Courtesy the artist

JACQUELINE BALL

Born 1986, Sydney
Lives and works in Perth
Represented by Turner Galleries, Perth

Jacqueline Ball's powerful photographs of enigmatic natural and architectural forms hover delicately on the threshold of opposites – illusion and actuality, certainty and uncertainty, interior and exterior. By evading fixed interpretation, these disorienting in-between spaces suggest limitless possibilities.

Creating her work in a studio, Ball has a multilayered process, with the physical construction as much a part of the final work as the photograph. Her approach involves extensive sketching to map out image compositions, the overall structure of the series and, finally, wall arrangements. She then carefully forms her models with gritty organic materials such as plaster, clay and wax. Light and colour are meticulously applied to accentuate, manipulate and highlight as she strives to maintain a striking formal tension in the final photographs. The progressions Ball's sculptures make are always recorded as she builds the layers of information – adjusting, erasing and reworking. But there is also the need for spontaneity: 'interesting things often unfold when initial plans go awry'.[1]

Chillingly reminiscent of subterranean caves, otherworldly spaces and glaciers, Ball's images could be mistaken for natural wonders of the world, the kind seen in *National Geographic*. But Ball has said, 'I don't approach my images as natural landscapes and I'm not interested in imitation'. The almost-cinematic land- or matter-scapes come into being at the point where photography is simultaneously deceptive and evidential: 'Photographic representation incorporates ambiguities due to the nature of the camera as a recording device'. But perhaps it is this momentary suspension of disbelief that allows the viewer to slip into a space of shared references and associations. 'I want to leave openings for possibility.'

Ball's recent body of work, 'Fluctuate' (2013), produced for 'Primavera 2013: Young Australian Artists', curated by Robert Cook for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, comprised eight large-scale photographs printed on photo rag. With muted pink and purple tones, the images possess a distorted sense of perspective. Ball has reduced the identifiable scale markers, thereby also taking away the viewers' ability to orient themselves; her handmade structures are often 'warped' before being photographed, the camera lens inevitably distorting the subject matter further. Of this manipulation, Ball explained:
I am fixated on the experience of feeling vulnerable and insignificant in relation to monumental natural structures that almost invade your field of vision, or the threatening experience of isolation. The potential for anything to happen is heightened and it can be both brutal and captivating.

