



**Painting.  
More  
Painting**



**Painting. More Painting**

**Painting. More Painting**  
**Australian Centre for Contemporary Art**  
**30 July – 28 August;**  
**2 – 25 September 2016**

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Foreword

*Painting. More Painting* explores the pictorial logic and medium condition of contemporary painting to examine the ways in which artists continue to reinvent painting within strict limitations, and in response to new perceptual conditions brought about by the advent of digital and virtual realms.

The exhibition is presented over two chapters, with each chapter structured around a series of solo presentations alongside an expansive panoramic group exhibition set within a dynamic mural-scaled wall painting. The solo presentations offer a focused consideration of the practices of fourteen Australian artists – seven in each chapter – demonstrating a range of distinctive positions. Two panoramic group exhibitions – encompassing some thirty artists in each chapter, arranged alphabetically – present the work of early, mid and senior-career artists conceived within the canon of painting and the medium-specificity of painterly discourse. These are displayed upon a newly commissioned architecturally-scaled wall painting by Sam Songailo which serves as a dynamic network within which a range of diverse and at times incommensurate painterly positions are presented.

Reflecting the resurgent activity and critical agency of painting over the past decade, *Painting. More Painting* provides an overview of contemporary Australian painting in a context in which diverse conceptual, polemic and stylistic connections and debates can be drawn between individual approaches across generations. It

considers the material, perceptual and conceptual operations of contemporary painting as both a self-referential, critical practice, and as a means to explore the wider conceptual implications of the work of art in the world today.

The curatorial structure of *Painting. More Painting* was initially conceived by ACCA Curator Annika Kristensen and Associate Curator Hannah Mathews, and it has been a great pleasure to work with them on the development of this project. I would like to especially acknowledge Annika and Hannah for their skilful orchestration and management of what is an ambitious and complex curatorial and logistic undertaking.

We are grateful for the lucid analysis and critical insights of catalogue essayists Jan Bryant, Justin Paton and Quentin Sprague, and for the contributions of ACCA staff members who have written catalogue entries. Special thanks are also due to Stephanie Berlangieri, Curatorial Intern, who has contributed to all aspects of the research and development of the exhibition and publication, along with ACCA's staff and installation team for their professionalism and commitment to the realisation of this project.

An exhibition of this scope would not be possible without inspired sponsorship and philanthropic support. We are especially appreciative of the significant support provided by Creative Partnerships Australia through the Plus 1 Program, and we are equally grateful to the Gordon Darling Foundation for their generous support of this publication. We

acknowledge with appreciation the many public and private lenders to the exhibition, and the assistance provided by artists’ gallerists and representatives. We also acknowledge our Media Partner JCDecaux, paint supplier Dulux, and our ongoing corporate and event partners, and philanthropic donors, who are acknowledged elsewhere in the publication.

We are grateful, above all, to the participating artists – many of whom have created new work especially for the exhibition – for the critical insight and enduring inspiration of their work.

*Painting. More Painting* is the first major institutional exhibition dedicated to contemporary Australian painting in over a decade. We hope that it stimulates further engagement, debate, exhibitions and public appreciation of the role that painting plays within the wider discourse of contemporary art.

Max Delany  
Artistic Director & CEO

Contents

HANNAH MATHEWS  
Painting. More Painting 6

QUENTIN SPRAGUE  
Six False Starts For An Essay On Painting. More Painting 12

JUSTIN PATON  
Necessity and glut: notes on painting 18

JAN BRYANT  
The Painterly 24

Mural Commission: Sam Songailo 32

Solo Studies 33

Panorama: A–M 86

Panorama: N–Z 116



## HANNAH MATHEWS Painting. More Painting

*Painting. More Painting* is an exhibition that acknowledges the continuing insistence of contemporary Australian painting. Focusing on living artists, it takes into account early, mid and senior-career practices from across the country.

The exhibition takes place a decade after the last large-scale institutional survey of Australian painters.<sup>1</sup> While artists have continually exhibited paintings in commercial galleries and independent art spaces, public institutions have tended to concentrate more on exhibitions that focus on various thematics, histories and participatory experiences. In the instance of recent medium-specific shows, video art and installation have become the new orthodoxy.

*Painting. More Painting* addresses the gap between the unceasing activity of painters and their relative absence in institutional programming, however, it is not a survey exhibition as such. It does not seek to be definitive.

Instead this two-part exhibition, presented over two months, brings together the work of seventy-nine artists whose practices demonstrate the scope of recent painting in Australia; not simply from a range of geographic and generational contexts but through distinctive positions, approaches, methodologies and lineages. The exhibition presents one version for four weeks, and then another, a recurring structure that acknowledges

the proliferation of painting currently being made in this early part of the twenty-first century. Its intent is to promote more detailed critical exhibitions of painting and dialogue around the discourse.

*Painting. More Painting* addresses painting's demand for attention. It responds to the return of early career artists to painting studios, the endurance of local painting practices, the current rise of publishing and discourse about painting, and the broader international focus given to the medium in recent years.

In exploring the pictorial logic and material condition of contemporary painting, questions around the definition of painting naturally arose. Why painting? Why now?

Painting as an art form is deeply historical, innately self-reflexive and, somehow, in its material specificity, singular. Painting can pick up qualities of other disciplines such as sculpture, photography and film, and yet it exists first and foremost as itself. This singular ability contributes to painting's autonomy, endurance and, possibly, its strength – although even now this is a contested interpretation. What is clear is that painting continues to produce new paintings, new methods and systems, and in doing so reflects the world around it in a way that distinguishes it from other mediums.

Painting takes time. Time for thinking, time in the studio, time working and reworking, time spent with the medium. Painting rewards time taken for looking. A painting can represent both long durations and short periods of activity. It can be indexical, diaristic

or materialist, yet its fixed (final) form never represents an instance in the way of a snapshot. Painting involves a temporal and material complexity that never quite privileges the single moment in time.

Painting is autonomous. It does not need anything beyond its material qualities. Painting does not need an immediate audience to justify its operations, choices or positions. It does not need a specific external environment. Painting comes from the artist's control of their own discipline and the discursive context of painting itself. In turn it can enter into various sites and relations while retaining control. In a world of contemporary art where 'anything and everything goes', painting has learned more and more to use its own material specificity to ensure a kind of integrity and questioning that can't be simply unpacked from the outside.

A painting is first and foremost a painting. We understand this idea from Modernism. It is a condition of thinking applied in a material way. It may be this and only this but at the same time it also speaks to ideas, discourses and concerns in the world as we expect all artworks to do. Contemporary painting's self-critical scrutiny of its own material and contextual conditions occurs simultaneously to its embodiment of the experience and sight of the world in which it operates. In this way it is an urgent condition, not only in conversation with itself but in conversation with its time. Each of the artists in *Painting. More Painting* asks us as viewers to follow the particularity of their practice and to understand their thinking in pictorial, material and conceptual terms.





The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) has a long history of engagement with painting. Before moving to its current location in an architecturally-designed complex in Southbank in 2002, ACCA's smaller-scaled domestic galleries in the Domain hosted a range of painting exhibitions and exhibitions about painting.<sup>2</sup> Its current home, however, poses challenges for the display of the medium.

In *Painting. More Painting* the seven solo studies included in each chapter of the exhibition – fourteen in total – take advantage of ACCA's more conventionally scaled side galleries. Each artist is afforded a space in which to present a key work or body of works selected from the last ten years. These studies allow the audience to consider the artists' practice closely, observing distinct approaches and concerns that have defined their work to date. These paintings are discussed in further detail throughout this publication and the artists' relationships to painting are expanded upon by Jan Bryant in her text, *The Painterly*.

In contrast, ACCA's main gallery is defined by its vast scale and complex perspectival qualities: a literal *kunsthalle*. How to make a painting show in this space posed interesting curatorial challenges that in turn drew on the organisation's history of working with artists on new commissions to address the unique spatial characteristics of this gallery.

For *Painting. More Painting* ACCA worked with artist Sam Songailo to realise a monochromatic wall

mural that is at once monumental and immersive. Comprising a pattern of three reccurring motifs, his work, *Sorry to kill the vibe, but time does exist* 2016, accentuates the compositional elements of line and space while making present the artist's hand. Intended as a background armature on which the group component of *Painting. More Painting* is displayed, its all-over quality alters the diverging architectural perspectives of the room in a way that allows a range of paintings to co-exist.

Songailo's work also interrupts the memory of the white institutional walls on which most of the exhibited paintings have previously been shown. Its schematic-like quality creates a volume in which these paintings temporarily exist together. Its geometric forms are dynamic – pointing, linking and reaching towards each other and other artworks across the room to form a network, or matrix, of sorts.

The group component of *Painting. More Painting* brings together a broad range of dedicated and rigorous practices to explore the ways in which artists continue to reinvent painting within strict limitations, and in response to new perceptual conditions brought about by the digital and virtual realms. Displayed in a linear hang and ordered alphabetically, with the first chapter including the works of artists' surnames beginning A-M, and the second chapter including those from N-Z, the work of sixty-four early, mid and senior-career painters are brought together. Their specific works are presented throughout this publication.





This temporary gathering of distinct and sometimes competing positions offers viewers the chance to draw on the many diverse conceptual, polemic and stylistic connections that exist between generations. Linkages emerge: there are artists interested in image-making, semiotics, process and in the material behaviour of paint itself; others in the dialectic and the painterly; some in the coded subcultures of place; and several more concerned with cultural languages related to land and history. The range is vast and demands close looking at individual works before considering the breadth of positions and allowing the connections to come forth.

The group section of *Painting. More Painting* also provides a space in which to explore the specific dialogues that painters share as colleagues, as well as with artists that came before them. It seeks to illustrate the idea of a network of Australian painters. Artists have been selected to demonstrate a range of contemporary painting positions, and also for the ways in which their work takes part in cycles of influence and exchange. This relational quality is perhaps more interesting to artists and less tangible to new audiences of painting, yet it is key to how artists develop and sustain practices. It is significant to the formation of community. Songailo’s mural, and the individual works by the sixty-four participating artists displayed in relation to it, brings this notion of network into focus. Collectively they suggest that every painting is part of a bigger picture, and that all painting is connected.

<sup>1</sup> Victoria Lynn’s inaugural *TarraWarra Biennial, Parallel Lives: Australian Painting Today*, was held in 2006 and surveyed contemporary painting through an expansive list of artists that included Richard Bell, Kate Beynon, Jon Cattapan, Nadine Christensen, Dale Frank, David Griggs, Brent Harris, Natalya Hughes, Aldo Iacobelli, Raafat Ishak, Joanna Lamb, Peter Maloney, Stieg Persson, Rusty Peters, Ben Pushman, Paul Uhlmann and Anne Wallace. In 2010 the Art Gallery of NSW presented *Wilderness: Balnaves Contemporary Painting* that focused on painting and its relationship to landscape and nature with works by Del Kathryn Barton, Andrew Browne, Daniel Boyd, Stephen Bush, Tony Clark, Julie Fragar, Louise Hearman, Fiona Lowry, Nigel Milsom, James Morrison, Alex Pittendrigh, Mary Scott, Megan Walch and Michael Zavros. The Ian Potter Museum of Art, at the University of Melbourne, also has a history of contemporary painting exhibitions: *Painting: An Arcane Technology (2001)*, curated by Natalie King and Bala Starr included the work of artists Hany Armanious, Nadine Christensen, Adam Cullen, Diena Georgetti, Matthys Gerber, Brent Harris, Louise Hearman, David Jolly, Gareth Sansom, Eve Sullivan, Anne Wallace and Constanze Zikos; *It’s a Beautiful Day. New Painting in Australia: 2 (2002)* curated by Bala Starr included Peter Booth, Mutlu Çerkez, Julie Dowling, Matthys Gerber, Brent Harris, Raafat Ishak, David Jolly, Tim Maguire, Tim McMonagle, Derek O’Connor, Vivienne Shark LeWitt and Anne Wallace; and *Model Pictures (2011)* which included James Lynch, Amanda Marburg, Rob McHaffie and Moya McKenna.

<sup>2</sup> ACCA’s inaugural exhibition was an installation of site-specific works by Melbourne painters Howard Arkley, Juan Davila and David Larwill. Each artist was given a room in the un-renovated building in Dallas Brooks Drive and invited to paint as they desired. Since then ACCA has presented the work of a variety of painters, including Tony Clark, Richard Larter, Keith Haring, Imants Tillers, Peter Tyndall, John Dunkley-Smith, Stephen Bush, Jenny Watson, Margaret Morgan, Greg Creek, John Nixon and Jelena Telecki.



QUENTIN SPRAGUE  
Six False Starts For  
An Essay On Painting.  
More Painting<sup>1</sup>

1.

Although it displays an ambitious, intergenerational scope, *Painting. More Painting*, an exhibition that features the work of seventy-nine painters, cannot be understood to make a definitive statement about painting. Sure, its borders have been carefully set – a decade of practice is considered, the focus is on living artists, ‘painting’ is conceived in material terms – but the exhibition neither acts to historicise the practices it contains, nor stages an argument for painting in terms that couldn’t be applied to art more generally.

If anything, *Painting. More Painting* seeks the opposite. It shows painting as a practice passed between many practitioners; a kind of social activity turned by many hands towards many ends. Painting contains multitudes, it tells us; to apprehend it we must forego surety, we must forget what we think we know about painting. We must think about where it begins and ends, about the point where it might become another practice entirely.

Look at the exhibition’s overarching format, for example. *Painting. More Painting* unfolds in two interrelated versions, each of which presents up to seven painters in depth alongside a broad-scale alphabetised ‘panorama’ of individual works massed in the Australian Centre for

Contemporary Art’s main gallery. If this hang, which is backgrounded by a large wall painting by the Melbourne-based artist Sam Songailo, acts like the exhibition’s engine room, the ‘solo presentations’, as they are referred to, are something like the power generated.

Because of this format we can’t help but think of process: not only in terms of painting, but in relation to the exhibition itself. The curatorial voice that underpins it is both suppressed and pronounced: there are, of course, a clear set of choices in play – certain artists included, others not, for example – but at one level these seem interchangeable, even arbitrary. More important is how the logic of the exhibition’s construction encourages one to think through the material at hand. If current painting can be pictured as a flow, *Painting. More Painting* attempts to capture it, as a dam might a river: the flow itself is stilled but its strength is more clearly felt.

We might ask what this approach imparts. It clearly assists us in understanding something fundamental about painting, but it also acts to obscure. In this exhibition painting is spread thin; it seems as dispersed as it is concentrated; its edges overlap, at times it may even seem to contradict itself. If we think about painting, we realise, we must also think about contemporary art. We must consider how each might open a space for the other.

2.

To begin, a simple point:

*Painting. More Painting*, the two-chapter exhibition of current and

recent painting at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, is not a survey. A survey suggests a certain kind of approach: not only does it purport to be objective, but it functions to secure selected practices within history. A survey makes an argument – implicit or otherwise – for the importance of certain practices above others.

But *Painting. More Painting* applies a different curatorial method. For one, it’s far more subjective; it embeds a certain apprehension at its very core. The challenge here, one senses, is not what to say about painting, but how to construct the terms of engagement in a way that allows the specific character of painting to remain. To look broadly at painting one must somehow embrace the uncertainty of the painter: the sense that every painting could in fact be a different painting; that every work simultaneously reaches forwards and backwards, anticipating and echoing in equal measure.

Because of this, *Painting. More Painting* makes apparent something that I’d argue shadows all exhibitions, but which is particularly pronounced within the thematic group model: an exhibition, especially an exhibition of contemporary art, is defined as much by its omissions as by its inclusions; by what it doesn’t say as much as by what it does. This may best be seen as a kind of negative space that traces an exhibition’s edges, and gives a sense of the exhibition, or exhibitions it could have been, but now is not.

Like a painting gestures towards its alternate versions, so too does *Painting. More Painting* draw

attention to its other iterations. It provides two discrete exhibitions, yet it suggests more still: in evoking painting in general terms it can’t help but draw under its frame the practices and works not included, even as it asks us to look at *these* practices and *these* works.

3.

The exhibition *Painting. More Painting* by default poses a question that has been passed around art worlds for some time, and remains prominent even if one could be forgiven for thinking it had been answered some time ago (or if it hadn’t then at least the pressing need to do so had by now faded): what is painting?

The answer presented at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art stretches between seventy-nine artists and two interrelated curatorial ‘chapters’, drawing on cumulative effect rather than individual example. It is an answer of equivalences. As Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square* 1915 once proved, to comment on all paintings a painting can only be defined in the widest of terms: paint, canvas and support. In a similar fashion, *Painting. More Painting* can’t help but impart a sense of overwhelming materiality: colour and form, for example, are writ large (think, for instance, of Sam Songailo’s vast wall painting in ACCA’s main gallery, which acts as a kind of meta-painting that captures all other paintings on display); so too the sense that although many of the painters included think well beyond painting’s borders it is nonetheless the general terms – the paint, the canvas, the support – that map here the common ground.

The exhibition’s self-reflexive format only feeds this effect: it provides an armature upon which the curatorial phrasing can shift. At its mid-point it is re-hung: visit twice, and you may well see two different, albeit related, exhibitions. Each might seem interchangeable, but this is part of the point. To make a definitive gesture, as one would expect from a more conventionally presented exhibition, is to misunderstand the field of engagement.

In this, *Painting. More Painting* positions itself in distinction to the other kind of exhibition it could have been. It is, for example, neither objective, nor historical. To be either it would need to act far more blindly. For one, it would need to operate on an assumption that to ‘survey’ specific painters as a means to make an argument about painting generally is possible. It’s not. Regardless of its clear material parameters, painting is an almost impossibly varied undertaking. An exhibition like *Painting. More Painting*, then, may in fact be best characterised as a kind of ‘anti-survey’. It takes on a survey’s broad tropes, but subverts them in the detail. What we get instead is a picture of a network; a social field mapped out between many players, all of whom, in this case, identify as painters.

Because of this the question of what painting is begins to shift: we wonder instead where it begins to push against other practices, where its outer limits may best be secured.

4.

During initial discussions about this essay between myself and staff at the Australian Centre for

Contemporary Art, the phrase ‘post-Tumblr painting’ – as in a movement like colour-field abstraction or appropriation – came up.

Most would have some idea what it refers to. A Tumblr aesthetic, marked by the endless scroll, is one of transience: one image readily becomes another, and then another still. The emphasis shifts from content to flow: from the message itself, to the technological medium of its delivery. Although at some level we understand that this flow is somewhere archived in its entirety, and thus permanent, our own memories of it are usually achingly brief.

As a motif for our times, many would argue that this is an apt one. Under the internet’s ultra-mediated regime, images find themselves simultaneously at a premium and an all-time low. Visual representations are absolutely dominant, but – perhaps perversely – their power to move the viewer has been diminished to the point of fading away entirely. Images have never been easier to produce, but nor have they ever been harder to hold onto.

For art historians and artists alike, this ever-increasing proliferation represents a boom-time. There’s so much to think about, so many implications. If a vast void has been created by the internet’s constant chatter, new ideas must fill it. But it’s also surely a cause for anxiety. Art world discourse has always been about elevating images from the mass of production, about identifying them as part of a master-narrative, definitive or otherwise. To do this now, however, is to fundamentally misunderstand the



rules of the new game. Once, an essay like this may have been about shoring up the curatorial premise of the exhibition to which it refers. It would make an argument for painting, much like the exhibition itself does. It would suggest why certain practices endure regardless, or perhaps because, of the image-saturated climate we find ourselves in. Painting would be identified as a vital activity, its use-value secure in the culture at large.

My contention here, however, is that it's not. In a digital world painting is marked, if anything, by a striking obsolescence. It is an old technology – perhaps the oldest – whose use-value now must seem archaic at best. To paint is to accept something of the medium's impossibility to enact an effect beyond the borders of its own discourse. Yet the compulsion remains. *Painting. More Painting*, a survey at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art which features works by seventy-nine painters, can't help but underscore this through sheer diversity and volume. What is it about painting that continues to engage our attention? Why now, when its claim to uniqueness has long been superseded by the ubiquity of every kind of position staged all at once, by the emergence on a near-daily basis not only of new technologies, but new means of experiencing images, of circulating and consuming them?

Why is it that painting – so clumsy, so apparently useless – still 'works'?

5.

In 2014, in the catalogue for *The forever now: contemporary painting*

*in an atemporal world*, an exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, the curator Laura Hoptman began an essay on current painting with the following sentence:

What characterizes our cultural moment at the beginning of this new millennium is the inability – or perhaps the refusal – of a great many of our cultural artifacts to define the times in which we live.

Painting – long marked by a pattern of near constant return – was at this moment once again claiming critical territory; although it had never really gone away, a narrative of triumph against the odds had again taken hold. Evidence lay everywhere, but *The forever now* provided a particularly blunt example: it was the first time since 1958 that MoMA had staged a large contemporary painting survey.

Because of this it's hard not to sense a certain anxiety in Hoptman's opening gambit. There's a lot at stake: against a backdrop of contemporaneity – a period most often defined in terms of plurality – a medium-specific survey cuts firmly against the grain. How might such an approach be justified? What can it tell us about the current moment that a more inclusive, broad-scale survey of contemporary art might not?

Hoptman's position, that the notion of atemporality (essentially the character of many histories manifesting all at once) is particularly pronounced in contemporary painting, underpins much of her answer. It's this, she argues, that lends current painting its marked instability, its refusal to collectively gather beneath one

discourse, or one idea. Return to her catalogue essay's first sentence, and in particular that small section of text separated from its body by dashes: 'perhaps the refusal'. Immediately there is a telling sense of uncertainty. It might first cause us to picture the painter (for although Hoptman is thinking broadly we can't help in context but see the 'artefacts' to which she refers as paintings) as a figure who is maintaining a critical distance from the culture at large; that they are enacting a conscious decision to *not* embed their work in their time. But the key, of course, is the way in which Hoptman's sentence allows this idea to tussle with another, contradictory one: she is only suggesting – perhaps during a review of an earlier draft in which the unqualified statement she leads with seems far too certain for the material at hand – that this is a refusal. It may equally be an inability. She can't be sure, and therefore nor can we.

For anyone engaging with contemporary painting this uncertainty seems important to acknowledge. It goes to the heart of how we might read paintings not as singular objects, or as individual practices bordered by carefully defined parameters, but in more general terms. How does painting function in the contemporary world, we might ask: what does it do?

One thing that's clear is that painting, as a collective activity, is more diffuse than ever. Sometimes this is evident in one practice, or even one painting, but it is especially so when multiple painters are drawn together. The exhibition *Painting*.

*More Painting*, at The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, encourages us to double down on this conclusion. Whereas *The forever now* focused on a carefully selected group of practitioners – seventeen in total – *Painting. More Painting* opens its engagement outwards. It brings together the work of no less than seventy-nine painters. A handful are considered in some detail, but the majority remain barely glimpsed: one work must act as a signifier for the practice that carries it, which in most cases is proven an impossible undertaking. It's the mass of activity, rather than individual perspectives, that thus comes to the fore. If *Painting. More Painting* gives us a series of still points in the form of 'solo presentations' staged under the exhibition's broader frame, it does so only to emphasise painting's insistent diversity. The diffuseness here may for some seem overwhelming: for every evident 'type' of painting – for every position a painter might take – there is another.

It follows that the uncertainty touched on above is particularly prominent. The question raised by *Painting. More Painting*, although essentially the same as that raised by Hoptman's exhibition, is due to volume far more pronounced: Does this quality – this diffuseness – represent a refusal or an inability? Is it evidence of a critical position, or simply an unavoidable symptom of our times?

6.

I want to first ask what painting does, or how it functions, for painters.

After all, long before we consider its function elsewhere, like any medium painting must first adapt to the demands of its maker: it must prove itself malleable; that as general as it is, it can be turned to specific ends. Before painting circulates in the world at large it must first play out in subjective terms.

In this light, painting might best be conceived as a series of endless-seeming propositions that unfold, at least at first, within the parameters of the studio. The logic it follows is of a specific kind. If (as many painters would surely argue) it is a form of labour, it is a labour not at all like the labour that occurs elsewhere. For one, the painter sets the terms of practice. They are working for no-one: what they do, and how often they do it, is up to them. In setting the terms, the painter can also define what kind of things they work on, and how. Some painters take a relatively straightforward route; the value of the painting can thus be measured against the time put into it, or in relation to the painting or paintings that came before. Others less so: it has long been unremarkable for a painter to not even touch their work. The labour is still there, but in a different way.

One assumes that such processes hold their own promise, that they provide a painter the means to translate the world around them in a variety of different ways. As with artists generally, painters both capture and construct images; they produce and consume them; they must attempt to create lasting affects even as this is proven time and again as a quixotic undertaking. For most, if not all, it's impossible. For

some time now the smart money has been on embracing the fact that art doesn't last, seeing it not as a pitch for timelessness but simply as part of culture's broader spread, part of a process of near-constant renewal. Contemporary art – utterly ruthless in its focus on constant change – only underscores this. Artists find themselves bit-players in a narrative that by definition must be about something else entirely.

The painter's self-made task is to narrow this field, or not. Some practices emphasise that they have to be everything all at once; that they must encompass all positions because increasingly we are aware that all positions exist. For others, this is a soulless undertaking, a kind of fatal cynicism that strips a practice of meaning. For them there is only ever one investigation, constantly refined across the years, honed to an increasingly fine degree. From the outside, the differences that exist within such practices can seem almost impossibly minute, but this must be the point. The investigation locates finely grained detail: you see now what before you could not.

<sup>1</sup>The structure of this essay is taken from Janet Malcolm's profile on the American painter David Salle, 'Forty-one false starts', first published in *The New Yorker*, 11 July, 1994.





## JUSTIN PATON

### Necessity and glut: notes on painting

Painting isn't dead but it gets up and risks death every day. 'I nearly died out there' performers say when no one laughs at their jokes or stops talking during their songs, and that's the kind of dying that painting runs the risk of all the time. Painting doesn't need you to dress in black and stand around for the funeral, as if this is The End forever. What it needs is for you to turn up at the club and hope it doesn't die *tonight*. And when it does die out there, sweating under the stage lights, it needs you to care and hope enough to show up again tomorrow (because nothing is sweeter than a comeback). Instead of dirges and memorials delivered by gloomy popes and poohbahs, what painting needs is hecklers, groupies, buffs, aficionados, nerds, family members and fans.

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But there are only so many seats in a club. Shouldn't painting be playing to bigger audiences? So runs the objection and the answer is Dear God, no, painting shouldn't. The need to please on an industrial scale has had unhappy consequences for sculpture, turning formerly needling and nimble artists into bloated stadium rockers. It's the bullfrog theory of cultural engagement: When in doubt, inflate. Painting needs all of us not to wish that kind of 'success' upon it. There are rare painters who seem most themselves in front of a sizeable crowd: I think of Anselm Kiefer when he unstops the whole orchestra or

Katharina Grosse when she really rips it up. But the painting that reaches us is usually the size of a person. It lives somewhere in the space between the size of someone's head and the span of someone's arms. It is not for 'the audience' or 'the sector' or 'the demographic' or that suspiciously docile crowd of ciphers known as 'viewers'. When you come as close to the painting as the painter stood to make it, it is for you and you only. Painting is radically intimate.