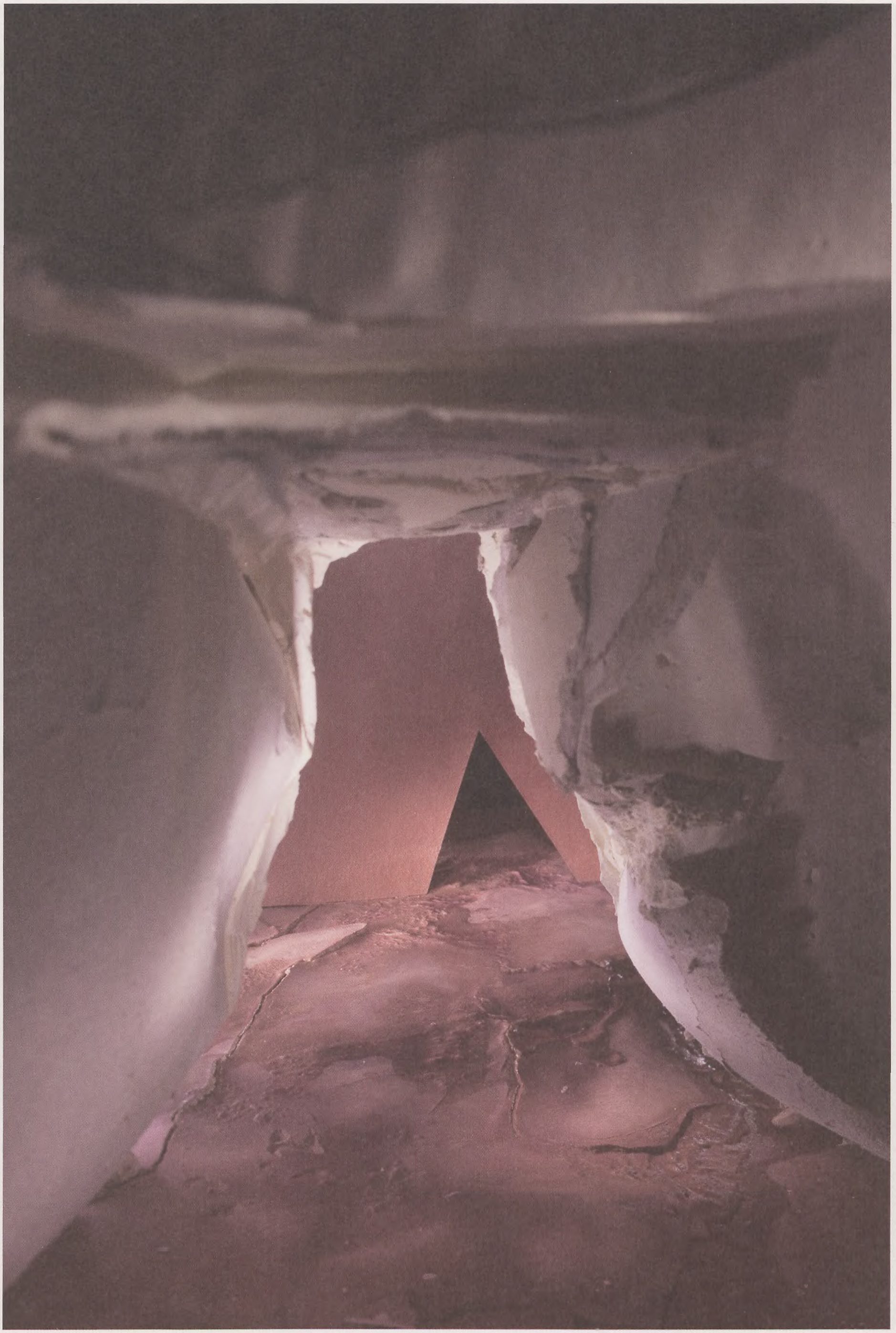
Eliciting feelings of awe, fear, loneliness, and redemption, Ball's photographs conjure nineteenth-century romanticism and Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime.

In late 2011 Ball completed residencies in Reykjavik, Iceland, and Varistaipale, Finland, a world away from suburban Perth. 'I had this strong desire for immersion and the sensation of being overwhelmed by the unfamiliar', she said of the experience, during which newfound interests in natural formations, isolation, Old-World expeditions into unknown territory, and decay surfaced. L.R.

1 All Jacqueline Ball quotes are taken from email correspondence with the author, February 2014.

I WAS IMMEDIATELY TAKEN IN BY THE EFFICIENCY OF JACQUI'S IMAGERY – HER DISTINCTIVE VOCABULARY OF CRYOGENICALLY FROZEN CAVITIES AND FORMS, PAINSTAKINGLY FASHIONED BY HAND AND RENDERED LIFELESS BY HER CAMERA.
– JASMIN STEPHENS

Fluctuate #4, 2013
Inkjet print on archival rag, 210 x 140 cm
Courtesy the artist



TEELAH GEORGE

Born 1984, Perth
Lives and works in Perth

The accretion of history, memory and visual art forms the conceptual foundation of Teelah George's work. Through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing painting, drawing, installation, sculpture and textiles, she examines the fraught relationship between narrative and representation, and excavates the parallel ambiguities that embed both historical record and visual art. Informed by research and archival material, George's art responds to 'the fissures and negative spaces within memory and record to form connections and raise questions about contemporary narrative and the complexities of identity'.[1]

A graduate of Perth's Curtin University, George has participated in group exhibitions and residencies both locally and internationally. Her first Australian solo exhibition, 'Meatworks Mens Qrtrs', was held in 2013 at OK Gallery, Perth. The series by the same name was created while she was in residence at Fremantle Arts Centre, and it mines the experiences of George's grandfather, who worked at an abattoir near coastal Wyndham in the early 1900s. Drawing from archival photographs, familial history and Ken Mellowship's memoir, *Wyndham: With a Ton of Salt* (2004), the artist translates the vernacular of her patriarchal heritage into semi-fictitious portraits, prints and sculptural installations. The 'Ugliest Man Competition' series, for example, depicts abattoir workers as imagined from the abstract clichés in Mellowship's book. The rawness of George's brushwork, rendering blurred and disfigured faces in smears of subdued colour, conveys a sense of hurriedness to record a melting memory. For George, the layering of paint operates in much the same way as an archive – built over time, and capable of both revealing and concealing.