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The tricky part is conveying how this intimacy exists within a sense of decorum or distance. Though we are standing where the painter stood and looking at the surface they touched, though we are seeing the strokes they made and inwardly rehearsing the gestures that generated them, though we may be close enough to smell the materials they smelled as they worked, it is crucial to this intimacy that the painter has left the scene – that they have ceded authority to this unlikely stand-in, a piece of fabric or board spread with colour. This letting go, oddly, is what permits art to visit places normal conversations don't go. There are things that the performer will say while they are performing, distanced from us by the stage and its lights, that they would not say to us directly. Painting, likewise, does not talk straight to us. It agrees to let us listen in.

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'For me, what is there left to do ... only to sing small'. Paul Cézanne

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Painting is a 'problem', a 'history', a 'project', a 'discourse', a 'formation', a 'mode of production', a 'field of

inquiry'. But it is also something you do, as in 'I'm painting', and no one who talks about painting should do so without occasionally attempting to make a painting. The initial and overwhelming sensation of feebleness is bracing and immensely instructive, as one strives to summon sense from blobs of muddy colour using a ridiculous stick topped with bristles. Persist, however, and humiliation yields to another instructive sensation – one that real painters often mention semi-superstitiously in their studio conversations. This is the feeling that the surface in front of you is beginning to develop *needs*, that it is responding to the attention you are paying to it by telling you what kind of picture it wants to be. Even when you are doing nothing more than attempting the simplest copy, every stroke demands a counterstroke, every colour requires an adjustment of another, and because the medium is fluid, viscous, sticky, volatile, a quiet urgency also enters the equation. You are building your image in real time from matter that slips and slides as you wield it, and only by agreeing to be like the medium, to yield and respond, will the painting continue to grow. No painter has described this strange transfer of power more eloquently than Philip Guston, who spoke of returning to the studio in the morning and peeking in with trepidation at the golems he had helped to life the night before.

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Of course, we copyists and amateurs are not going to emerge from our efforts with paintings like Philip Guston's. Nonetheless, the thrilling and humiliating exercise of *actually painting* should be

imposed upon all critics, historians and curators, if only to disabuse us of the notion that the thinking in a painting can be separated from its making. 'Tell us about the ideas behind your work' painters are often asked, as if the painting is merely a door behind which the thoughts that generated it are stowed. But the thoughts that matter most are not lined up beforehand to be put into or clipped onto the painting. The thoughts that matter most emerge *from* the painting, like heat rising off a compost heap.

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Inspiration is real, but the metaphors it needs are horticultural rather than meteorological. It doesn't strike like lightning from the heavens: it blooms behind you like an unwatched plant. And the ground it grows in is work.

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Yes, Painter X is better, greater, more important than Painter Y. But Painter Y may have qualities that Painter X does not. And beware those observers for whom the greatness of the greats is merely an excuse to be perpetually disappointed with everything else. One of the joys of looking at painting today, in the wake of the collapse of the faith in artistic progress, is encountering the work of the minor masters, the artists' artists, the character actors in art's big movie. Pollock is a genius, an unlatcher, a kicker down of doors, etc., but have you seen what happens when Milton Avery puts a chalky green beside pink? The paintings we revere on museum walls are not necessarily the paintings we'd take home with

us. And lucky is the painting that someone wants to live with.

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'Just because painting failed Duchamp, didn't mean that painting itself had failed'. Trevor Winkfield

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It is obligatory now when writing about painting to furrow one's brow about the rise of the digital – about the unstoppable flood of electronic images and the bottomlessness of our appetite for them. Accordingly, I suppose I ought to feel anxious about the preschool kid I saw on the bus one recent morning, who was trying to swipe the cover of her picture book because she thought it was a touch screen. Here was a scene apparently designed to dismay any friend of painting: a premonition of a world where unmoving images are regarded as a frustrating irrelevance. At the same time, however, it was a scene that made the situation for painting marvellously clear. Now that everyone carries with them and sees the world through these responsive screens, the stillness of painting seems stranger and more scandalous than ever before. For eyes accustomed to swiping and scrolling, a painting is effectively a stalled iPad – a permanent glitch, a surface that perversely refuses to yield up other images. This does not mean that painting is obsolete. But it does mean it just got harder. Painting in the age of the internet does not mean deploying digital squiggles and Photoshoppy fades – the tics and tricks of hedge-fund formalism. It means making the stillness and singularity of the painting's surface count as never

before. It means arguing, as images stream past on all sides, that *this one image should stay*.

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The methods for making an image stay are an open secret. They are there to be gleaned from the stayers of the past, which wait for us in museums. To learn some of them, I recommend making a series of appointments with Hans Memling's *The Man of Sorrows in the arms of the Virgin*, a 550-year-old painting that argues afresh for its existence every time I visit it at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. It is a painting I feel so obscurely attached to that I'm not sure what I can say about it, but what I noticed last time, which I had not before, is the pull between descent and rising. Everything in the painting tells you Christ is gripped by gravity and mortality. There's the slump of his head, the trails of his blood, his sallow body positioned low in the composition. But what compelled afresh last time was the fabric wrapped around him, fabric that seemed, the longer I looked, to fall back like the petals of an opening flower from a figure that was *rising*. I don't say conclusively that he's rising or falling. In the painting both things happen. And the presence of both possibilities on one centuries-old surface is what makes the painting necessary.

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Painting is possible today, but is it necessary? The question is a good one to ask of painting in the age of the Art Fair, when the death of the medium seems less of a threat than complacent overproduction. To walk through the big fairs in Hong Kong

or London is to see many examples of what might be called placeholder paintings – paintings that exist to occupy the place that painting is expected to occupy in these settings. Placeholder paintings pay us the dubious compliment of giving us what they think we want. Like other products of the Instagram age, what they desire most of all is to to be Liked. Away with them. Hard as it is to define, what one wants to find instead is the *necessary* painting: the painting that the painter needed to make and which you needed to see.

- More than beauty, quality, sublimity, consistency or perfection, a sense of necessity is what I want most from a painting today, and it lives for me in four qualities especially. First is modesty, a sober evaluation of painting’s power and scale in the world. The necessary painting begins in full knowledge of all the things painting can’t do or hasn’t realised. Productively disillusioned and cheerfully disenchanted, it gets up and gets on with the job. Second is a certain nakedness of physical means, a recourse to ‘the bare necessities’. Rather than borrow or emulate fluency, the necessary painting will speak plainly and awkwardly. Third and crucially, the necessary painting is a painting that could have failed. It grew uniquely and its final shape is one that the painter could not have foreseen. And because it was discovered in good faith rather than predetermined and merely executed, its appearance registers, for both the painter and the viewer, as a surprise and something of a gift.

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‘... sometimes a painting can operate within its borders, sitting quietly on the wall, and other times it can infect the whole room and the person standing in front of it; it can jump outside of itself’. Dana Schutz

- Then there is strangeness. By strangeness I don’t mean the obviously surreal, fantastical or outlandish. I’m thinking instead of the way painting simultaneously clarifies and makes mysterious. We’re familiar with the idea that, by describing the world well, painting brings us closer to it, drawing attention to what we hadn’t noticed. But the paradox of the painting is that, while drawing the world close, it also supplants or replaces or resists it. That is the oddity and fascination of Giorgio Morandi’s paintings: the way they seem at once to take hold of their objects yet also to push them away, smearing and blending their outlines in a paste of muted tones. As they encounter again the familiar shapes of his vases, pitchers and boxes, Morandi’s wandering, wondering brushstrokes seem to be asking: What is the world? Can we possess it? How constant is it, how changeable, how attainable? Even when we limit our gaze to a few boxes and jars, what are we certain we can place our faith in? There is something consoling in Morandi’s deep attachment to these few pieces of the quotidian world. But his painting is also a way to hold the world at bay, the better to think about it.

- I don’t think we can say on this basis that painting is a ‘critical’ medium – ‘critical’ being one of

those wishful terms that reveals more about the speaker than the thing spoken of. But because it is old, slow, difficult, stubborn, marginal and uncontemporary, painting is well placed to express a sense of estrangement from and discontentment with some of the prevailing conditions of our time. In our culture of outcomes, deliverables, efficiencies, instantaneity, spectacle and calculated obsolescence, painting that is slow, inquisitive, persistent and doubting reminds us there are other ways of being and seeing. Painting may not be much in the end: a delay, a lovely tremble, a minor heresy, a stammer in the speech of Culture. But it is not nothing.

- And it is yours. As the maverick American portraitist Alice Neel put it, ‘The minute I sat in front of a canvas I was happy. Because it was a world, and I could do what I liked with it’. I realise there is a risk of recycling romantic stereotypes or exaggerating the freedom of artists – not least at a moment when a working life as an artist is becoming harder to achieve. But if you can find the time and the resources, if you can secure the part-time job and make space in the small hours, if you can nab a patron or wrangle a residency or simply get up early and get to work on the kitchen table, then in front of your canvas you can be (as painter Rebecca Morris writes) the master of your own universe. Consider the horrors of directing a film or erecting a vast public sculpture – the HR issues, the accountancy bills, the endless battle with compromise. But in front of a canvas you preside over a world where anything can happen if you

can make it happen. It is Guston I find myself thinking of again, the lumpen eloquence of the 1970s paintings – the way he puts one thing bluntly beside another and has you believe in the world thus made. Here is a pyramid, he says, and here beside it is a shoe. And because of how he paints them, the pyramid is a face and the shoe is a torso and the red earth they rest on is a rising tide.

- Painting is yours to make.





JAN BRYANT  
The Painterly

When I see this light irradiate a picture, I feel so rewarded that I would go on making pictures with the same joy if no one but myself felt as I do about them. Take note that this awesome manifestation of life that, (deluded or not), I love in a picture, this enhanced presence, this supercharged life you mean when you say reality, has nothing to do with the objects represented, rather it is distinct from them, pre-existent, surging up like an electric flow, without your ever knowing where it comes from...

Jean Dubuffet<sup>1</sup>

Jean Dubuffet’s statement on painting was written in France in 1960. It speaks of the potential for achieving unspeakable affects in painting. Artists from *Painting. More Painting* were asked to respond.

Introduction

Many painters in Australia in the latter part of last century were confident about painting’s place as a robust activity and ‘were never much concerned’ as Stephen Bram remarked, ‘with painting in itself: we all used painting as a means to articulate relationships. The significance of the work was always in the relationships, in the perception of information expressed materially’.<sup>2</sup> Despite the positive environment that local painters enjoyed, debates coming out of America in the same period claimed that painting was not only an outmoded medium,<sup>3</sup>

but that it was overly complicit with the interests of the market.<sup>4</sup> This was in the context of the decisive influence that conceptualist and post-minimalist modes of making were having on art communities around the world.

There was a further complication for ‘Painting’ during this period: it was implicated in criticisms about the kind of art history we had inherited. A narrowly focused history of art, enclosed within European epistemologies, was canonised by a small group of ‘master’ historians who tied judgement to lines of artistic ‘refinement’,<sup>5</sup> placing painting at the top of a hierarchy of art making.<sup>6</sup> Somehow this also seemed to exclude or throw to the periphery whole groups of painters from other cultures and people who were not men. A power struggle ensued in the second half of the last century over what art could be and who could be seen to be making it, questioning in particular, painting’s sovereignty.

The inclusion of Indigenous artists in *Painting. More Painting* challenges an understanding of painting drawn solely from European-focused discourses and knowledges. It recognises the integral place that Indigenous artists hold in contemporary Australian art, without eliding the important differences and experiences that are found in the diversity of artists who identify as Aboriginal today. Teresa Baker, from the Kanpi community, expresses beautifully a very specific experience of painting when she describes the influence of Malilu, her pre-eminent female spirit ancestor: ‘I’m thinking (when I am painting), oh this Malilu travelling here [referring to marks

laid down on the canvas] ... When I paint, in my heart I’m feeling it. Maybe that spirit’s there, maybe Malilu is teaching me ... because I love that country. When I was a little girl I just felt the pull, the feeling Minyma Malilunya. I feel ‘wiru’ [beautiful] inside that country’.

While the continuing influence of postcolonial and decolonising discourses has witnessed the opening up of a more inclusive field of contemporary painting in Australia (and globally), it is not my point in raising this history in 2016 to repeat the complex play of discourses that flowed in and around the subject of painting last century. Rather, it is to suggest that criticisms about painting’s outmoded status were merely supplements to the act of painting. What past criticisms blurred was the specificity of what it is to paint and what it is to distinguish ‘the painterly’ from the material specificities of other mediums. Alongside this, there has been renewed critical interest in materials and aesthetics, applied to contemporary modes of making and thinking. In the knotty exchanges between painting’s production and its reception, these concerns indicate a decisive shift away from the ‘anti-aesthetic’ decades of last century.<sup>7</sup> And while an intellectual response to painting remains important — socially, collectively, politically — questions about how it is experienced and reflections upon how our senses are affected have also come increasingly into play. Would this experience be different to the way we experience other art forms, such as film, for instance, or the way we negotiate the spatial affects of sculpture? Might an

investigation into what constitutes the ‘painterly’, as a specific quality of painting, be a productive mechanism for such reflection?

Painting and the painterly

To introduce this nebulous and evasive term, ‘the painterly’, is an attempt to isolate what might be particular to painting, and to nothing other than painting, while also acknowledging that such a thread of thought is not an attempt to strip painting of its interconnectedness with other practices and histories. Nor is it to reinstate the kinds of essentialist judgements that Clement Greenberg applied to painting last century.<sup>8</sup> For Matthys Gerber, for instance, there is no interest in finding an essential relation in painting: of greater concern is the figure of the painter who negotiates the complex process of painting’s relation to the world and its own history. This attempt to find something peculiar to painting is not to treat it as an isolated and discrete practice, because painting operates for many artists today as only one material choice among a plethora of possibilities, which are likely to flow from conceptual demands. Taking these qualifications into consideration, if ‘the painterly’ is to be a useful way to understand something about painting, then its defining qualities will need to be applied tentatively and its possibilities kept in play.

Perhaps the painterly, therefore, might be better approached obliquely, beginning with painting’s relation to the immaterial-materiality of digital. It is an old claim that painting needs to be seen and

experienced directly. And yet, it is worth saying again that painting’s reproduction and dissemination through the unforeseeable pathways of the internet and other digital spaces, where colour and size adjustment tools are on hand, leads to a strange transformation of a painting into a manipulable pixelated surface. This has the effect to radically transform what this thing once was, this painting.

For Karl Wiebke, ‘A painting is not a picture’. This wonderfully simple thought belies the actual complexity of its claim and the rich implications that can be mined from it. As painting is translated into a digital representation of itself, it undergoes a process of reduction, which is also a form of loss. In other words, painting becomes a mere picture of itself, an arrangement of picture cells (pixels). As a numeric-based medium, the digital is wholly other to the chemical structure of paint and is far removed from the activities of painting, which, as Abdul Abdullah writes, is a ‘process of delivering, placing, and shifting wet mediums to communicate an idea’. There is a certain kind of madness in this activity, he observes, ‘a specific joy and a guilty pleasure, in the capacity to overcome the obstacles of a blank surface’.

To give the digital its due, however, a digital version can tell us a lot about a painting, particularly about its form, even if it is incapable of communicating certain formal and material qualities. In other words, I can see what a painting is ‘about’, if not what it ‘is’. Thus, even while recognising that a loss of certain values is inevitable — for

example, a painting’s substructure (its memory) of wetness, as well as the particularity of its surface, and the specificity of its texture (its touchability) — digital representations are nonetheless a good source of information. For even if in the end the digital delivers only bare form, it enables representations of painting to be disseminated widely, mitigating painting’s exclusivity — its presence in a situated space and time.

This is not to fetishise paint as a material above other materials, and by extension the painter over other artists, nor is it a way to idealise the idea that an image must come into being from a blank surface.<sup>9</sup> David Jolly and Ry David Bradley are part of a long tradition of painters whose source material is found in analogue and digitally generated photography, opening up a dialogue with the pervasive circulation of images in our world. Photographic stills are taken from events in Jolly’s life, to be revived through the act of painting. During the processes of painting not only are the memories of the original event altered, but also the photographic affect of the original image, now imbued with the specificities of paint. Bradley’s paintings, on the other hand, were generated from postcards found during a research trip to the New York City Library. What began as postcards sent from Australia in the 1930s, now archived in dusty files, have been transformed into paintings whose surfaces have taken on the feel and appearance of a digital screen. Bradley recognised a parallel between this form of communication (the postcard as an open, public message), and the way social media



works today. ‘That postcards can still be sent today is slightly anachronistic, an out-of-time/timeliness that also belongs to painting as it persists amidst digital signals’.

**Enhanced presence**

Some paintings comply with the language of ‘the dominant organisation of life’,<sup>10</sup> and are incapable of upsetting the ordering of paint on a surface. Others aim for an affect that is more ‘poetic’, for a ‘liberated language’, to quote the Situationists (1957–72), language that is able to recover ‘its richness, language breaking its rigid significations ... The “poetic”, therefore, depends on the richest possibilities for living and changing life at a given stage of socioeconomic structure’.<sup>11</sup> To say, therefore, that some paintings acquiesce to the order of the day is to confer upon others a certain responsibility (a burden perhaps) to be more than this, to be more than mere pictorial information circulating through the channels of a receptive art market.

Negotiating his way through the soupy, sodden days of France’s collaboration with Germany during the war (and its after effects), the painter Jean Dubuffet, adding dirt, scratches and other marks to his painting, described the moment when a painting begins to ‘radiate life’ as ‘enhanced presence’. It is also what Helen Johnson describes so wonderfully as ‘a stripe of life moment’, the point when a painting agitates sense perception in unspeakable ways. This intensified, bearing down on the fullness of present-ness, surges ‘up like an electric flow’, as Dubuffet writes,

‘without you ever knowing where it comes from’. It is an unspeakable moment of life, this painterly moment, which comes to the painter at unexpected times and sometimes in unexpected ways. It is also the moment when the language of painting ‘breaks its rigid signification’.

It is a moment clarified by Angela Brennan when she writes: ‘These days, people seem embarrassed to talk about ‘enhanced presence’ and ‘supercharged life’ in relation to painting. But to me it seems that the life of a painting is distinct ontologically. It has a mind of its own and, in some sense, this has nothing at all to do with anything outside of itself, including the artist and anything represented’. Brennan shares with Dubuffet the idea that a painting is both connected to the artist, but also, at some point, becomes strangely removed.

That a painting can possess vitality, a life, separate from the life of the painter and separate from the viewer, a life that exists alongside these lived realities, is a point Helen Johnson also makes: ‘With some of my paintings it is a clear instant when the work becomes itself and you know it’s done and that it’s ready to detach from you and be in the world, like it comes on strong. Others flirt with the idea of coming into that state but then it peters out, or the next day it’s not located where you thought it was (because it has drifted from that initial infant ego-driven delight at having produced something new)’.

Mitch Cairns has commented about the relation of subject matter to these qualities of painting (this ideal):

‘There is a great difference felt between the affection for a subject of painting and the desires I harbour to work on the painting. And after the working on, the completion of a work doesn’t enhance or give further weight to what has been painted, or to the series of thoughts that have helped to seal it. These are distinct from the atmospherics or this supercharged nature that enables a painter to paint, on and on ... This is not to belittle my relationship to the subject, in most cases it is more intuitive a process than the actual painting process...’

To what might painters be referring when they say that a painting comes into itself, and is ‘done’? Helen Johnson describes it as being ‘like a window that opens up, within which you can push at the painting and it can retain that energy, but I think it is possible to overwork any painting and ruin it, easily’. In contrast, Dubuffet wrote, ‘When this happens (I have often remarked, and always to my surprise, that the effect is a very stable one, contrary to what you might think, so that, once it appears, you can change and push around all the elements of a picture without weakening it), the effect persists...’<sup>12</sup> For some of our painters, this point of ‘completion’ — which might better be thought of not as an end point, but more of a pause within the continuity of a body of work — is a fragile condition, easily upset, while others, in accord with Dubuffet, consider this state as an enduring and stable one. It is something Cairns calls ‘a matter-of-factness’ that brings him to a state of stillness: ‘I often feel very still when looking over a day’s work, I’m just looking. The after effect is oddly sober’

When I spoke with Vivienne Binns, we discussed at some length how stability/fragility plays out in the act of painting:

‘I discovered years ago to my amazement that one can reach a point in the work where there’s nothing to be done that is wrong. Each step taken then, is integrally part of the whole’.

This also aligns with Angela Brennan who wrote:

‘There is inbuilt architecture to the painting. Anything can happen if you are plugged into this. But you only get to that state when you are immersed, engaged and right into it. That’s when the paint speaks. Not the look or the image but how the paint is acting. As such, a painting paints itself. I’m never sure what is going to happen next, but the painting knows. If I knew then the painting could not exist’.

The observation that materials have an independent existence was also a claim made for film by Jean Luc Godard, as he battled (nay mourned) the coming of digital in the last century. He suggested that memory resides in a filmic image in complicated ways, not just as a record of subject matter, not just as traces of the maker, but as itself, as living material, and that this preserver of time is all the more significant because of the sensational response it can induce in a viewer. Although it operates very differently to film, painting too has sensate potential, a way of affecting our senses by locking us into the

time of the work, the time of its making. And yet, painting is capable of surpassing historical time. This is Dubuffet’s ‘supercharged life’, and Helen Johnson’s ‘stripe of life’. It is the sense of vitality inscribed on the surface of the painting that persists through time.

**‘My painter self’<sup>13</sup>**

To speak about the figure of the painter (the other) carries a risk of (mis)representation. It also threatens — albeit inadvertently and far too soon in our historical moment — to reinstate romantic myths about painters that were effectively challenged (overcome) last century. It becomes a matter of treading very carefully and around very different worldviews and knowledges.

Nyapanyapa Yunupingu is a Yolngu woman from north-east Arnhem Land. She uses the painting methods of her ancestors, but without reference to her clan stories. This is a position that consciously blends traditional methods with content taken from her own life, from her everyday experiences. Flowing from this is a style that is very much her own and quite distinct from other Yolngu artists. When speaking of her Yirrkala drawings, Yunupingu describes this deliberate move away from traditional stories: ‘I didn’t do trees, rocks or anything else, not at all. I only made designs. I haven’t made any mistakes, none’.<sup>14</sup> Rather than re-interpreting traditional stories, there is a concentration on the painting process, which may include a material exploration of the sensation of earth pigments, counterpoised with the hard lines of marker pen.<sup>15</sup>

The differing methods, practices and cultural knowledges of the individual painters should not be thought of as fixed or completed, but rather, as a becoming in continual flux, and *Painting. More Painting* as a cut into the ongoing continuum of each artist’s practice.

Karl Wiebke considers ‘painting as a materialised form of being, with the help of light, paint and some matter to paint on’. He understands ‘being’ as something constant, something that endures, but it endures within the incompleteness of time. In other words, the constant is the stability of being, while the flux comes from the painter’s engagement with the vitalities of life and matter. Whereas, for Lisa Radford, the relationship between the painter and the process of painting is ‘openness to the elemental nature of liquid paint and to the elemental nature of subjectivity and experience’. Formed in response to social interaction and conditioning, ‘subjectivity can be a shaky, unstable sense of oneself, and is not to be confused with the continuity of ‘being’ in the terms Wiebke describes. As the painter commences a new work, she begins in a state of conformism (of the past, and of her own sense of self). She proceeds in doubt, and with great care. The writer, Maurice Blanchot, explained that poetry consists of ‘the peculiarity of turning toward, which is also a detour. Whoever would advance must turn aside. This makes for a curious kind of crab’s progress. Would it also be the movement of seeking?’<sup>16</sup> This ‘movement of seeking’, entangled with the conflicting emotions and sensations of making, entails a becoming-other, throwing subjectivity into doubt, into movement and change.

Working within the constant movement of life, as Vivienne Binns describes her engagement with painting, is a durational and visceral process. At times there is a pushing forward to see what happens, and, at others a collapsing back, a becoming inert, even a potential stopping point. Activating the movement between pushing and collapsing are diverse but inevitably conflicting emotions (including doubt, trepidation, foolhardiness, certainty...), as well as a mixture of conscious, intellectual decision-making and moments of immersive intuition (a timelessness). What I have called ‘foolhardiness’, Binns describes as ‘a leap into the void’. This can also be described as a moment of risk, for it is here, peering without support into a black hole, that Vivienne suspends judgement: that is, she resists asking whether a painting is right or wrong, and pushes forward regardless. She found that once she stopped judging she ‘responded to the work in a different way’. It is possible still to break this momentum, this risky pushing forward, and to ‘lose your nerve and then value judgements come back’.

The difficult process of making a painting is encapsulated in Diena Georgetti’s simple but cannily loaded aphorism: ‘It is truly hard to make a painting, and nearly impossible to make art’. In this wonderfully elliptical statement, we are left to imagine the successes and failures, the crab-like tactics that operate within the movements of painting.

The ruminations in this essay are an attempt to understand how we might experience ‘painterliness’ as something particular to painting.

This comes with the qualification that a discussion of the painterly forms only a small part of a much wider (and necessarily contested) field of activity. This involves seeing a painting in the context of a wide range of considerations, such as its political, social, philosophical or wider aesthetic implications. In a contemporary context, there would be no single concept of painting that would be adequate to meet the miscellany of our painters’ diverse methods or singular ways of negotiating the world. However, appreciating the painterly in painting is posited as a way try to understand the specificity of the medium and its differences to other art forms, a way to dig down, if you like, into the material quality of artwork against the tendency to reduce all media to the universal category of ‘contemporary art’.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Dubuffet, ‘Statements and documents: Artists on art and reality, on their work, and on values’, *Daedalus*, vol. 89, no. 1, Winter, 1960, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> All artist quotes were taken from email or phone exchanges with painters from *Painting. More Painting* over the past two months.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Louis Aragon, ‘The challenge to painting’ (1930), reproduced in Aragon et al, *The Surrealists look at art*, Lapis Press, Venice, California, 1990; or Douglas Crimp, ‘The end of painting’, *October*, vol. 16, Spring, 1981, pp. 69–86.

<sup>4</sup> See Benjamin Buchloh: ‘the new language of painting — now wrenched from its original symbolic function — has become reified as ‘style’ and thus no longer fulfils any purpose but to refer to itself as an aesthetic commodity within a dysfunctional discourse’, ‘Figures of authority, ciphers of regression’, *October*, vol. 16, Spring, 1981, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> The methodologies of Irwin Panofsky and Clement Greenberg are two examples of European art history that tied work to specific structures of time and notions of authenticity that have been contested in recent decades.

<sup>6</sup> This became crystallised in the work of art historian Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), and to a lesser extent Alfred Barr (1902–1981), the first Director of MoMA. They propagated an internationalist perspective that was later viewed as American-centric and exclusionary under postmodernist discourses at the end the century.

<sup>7</sup> Hal Foster: “‘Anti-aesthetic’ ... signals that the very notion of the aesthetic, its network of ideas, is in question here ... the anti-aesthetic marks a cultural position on the present: are categories afforded by the aesthetic still valid?’. ‘Postmodernism: A preface’, in *The anti-aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern culture*, Bay Press, California, 1983, p. xv.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself’. Clement Greenberg, ‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch’, originally published in *Partisan Review*, New York, VI, no. 5, Fall, 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Deleuze speaks of painting as a catastrophe beginning necessarily with cliché, in ‘Painting sets writing ablaze’, interview with Hervé Guibert for *Le Monde*, 3 December, 1981, reprinted in David Lapoujade (ed.), *Two regimes of madness: Texts and interviews* 1975–1995, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, Semiotexte, New York & Los Angeles, 2007, p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> Situationist International, ‘All the King’s men’, *Internationale Situationniste*, no.8, trans. Ken Knabb, Paris, Jan. 1963. <[www.bopsecrets.org/SI/8.kingsmen.htm](http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/8.kingsmen.htm)>, accessed 22 June, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, italics in original

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> ‘My painter-self’ is a term kindly donated by Angela Brennan who uses it to distinguish her interest in painting from that of the historian, particularly in the love she has for the crazy little oddities overlooked or dismissed in the recording of much art history.

<sup>14</sup> Yirrkala drawings: Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, Gallery channel, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2015, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJsILPiDE88](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJsILPiDE88)>, accessed 10 June, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Nyapanyapa Yunupingu: Lawarra Maypa’, *ARTAND*, Sydney, 2015, <[www.artandaustralia.com/news/reviews-commentary/selected-exhibition-nyapanyapa-yunupingu](http://www.artandaustralia.com/news/reviews-commentary/selected-exhibition-nyapanyapa-yunupingu)>, accessed 10 June, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The infinite conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis & London, 2003, p. 32.







Painting. More Painting  
Mural Commission

**SAM SONGAILO**  
**Born 1979, Townsville,**  
**Queensland**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Sorry to kill the vibe,*  
*but time does exist* 2016  
wall painting  
Courtesy the artist

Sam Songailo’s practice is based in painting and often includes large-scale installations. He is deeply influenced by digital technology and electronic music, adopting algorithms and concepts from these disciplines to shape his approach to both architectural and pictorial space. Originally exhibiting works on canvas, Songailo was motivated to address the entire space of the exhibition environment through painting. He has said: ‘I decided I wanted to make my work inescapable and ever-present. Instead of having to mentally project into the picture plane, visitors to the show would be inside the painting’.

Commissioned specifically for ACCA’s main exhibition hall, Songailo’s *Sorry to kill the vibe, but time does exist* 2016 is a highly immersive, monochromatic wall painting of three repeating motifs. These geometric forms are dynamic: pointing, linking and reaching towards each other and across the room. Realised on a monumental scale, the work magnifies the expansive nature of painting, accentuating the compositional elements of line and space in a form that recalls both the modernist grid and digital networks. Songailo holds a Bachelor of Visual Communication (Graphic Design) from the University of South Australia, Adelaide. Since 2008 he has exhibited extensively in independent gallery spaces in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. HM

Painting. More Painting  
Solo Studies

**Abdul Abdullah**  
**Teresa Baker**  
**Vivienne Binns**  
**Ry David Bradley**  
**Stephen Bram**  
**Angela Brennan**  
**Mitch Cairns**  
**Diena Georgetti**  
**Matthys Gerber**  
**Helen Johnson**  
**David Jolly**  
**Lisa Radford**  
**Karl Wiebke**  
**Nyapanyapa Yunupingu**





**ABDUL ABDULLAH**  
**Born 1986, Perth**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Enjoy your day* 2016  
oil and resin on canvas  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
[p.34]

*Imperial graffiti* 2016  
pen on tiles  
30.0 x 30.0 cm

*Look the other way* 2016  
oil and resin on canvas  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
[p.35a]

*Nothing to see here* 2016  
oil and resin on canvas  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
[p.35b]

Courtesy the artist and  
Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

Multidisciplinary artist Abdul Abdullah’s work centres on the subjective experience of marginality. His work gives emphasis to the unique perspective of the ‘Other’ and seeks to counter stereotypical representations that are often portrayed in the media. A seventh generation Australian Muslim with Malaysian heritage, Abdullah’s new suite of paintings, *Enjoy your day*, *Nothing to see here* and *Look the other way*, all 2016, are based on found and sourced media images of soldiers, police officers and other figures representing institutional power, overlayed with graffiti-like motifs. The purposeful disjuncture between two visual styles – the authoritative effect of painterly realism and the spontaneous subjective gesture of graffiti – generates a sense of irony that disputes the supposed authority held by official representations and underlines the contested relations between the individual and state. Abdullah holds a Bachelor of Arts from Curtin University, Perth, and is currently completing a Masters of Fine Arts by Research at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. SB





**TERESA BAKER**  
**Born 1977 in**  
**Alice Springs,**  
**Northern Territory**  
**Pitjantjatjara**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Alice Springs,**  
**Northern Territory and**  
**Kanpi and Watarru,**  
**South Australia**

*Tjukurpa Kutjara* 2012  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
200.0 x 120.0 cm  
Collection: Marie Jackson, Melbourne  
[p.38]

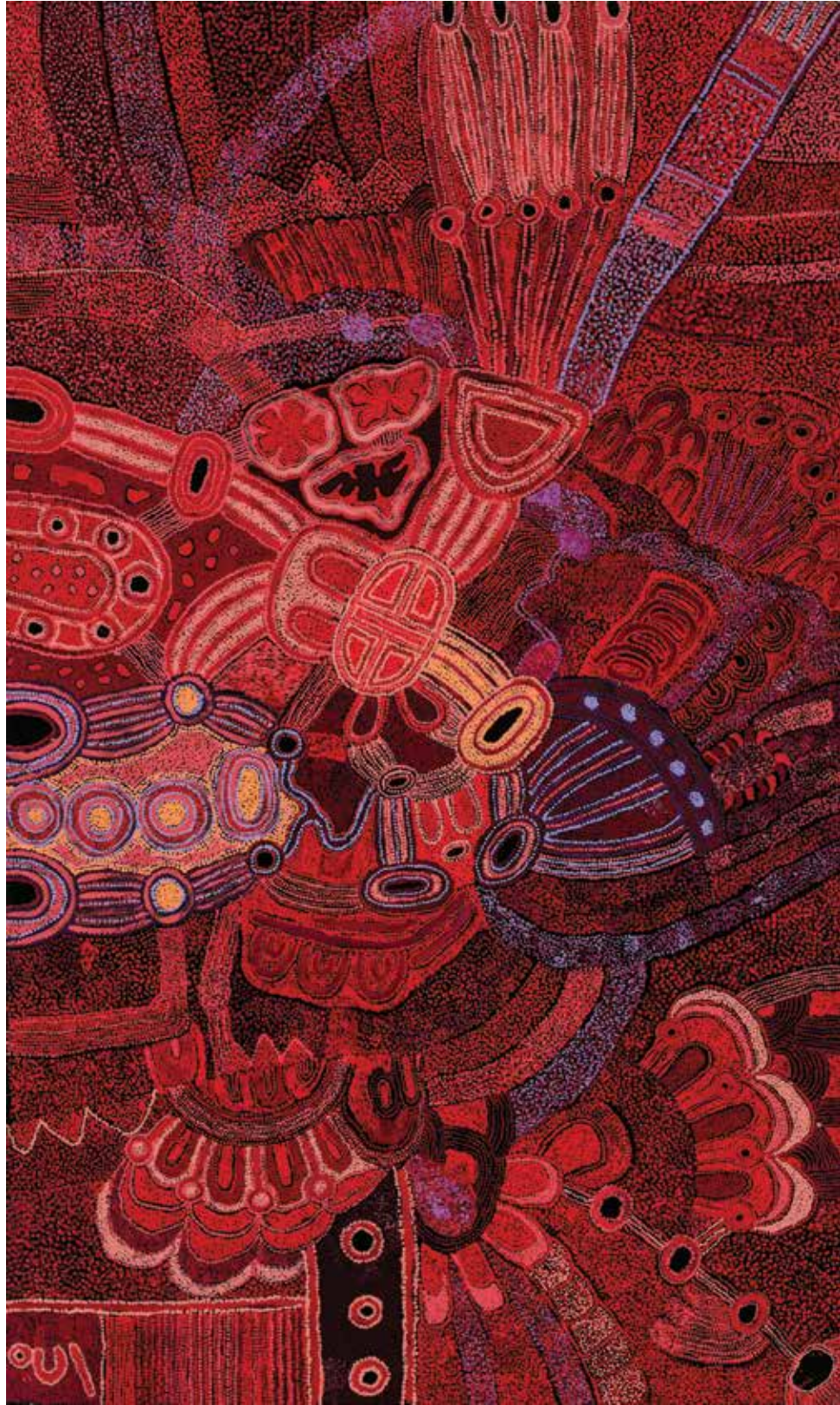
*Minyma Malilunya* 2013  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
200.0 x 120.0 cm  
Provenance: Tjungu Palya SA  
Private Collection, Sydney  
[p.37]

*Minyma Malilunya* 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
198.0 x 117.0 cm  
Monash University Collection,  
Melbourne  
Purchased by the Faculty of Arts 2016  
[p.39]

The paintings of Pitjantjatjara artist Teresa Baker are fundamentally linked to place and its vital connection to spirituality, identity and self-knowledge. In *Minyma Malilunya* 2015, *Minyma Malilunya* 2013 and *Tjukurpa Kutjara* 2012 Baker depicts Tjukurpa (or Dreaming stories) including that of the ancestral woman Malilu and the Emu Dreaming. Baker inherited the right to paint these stories after the death of her grandfather, Jimmy Baker, one of Australia’s foremost Indigenous artists. Formally, Baker’s paintings can be read in both macro and micro terms. Rendered in a dense field of vivid reds, her intricate patterns ostensibly delineate a topographical network through which Malilu moves. The substrates of sky and land converge around each other, divided only by the volition of the female spirit as she shapes the world around her. Baker grew up in Kanpi in northwestern South Australia. She began painting in 2005 at Tjungu Palya art centre where she was first taught by her grandfather. Baker was a finalist in this year’s Blake Prize as well as the 2013 Kate Challis RAKA Award. SB/HM









VIVIENNE BINNS  
Born 1940, Wyong,  
New South Wales  
Lives and works in  
Canberra

*Many things together* 2005  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
88.4 x 260.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Milani Gallery, Brisbane  
[p.42]

*This moment then* 2013  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
100.2 x 130.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist  
[p.41]

*Minding clouds* 2016  
acrylic, masonite on canvas  
90.0 x 296.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
[p.43a]

In 1967 Vivienne Binns burst onto the Australian art scene with her first exhibition, *Vivienne Binns: paintings and constructions*, held at Watters Gallery in the inner-Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst. Among the paintings included were *Vag dens* 1967 and *Phallic monument* 1966 – startling in their visual and sexual vitality – and now seminal works in the history of both Australian painting and feminist art. Binns’ career since has encompassed pioneering explorations of conceptual, performance, community and feminist art practices, traversing various media including textiles, craft, painting, assemblage and enamelling. More recently, her attention has returned to painting – a medium through which she continues her long-term investigation into the relationship between art, society and culture. Here, three disparate works, created over a ten-year period, are brought into conversation: revealing both diverging and enduring concerns for Binns. *Many things together* 2005 displays Binns’ interest in the treatment of surface and pattern, which originated in her fascination with *tapa* – the bark cloth traditionally made on a number of islands in the Pacific region. While *This moment then* 2013 – a captured moment of afternoon light in the artist’s studio – differs in the flatness of its execution, *Minding clouds* 2016, re-presents Binns’ ongoing experimentation with an abstract textural surface, interspersed with realistic pictorial vignettes. Binns graduated from the National Art School, Sydney, in 1962. AK





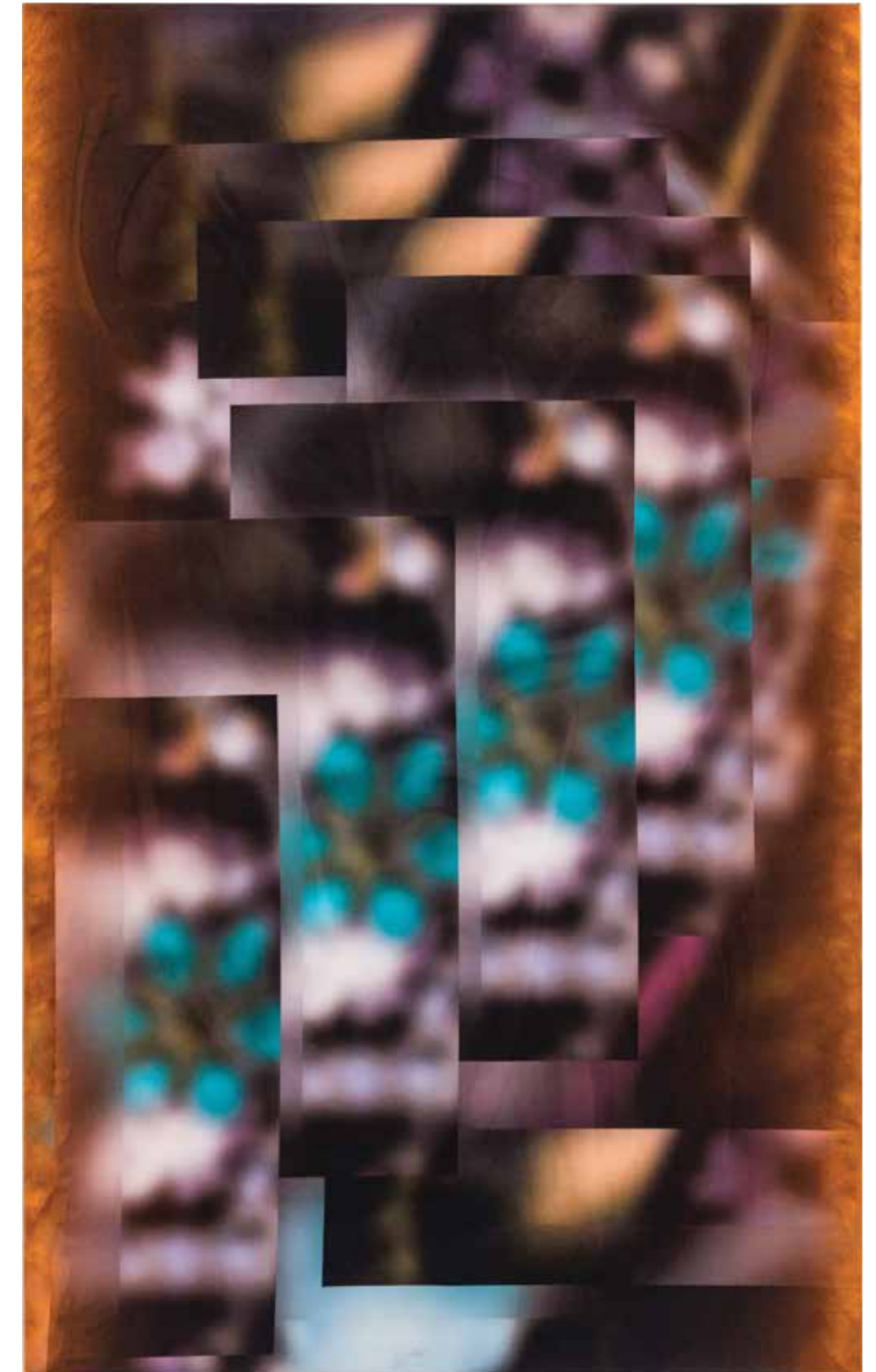


**RY DAVID BRADLEY**  
**Born 1979, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**London**

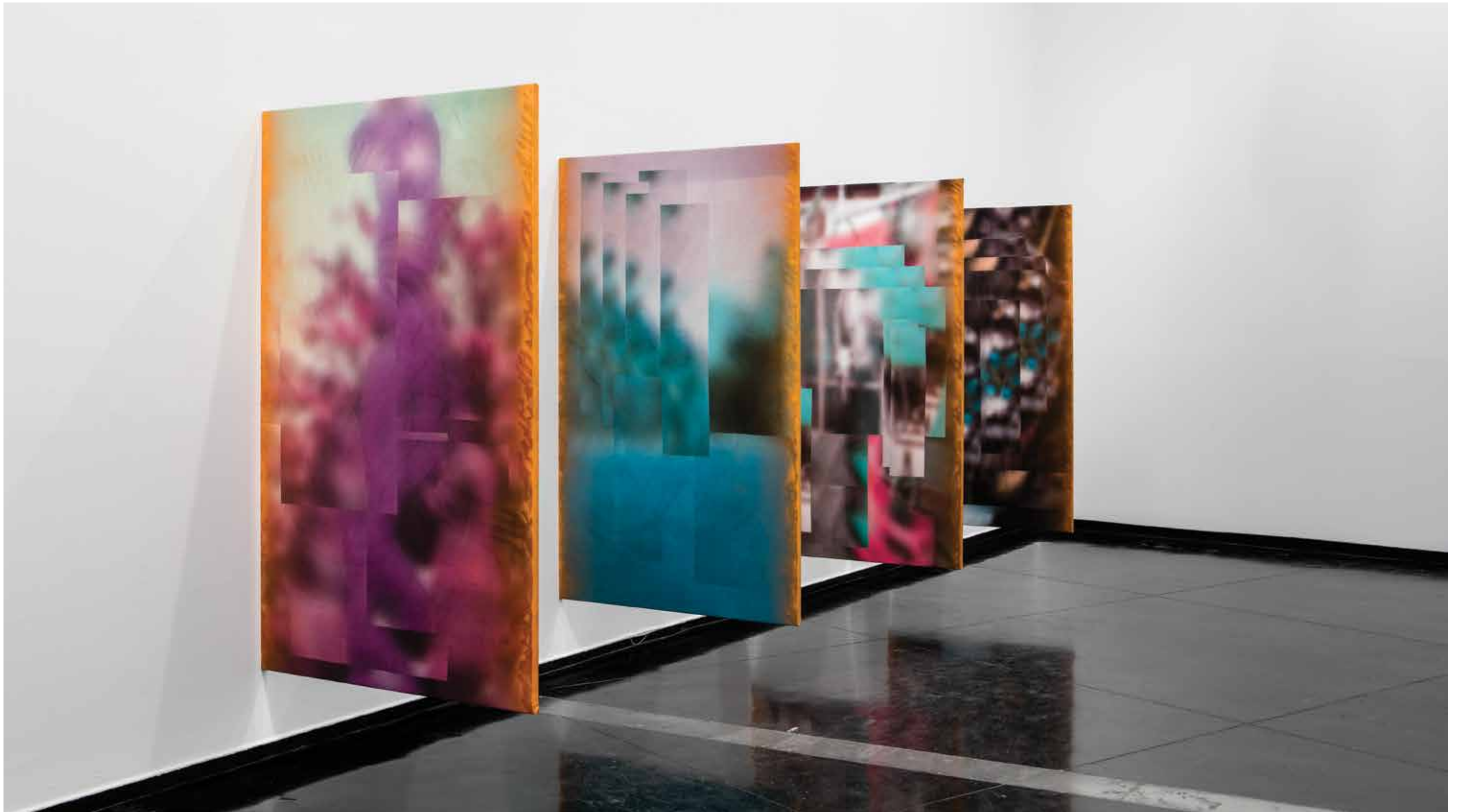
*NTBD #4* and *NTBD #12* 2015  
synthetic polymer paint and  
dye-transfer on synthetic suede,  
synthetic silk  
2 panels: 182.0 x 112.0 cm (each)  
Courtesy the artist and  
Tristian Koenig Gallery, Melbourne  
[pp.46-7c&d]

*NTBD #6* and *NTBD #13* 2015  
synthetic polymer paint and  
dye-transfer on synthetic suede,  
synthetic silk  
2 panels: 182.0 x 112.0 cm (each)  
Collection: Diana Palmer, Sydney  
[pp.46-7a&b]

Ry David Bradley's recent works blur the lines between painting, photography, digital printing and touch-sensitive computer screens. His two-sided paintings *NTBD #6*, *#13*, *#4* and *#12*, all 2015, present archival images from the New York Public Library's Picture Collection that have undergone a computerised editing process before being printed onto synthetic suede using a dye-transfer technique. Informed by the interplay of mobile photography, digital abstraction and the bitmap structure of pixelated image file formats, Bradley confers art historical significance onto the aesthetics of the internet as a logical development in the painterly canon. Noting his desire to interrogate 'the relationship between images and paintings, particularly images that are derived from the network', Bradley's works bring together the virtual and the 'archaically' physical to elicit an interplay between materiality and immateriality. The resulting paintings problematise notions of image preservation and cultural heritage, proposing the possibility of alternative interpretations of our collective inheritance. Bradley completed a Master of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2013. SB







**STEPHEN BRAM**  
**Born 1961, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Untitled (two point perspective)* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
150.0 x 500.0 x 4.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Anna  
Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
[p.49]

Throughout his practice Stephen Bram has rigorously explored the play and tension between flat, geometric abstract painting and the representation of architectural space. His early works from the late 1980s (before the advent of the internet and computer-aided design) adopted the structure of the modernist grid, which inevitably related to the flatness of modernist painting but also stressed the continuity of painting with the architectural space beyond the frame of the work. Panoramic in format, Bram's *Untitled (two point perspective)* 2016, is a recent example of the artist's large, almost cinematically-scaled paintings, which dramatise a series of productive tensions within pictorial space: the relations between flatness and depth, illusion and plasticity, painting and architecture, and pre- and post-digital means of perceiving space (the analogue and the virtual). It is a work that we might metaphorically enter (in an illusionistic way) but as we do we come across the plastic realities of flat painterly shapes arranged as a matter-of-fact on the surface of the picture plane. Bram holds a Bachelor of Art from the Chisholm Institute of Technology, Melbourne (1985), a Graduate Diploma in Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (1987), as well as a Master of Arts (Research) from RMIT University, Melbourne (1996). During 1998–99 he studied at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich after being awarded the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship. MD





**ANGELA BRENNAN**  
**Born 1960, Ballarat**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Like a visitor to Earth* 2016  
oil on canvas  
178.0 x 180.0 cm  
[p.53]

*The essence is in the detour* 2016  
oil on linen  
181.0 x 181.0 cm  
[p.52]

*Trees, bodies, sky and water* 2016  
oil on linen  
170.0 x 180.0 cm  
[p.51]

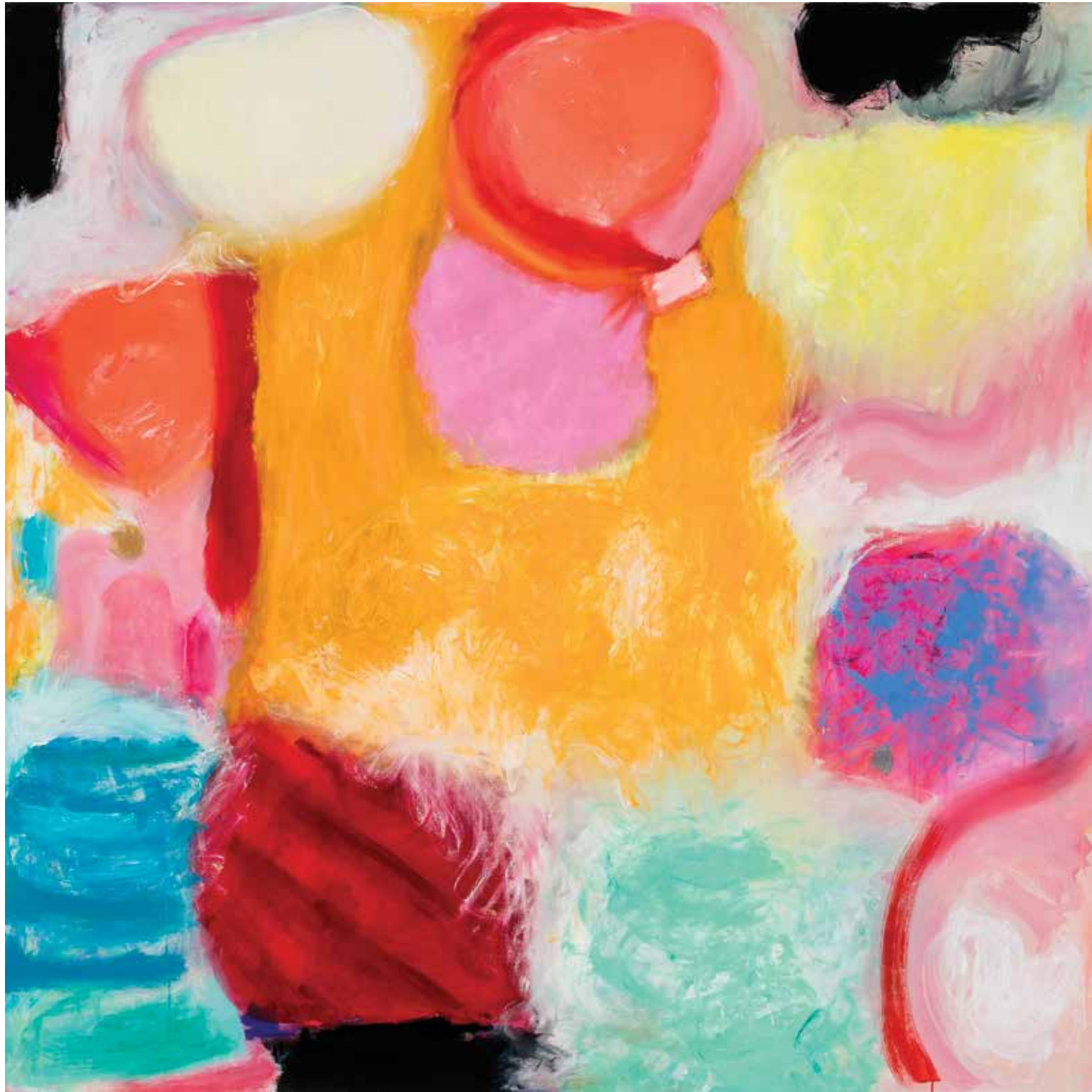
Courtesy the artist;  
Niagara Galleries, Melbourne; and  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

A certain pleasure principle prevails in Angela Brennan's free and abundant painterly practice, manifest in pulsing, billowing abstract paintings which highlight the inherently sensual and ineffable character of aesthetic engagement. Drawn to expansive, expressive colour, Brennan's paintings give form to thoughts and feelings: fields of colour are defined by an experimental approach to mark-making – bold contours, feathered, scumbled, scrawled – which allow for a variety of sensations and desires to consort and coexist.