With artwork titles such as *The hygienic butcher (Ted Scot)*, 2012, and *Len (the Horse) Philips*, 2013 – real nicknames from Mellowship's memoir – the works have a redemptive quality, the words becoming mnemonic traces of a time long gone. George explained her use:
It was rough, dark, but humorous. I became obsessed with how the language seemed to embrace the negative space of memory. It was the departure point for how I developed the work, and I became familiar with the characters and stories through the nicknames and phrases.[2]

Another piece in the series, colloquially titled *Shit on a stick, piss in a cup*, 2013, is also transcribed directly from Mellowship's dialect. With one wall-supported and two freestanding sculptures, the installation brings together papier-mâché, ceramic, aluminium foil, ink and enamel, its title giving form to a Wyndham family's description of dinner. Here again the artist presents an abstracted vision of the past that evinces the layering of history and the development of mythologies.

> WITH TITLES SUCH AS 'MEATWORKS MENS QRTRS' AND 'UGLIEST MAN COMPETITION', TEELAH'S MILKY, BRUTAL APPROACH TO PORTRAITURE STRIKES ME AS SIMULTANEOUSLY MATTER-OF-FACT AND FOREBODING.
> – JASMIN STEPHENS

For George's next solo exhibition, at Venn Gallery, Perth, she is currently engaging with the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art (Australia's largest specialist collection of women's art, housed at the University of Western Australia) in a similar manner to how she approached her grandfather's archive. George's particular interest in the Cruthers Collection lies in its transition from a private collection with domestic beginnings to a public resource, and how this impacts the interpretation of an archive and the (re)construction of history. E.W.

Solo exhibition, Venn Gallery, Perth, July 2014; group exhibition, Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide, October 2014.

1 Teelah George quote from Soya 365 Qantas Spirit of Youth Awards, *http://www.soya.com.au/entrant/teelah/*.
2 Quote taken from email correspondence with the author, February 2014.

The hygienic butcher (Ted Scot), 2012
Oil and enamel on board, 39.5 x 29 cm
Courtesy the artist and OK Gallery, Perth
Photograph Bo Wong

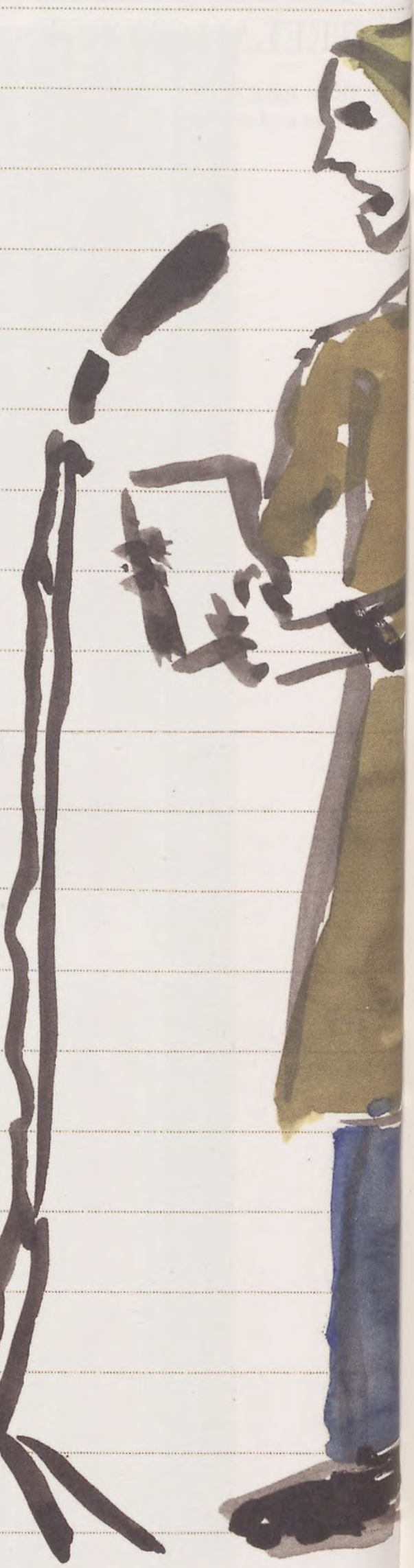
'ART AND POETRY: OUR STORY BEGINS'