Angela Brennan's early work was celebrated for the ways in which her then somewhat eccentric abstraction loosened up the formalist strictures of late-modernist painting, introducing a feminine subjectivity, playfulness or *jouissance* into the frame. In her recent work Brennan continues to explore the significance of form, fragment and detail, with reference to the work of medieval painters and Byzantine decorative arts, among other influences. With a penchant for the unorthodox and uncanny, she juxtaposes pattern and decorative motifs to create anachronistic stylistic clashes invoking energy and surprise. Rather than relying on a pre-planned schemata, Brennan's aesthetic is wholly intuitive; the paint, linen and brushes govern themselves but at the same time connect to a reality beyond the painting. MD









**MITCH CAIRNS**  
**Born 1984, Camden,**  
**New South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Geranium pots (adjacent garden square)* 2016  
oil on linen  
153.0 x 167.0 cm  
[p.57]

*Geranium pots (art fair painting)* 2016  
oil on linen  
61.5 x 76.5 cm  
[p.56a]

*Geranium pots (combine painting)*  
2016  
oil on linen  
153.0 x 167.0 cm  
[p.55]

*Geranium pots (panadol painting)*  
2016  
oil on linen  
61.5 x 76.5 cm  
[p.56c]

*Geranium pots (piano advert)* 2016  
oil on linen  
61.5 x 76.5 cm  
[p.56b]

*Geranium pots (swan classic)* 2016  
oil on linen  
61.5 x 76.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and  
The Commercial, Sydney

Mitch Cairns’ paintings are characterised by a deft and economic handling of line and tone that demonstrates a sophisticated visual literacy and an inimitable sense of humour. The angular planes and flatness of his forms combine the influence of Synthetic Cubism and vernacular graphic illustration. In *Geranium pots* 2016, Cairns unifies a series of paintings of varying pictorial content and size with bands of painted bricks that drawing our attention to their display, frame and ground the image. Referencing personal items and magazine advertisements, the range of subject matter in these works are rendered as if vignettes, bound together by a unifying structure and yet loosely connected, Cairns’ *Geranium pots* suggest a visual equivalence to concrete poetry, another of the artists’ interests. SB/HM







**DIENA GEORGETTI**  
**Born 1966, Alice**  
**Springs**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*Armour* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas in custom frame  
97.0 x 58.0 cm (unframed)  
[p.60]

*History* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas in custom frame  
100.0 x 73.0 (unframed)  
[p.61]

*Raider* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas in custom frame  
130.0 x 59.0 cm (unframed)  
[p.59]

Courtesy the artist and  
The Commercial, Sydney

The image libraries now available on photo-sharing websites, such as Pinterest, provide Diena Georgetti with an endless archive from which to collate maverick fragments from diverse art-historical genres, including 1950s abstraction, Op Art and the art of religious visionaries. These are then reconvened and reimagined in new compositions, in much the same way that a poet might play with words and language to convey emotion, create new sensations, and promote visual ideas which burn indelibly into our mind and retina.

Georgetti’s recent works are composed by aggregating fragments of works by artists that have gone before her, and from memories of paintings glimpsed in the ambient corners of everyday life – in the background of films and television shows, and in the architectural décors found in magazines and books. Learning from the past, and freely consorting with her precursors, Georgetti adopts different personas: ‘I can be a man, post-war, French or Icelandic’.

There is both a symbolic and haptic logic to these works, which realise the visual and material qualities of painting at a deeply sensual level. Georgetti also believes in the idea of painting as talismanic object, full of magical properties, and able summon the fullest range of painterly affect: power, comfort, the spiritual and erotic. MD







**MATTHYS GERBER**  
**Born 1956, Delft,**  
**The Netherlands;**  
**arrived Australia 1971**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

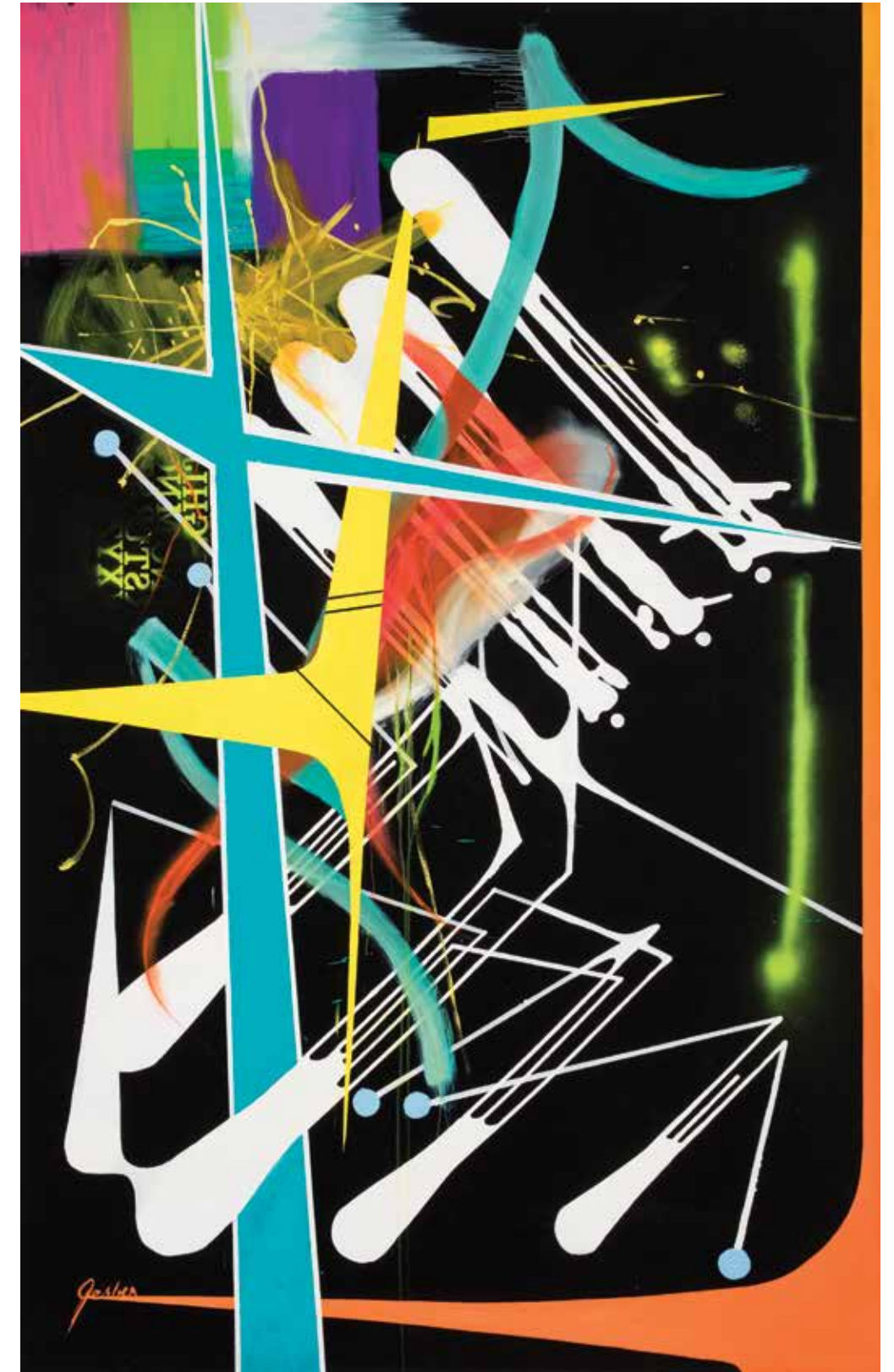
*Pump* 2013  
oil on canvas  
190.0 x 300.0 cm  
[p.64]

*Catwalk* 2016  
oil on canvas  
270.0 x 190.0 cm  
[p.63]

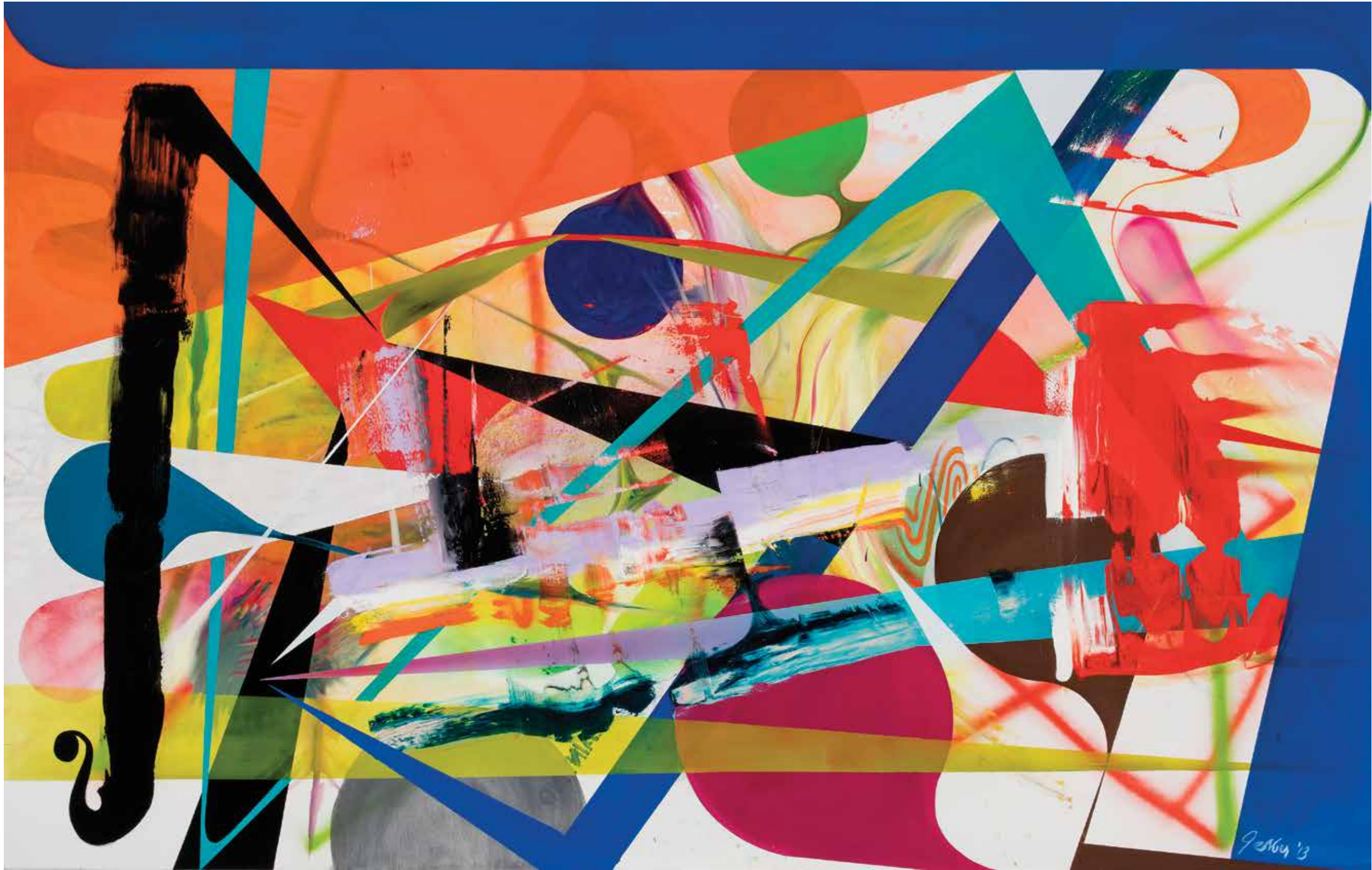
Courtesy the artist and  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

Matthys Gerber has developed a fluid and irrepressible approach to painting – across genre hierarchies and stylistic categories – with a practice that is both analytical and libidinous. Gerber’s work explores the language of images, and the material realities of painting itself, through a panoply of visual styles: the concrete reality of abstract art, the materialist actuality of painterly flows, and illusionistic manoeuvres drawn from figurative painting’s representational codes.

With technical dexterity, Gerber’s work enacts an anthology of painterly style, with formal relationships and contrasts that operate within and between paintings, and back and forth in time. We might discern the anti-classical tenor of Rococo, Surrealism, psychedelia and kitsch; or visual affinities with the syncopations and sonorous resonances of experimental music; or an allegiance to analytical modes of abstraction – alongside more maverick propositions. The fecundity of his language, and the delirious nature of painterly flows, sprays and pours, revels in the sensual pleasures of painterly process. Through a beguiling and at times bewildering eclecticism, Gerber is able to activate and analyse painting’s inherent qualities and characteristics, to explore the history, potential and possibilities for painting in the twenty-first century. MD









**HELEN JOHNSON**  
**Born 1979, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*History painting* 2016  
acrylic on canvas  
310.0 x 240.0 cm  
Collection: Adam and Mariana  
Clayton, Dublin  
[p.68 verso; p.69]

*My word* 2016  
acrylic on canvas  
230.0 x 180.0 cm  
Collection: Claire Dewar, Dallas  
[p.67]

First exhibited in the *Glasgow International* in 2016, Helen Johnson's new body of paintings, including *History painting* and *My word*, both 2016, might be considered in the traditions of history paintings and political banners; they present layered reflections on the histories of colonisation, violence, gender and pedagogy, among other subjects. The suspended presentation of these works, which elevate the status of the reverse side of the canvas, allow for notational marks and discourses to be appended to the picture-making process, connecting image and language, and personal reflection upon the political nature of painting and representation. Johnson has referred to the discipline of painting 'as a loaded medium operating on new terms in a post-medium condition'. Her recent work reflects a move towards an expansive consideration of painting as a force for social critique. Rather than viewing the vehement debates around painting as an encumbrance, Johnson embraces these conflicts as dynamic grounds for further exploration into the medium and its attendant histories. Johnson completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at RMIT University, Melbourne, in 2002 and in 2014 was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (Fine Art) from Monash University, Melbourne. Johnson's book length study, titled *Painting is a critical form*, was published in 2015 by 3-Ply, Victoria. SB





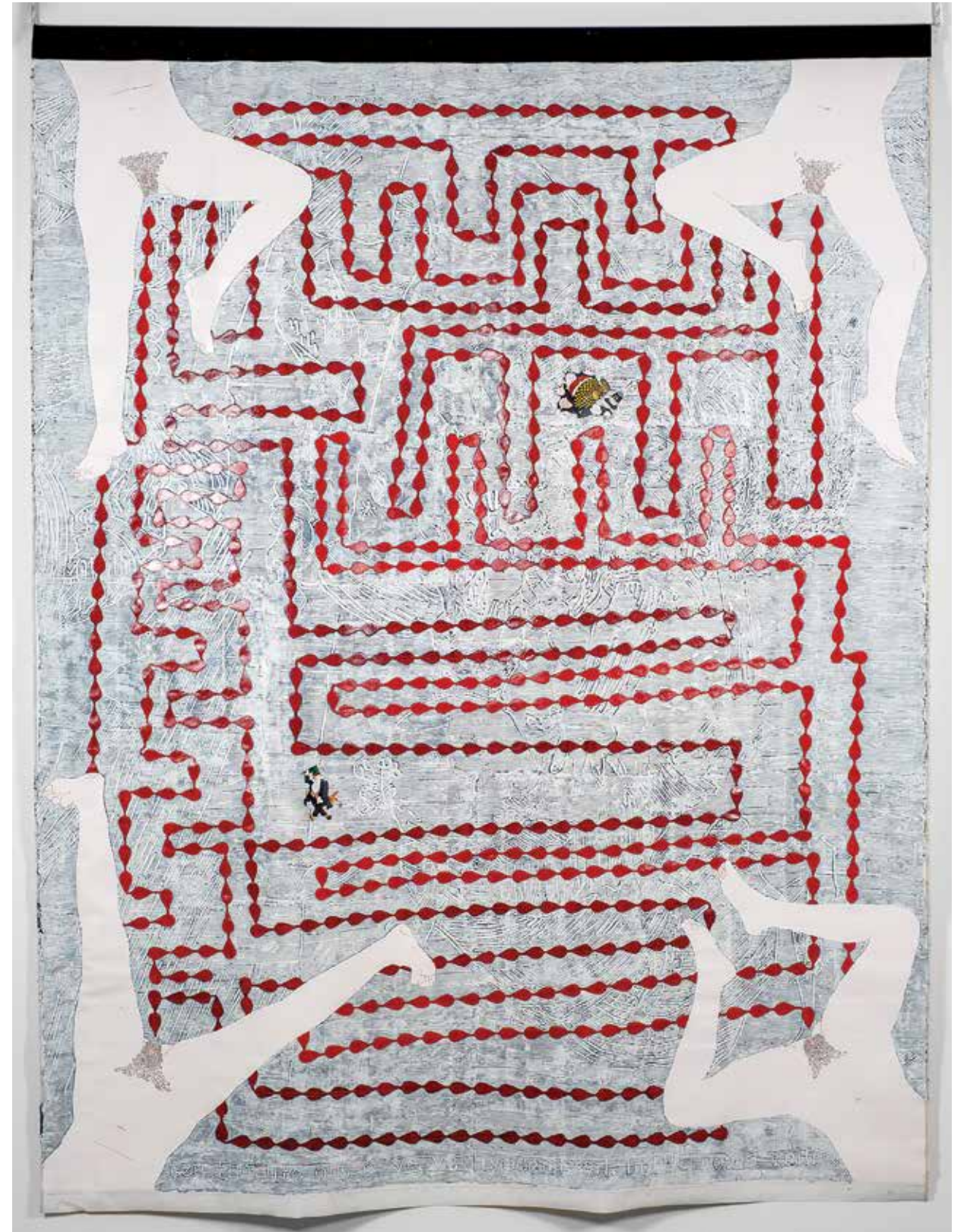
Snakes as whisperers of truths --  
taking what form, making what  
images, spelling what words?  
Whispering in Cassandra's ear,  
as it goes?

Basilica cistern

↓  
Rainbow  
serpent,  
the  
creator

Ajax & Cassandra - Solomon Joseph Solomon  
Norman Lindsay looking at this painting  
in Ballarat - Gold nuggets

Norman Lindsay - The Picnic Ground  
1907





DAVID JOLLY  
Born 1972, Melbourne  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 1* 2009–10  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Collection: Ricardo de Souza and  
Terry Harding, Canberra

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 2* 2009–10  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Collection: Ricardo de Souza and  
Terry Harding, Canberra

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 3* 2009–10  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Collection: Ricardo de Souza and  
Terry Harding, Canberra  
[p.73a]

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 9* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[p.73b]

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 10* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
[p.72]

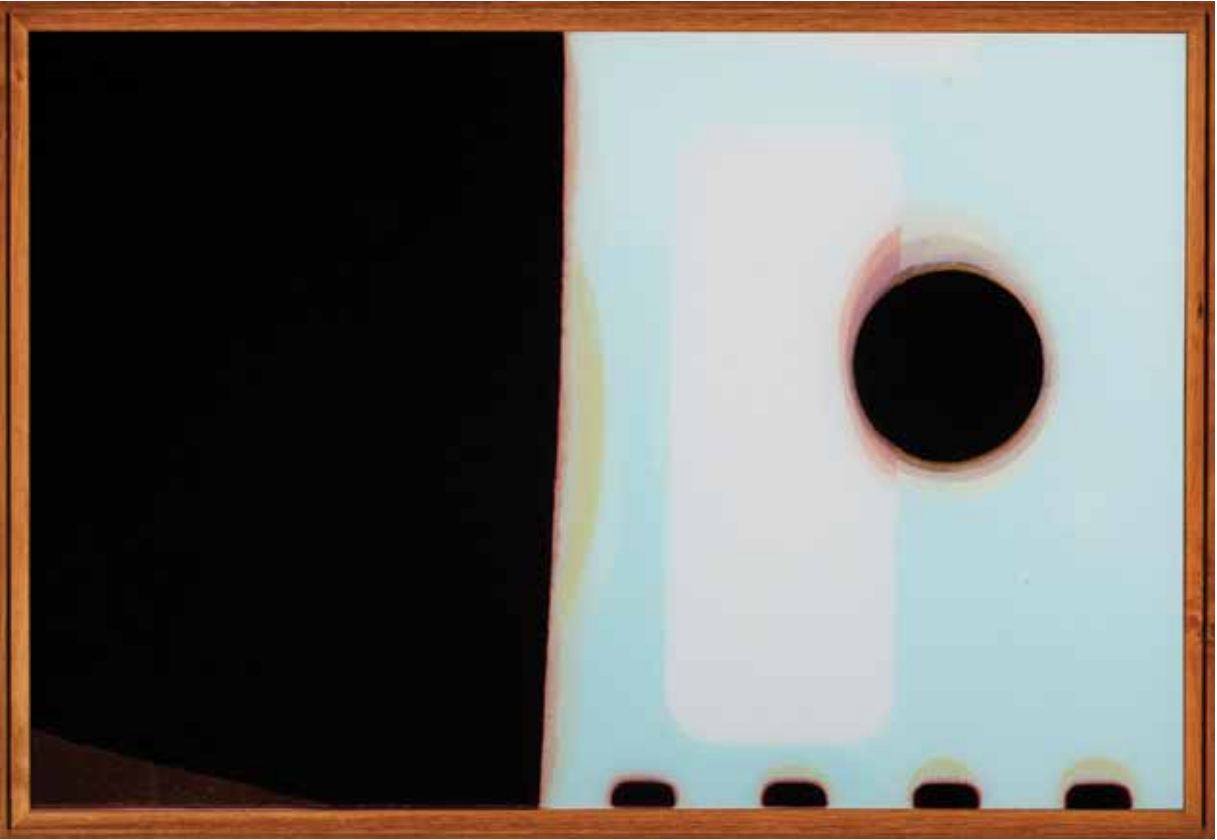
*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 11* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[p.73d]

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 12* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[p.73e]

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 14* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne

*Before history as poem or  
mythic chant 15* 2010  
oil on glass  
72.0 x 56.0 cm  
Collection: Paul and Wendy  
Bonnici, Melbourne  
[p.71]

David Jolly’s paintings draw on the specificity of time and place, merging documentary and realist traditions to capture the nuanced particularities of memory. Working primarily from his own photographs, Jolly translates these images onto glass using an approach that reverses the usual convention of image construction in painting: foreground details are first laid onto the glass with the mid and background details rendered around and on top of them. Jolly’s technique results in the painting being read through the flat, screen like surface of the glass’s recto and, although they are rarely seen, the built up back of the verso. Jolly’s series *Before history as poem or mythic chant* 2009–10 documents a journey made by friends to a rave concert outside of Melbourne. The series begins with an illustration of the first frame of a 35mm camera roll followed by a sequence of images that capture the view from a car windscreen at night as they travel to their destination. This series of lights in the darkness moves to the bush setting of the gathering as it transitions through night into early morning. The materiality of Jolly’s technique bridges the relationship between photography and painting succinctly; the original photograph frames and captures the memory in an instant while its translation through painting allows this memory to be relived in the temporal space of the studio. Jolly completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne (1992). In 2015 the Australian War Memorial commissioned him to produce work based on a visit to Gallipoli for the ANZAC Centenary. SB/HM







LISA RADFORD  
Born 1976, Melbourne

*Furniture painting* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[p.75]

*Furniture painting (737 Croydon)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Collection: Marita Dyson and Stuart  
Flanagan, Melbourne  
[pp.76-7h]

*Furniture painting (737 Croydon)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Collection: Jon Campbell, Melbourne  
[pp.76-7d]

*Furniture painting (737 Croydon)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist  
[pp.76-7f]

*Furniture painting  
(737 Croydon #4)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Collection: Jenny Zhe Chang,  
Melbourne  
[pp.76-7g]

*Furniture painting (Belgrave)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Collection: Simon McGlinn,  
Melbourne  
[pp.76-7c]

*Furniture painting (Canberra)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[pp.76-7i]

*Furniture painting (Hotel Hollywood)*  
2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist  
[pp.76-7a]

*Furniture painting (Tube)* 2010  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
22.5 x 30.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
[pp.76-7e]

Lisa Radford’s paintings might at first deceive the spectator in their ostensible fixation on the micro and intimate elaboration of decorative motifs. It is via this sensitivity to detail, however, that she forges a subtle yet discerning commentary on wider social tendencies and the aesthetics of everyday public space. Radford’s *Furniture paintings* 2010 critically explore the logic and aesthetics of utilitarian design by honing in on the kitsch appearance of mass-produced textiles used for public transport seating, hotel carpets and civic building furnishings. The bright colours and repetition of gaudy motifs speak of a maladroit attempt by designers to define and regulate public space. In reconfiguring these motifs, Radford seeks to question the inherent qualities of collective space, while drawing a tongue-in-cheek visual link between the high art of abstraction and the patterns and colours of public design. The intimate scale of these works, and dynamic activation of the pictorial field, also speak of the imagining of new worlds through a painting practice pursued in the interest of social exchange and communication. Radford completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1999, and is currently a PhD candidate at Monash University, Melbourne. She has served as a board member of Melbourne artist-run initiative TCB Art Inc. during 2000–14 and was a member of the collaborative art group DAMP from 1999 to 2010. She is currently a lecturer in the painting department at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. SB









**KARL WIEBKE**  
**Born 1944, Detmold,**  
**Germany; arrived**  
**Australia 1981**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Vertical movements / horizontal brushstrokes 1* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
150.0 x 100.0 cm  
[pp.80-1a]

*Vertical movements / horizontal brushstrokes 2* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
150.0 x 300.0 cm  
[pp.80-1c]

*Vertical movements / horizontal brushstrokes 3* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
150.0 x 300.0 cm  
[pp.80-1b]

*Vertical movements / horizontal brushstrokes 6* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
150.0 x 120.0 cm  
[p.79]

Courtesy the artist and  
Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney

Karl Wiebke’s practice exemplifies a rigorous process-based approach to art that seeks to investigate the inherent nature of painting. Wiebke’s methodology is founded on art historical precedents, permitting a systematic yet experimental inquiry into the place, purpose and function of the medium. Closely considering the tenets of the Concrete art movement, Wiebke is devoted to an art entirely divorced from observed reality, once stating, ‘I make work which stands for itself and doesn’t refer to anything outside itself’. Wiebke’s series *Vertical movements / horizontal brushstrokes* 2016 extends the artist’s focus on generative procedures, depicting a fluid sequence of vertical lines created with horizontal brushstrokes. These bands of colour bleed into each other, at once suggestive of movement in their undulating forms and stasis in their intrinsic linearity. Trained as both a goldsmith and a painter, Wiebke studied Fine Art at the Hochschule für bildende Kunste, Hamburg, Germany, between 1972–76 alongside noteworthy artists such as Martin Kippenberger. He relocated to Australia in 1981 and has exhibited continuously since. His work is widely represented in various collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. [SB/HM](#)







**NYAPANYAPA  
YUNUPINGU**  
**Born c. 1945,**  
**Yirrkala,**  
**Northern Territory**  
**Gumatj**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Yirrkala**

*White painting #3* 2009  
natural earth pigments on bark  
98.0 x 53.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne

*Mangutji #6 with square* 2010  
natural earth pigments on bark  
93.0 x 80.0 cm  
Collection: Anthony Scott, Melbourne

*Pink and White Painting #2* 2010  
natural earth pigments on bark  
69.0 x 68.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
[p.83]

*Leaves and circles* 2011  
natural earth pigments on bark  
171.0 x 92.0 cm  
QUT Art Collection, Brisbane  
Purchased 2011

*Untitled* 2015  
natural earth pigments on bark  
93.0 x 49.0 cm  
Private Collection, Sydney  
[p.84]

*Untitled* 2015  
natural earth pigments on bark  
122.0 x 83.0 cm  
Collection: Sarah and  
Jürgen Jentsch, Sydney  
[p.85]