PRUDENCE FLINT AND ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

JENNY WATSON AND KEN BOLTON

A collaborative project by *ARTAND Australia* and The Red Room Company to be launched at the Sydney Writers' Festival as a public exhibition and discussion chaired by poet Robert Adamson.

SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL
THURSDAY 22 MAY 2014, 1.30–2.30 PM
PIER 2/3 CLUB STAGE, WALSH BAY



Jenny Watson,
Poet reading, 2014, detail

THE RED ROOM COMPANY

ARTAND
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SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

LIAM

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Art Award

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Writers Pr

OPPOSITE A
The glaze, 2013,
High-definitio
18 mins 27 secs
Courtesy the a
Fine Art, Sydn

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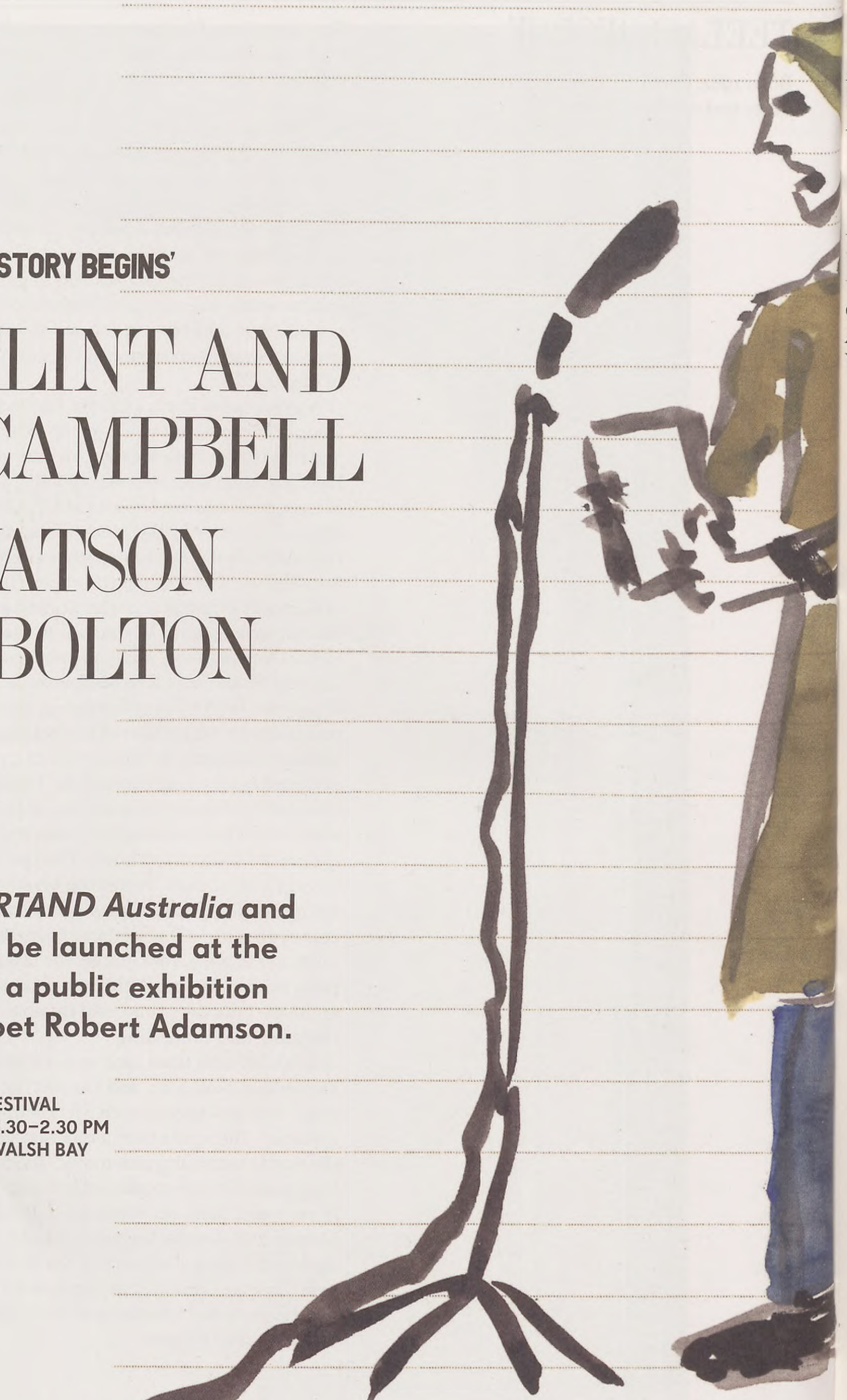