Yolngu artist Nyapanyapa Yunupingu has been widely celebrated for her distinctive and singular vision. Her paintings, which forego the dense Yolngu clan designs known as *miny'tji*, are in marked contrast to the majority of contemporary Yolngu art that is underpinned by ancestral narratives. Turning instead to personal and, at times, wholly abstract content, her works have been referred to as *mayilimiriw*, a Yolngu Matha word that loosely translates as 'meaningless' and captures something of the works difficult translation between Yolngu and non-Yolngu worlds. Although most evident in her series of entirely white paintings, this quality extends throughout Yunupingu's practice: her depiction of bush foods, leaves and rough geometric forms generate a lively pictorial space in which different formal motifs interact. Born in Yirrkala in the Northern Territory, Yunupingu was taught to paint by her father, Munggurrawuy Yunupingu, a cultural leader and renowned artist. She began painting on bark in 2007 and has amassed a prolific and inventive oeuvre in which the rhythms, sensations and narratives of contemporary life are captured through energetic line work and colour. SB/HM









**Painting. More Painting**  
**Panorama: A–M**  
**30 July – 28 August 2016**





**COLLEEN AHERN**  
**Born 1971, Leeton,**  
**New South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Five foot one* 2014  
oil on board  
30.0 x 30.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Neon Parc, Melbourne

Colleen Ahern's visual arts practice is enmeshed in the world of music. *Five foot one* 2014 is a painting based on a photographic portrait of the famed American musician, Iggy Pop, which features on the reverse side of his 1979 album, *New values*. Ahern's painting is exhibited at a height of 5'1", in reference to his song of the same name. Ahern's paintings are motivated by her desire to connect with the subjects of her musical fandom. Like earlier works that capture musical performances presented on television shows such as ABC's *RAGE*, this painting references the various platforms through which we engage with our musical heroes and also the distance between us and them; the distance that allows them to remain accessible yet untouchable, out of physical reach but close enough to gaze upon and to listen to without restraint. Ahern graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1999 and has since exhibited regularly in Melbourne. [HM/DL](#)



**SEAN BAILEY**  
**Born 1977, Adelaide**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Immix* 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on plywood,  
artist frame  
84.0 x 62.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Daine Singer, Melbourne

Sean Bailey's paintings are gestural and largely abstract. Meaning is obfuscated under the artist's quick, broad strokes as he covers collage in layers of paint, manifesting his interests in the arcane and esoteric. *Immix* 2015 demonstrates the deftness and decisiveness of Bailey's hand with a nebulous swathe of grey that is barely contained by the perimeter of the frame and spills to obscure a crisp yellow form. The painting's unmistakeable black ground is overshadowed by the colour and movement it has boxed into the corner, somehow slipping past unnoticed at first glance. Bailey graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, and was a studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary from 2013–15. A fixture in Melbourne's experimental music scene, Bailey has played in groups such as Paeces, Wasted Truth and Lakes, while also running independent label Inverted Crux. [KB](#)





**KAREN BLACK**  
**Born 1961, Brisbane**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*Guard the opening gate* 2013  
oil on wood  
67.0 x 116.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne

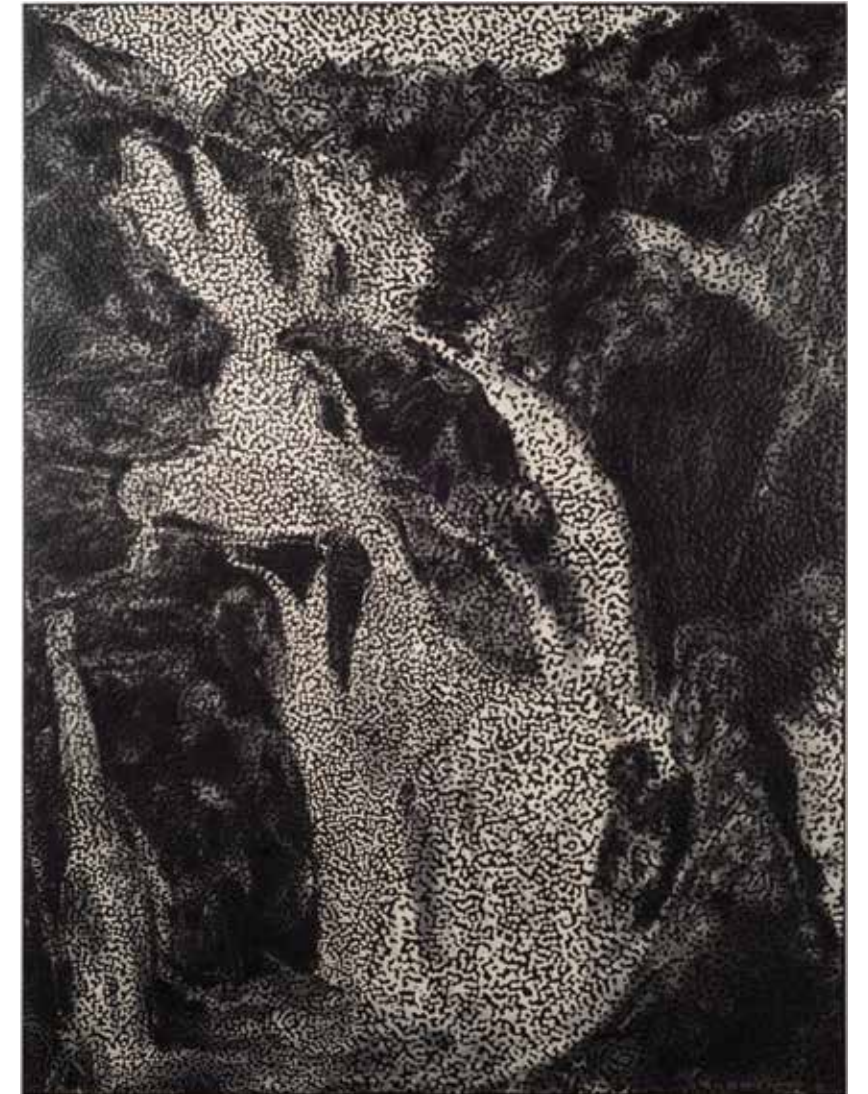
Brisbane-based artist Karen Black interrogates the dramaturgical implications of contemporary painting through narratives of despair, loss and violence. Formally her paintings – the colours of which are mixed on the surface of the picture plane itself – teeter between figuration and abstraction to constitute a vivid *mise-en-scène* where tumult and disarray dominate. Entering the visual arts after a successful career in costume design, Black’s background in the performing arts is palpable in her paintings, many of which adopt the structure of a proscenium space in which painterly dramas unfold. Black admits, ‘I do set up the paintings as if they were stage plays ... I pit characters against each other’. It is in this way that we can understand *Guard the opening gate* 2013, which references the tragic sinking of the SIEV221 off the cliffs of Christmas Island in 2010, which was both witnessed by helpless onlookers and telecast to the nation. Black completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at Griffith University in 2011. She has received numerous prizes and awards including the Art & Australia/Credit Suisse Contemporary Art Prize (2013) and Griffith University Art Gallery’s GAS Award (2011). **SB**



**DANIEL BOYD**  
**Born 1982, Cairns**  
**Kudjila/Gangalu**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Untitled (BFK)* 2015  
oil, charcoal and archival glue on polyester  
183.0 x 137.5 cm  
Private Collection, Sydney

Daniel Boyd’s work confronts the diverging perspectives, narratives, truths and untruths embedded in Australia’s colonial history. His majestic, technically dexterous history paintings (made from oil paint and archival glue) engage with and reinterpret the complexities of Indigenous and European-Australian history. *Untitled (BFK)* 2015 is characteristic of Boyd’s recent paintings. A compelling dot-like structure activates the visual power and cultural language of his Indigenous heritage but also invokes the idea of the dot-matrix and pixels commonly found in print and digital media. This aspect underscores the archival, historically-grounded, and evidentiary nature of his subject matter and allows his work to engage a complex range of visual and historical cultural references. Boyd holds a Bachelor of Arts from the Australian National University, Canberra, and has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally since 2005. **MD**





**KIRSTY BUDGE**  
**Born 1981, Auckland,**  
**New Zealand;**  
**arrived Australia 2005**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Always late to the party* 2016  
oil on canvas  
205.0 x 150.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Daine Singer, Melbourne

Kirsty Budge’s paintings frequently incorporate humour, personal observation and imaginary situations, aligned with painterly echoes of Modernist and Primitivist antecedents. Characterised by a muted palette and layering of bodily forms composed from art historical fragments, Budge accompanies her paintings with endearingly playful titles which reconcile historical motifs with contemporary experience and its idiosyncratic tendencies. Budge’s recent paintings continue these interests, with *Always late to the party* 2016 displaying an abstract sensibility reminiscent of early Synthetic Cubism, combined with the softness of organic biomorphic shapes. The scale of the work looms over the viewer, its all-over composition emphasising a complex interplay between narrative, space and figuration. Originally from Auckland, New Zealand, Budge completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2014. KB



**JANET BURCHILL**  
**Born 1955, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*The Collected works of Emily Dickinson (515 circumference)* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on hessian  
6 panels: 276.0 x 124.0 cm (overall)  
Courtesy the artist and  
Neon Parc, Melbourne

While Janet Burchill’s practice, often working in collaboration with Jennifer McCamley, spans a vast range of mediums and theoretical underpinnings, it is possible to isolate certain recurrent interests within her work. A focus on Modernism and its contemporary implications along with a feminist analysis of the complexities of language and semantics are recurring motifs, and appear again in *The Collected works of Emily Dickinson (515 circumference)* 2016, an ongoing painting series begun in 2010. In this painting, Dickinson is figured as a proto-Modernist, and her poems, with their posthumous titling system, are translated in visual form. The sparseness and distinctive punctuation of Dickinson’s poems are further echoed in the condensed directness of Burchill’s aesthetic. Burchill obtained a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Art, Sculpture and Film) from Sydney College of the Arts in 1983, and has worked collaboratively with Jennifer McCamley since the mid 1980s. SB





**JON CAMPBELL**  
**Born 1961, Belfast,**  
**Ireland; arrived**  
**Australia 1964**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Fuck yeah (Matisse)* 2015  
synthetic polymer and enamel  
paint on cotton duck  
41.0 x 56.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Darren  
Knight Gallery, Sydney

Jon Campbell's largely text-based works, along with related music and performance projects, audaciously elevate Australian vernacular language to the status of art, joyously exclaiming the inherent playfulness and pop-cultural significance of local dialectic inflections. In *Fuck yeah (Matisse)* 2015, Campbell manipulates figure and ground to simultaneously conceal and reveal the text, creating a vacillation between abstraction and figuration, design and communication. The work colourfully celebrates the late paper cut-outs of Henri Matisse with an economy and ornamentation in an act of homage dowsed in sardonic wit. Born in Belfast, Campbell relocated to Melbourne in 1964. He graduated from RMIT University, Melbourne, in 1982 with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) and completed a Graduate Diploma (Painting) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1985, where he has since worked in the painting department as an influential lecturer. [SB](#)



**NADINE**  
**CHRISTENSEN**  
**Born 1969, Traralgon,**  
**Victoria**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Untitled (Vanity)* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
120.0 x 150.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Hugo Michell  
Gallery, Adelaide; and Sarah Scout  
Presents, Melbourne

Melbourne-based artist Nadine Christensen's paintings often present a flattened perspective where unanchored objects and forms float inexplicably atop landscapes devoid of horizons. This montage effect is disorientating, colliding nature and architecture in layers of disconnected realities. Christensen's most recent paintings have seen the introduction of highly textured elements that float amongst their surroundings. Geological in texture, they seem more anchored to the ground than the sky, interrupting the artifice of the picture plane with painterly materiality. Christensen studied painting at Monash University, Melbourne, and the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, and was a studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary (1998–99) and founding member of seminal artist-run space CLUBSprojects inc. [KB](#)





TIMOTHY COOK

Born 1958,  
Melville Island,  
Northern Territory  
Tiwi  
Lives and works in  
Milikapiti,  
Melville Island

*Kulama* 2012  
Natural ochre and pigment on linen  
150.0 x 220.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Seva Frangos  
Art, Perth/Singapore

Timothy Cook’s paintings display a deep connection to the history and culture of the Tiwi Islands, where he has lived his entire life. While drawing from a classical Tiwi style, his striking works also reveal his own aesthetic innovations: seductively minimal compositions that recount aspects of the Tiwi ritual life of his youth and its place in the island’s contemporary culture. *Kulama* 2012 – a subject that recurs throughout Cook’s oeuvre – recounts one of the two major Tiwi ceremonies, an initiation for young Tiwi men coinciding with the harvest of wild yams. The Catholic mission, whose long-established influence on the Tiwi Islands is now in a declining phase, is represented by a cross in the centre of the composition, while large, concentric circles simultaneously delineate the ceremonial ground and the full moon in a star-filled sky. Cook began exhibiting in the late 1990s and his work is widely celebrated and collected. In 2012 he was awarded the prestigious National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

AL/HM

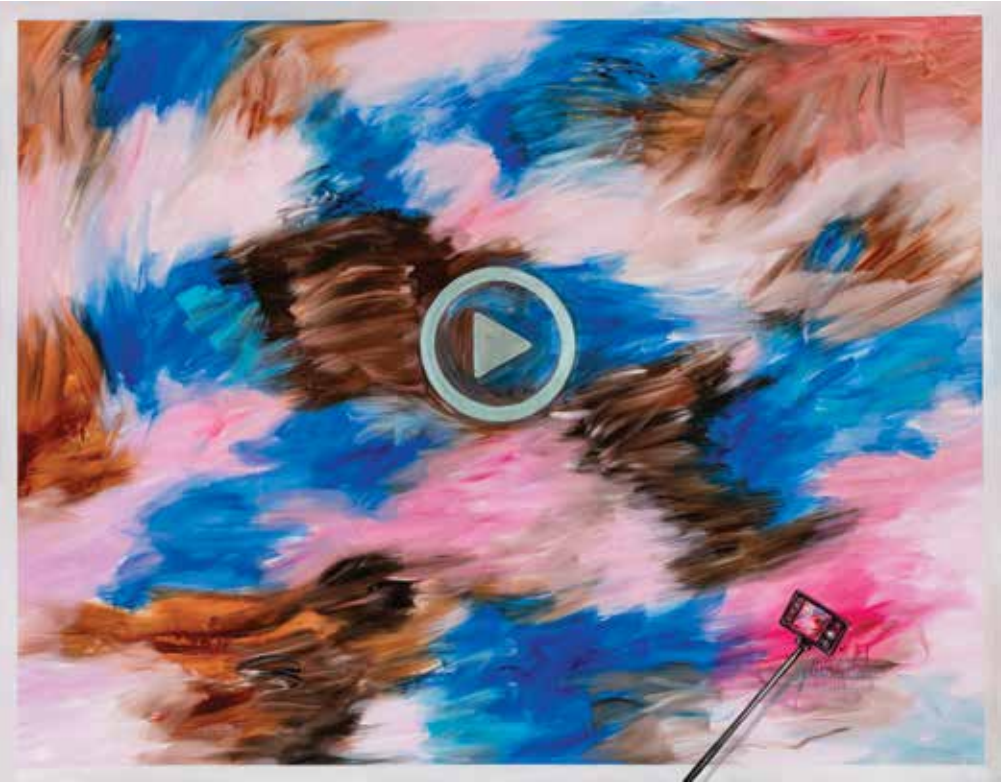


JUAN DAVILA

Born 1946, Santiago,  
Chile; arrived  
Australia 1974  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*Being-in-the-world* 2015  
oil on canvas  
200.0 x 255.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Kalli Rolfe  
Contemporary Art, Melbourne

Chilean-born, Melbourne-based Juan Davila has remained one of Australia’s most consequential artists for over four decades. In his recent work Davila has turned to new subjects – ecological destruction; the representation of desire and phantasy; and the idea of *jouissance* as an excessive, paradoxical pleasure. *Being-in-the-world* 2015 depicts a delirious haze of warm blues, fleshy pinks and earthy browns, interrupted by a ‘play’ symbol at its centre, and, in the corner, a selfie stick poised to address the viewer. A critique of the situation whereby experience is increasingly mediated through technology, where reality is virtual, and citizens are recast as consumers, Davila’s painting confounds viewers’ attempts to ‘play the image’ when viewed on screen. Instead it rests furtively as a work that requires considered attention and concentration in the real. Davila attended the University of Chile, studying Law (1965–69) and Fine Arts (1970–72). His work has been the subject of major career retrospective exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2006), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2007) and Centro Cultural Matucana 100, Santiago, Chile (2016). MD





**DAVID EGAN**  
**Born 1989, Perth**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Stale under rates booth* 2016  
gesso and flowers on canvas  
2 panels: 152.0 x 111.0 cm (overall)  
Courtesy the artist

David Egan works across painting, textiles, performance and installation, bringing together a range of interests in subjects including botany, ornamentation, decoration and the colonial history of pattern. *Stale under rates booth* 2016 takes the form of two canvases, each presenting a top-down view of a single formal dining table setting and hung horizontally directly atop one another, as if for two diners to face one another. A section of text appears on each canvas describing two rooms: the office of an accountant on top, and a domestic bedroom below. Like the two canvases themselves, these spaces are pitted against one another, connected by a sewerage pipe that carries the waste of the accountant. A wry nod is made to the overlap between the by-product of the finance worker’s body and the language of his industry: words like block, flow, and liquidity. Painted using plant matter rubbed directly onto the surface of the canvas, which will deteriorate over time, the fading nature of the painting mirrors the impermanence of its subject matter. Egan graduated with Fine Art degree from Curtin University, Perth, in 2011 and completed Honours at Monash University, Melbourne, in 2013. KB/AK



**HAMISHI FARAH**  
**Born 1991, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Trying to connect* 2014  
synthetic polymer paint on board  
124.0 x 84.0 cm  
Collection: Helen Mariampolski and  
Ian Williams, Melbourne

Hamishi Farah’s ultra saturated paintings reference imagery from an eclectic array of cultural and popular signifiers, much like an online search engine. Farah was born in the early nineties, and his practice has been situated within the context of post-internet art. *Trying to connect* 2014 is one of a series of paintings that depict meticulously painted renditions of digital images sourced from the internet. The composition of the work is polished and formally considered, with a layering of images – like windows within windows – structuring a proliferation of motifs. The cascading, scroll-like composition suggests a digital flow of images and cultural signifiers, exploring the economy of image production and what it means to live in a digital world. Farah was studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, from 2014-16, and has exhibited in Australia and internationally. LC

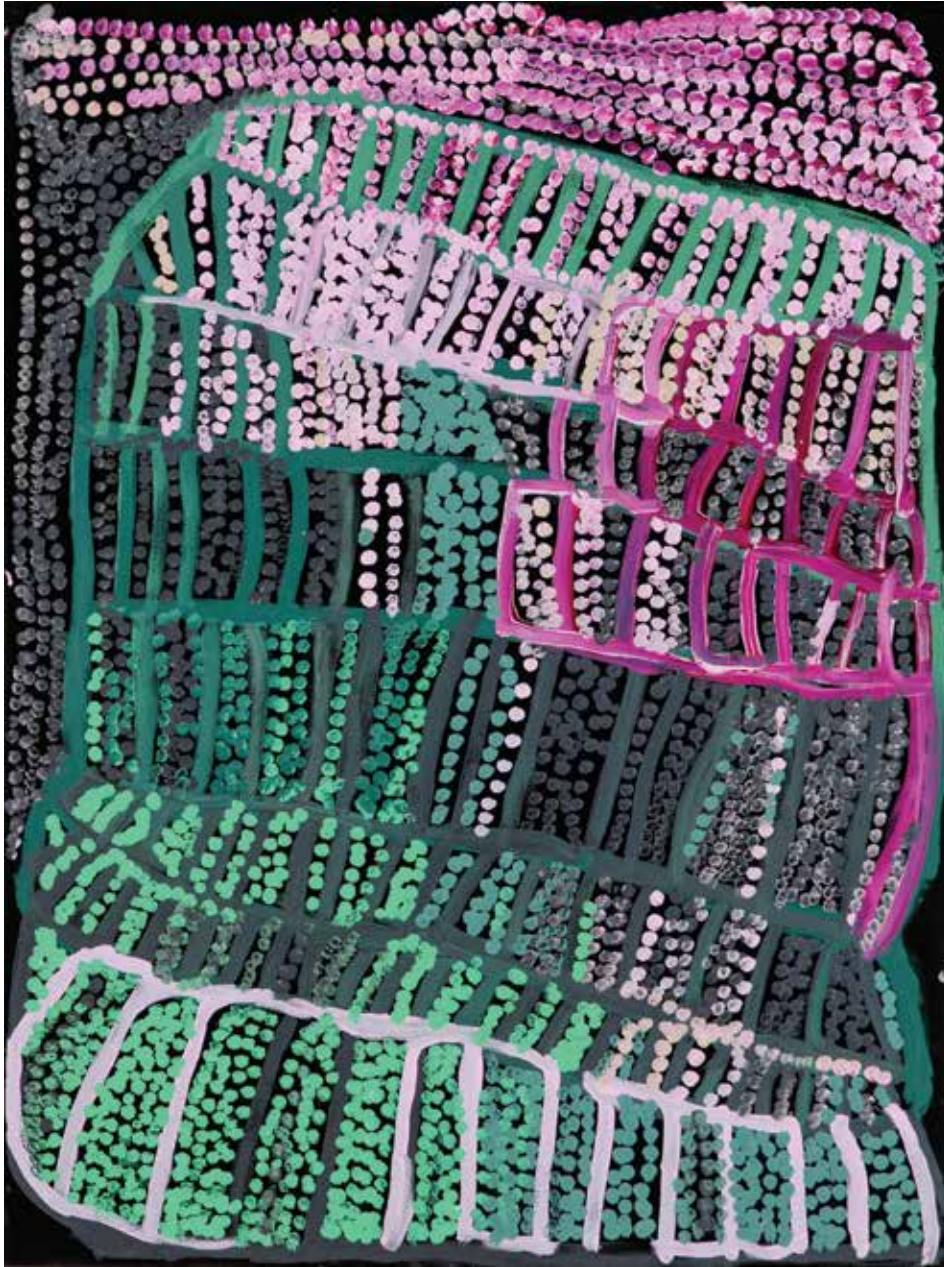




**NYARAPAYI GILES**  
**Born c. 1940, Tjukurla,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Ngaanyatjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Tjukurla**

*Wamurrungu* 2016  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
118.5 x 88.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist; Hanging Valley,  
Melbourne; and Tjarlirli Art, Tjukurla

As a respected elder of the Tjukurla community, Nyarapayi Giles' paintings consolidate an intimate knowledge of her country with a singular approach to colour and painterly bodily materiality. Born in the late 1930s in the Gibson Desert at Karrku (an important Indigenous cultural site) Giles brings her profound knowledge of the *inma* (ceremonies) and *tjukurrpa* (dreaming stories) to her work, which is often identified by a proliferation of concentric circles referencing the *tjukurrpa* of Karrku. These circular forms signify the emu's ochre-laden feathers as it reaches down and digs in the pit to locate the precious ochre. Giles' *Wamurrungu* 2016, although devoid of her typical circular motifs, replicates her engagement with country. The use of radiant synthetic pastel colours creates a tension with the content of the painting – a reference to the landscape – while the progressive modulation of line lends a unique dynamism to the work. **SB**



**IRENE HANENBERGH**  
**Born 1966, Erica,**  
**Netherlands; arrived**  
**Australia 1999**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Hank* 2014  
oil on canvas  
41.0 x 31.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne  
Courtesy the artist and  
Neon Parc, Melbourne

Irene Hanenbergh is known for her mythical landscapes made up of swirling forms of paint that conjure dramatic scenes and dreamscapes. Hanenbergh's paintings draw on the traditions of Romanticism and the Baroque, creating intricate, gestural pictures that pay homage to the sublime power of nature – and the painterly process itself. Utilising a distinct palette of blues, greens, pinks and yellows applied in tangled layers of brush strokes – amongst a sea of black and flashes of white – Hanenbergh alludes to figurative scenes without revealing too much. The modest scale of *Hank* 2014 encourages the viewer to peer closely into the scene, establishing an intimate connection with the painting. Fittingly, Hanenbergh often refers to her paintings as 'portals'; offering the viewer a window into another, perhaps internal or subconscious, world. Hanenbergh studied in Greece and London before moving to Melbourne, where she completed a Master of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2010. **LC**





MELINDA HARPER  
Born 1965, Darwin  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*Untitled* 2014  
oil on canvas  
153.0 x 122.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
NKN Gallery, Melbourne

Melinda Harper’s practice reflects an ongoing fascination with the sensory relations between pure colour and abstract form. Inspired by geometric painting, decorative arts and textiles, and the work of modernist women artists such as Sonia Delaunay, Harper’s work also continues a rich lineage of abstract geometric painting in Australia – an under-appreciated trajectory that stems from Grace Crowley, Frank Hinder and Ralph Balson onwards. Harper constructs her paintings intuitively, marking out the edges of the canvas with masking tape and working slowly as the paint dries, allowing the composition to build organically through the painterly process. Representative of Harper’s intuitive approach, *Untitled* 2014 shows vibrant, complimentary colours arranged in a patchwork design across the flat surface of the canvas, suggesting kaleidoscopic tiles that shift and undulate hypnotically in waves of motion – producing intense optical effects and loosening the flatness of the picture plane. Harper completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at Victoria College, Melbourne, in 1985. She was a leading member of the influential artist group Store 5 in Melbourne 1989–93, and a lecturer in painting at the Victorian College of the Arts, 1993–95. [LC](#)



LOUISE HEARMAN  
Born 1963, Melbourne  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*Untitled 1397* 2015  
oil on masonite  
25.0 x 36.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Tolarno  
Galleries, Melbourne

With her skilful rendering of light and dark, Louise Hearman creates otherworldly moments in which ordinary subjects appear mysterious or strange. Best known for her hyper-real portraiture, Hearman works subconsciously to reveal the complexity and curiosity of the human spirit. *Untitled 1397* 2015 draws the viewer close to consider an intimate, almost voyeuristic, view over the shoulder of a male figure. Unaware of our attention, the subject looks wistfully into the distance, seeking revelation as does the viewer. Of what he is seeing or thinking we cannot be sure yet the bright light cast onto the side of his face brings small, revelatory details of his identity into focus: the white shirt of his professional attire, the greying strands of his hair, and the fine lines of his ageing skin. Since graduating in 1984 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Victorian College of Arts, Melbourne, Hearman has exhibited widely. She was awarded the 2016 Archibald Prize for her portrait of Australian entertainer Barry Humphries. [GD](#)





**RAAFAT ISHAK**  
**Born 1967, Cairo, Egypt;**  
**arrived Australia 1982**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Paw paw* 2011  
oil on linen  
42.5 x 30.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

With deft painterly precision, Raafat Ishak's compositions emerge from an interrogation of migration, place and identity. *Paw paw* 2011 was first exhibited as part of Ishak's solo exhibition *Congratulatory notes on ubiquity and debacle* 2011, a collection of nine works each deconstructing Marcel Duchamp's painting *Nude descending a staircase, no. 2* 1912. Against a background of architectural motifs, *Paw paw* depicts a central figure in motion with a surprising flower arrangement located at its core. Titled in reference to the eponymous fruit, Ishak's painting interrupts the dominant western canon of Cubism with an exotic bloom that alludes to notions of displacement and the construction of self in new lands. Ishak completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1990, followed by a Post Graduate Diploma in Architecture (History and Conservation Practice) from the University of Melbourne in 2004. He completed a PhD in Fine Arts at Monash University in 2014. GD/HM



**JOSEY KIDD-CROWE**  
**Born 1987, Newcastle,**  
**New South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Goog boy* 2015  
oil on jute  
115.0 x 90.0 cm  
Private Collection, Sydney

Josey Kidd-Crowe's paintings have a unique, dual quality. They are at once naïve in appearance and yet knowing and sophisticated in their reference to the history of painting. *Goog boy* 2015 is based on Pablo Picasso's *The young painter* 1972, one of Picasso's late works in which the elderly Franco-Spanish artist summoned crude, primitive mark-making to conjure expressive forms with utmost simplicity. With its flattened picture plane and raw, painterly handling, Kidd-Crowe's childlike aesthetic of loose, meandering, painterly swirls can be seen as both an act of painterly homage and a defining self-portrait of a young artist self-consciously engaged in the act of painting and exploration of aesthetic freedom. Kidd-Crowe graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art in 2009 from La Trobe University, Mildura, and has exhibited since 2006. GD





FIONA LOWRY  
Born 1974, Sydney  
Lives and works in Sydney

*apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am* 2010  
synthetic polymer and gouache on canvas  
218.5 x 152.5 cm  
Private Collection, Canberra

Fiona Lowry creates work related to memory and history, using photographic research and airbrush techniques. Lowry’s use of dream-like pastel colours belies the darker subject matter of her paintings, which often appropriate the Australian landscape as a historical backdrop for sinister happenings. Lowry draws inspiration from a range of cultural and religious references, including songs by Nick Cave, the writings of the Old Testament and the art and philosophy of William Blake. The title of her painting *apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am* 2010, refers to a line in the epic poem *Song of myself* by acclaimed American writer Walt Whitman. Lowry’s application of paint with an airbrush allows the surface of the painting to seemingly move in and out of focus, with no single entry point for the viewer. The viewer’s gaze is instead led to the cascading spectacle of a waterfall. Often used as a cultural trope in fairytales and folklore, the waterfall could here be read as a metaphor for nature’s capacity to be both a seductive and destructive force, whilst also referencing painterly flow. Lowry completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) at the Sydney College of the Arts and is currently completing a Masters degree at the same institution. ED



TRAVIS MACDONALD  
Born 1990,  
Bunnythorpe,  
New Zealand;  
arrived Australia 1994  
Lives and works in Melbourne

*Picnic table* 2015  
oil on linen  
76.0 x 51.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

Travis MacDonald’s paintings evolve from his collection of articles and photographs of wide-ranging subjects including history, music, conspiracy theories and current affairs. Working from these source materials MacDonald creates paintings that merge the personal and universal, presenting blurred memories that suggest broader narratives. Rendered on linen using a dark and subdued palette, his painting *Picnic table* 2015 is at once familiar and yet ambiguous in its location and time. In it a weathered yellow umbrella casts a shadow over a picnic table cemented to the mossy dirt and grass beneath. The work is at once a painting of place and non-place: a place observed, an image remembered, or a moment imagined, that resonates with the viewer’s own experiences and memories. MacDonald completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2011. ED





**ROBERT  
MACPHERSON**  
**Born 1937, Brisbane**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*MAYFAIR; 'ROPE A DOPE' HERE'S ONE FOR YOU SAMMY 2002–7*  
Dulux Weathershield synthetic polymer paint on Masonite  
3 panels: 122.0 x 91.0 cm each  
Courtesy the artist and Yuill|Crowley, Sydney

The evocative, if perplexing, title of Robert Macpherson’s *MAYFAIR; 'ROPE A DOPE' HERE'S ONE FOR YOU SAMMY 2002–07* belies the apparent simplicity of the painting’s execution. Across three panels, in white household paint boldly applied upon a matte black background, three words appear – ‘rope-a-dope’ – a boxing tactic for which one player feigns fatigue or weakness in order to eventually overcome his opponent. This work forms part of a larger ‘Mayfair’ series, made in reference to the amateur hand-painted signs, advertising various local produce, that are found along roadsides in the artist’s home state of Queensland. The relationship between image, text and painting has formed an important element of Macpherson’s practice throughout his long career as an artist; combining his interests in the formal qualities of minimalism with the intellectual concerns of conceptual art, as well as humour and everyday, vernacular expression. Removed from their original context when placed within the gallery space, these words take on new meaning, elevating the mundane to the extraordinary and challenging the distinction between image and text, painting and writing, sign and art object. *AK*



**GIAN MANIK**  
**Born 1985, Perth**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Untitled 2 2014*  
oil on canvas  
258.0 x 218.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Arterreal Gallery, Sydney

Gian Manik’s recent work involves detailed painted images of distorted reflections on mirrored surfaces. He uses the term ‘vibration’ to describe the conceptual context of his practice, which explores liminal spaces and the tensions between abstraction and representation through a manipulation of media. Manik photographs abstracted reflective surfaces, like crumpled aluminium foil, before rendering these forms in paint on large canvases. In the complex slippage between painting, photography and the perceptual play of light upon reflective surfaces, Manik’s work underscores painting’s twin role as both representation and pure materiality. Manik completed a Bachelor of Arts, Visual Arts (Honours) at Curtin University of Technology, Perth, and a Master of Fine Arts at Monash University, Melbourne. He has undertaken residencies at the Gunnery Artspace, Sydney, 2009, and at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2008. *ED*

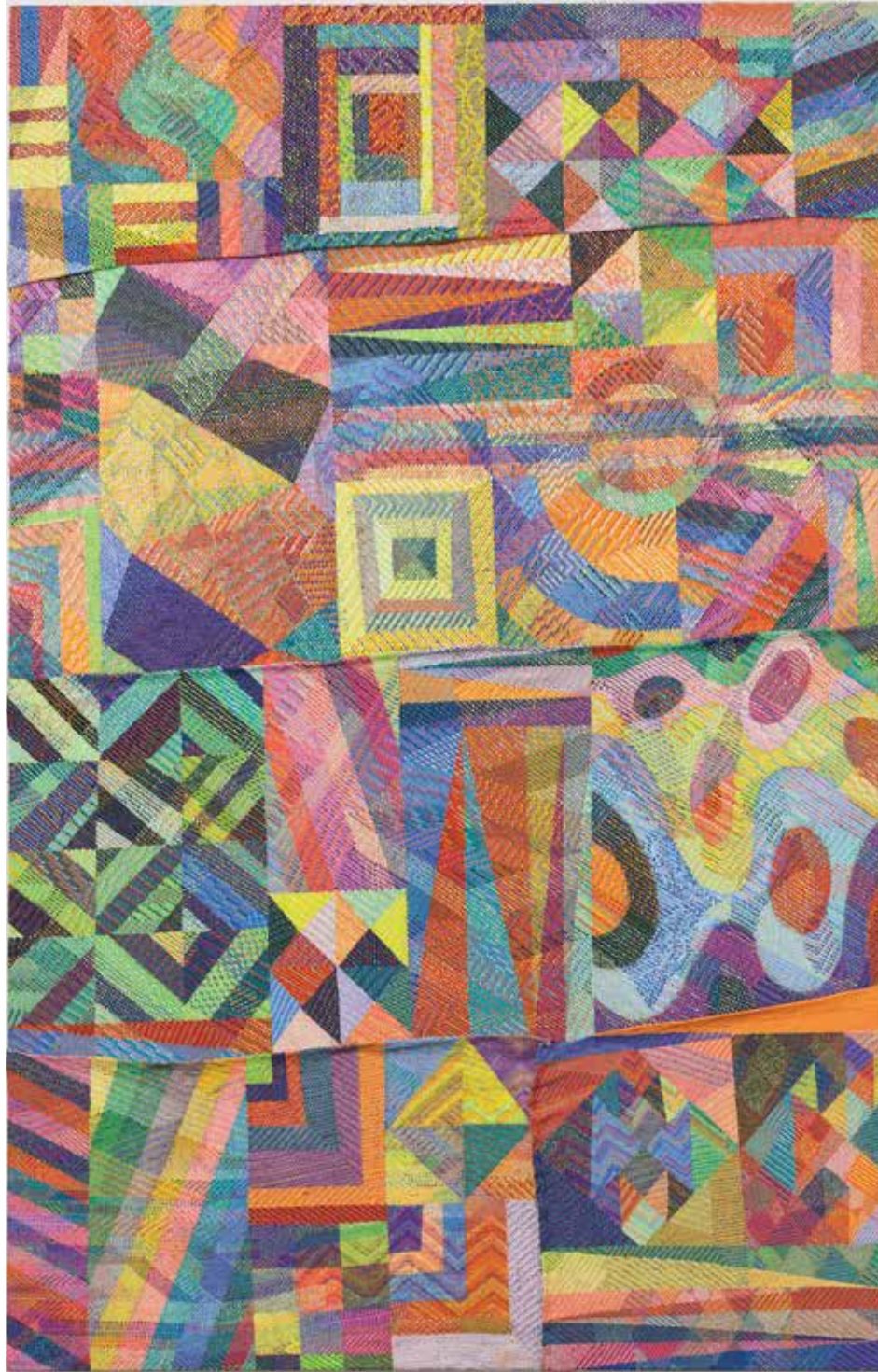




**SAMSON MARTIN**  
**Born 1985, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Harmolodics* 2015  
oil and synthetic polymer paint on  
hessian  
220.0 x 140.0 cm  
Joyce Nissan Collection, Melbourne  
Courtesy the artist and Tristian  
Koenig Gallery, Melbourne

Samson Martin's current paintings explore the tenuous lines between art and craft, as well as painting and sculpture. Embracing elements of weaving and decorative design in his work, Martin adopts a repetitive craftsmanship akin to laborious folk art practices. In *Harmolodics* 2015 the painting's surface is built by weaving together strips of hessian, granting it a physicality that plays on the traditional idea of the canvas as mere support. Each individual fibre of the substrate is then meticulously painted using miniscule polychromatic brushstrokes to reveal a painstaking display of labour. Martin graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) from Monash University, Melbourne in 2008, completing his Honours degree in 2009. ZT



**HELEN MAUDSLEY**  
**Born 1927, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*The rose petal scrolls, become  
the scrolls of our ancient past;  
of the law; of wigs, still worn.  
The hands of now, of doing.  
The pear that is flesh and heart.  
The conflict with arrogance.  
Also, the flicker of life, and the  
question mark* 2014  
oil on canvas  
74.5 x 80.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Niagara  
Galleries, Melbourne

Helen Maudsley's work has often been aligned with psycho-aesthetics, and the sense of an interior world is evident in her highly personal visual language of abstract forms and muted colours. Maudsley's poetic titling of her work reflects her affinity with the surreal and subjective whilst the composition of the work underlines the artist's keen interest in the spatial dynamics of the picture plane and framing. The painting describes a curious architectural space in which objects appear to move freely. From this tangle of forms, distinct shapes emerge – a human hand, a paper scroll, an architectural column and upturned bell – putting the onus on the viewer to imagine relationships between them. Maudsley has exhibited regularly since 1957, following studies at the National Gallery Art School, Melbourne, between 1945–47 and later completing a Graduate Diploma in Fine Arts from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. SB





**MOYA MCKENNA**  
**Born 1973, Guildford,**  
**England; arrived**  
**Australia 1975**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*One journey* 2007  
oil on canvas  
40.0 x 45.0 cm  
Benjamin Armstrong Collection,  
Melbourne

Moya McKenna's paintings draw from various corporeal and photographic materials that she amasses within her studio. In the tradition of still life, McKenna employs the discipline of painting to examine the effects of light, shadow, colour and contrast, and to achieve a sense of animated painterly form. Whilst earlier works depict arranged objects by McKenna in the studio, *One journey* 2007 adopts an approach akin to collage, layering seemingly incoherent images into one illusive frame. Painted in oil using a wet-on-wet technique, also known as *alla prima*, McKenna achieves a liveliness of the painted surface which brings the disparate motifs into an animated, coherent composition. Graphic shifts in scale and perspective, combined with her unusual, often tertiary colour selection, gives McKenna's work a distinctive presence, evocative of memory and the emotional energy of the psyche. McKenna graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1998. Her work has been included in significant exhibitions such as *Primavera*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2008) and *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2013–14). ZT/HM



**TIM MCMONAGLE**  
**Born 1971, Auckland,**  
**New Zealand;**  
**arrived Australia 1971**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Ken Pearler* 2009  
oil on linen and mixed media  
153.0 x 153.0 cm  
Joyce Nissan Collection, Melbourne

Tim McMonagle's figurative paintings often draw from everyday subject matter which he transforms through the medium of paint into whimsical parallel worlds. McMonagle's figures are brought to life on the canvas with both an economy and abundance of paint that affords the artist freedom to direct the gaze of the viewer to specific elements of the composition. *Ken Pearler* 2009 continues McMonagle's characteristic use of undulating soft washes and thick impasto smears of oil paint to capture the successful plight of a fisherman. The seeming slightness of McMonagle's surfaces belies the complexity of their production and the delicate nuance of each mark; the artist is highly attuned to compositional balance and the lyrical dynamism he achieves in his work is the labour of numerous sketches and repeated attempts to achieve the desired effects. McMonagle's portrait is without a face, perhaps an indication that the figure is merely a vehicle for painterly embodiment rather than a portrait or likeness. McMonagle completed a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1994. ZT/HM





**NIGEL MILSOM**  
**Born 1975, Albury,**  
**New South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Newcastle,**  
**New South Wales**

*Untitled (Judo house part 2)* 2009  
oil on canvas  
195.0 x 136.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Yuill|Crowley  
Gallery, Sydney

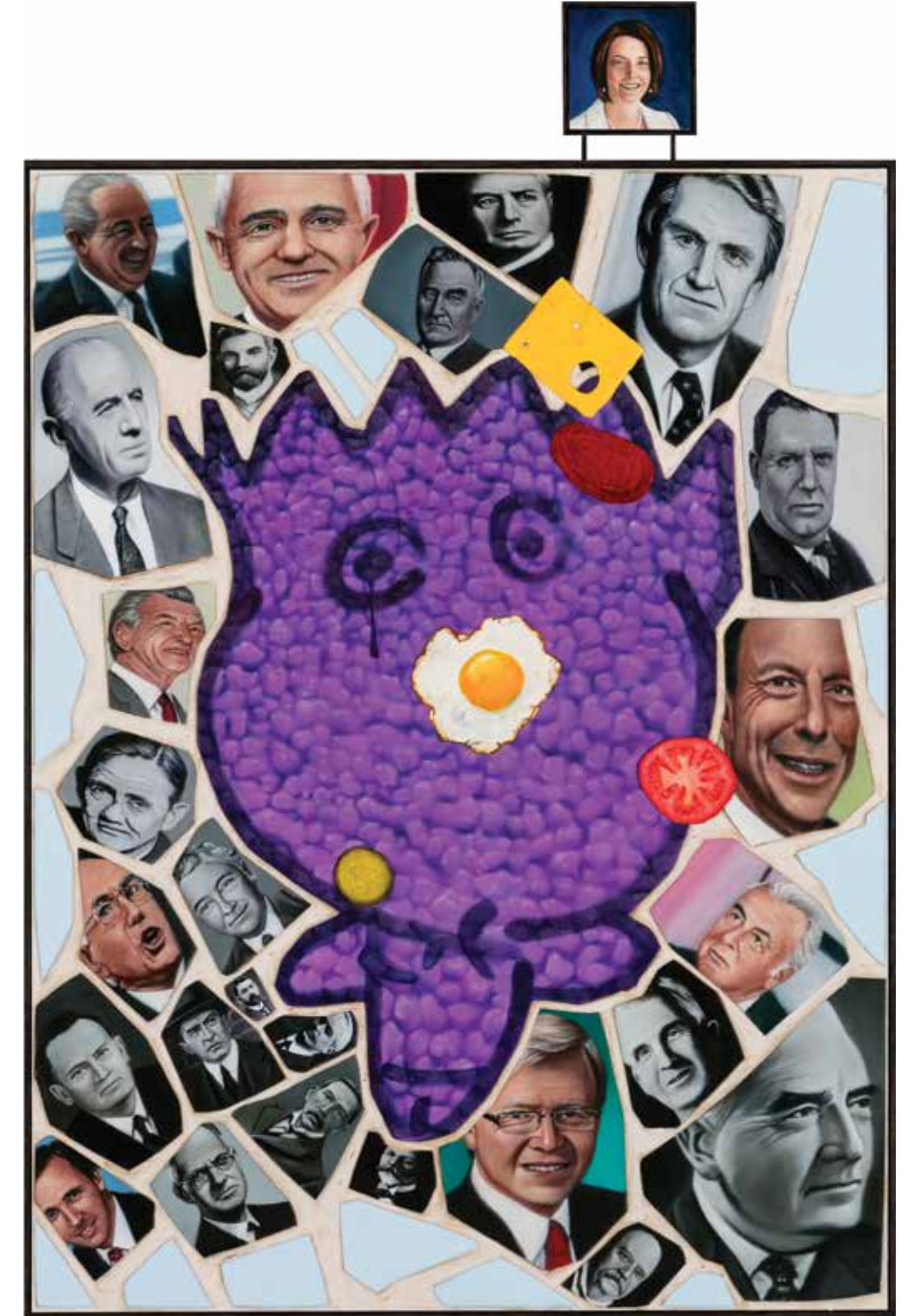
Nigel Milsom's figurative paintings are rendered in a stark monochromatic palate. Captured at a larger than life scale, *Untitled (Judo house part 2)* 2009 depicts two martial arts fighters engaged in contest. The intense, concentrated velocity of their action is captured in Milsom's use of high contrast, and in gestural brushstrokes that obscure the background so that the two bodies converge into one confounding, almost sculptural form. With a lighter hand, he convincingly details the folds of their crisp white uniforms, giving volume and mass to their presence. Here Milsom demonstrates his deft ability to render drapery, attesting to his interest in classical sculpture, a canon of art history that has been influential to him. Milsom graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the University of Newcastle in 1998 and later completed a Master of Fine Art from College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney in 2002. Since then he has exhibited widely, winning the Sulman Prize in 2012 and the Doug Moran National Portrait prize in 2013. In 2015, Milsom infamously won the prestigious Archibald Prize for his portrait of revered barrister and close friend, Charles Waterstreet. HM



**TULLY MOORE**  
**Born 1981, Orange,**  
**New South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

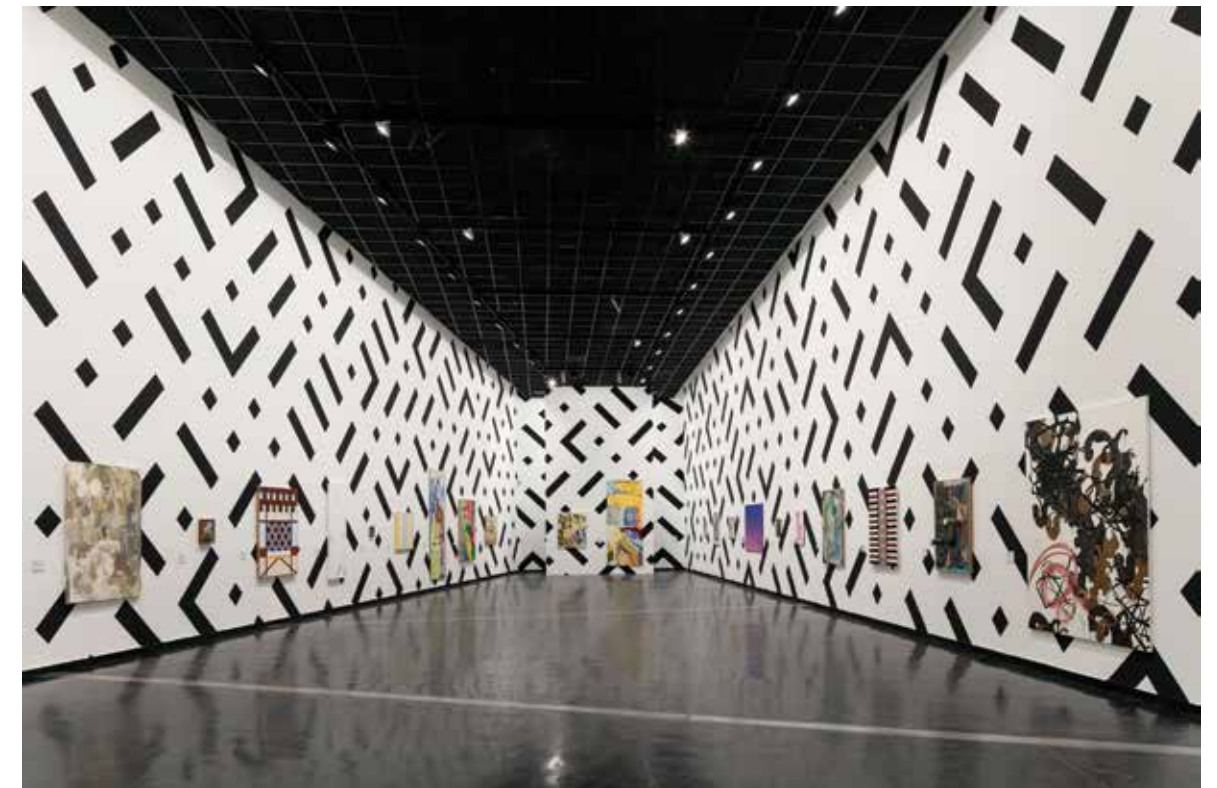
*Make it be that the pm stops looking like me* 2016  
oil on board and clay  
137.0 x 90.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist

Politics, popular culture and humour collide in Tully Moore's *Make it be that the pm stops looking like me* 2016: a portrait of twenty-six of the twenty-eight exclusively white, male Prime Ministers in Australia's constitutional history to date. In a separate frame, above this fragmented composition of faces, sits a portrait of Julia Gillard – the singular exception to this otherwise homogenous political line-up. Moore's practice often begins on the streets, in graphic motifs and imagery discovered on walks around the city. Here, in the shape of a gaudy mass in the centre of the painting, he has appropriated a stylised outline of male genitalia; applying it – as with graffiti – so as to literally deface this collection of faces. *Make it be that the pm stops looking like me* is characteristic of enduring concerns within Moore's art practice: combining representational imagery with illusionary elements and the visual language of popular culture to satirise and criticise ideology and authority. Moore graduated with an Honours degree in Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2008. AK





**Painting. More Painting**  
**Panorama: N–Z**  
**2 – 25 September 2016**





## JAN NELSON

**Born 1955, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in Melbourne**

*Black river running* 2016  
oil on linen  
55.0 x 50.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

In her series *Walking in the tall grass*, begun in 2001, Jan Nelson combines digital photographic editing and painterly process to achieve technically refined, photo-realist paintings. Nelson's hand-rendered reproduction of the photographic image in the traditional medium of oil paint is contrasted against the placement of her subject on a superflat, digitally modelled polychromatic ground, characteristic of screen culture. A temporal schism is also evoked in Nelson's subject matter, with the object of the young girl's contemplative gaze – the cup she holds – functioning as a totem of childhood that contrasts with her distinctly grownup fashion-styling. The portrait offers the viewer a window into the tentative self-image experimentation common in adolescence and in screen-based, networked society. It may also lead the viewer to adopt the reflective mode of the subject, contemplating their own life's progress in a contemporary state of being. Nelson graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1983 and has been the recipient of numerous awards including The Arthur Guy Painting Prize, 2009, and the John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize, 2004. AA



## ELIZABETH NEWMAN

**Born 1962, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in Melbourne**

*Painting* 2009  
oil and collage on linen  
100.0 x 80.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Neon Parc, Melbourne

Alongside a parallel occupation as a practicing psychoanalyst, Elizabeth Newman has maintained a longstanding practice of abstract paintings, text and textile works, developed with an economy of means and an ethics of restraint. Reluctant to fill the world with evermore signs, Newman has embraced the idea an ascetic artistic practice, in which spaces of silence, reflection, freedom and sensibility are framed, in counterpoint to the invasiveness of late-capitalist image production and discourse that increasingly colonise subjectivity. In *Painting* 2009, grey, white and green rectangular fields float alongside a fugitive collage of a Baroque lake and garden upon an aqueous painterly field. These hovering fields of non-objectivity inevitably suggest an idiosyncratic subjectivity. Questioning the authority of images, and the idea of mastery, Newman's *Painting* is characterised by tentative mark making, fragility and doubt – with the edges of the work left untouched, as if to suggest that the work remains unfinished, to be continued. Modest in scale and temperament, like much of Newman's practice, it is replete with soul, anecdote, feeling and poetic sensation, elaborated in a determinedly minor key. MD





**JONATHAN NICHOLS**  
**Born 1956, Canberra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Singapore**

*Atman* 2008  
oil on linen  
60.0 x 71.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne

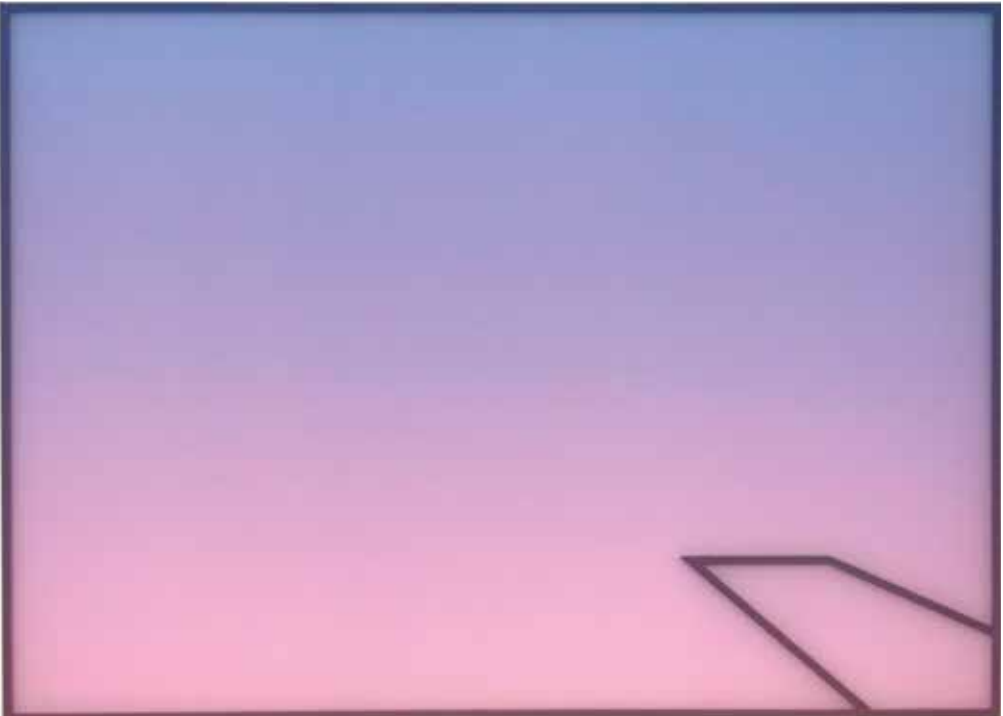
The protagonists in Jonathan Nichols’ paintings appear repeatedly in his work, often over a number of years, curiously untouched by time. Nichols’ unorthodox, oblique compositional choices – like freeze-frames extracted from everyday life – draw on photographic source material and the chance composition of the vernacular snapshot. In *Atman* 2008, a titular reference to the word for soul or essential self in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religions, a child is portrayed from above, faceless beneath a spray of long, fair hair. As if captured casually in passing, this anonymous figure occupies a non-specific space characterised by painterly handling, light-flare and the play between photography and painting. The choice of composition subverts the conventional depiction of the photographic subject, instead embodying through anonymity an avatar for projections of ego and personality. By obscuring the face from view, Nichols allows us to psychically complete the essence of his subject, an obscure opportunity to imagine another soul. Nichols completed a Bachelor of Visual Art at the National Institute of the Arts, Australian National University, Canberra, in 1988, and a Graduate Diploma of Professional Art at the College of Fine Art, University of New South Wales, Sydney, in 1989. AA