Jenny Watson,
Poet reading, 2014, detail

THE RED ROOM COMPANY

ARTAND
AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

LIAM O'BRIEN

ARTAND Australia / Credit Suisse Private Banking Contemporary Art Award

ANNIKA KRISTENSEN

Gertrude Contemporary and ARTAND Australia Emerging Writers Program

Liam O'Brien has expressive fingers. With two alone, propped up to resemble a pair of promenading legs, he is able to convey an array of emotions, including anguish and exhaustion, relief and despair. In *Whistling in the dark*, 2013, a performative video for the Artbank series 'Performutations', O'Brien's fingers, in place of the body of the artist, are tasked with the arduous duty of dragging a physically overwhelming sack towards an arbitrary finish line. A cut-out of the artist's face stuck to the back of his increasingly sweaty hand humanises this otherwise anonymous body part. As his fingers buckle beneath the weight of the sack and fall, cutting themselves on broken glass, we feel for the little character on his endless, futile journey.

In this adaptation of the Sisyphean myth, O'Brien employs deadpan humour and a sparse but dramatic soundtrack to stir within the viewer feelings of empathy for the protagonist. Like the beleaguered Sisyphus – forever condemned to push a boulder to the top of a hill, only for it to roll back down again – O'Brien's caricature must accept his fate. Despite the clear burden yet unexplained purpose of the sack, he nonetheless carries it dutifully, red-faced and groaning. As with many mundane and utilitarian tasks, he may even come to enjoy it – to seek progress and self-betterment through purposeful employment. A strip of hazard tape demarcates a finish line in the distance, as if a climactic point in his journey. As the character lumbers towards it in his quest for meaning and self-perfection, we find ourselves emotionally invested in the narrative, actively willing him on.