**JONNY NIESCHE**  
**Born 1972, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Ritornello* 2015  
voile, steel and synthetic  
polymer paint  
120.0 cm x 170.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
STATION, Melbourne

Sydney-based artist Jonny Niesche explores the outlying territories of painting through a glam yet hard-edged mode of image/object construction. The artist’s post-minimal works, typically abstract and materially fetishistic, employ glitter, mirrors and sheer, translucent custom-dyed fabrics stretched over welded steel armatures. In *Ritornello* 2015 – a term borrowed from opera to signal a return or refrain – Niesche revisits English artist David Hockney’s iconic 1967 painting *A bigger splash*. Emptied of the sensuality of the ‘Californian Modernist’ original – the house, the plants, even the ‘splash’ itself is gone – Niesche’s version is evenly geometric, with an irregular rhombus remaining to conjure the source painting’s diving board over water. Niesche’s pastel-vaporwave voile-gradient orients the viewer at a cool distance from Hockney’s warm, bright sun. Instead, the viewer sees the early morning or end of light, just this side of night. Niesche completed Honours and Masters degrees in Fine Art at the University of Sydney (2008 and 2013 respectively), and also attended a Masters program with Heimo Zobernig at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, in 2012. AA





**JOHN NIXON &  
UNKNOWN ARTIST**  
**Born 1949, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in  
Melbourne**

*Purple circle/flowers*  
(Copenhagen/Melbourne) 2014  
enamel on MDF on oil on  
canvas board  
38.5 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

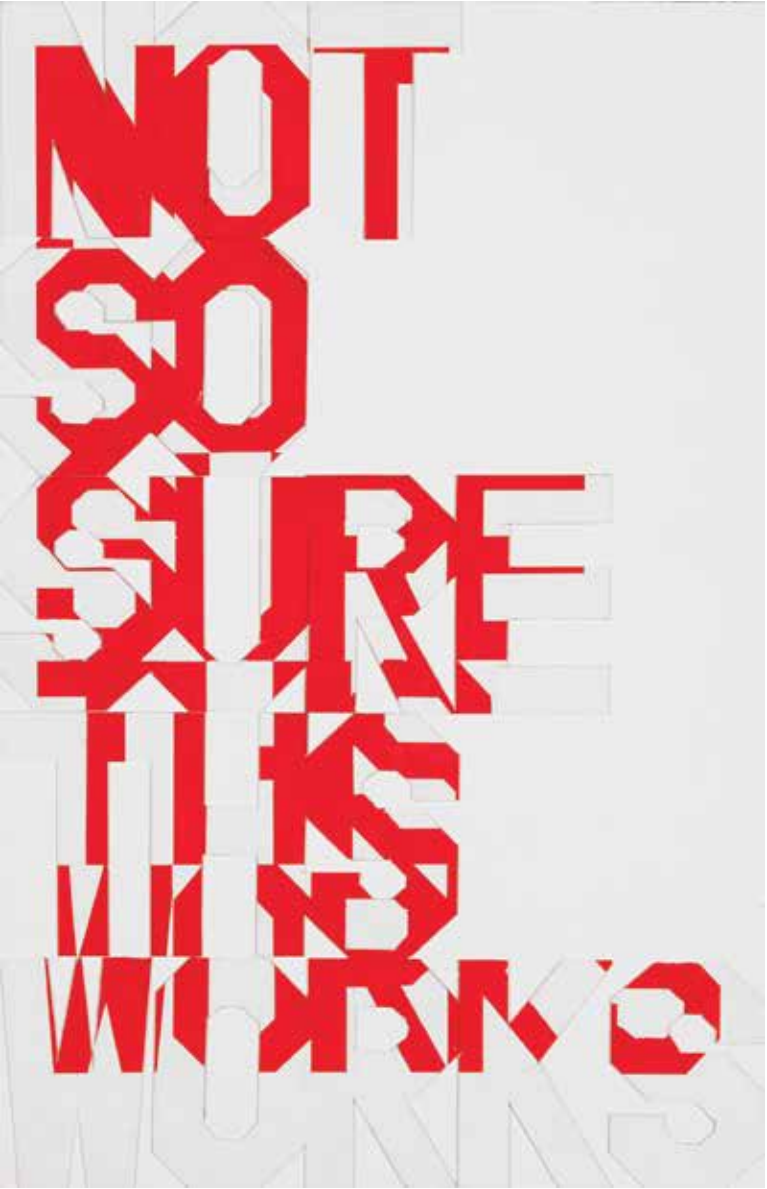
In a recent series of paintings devised as collaborations with unknown artists, John Nixon has applied his interest in monochrome painting, the Readymade and Constructivism to found still-life, landscape and portrait paintings sourced from auctions and flea markets. Influenced in part by Kazimir Malevich’s late-career turn toward the village vernacular in his Russian peasant paintings, Nixon sees himself as working alongside the original creators of these ‘found images’ in a progressive and respectful dialogue with unknown, uncelebrated artists. In *Purple circle/flowers* (Copenhagen/Melbourne) 2014, Nixon judiciously isolates a single hue for uncompromised attention from the underlying depiction of a bunch of Chrysanthemums. The viewer is privileged to the dialogue between two unrelated artists, the outcome of which constitutes a complex enrichment of each contributor’s aesthetic position. John Nixon studied at the Preston Institute of Technology, 1967–68 and at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, 1969–70. He was awarded the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award in 1999 and an Australia Council Fellowship in 2001. [AA](#)



**ROSE NOLAN**  
**Born 1959, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in  
Melbourne**

*Not so sure this works* (first anxiety  
red-on-white version) 2007  
synthetic polymer paint on cardboard  
76.0 x 50.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Anna  
Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Rose Nolan primarily locates her work within the expanded field of painting, notwithstanding a multidisciplinary approach which also encompasses sculpture, installation, photography and text. Since the late 1990s she has consistently limited her palette to red and white in reference to diverse cultural influences that include the tradition of the white monochrome, political banners, Russian revolutionary art, and the aesthetics of advertising. *Not so sure this works* (first anxiety red-on-white version) 2007 continues the artist’s practice of giving visual form to language, reclaiming vernacular expressions and utterances from the stream of daily conversation, and redeploying them as textual readymades. Here the artist’s graphic distortion reduces legibility, extending time spent with the deconstructed text as image, creating a lag, or pause, within comprehension. Redolent with doubt and disembodied authorship, *Not so sure this works* presents a permanently problematic, self-reflexive image – at once acknowledging the vulnerability of the experimental artist and providing a script for judgment by the viewer. [AA](#)





**DANIEL NOONAN**  
**Born 1974, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**New York**

*Indexical feelings* 2015  
oil on linen  
137.0 x 107.0 cm  
Collection of James Mollison and  
Vince Langford, Melbourne

Daniel Noonan is known for distinctively elusive, complex and vibrational polychrome abstractions. His work exists in a state of ethereal suspension, with cryptic forms and figures slowly unfolding over time – figures that are obscure and resist quick comprehension. Whilst his compositions are derived from preliminary drawings along with an amalgam of words and phrases scribbled on his studio wall, Noonan sees painting as a primary manifestation of the ‘real’, as opposed to a secondary representation. The specificity of the title, *Indexical feelings*, suggests both the representational and sensory possibilities of painterly practice. Noonan has a desire to unlock a language of consciousness, as forms collide and guide the creation of the image, though its logic remains fascinatingly opaque to the viewer. Noonan only wants to make essential marks – an approach which takes on a performative aspect in the studio. Noonan graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1997 and has been based in New York since 2005. AA/HM



**ALAIR PAMBEGAN**  
**Born 1968, Aurukun,**  
**Queensland**  
**Wik-Mungkan**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Aurukun**

*Kalben (Flying fox story place 4)*  
2014  
ochre on canvas  
122.5 x 102.0 cm  
Art Gallery of South Australia,  
Adelaide  
Acquisition through TARNANTHI |  
Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Art  
supported by BHP Billiton 2015

Alair Pambegan is a Wik-Mungkan artist from the community of Aurukun located on the west side of Cape York in Northern Queensland. He produces paintings on canvas using ochre from his country combined with acrylic binder to create striking linear and geometric elements that refer to traditional body-painting designs worn during Wik-Mungkan ceremonies. Pambegan assumes important cultural responsibility in his practice. His work *Kalben (flying fox story place 4)* 2014 draws upon ancestral responsibility for Kalben, the locale relating to the ancestral flying fox, while commenting on colonisation and the defiant defense of country by Indigenous people. The red, white and black colour relationship combined with repetitive graphic elements are expressions of social tradition, stories and responsibilities handed down to him from his late father, highly respected elder and nationally renowned artist, Arthur Koo’ekka Pambegan Jnr. ED





**OSCAR PERRY**  
**Born 1988, Kent,**  
**England; arrived**  
**Australia 1992**  
**Lives and works**  
**in Melbourne and**  
**Daylesford, Victoria**

*Bad things come easy / poke and a mop* 2013  
oil on plywood, logs, artist's frame  
123.0 x 93.0 x 30.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist

Oscar Perry looks to popular culture, art history and the work of his fellow artists as source material for his own work, which encompasses painting, sculpture, video and performance. The highly specific references in his work often function to maintain narrative but never confine the direction that his abstract paintings take. Perry combines paint with three-dimensional elements in his work *Bad things come easy / poke and a mop* 2013, inspired by Kung Fu fighting. Two wooden poles protrude out of the painting, resembling martial arts training sculptures, and acting as obstacles restricting Perry's painting movements and dictating the direction of his strokes. Perry graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2009, and Honours (Painting) from RMIT University, Melbourne, in 2012. ED



**STIEG PERSSON**  
**Born 1959, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Fragile Ys* 2009  
oil and metallic paint on linen  
229.0 x 183.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

As an artist who came of age in the twilight of late modernist painting, Stieg Persson has maintained a keen interest in the language and semantics of painting, and the role of decorative traditions once considered anathema to the formalist conventions of modernist abstraction. *Fragile Ys* 2009 is composed from a complex spatial layering of Rococo-like painterly forms which oscillate between painting and writing, with reference to *rocaille*, *graffito*, and scroll-like ecriture, as well as more recently discovered scientific models found in genetic coding related to gender assignment. These are layered, one upon the other, in taut, swooping and swooning arrangement, immersing the viewer within the depths and dynamism of the picture plane, creating an archaeological painting, imbued with a surplus economy of ornament, in a complex play which pits gestural and subjective decorative modes against the classical and decorous. Persson graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1981. He was awarded the inaugural Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize, Bendigo Art Gallery, in 2003, and is currently a PhD candidate, and teacher in the Drawing and Printmedia Department, at the Victorian College of the Arts. MD

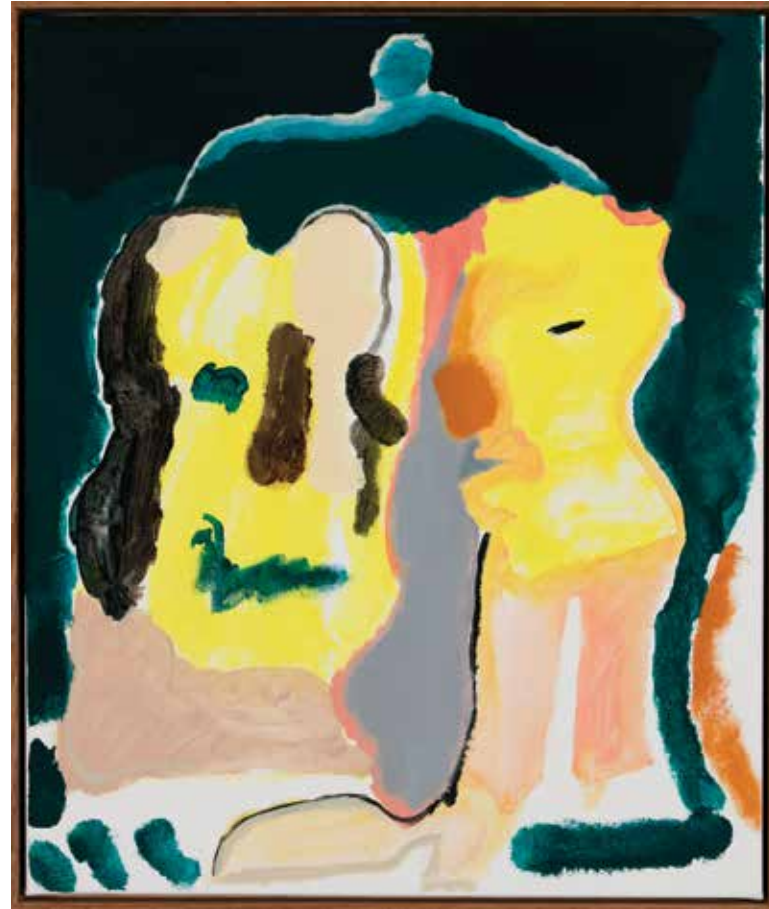




**TOM POLO**  
**Born Sydney, 1985**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Side talk* 2014  
synthetic polymer paint and flashe  
on canvas  
60.0 x 50.0 cm  
Joyce Nissan Collection, Melbourne

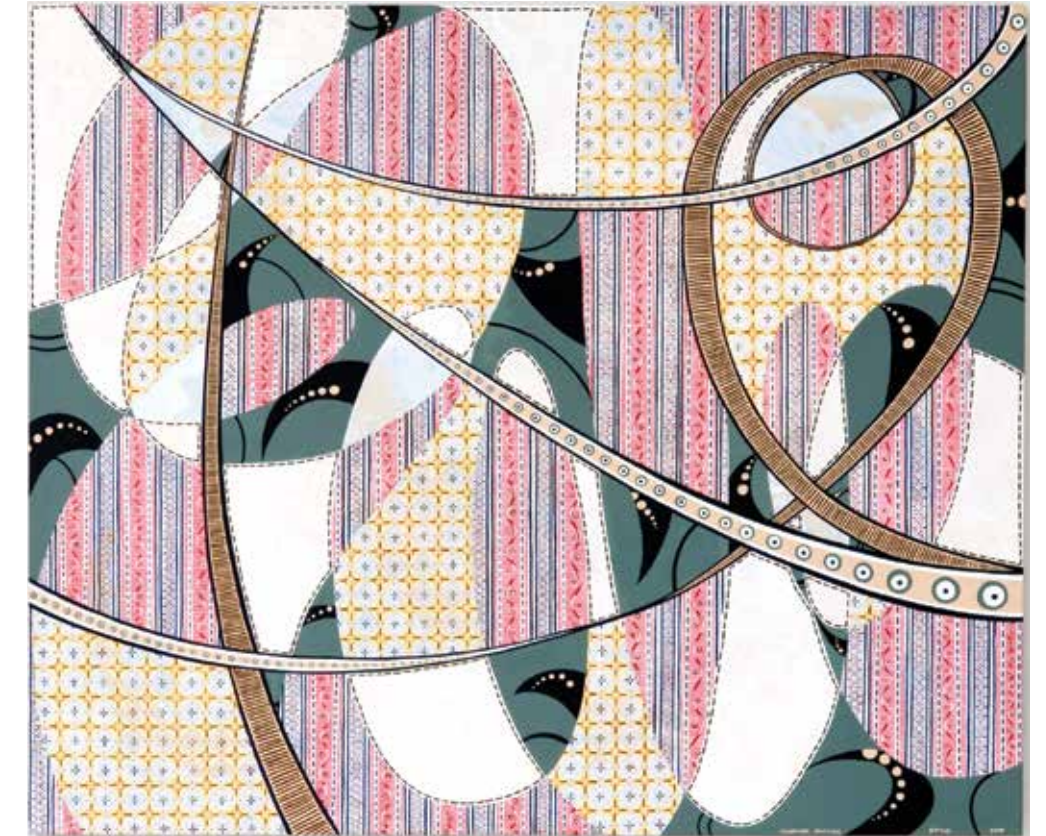
Tom Polo employs portraiture, text and graphic image-making, aligned with a ready dose of humour, to explore ideas around anxiety, failure and expectation within the human condition. Characterised by bold colours and loose figurative forms, his paintings reflect on self-deprecation, vulnerability, honesty and doubt amidst a culture of continual validation. Polo contrasts themes of uncertainty and self-doubt with moments of confidence through the immediacy of painted gestures. In *Side talk* 2014, two half-formed faces are depicted in conversation, their expressions formed through bleeds and irregular shapes divided by patches of colour. Polo graduated with a Master of Fine Art from the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, in 2011. In 2015 he was the recipient of the Brett Whiteley Travelling Art Scholarship and undertook a three-month residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. ED



**ELIZABETH PULIE**  
**Born 1968, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Signature painting* 2008  
synthetic polymer paint, pencil,  
gouache on linen  
100.0 x 120.0 cm  
RACV Art Collection, Healesville

Elizabeth Pulie consciously works within the formal constraints of painting to accentuate the inherent constructedness of the picture plane. Self-reflexive and critical, Pulie's work often possesses a distinctive decorative sensibility, as is visible in *Signature painting* 2008. Here a selection of diverse patterns, seemingly seized from outmoded domestic contexts, are re-appropriated, and juxtaposed within a dynamic composition of circular looping lines. The graphic content signals the gendered nature of many of Pulie's representations, while the highly lyrical composition allows the foreground and background to oscillate between positive and negative space. In this way Pulie's finely detailed rendering draws the viewer's eye across and around the painting as if engaged in an optical dance. Pulie graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (1991) and Master of Visual Arts (2000) from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney and has exhibited widely both in Australia and internationally since 1987. SB/HM





**ADAM PYETT**  
**Born 1973, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Silver Princess Gum flowers [2]* 2015  
oil on linen  
76.5 x 61.0 cm  
Private Collection, Melbourne;  
courtesy Sophie Gannon Gallery

A sustained discipline in painterly handling and observational process allows Adam Pyett to create evocative works within the genre of still life – a tradition known in French as *nature morte* (dead nature) – bringing a work to life from inanimate painterly materiality. Form, colour, texture and light are key to the freshness and individuality of each of his paintings, often centered on Australian native flowers, such as gums, wattle and bottlebrush. *Silver Princess Gum flowers [2]* 2015 features pink pendant flowers with dotted yellow tips against a balanced still life arrangement of waxy leaves and cool greens which animate a dynamic interplay between the life of a painting and the suggestion of mortality implicit in the still-life memento mori tradition. Pyett graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) from Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1994. ED



**BEN QUILTY**  
**Born 1973, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Robertson,**  
**New South Wales**

*Straight white male, nose self portrait* 2014  
oil on linen  
130.0 x 110.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist

Ben Quilty's practice is characterised by a gestural painting style, working with a palette knife to achieve layered, bodily three-dimensional smears of paint on canvas. Much of his work is autobiographical, focusing on universal themes of masculinity, mortality and national identity, while exploring personal questions relating to self and identity. Part of this exploration is his identification with the 'straight, white male' paradigm to communicate contemporary themes. Quilty studied feminist theory at the University of Western Sydney in the late 1990s to better understand his own position as a young male confronting masculinity roles he did not respect or understand. An absurdist humour is apparent in the self-portrait *Straight white male, nose self portrait* 2014; the work subverts an image of the artist in order to communicate his own awkwardness in identifying as a figure of artistic and patriarchal authority. Quilty has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally, winning the 2014 Prudential Eye Award, 2011 Archibald Prize and 2009 Doug Moran National Portrait Prize. ED

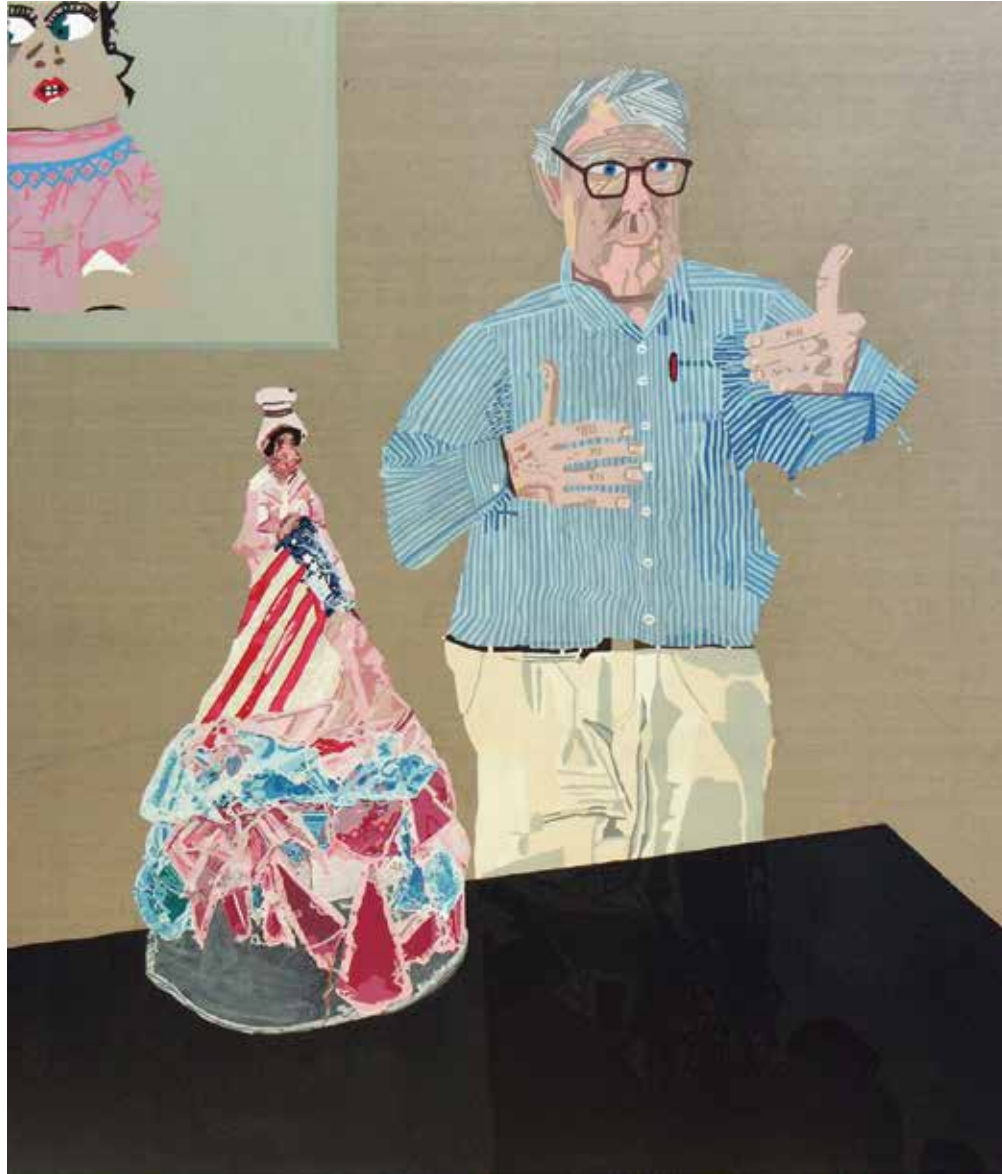




**LISA REID**  
**Born 1975, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Peter Fay* 2007  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
177.0 x 151.5 cm  
Arts Project Australia Permanent  
Collection, Melbourne  
Gift of Peter Fay

Working with everyday images sourced from family albums and popular culture, Lisa Reid's intuitive and meticulously detailed paintings playfully explore personal and family history. Reid's clever division of space in the portrait painting, *Peter Fay* 2007, captures the figure in action, diligently animated against raw canvas ground. The inclusion of a self-portrait hanging in the upper left of the painting sets up a triangulated relationship with the principal subject and table-based sculpture in the foreground. Reid's refined use of surface texture shows a deeply considered combination of haptic and tactile painterly handling, through the play of intricate detail against sparse areas of flat materiality. Reid joined Arts Project Australia in 2000 and has since exhibited nationally and internationally since 2002, extending her practice to include printmaking, ceramics, animation and digital art. Her portrait of Peter Fay depicts a collector and patron well known for his support of untrained artists and informal art practices. [CO](#)



**REKO RENNIE**  
**Born 1974, Melbourne**  
**Kamilaroi**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Warrior* 2015  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
120.0 x 120.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Blackartprojects, Melbourne

Reko Rennie's work reveals a complex interplay of cultural references, from the distinctive geometric patterns of his Kamilaroi heritage, to urban graffiti, pop art and the influence of his upbringing in suburban Footscray. Self-taught, Rennie explores ideas of personal identity, Indigenous history and political activism in his work, often investigating Indigenous culture within contemporary urban environments. *Warrior* 2015 continues his exploration of cultural juxtapositions: the bright, reverberating patterns on the right of the canvas are an extension of Rennie's recurring use of a diamond motif in reference to his connection to the Kamilaroi people of northern New South Wales; while the stick figure, with spear raised, is a nod both to early New York street art and the defiant war-cry dance performed by Indigenous Australian rules footballer, Adam Goodes. Rennie's work has been exhibited widely in Australia and internationally and was most recently projected upon the sails of the Sydney Opera House as part of the Vivid Festival in 2016. [CO](#)