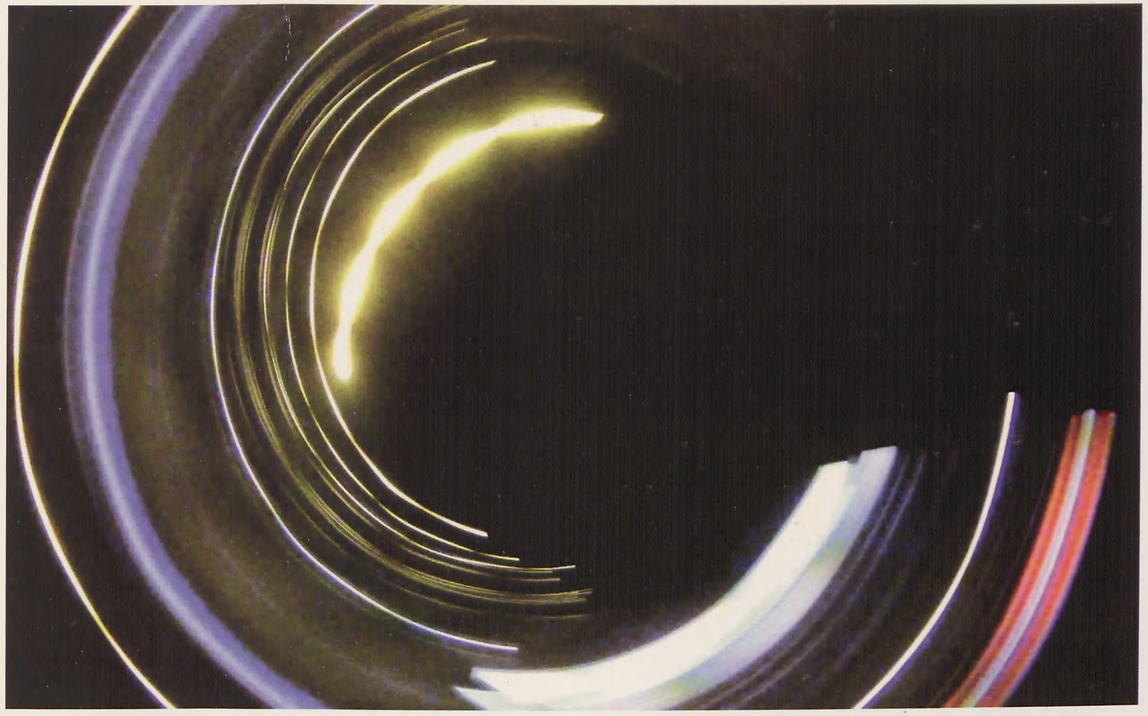
Tom Hodgkinson, author and Editor of *The Idler*, has posited the idea of a conventional career as 'posh slavery ... an institutionalised putting off, a paradise deferred'.[1] For Hodgkinson, the prevailing nine-to-five is an imposition on our freedom – an empty promise of fulfilment at the behest of self-interested governments and profit-seeking corporations. In *Whistling in the dark*, the sack is a metaphor not only for literal work, but for personal freedom in a broader sense – a running theme throughout O'Brien's practice. O'Brien employs absurdist techniques to question the accepted systems and social norms that we often take for granted. In earlier works he has examined such socially ingrained concepts as the necessity for employment and regulation of public space, as well as the entrenched acceptance of alcohol as both social lubricant and coping mechanism. Through the absurd hero of *Whistling in the dark*, O'Brien extends this questioning to consider the pointlessness of our own existence.

This idea of personal freedom – or lack thereof – is carried beyond individual experience in O'Brien's most recent work, *The glaze*, 2013, a sequence of unrelated vignettes where he explores the camera itself as a character, as well as the chance compositions of everyday objects and the relationship between analogue and digital technologies. Radial blur from a drill-mounted camera is followed by scenes of the artist mopping a floor with ineffectual abandon; a writhing, intestinal hosepipe; a collection of amalgamated phrases; and imagery of two household gloves, coming together and being pulled apart again. Intentionally ambiguous in both form and function, *The glaze* is littered with visual signifiers, art historical references and red herrings, leaving it open to interpretation. From an artist's perspective, O'Brien tests whether satisfaction can be gained from wilfully investing in the pursuit of an action that he knows to be meaningless. And if there is no such meaning, and all that remains is aesthetics, is that alone enough?

'Madman or slave, must man be one?', asked Victorian-era poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold in his 1852 poem *A Summer Night*. O'Brien's photographs, videos and performance works similarly seek to interrogate the limitations on our freedom under late capitalism and pursue alternatives: a twist at the end of *Whistling in the dark* provides an answer to Arnold's analogy. After O'Brien's fingers have collapsed, inert, the elusive finish line ahead, the camera pulls back to reveal a street scene empty but for a studio light atop a couple of milk crates. The artist retracts his hand, throws off the sack that has been concealing him, and crosses the street into the night a free man.

Annika Kristensen was mentored by Aaron Seeto, Director, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney.

1 Tom Hodgkinson, *How to Be Free*, Penguin Books, London, 2007.



OPPOSITE AND BACK COVER
The glaze, 2013, details
High-definition single-channel video, 18 mins 27 secs duration
Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

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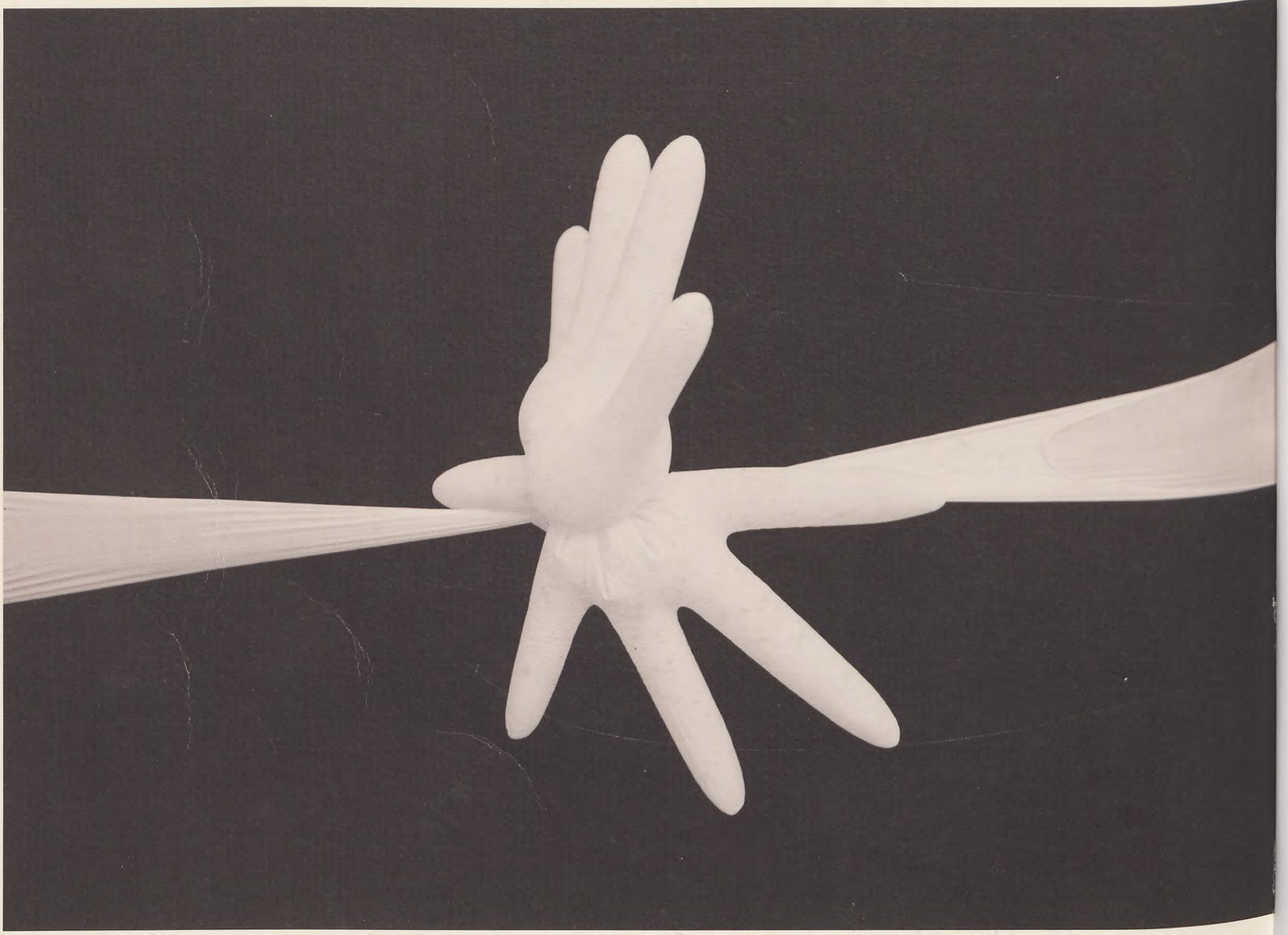
Liam O'Brien



Quarterly journal
A$24.95 (incl. GST)
NZ$29.50

ISSN 0004-301X