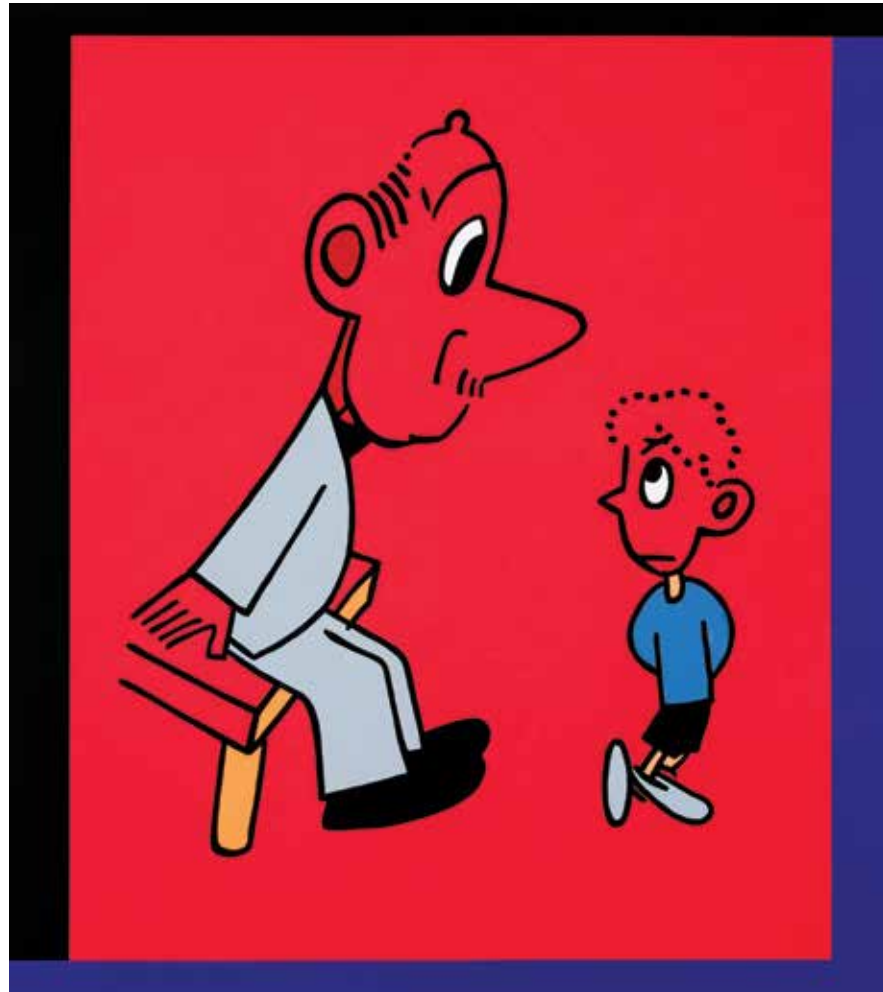




**ROBERT ROONEY**  
**Born 1937, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Le Rire: The guilty one (Picq)* 2006  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
110.0 x 98.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

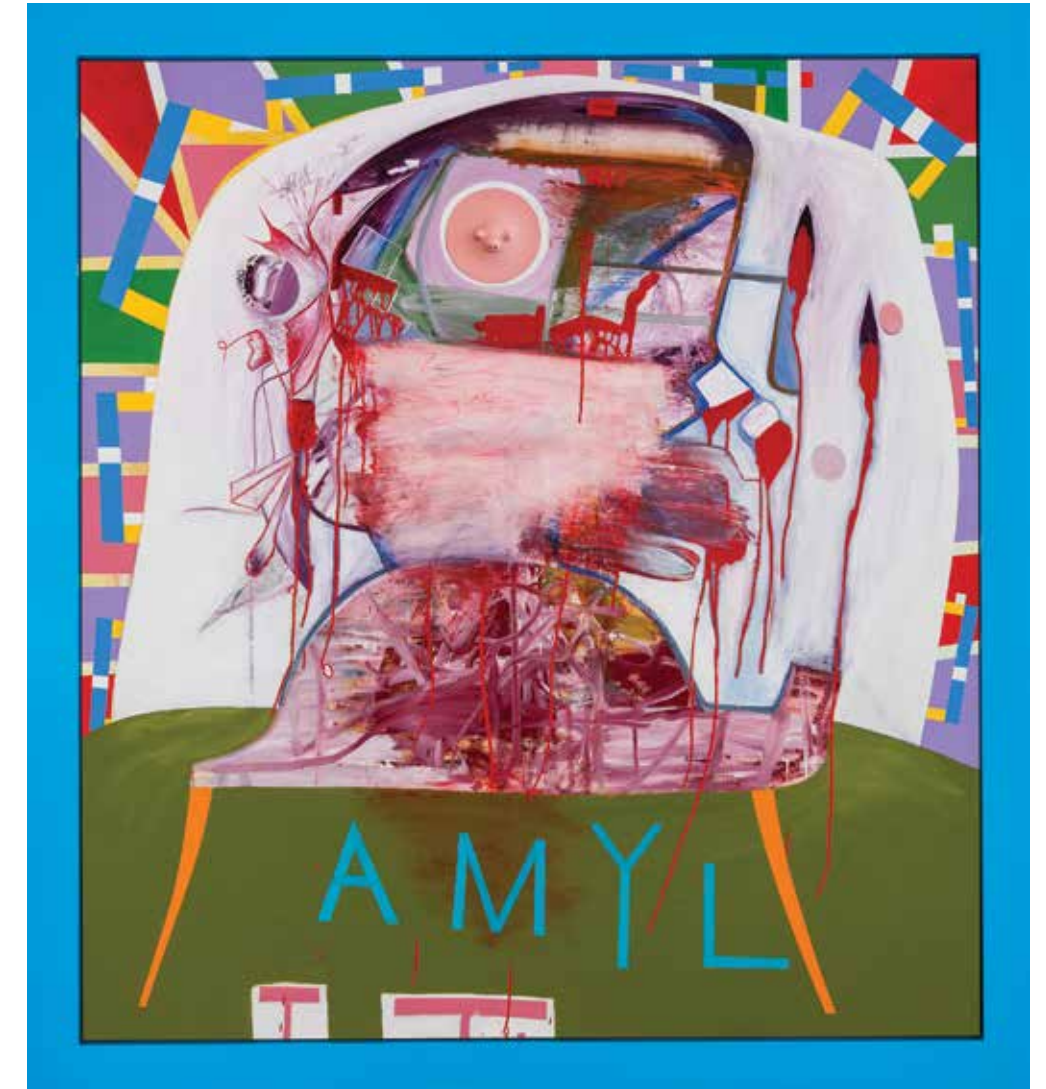
Robert Rooney's *Le Rire: The guilty one (Picq)* 2006 captures a moment of realisation between two characters – an adult and a child. Despite the implied guilt of the painting's title, and the generational hierarchy that exists between the pair, it is not immediately apparent – from the figures' stylised body language and facial expressions alone – to which this accusation applies. Are the eyes of the child ones of shame or scorn? Or the suggested shock of the adult caused by a discovery or by himself being discovered? Without the usual text to accompany a cartoon strip, the medium from which this painting takes its cue, it is up to viewers to deduce their own meaning from this pregnant pause. *Le Rire: The guilty one (Picq)* 2006 is one of five paintings by Rooney to reference the crisp outlines found in satirical cartoons by the artists Picq, Tayvar and Nitro published in a 1937 copy of the French journal *Le Rire* (Laughter). The painting reveals Rooney's ongoing interest, throughout his long and diverse practice, in working from found and secondary sources – often referencing the visual language of advertising, children's book illustrations and cartoon strips to enact a playful deconstructive of images and language. *AK*



**GARETH SANSOM**  
**Born 1939, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne and**  
**Sorrento, Victoria**

*Amyl* 2015–6  
oil, enamel and latex on linen  
183.0 x 169.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and STATION,  
Melbourne

Gareth Sansom's paintings are imbued with a density of experience and highly allusive references to art and cinema history, popular culture, and the performance of sexual identity. *Amyl* 2015–16 continues Sansom's long-standing exploration into painterly process and mark-making, as ambiguous figurative delineations wrestle with abstract entities to reveal the mysterious life and energies of painting itself. The central form recalls the grotesque figures and compositional structure of Sansom's artistic forebear, Francis Bacon; its painted latex visage protruding uncannily from an intensely coloured, otherworldly realm. First exhibiting in the late 1950s, Sansom was Head of Painting and subsequently Dean of the School of Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, from 1977–91. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Dobell Drawing Prize in 2012, the John McCaughey Memorial Prize in 2008 and the National Works on Paper Award in 2006. *SB*





**GEMMA SMITH**  
**Born 1978, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Brilliant branch* 2014  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
138.5 x 118.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Sarah Cottier  
Gallery, Sydney

Drawing from the history of abstraction, process and colour field painting, Gemma Smith explores the potential for colour and gesture to challenge the otherwise flat surface of the picture plane. Revelling in the viscous flow of painting's materiality, Smith's use of colour is bold and joyful, with large sweeps of synthetic polymer paint accentuating painterly process and gesture. Smith's sculptural forms, an extension of her paintings, pay homage to the work of Australian hard-edge abstract artists, such as Ron Robertson-Swann, whose infamous public sculpture *Vault* 1978 sits in the ACCA forecourt. Since 2009, Smith has moved away from the sharp, geometric planes of her earlier work, embracing a more organic and gestural style, described as *Tangle paintings*. In *Brilliant branch* 2014, the underlying surface of the canvas appears to have been erased by thick painterly doodles, confusing the space between figure and ground, and the relations of line and colour. Smith completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Sydney College of the Arts in 1999 and in 2004 completed an honours year at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. LC



**KATE SMITH**  
**Born 1980,**  
**Cootamundra, New**  
**South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Bethungra,**  
**New South Wales**

*Repeat (the plague)* 2014  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
board  
20.5 x 40.8 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

With humble means and with recourse to readily available materials, Kate Smith's practice displays a playful approach to painting that embodies a sense of immediacy through its raw traits. In *Repeat (the plague)* 2014 Smith's use of a modest canvas board format rejects the putative authority of traditionally stretched canvas whilst its informality and humility challenges the values of painting today by pitting ambient, precarious poetics against mastery. The at once bold and vulnerable gestures of her brushstrokes evoke a fleeting moment or emotional drama that is amplified by the emptiness of the balance of the expansive picture plane. Smith graduated from the School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra, in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts (Visual) and was awarded the ANU School of Art Peter Fay Graduate Award. She has completed residencies at Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne (2010), and Artspace, Sydney (2011). KL





**NICOLA SMITH**  
**Born 1981, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Je tu il elle* 7 2015  
oil on linen  
45.0 x 60.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

Exploring the relationship between cinema and painting, Nicola Smith's *Je tu il elle* 7 2015, is from a series of twelve oil paintings that re-purpose and re-imagine scenes from the 1974 film *Je tu il elle* (I, you, he, she) by the late structuralist filmmaker Chantal Akerman. Written, directed by and starring Akerman, the film tells the story of an aimless young woman, attempting to recover at home from a breakup. Originally shot in black and white, Smith has translated the scene into lively colour, depicting the former lovers reconciled over a kitchen table. Smith's interest in Akerman's oeuvre stems in part from the filmmaker's characteristic use of long takes – a temporal concern that is shared by painting. In reconstructing these existing scenes, translating them from one medium to another, Smith also alludes to the relationship between the real and illusory, another of the many concerns shared by both cinema and painting. Smith received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the National Art School, Sydney, in 2002 and completed her Honours year at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, in 2009. KL



**JOHN SPITERI**  
**Born 1967, Sydney**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Vagabond* 2016  
oil and enamel on canvas  
168.0 x 122.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Neon Parc, Melbourne

John Spiteri's practice has recently shifted from figurative, dream-like two and three-dimensional works to abstract paintings on linen with oil and enamel, allowing the materiality of the paint to become the focus. In *Vagabond* 2016, the energy of the painted surface draws the eye to move constantly around the surface of the painting, the focus vibrating between background and foreground and between painterly process and spatial composition. The earthy tones and translucent colours are reminiscent of a landscape and as the name of the work implies we are free to visually wander around the composition without belonging to a certain time or place. Spiteri completed a Bachelor of Education (Art) and Master of Fine Art at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales (1989 and 2001 respectively). In 1995 and 2001 he attended a Masters program in Associate Research at Goldsmiths College, London. KL





**MADONNA STAUNTON**  
**Born 1938,**  
**Murwillumbah, New**  
**South Wales**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*Profile no. 1* 2012  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
36.0 x 30.5 cm  
Private Collection, Brisbane

Working across painting, collage and assemblage, in a career spanning over five decades, Madonna Staunton has made an indelible mark on the landscape of Australian art. Following an early career as a large-scale, abstract painter, Staunton embraced the intimacy of collage and assemblage upon the early onset of arthritis. More recently, she has returned to painting – combining the formal properties of her collages with an enduring interest in philosophy and the internal psychological world. In *Profile no. 1* 2012 a vase of flowers is set against a flattened and slightly askew background. Staunton's strong understanding and use of colour is evident here in her confident rendering of this bold and abstracted still-life that can be read as either a literal depiction of a domestic interior, the play of paint upon the surface of the picture plane, or as a memento mori reminding us of the passage of life and time. Staunton has had a long and prolific career, with solo survey exhibitions of her work held at the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2014), Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2003) and QUT Art Museum, Brisbane (2002). KL



**ESTHER STEWART**  
**Born 1988, Katherine,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Lives and works**  
**in Melbourne and**  
**Daylesford, Victoria**

*Networking from bed* 2016  
synthetic polymer on board  
151.0 x 121.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

Esther Stewart creates juxtapositions of bold colour, shape and line that encourage shifting perspectives and illusory effects. Drawing on traditions of geometric painting and graphic design, the title of Stewart's painting *Networking from bed* 2016 implies an interior space, with the symmetry of the composition and graphic black lines reminiscent of an architectural plan or elevation. This notion – of being able to communicate with others from the privacy and comfort of the bedroom – of course also references a digital space, alluded to in the grid-like matrix of which gives the painting its structure. Stewart's geometric planes and colour palette can here be seen to reference painting's relationship both to a modernist art history, as well as our digital present, with the new and various modes of representation and perception that this brings. Stewart completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2010, and graduated with a Masters of Cultural and Arts Management from the University of Melbourne in 2013. SB





**TYZA STEWART**  
**Born 1990, Brisbane**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*Over* 2015  
oil on panel  
185.0 x 70.3 cm  
Griffith University Art Collection,  
Brisbane  
Purchased 2016

Tyza Stewart's paintings consider ideas of identity and non-binary gender through the repeated act of self-portraiture. Stewart's portraits challenge dominant understandings of gender fixity, in preference for more ambiguous, fluid representations. In *Over* 2015 we see a portrait of the artist in which only the face, hands and feet are rendered complete. The rest of the body is constructed with a faint outline, creating a ghostly, ambiguous figure. *Over*, like much of Stewart's work, raises questions about the visibility, or lack thereof, of transsexual bodies in the public sphere. Focussing upon the head, locks of hair, hands, wrist and feet, Stewart's painting makes inevitable reference to the crucifixion, passion and suffering of Christ, whilst its openness provides the viewer with space to consider the question gender, and to imagine alternative possibilities. Stewart graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) in 2012 from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane. In 2016, Stewart was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane. KL



**KRISTINA**  
**TSOULIS-REAY**  
**Born 1979, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Melbourne**

*Rearview* 2016  
oil on linen board  
21.0 x 16.3 cm  
Courtesy the artist

Often rendered on a small scale, Kristina Tsoulis-Reay's paintings capture fleeting moments that conjure forgotten childhood memories of family holidays. Working mostly from photographic sources, both personal and found, she develops layers of semi-translucent paint, instilling a sense of the transitional, and the idea of fragile memory, through textures that appear to shimmer. *Rearview* 2016 is a complex image that explores the perceptual potential of windows, mirrors and interior space. Employing dramatic shifts in scale – from macro to micro, and adult to childhood perception – *Rearview* is about looking and memory, with an equally compelling allusion to psychological and personal space. Tsoulis-Reay completed her Masters of Fine Art at Monash University in 2009 and has exhibited widely in Melbourne since 2002. CO

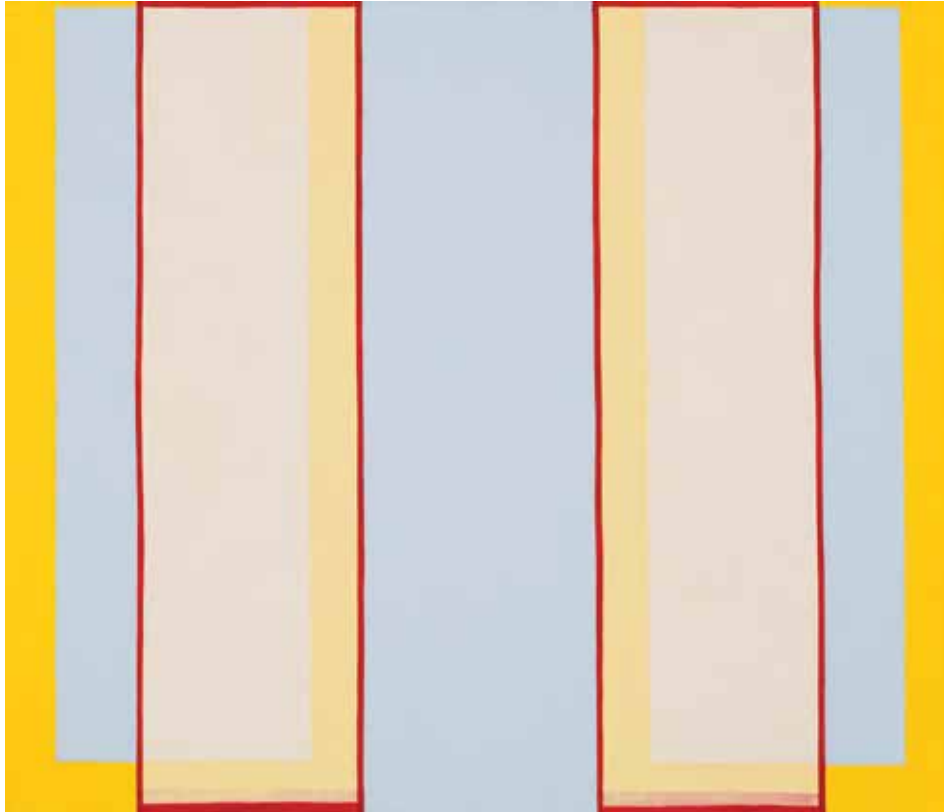




**TREVOR VICKERS**  
**Born 1943, Adelaide**  
**Lives and works in Perth**

*Untitled* 2014–15  
synthetic polymer paint on canvas  
91.5 x 106.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Charles  
Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

Continuing to refine his practice over a career spanning more than five decades, Trevor Vickers’ distinctive style of abstraction employs bold colour, elegant lines and basic geometric shapes. Through his application of colour, Vickers plays with our perceptions – locating lighter tones next to, or overlapping, darker ones to create the illusion of a space that is visually rhythmic and never still. *Untitled* 2014–15 continues Vickers’ exploration of visual perception through his graceful use of abstraction and the play of light and colour, which sees vertical fields located in parallel across the canvas, weaving the eye throughout the space in a continuous optical hum. Vickers was included in the seminal exhibition *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968, which championed Australian artists working with hard-edged abstraction and colour field painting. CO



**JENNY WATSON**  
**Born 1951, Melbourne**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Brisbane**

*Moon, Sophie + Me* 2013  
synthetic polymer paint, oil, oilstick,  
pigment, pom poms on linen  
293.0 x 124.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Autobiographical in nature, Jenny Watson’s paintings depict fragmented narratives and memories with a wilful childlike energy. Watson often places herself within her images, drawing on her recollections from travel and everyday life, as well as an interest in feminism and domestic narratives, to create poetic expressions of the self. *Moon, Sophie + Me* 2013 depicts a quintessential subject for Watson: the artist in the company of a horse. A lifelong love of horses has seen equine subjects feature in many of the artist’s paintings, both as figurative subject matter and through the application of horse hair. Combining imagery and text on fabric, the work is characteristic of Watson’s use of materials as well as her tendency to share intimate details of her life with the viewer. Watson graduated from the National Gallery of Victoria Art School in 1972 and has since held over ninety solo exhibitions in Australia and internationally. She was the first female artist to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale with a solo presentation in 1993, and was awarded an Australia Council Fellowship in 2005. AL





**BRADD  
WESTMORELAND**  
Born 1975, Melbourne  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*Spring morning* 2015  
oil on linen  
180.0 x 140.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Niagara  
Galleries, Melbourne

A keen appreciation for art history has helped Bradd Westmoreland evolve his distinctive approach, which shifts beguilingly between figuration and abstraction. The influence of canonical figures including Picasso, Cézanne, Matisse and El Greco are evident in Westmoreland's imagined still life and figure paintings, landscapes and renderings of emotional states. Using a high-key palette comprised mainly of primary and secondary colours, Westmoreland applies layers of paint in intuitive, gestural strokes, scratching and scrubbing back the surface to create concentrations of colour, or areas of light and space. The gesture of the artist's hand lends Westmoreland's work, a lively, energised presence that imbues something of a felt, rather than seen, reality. In *Spring morning* 2015, a dynamic figure structures the composition according to its diagonal fold, warping painterly space through abstract, biomorphic fields. Many of Westmoreland's subjects, predominantly nudes, turn away from the viewer in introspection, creating a melancholic and voyeuristic feeling. Westmoreland completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1995 and has exhibited regularly since 1997. LC/HM



**PETER WESTWOOD**  
Born 1954, Sydney  
Lives and works in  
Melbourne

*The poor hospital* 2012  
oil on linen  
92.0 x 128.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist

An interest in the unsettled nature of contemporary society and ideas of self in relation to complex power structures is a repeated motif in Peter Westwood's work. With a practice devoted to questions of painting, Westwood is as much concerned with the sensory, experiential implications of painterly practice – the idea of the work of art 'as immanent to experience, as much an event as an object' – as he is with representation itself. *The poor hospital* 2012 presents a group of uniformed figures in a hospital ward awash with institutional colours of yellow and pale blue. Whilst the viewer is rendered an impotent observer to the narrative scene depicted, it is the image-form itself which compels our attention, in the painterly play of sweeping brushstrokes and the optical vibration of contrasting colours and dynamic compositional space. Westwood is Senior Lecturer and the Coordinator of the School of Art Bachelor of Art Honours program at RMIT University, Melbourne, where he is also a PhD candidate. AL





**KEN WHISSON**  
**Born 1927, Lilydale,**  
**Victoria**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Sydney**

*Bush recollections with houses and faces* 2013-14  
oil on linen  
120.0 x 100.0 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

Ken Whisson received his artistic training from Russian émigré painter, Danila Vassilieff, after studying briefly at Swinburne Technical College, Melbourne. Vassilieff helped to focus Whisson’s expressive painterly style while introducing him to the artistic coterie surrounding the Heide circle. Whisson relocated to Perugia, Italy, in 1977 yet his work maintained an enduring link to the Australian landscape. He recently returned to Sydney after three and half decades of living abroad. The composition of Whisson’s paintings hinge on their precarious balance of graphic visual components arranged discretely to resemble schematic blueprints, which coalesce to create coherent spatial narratives. This coming-together of parts reflects an intuitive urge to simultaneously record and create. As Whisson once stated: ‘Art is what happens at the end of the brush when it meets the canvas’. Achieving an optical energy from the frisson of colour and line, *Bush recollections with houses and faces* 2013-14 disperses familiar representations of the landscape against patches of vivid colour to formulate abstract sensations of identity and place in the artist’s typically raw, optical illustrative style. SB



**NORA WOMPI**  
**Born 1939, Karimarra,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Manyjilyjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Kunawarritji**

**NORA NUNGABAR**  
**Born 1920, near Lupuru,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Manyjilyjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Kunawarritji**

**BUGAI WHYOULTER**  
**Born 1940, Pukayiyirna**  
**(Balfour Downs Station),**  
**Western Australia**  
**Manyjilyjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Kunawarritji**

**with**  
**NORA NGALANGKA**  
**TAYLOR**  
**Born 1951, Wirrinyalkujarra,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Manyjilyjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Parnngurr**

**MARJORIE YATES**  
**Born 1950, Western Desert,**  
**Western Australia**  
**Manyjilyjarra**  
**Lives and works in**  
**Kunawarritji**

*Wantili to Kinya* 2013  
synthetic polymer paint on linen  
300.0 x 125.0 cm  
Courtesy the artists; Martumili Artists; and Hanging Valley, Melbourne

*Wantili to Kinyu* 2013 was created by Nora Wompi, Nora Nungabar and Baugai Whylouter, and completed in collaboration with younger artists Marjorie Yates and Nola Ngalangka Taylor. Working together, the women are able to demonstrate how they represent their country through the shared act of painting and knowledge transfer. According to these Martumili artists: ‘This painting shouldn’t be read as a straight map of waterholes and sandhills, places. We don’t join it up like white fellas might. We put it down the way we see it, feel it, know it and that’s not in a straight line’. Avoiding a purely diagrammatic representation of landscape, the artists understand topographic references as part of a broader investigation into the spiritual essence and sensual evocation of place. In this way *Wantili to Kinyu* 2013 reflects the group’s deep engagement with their ancestral country, reflecting a journey from Wantili (near Parnngurr) to Kinyu (near Kunawarritji) that documents both the physical and spiritual attributes of their surrounds. SB







PROJECT CREDITS	CURATORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ESSAYISTS	ACCA BOARD	WEEKEND GALLERY COORDINATORS	VISIONARY	PATRON	ENTHUSIAST	Helen Selby & Jim Couttie	CONTEMPORARY CIRCLE
Curators Max Delany Annika Kristensen Hannah Mathews	Our thanks go firstly to the seventy-nine participating artists for their provocative and inspiring artworks and for the conversations about painting that we have shared along the way. We thank the numerous private lenders and commercial galleries who have generously loaned works for the period of the exhibition. Special thanks are also due to Charlotte Day, Director, Monash University Museum of Art; Angela Goddard, Director, Griffith Artworks, Griffith University Art Gallery and Griffith University Art Collection; Nick Mitzevich, Director, and Nici Cumpston, Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of South Australia; and Vanessa Van Ooyen, Senior Curator, QUT Art Museum & William Robinson Gallery, Queensland University of Technology who have been instrumental in confirming the loans of key works from public collections. We are grateful for the advice of numerous peers including Tony Albert, Joanna Bosse, Damiano Bertoli, Geoff Newton, Jonathan Nichols, Quentin Sprague and Judith Ryan, Senior Curator of Indigenous Art, National Gallery of Victoria. To our essayists – Jan Bryant, Justin Paton and Quentin Sprague – we thank you for your thoughtful and illuminating observations about painting; and thank you to the ACCA staff for pitching in to put together the artists' texts. A huge thank you to our Curatorial Intern, Stephanie Berlangieri, who has been an enormous help at all stages of this project, as well as to our crew – Beau Emmett, Patrick O'Brien, Ned Needham, Simon McGuinness, Brian Scales, SimoneTops and Danae Valenza – for their good humour and professionalism in the installation of this exhibition. — MD, AK & HM	Jan Bryant is a writer and teacher. She works in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University, Melbourne.	John Denton Chair  Lesley Alway Deputy Chair	Jessie Bullivant Hanna Chetwin Anna Parlane Jacqui Shelton	Prescott Family Foundation Morgan Phoa Family Fund Anonymous	Nicholas Brass & Zoe Ganim Ingrid Braun Dominic & Natalie Dirupo Mark Fraser Rachel Griffiths & Andrew Taylor Jane Hemstrich Jan Minchin Mark & Louise Nelson Margaret Plant Jane Ryan & Nick Kharsas Alan & Carol Schwartz AM Dahle Suggett Irene Sutton Jan van Schaik Sarah & Ted Watts	The Alderman Emma Anderson Kerryn & Gary Anderson Ruth Bain Andrew Benjamin Claire Beynon Bialik College Maryann & Michael Brash Angela Brennan Janet Broughton Judy Buchan Robert Buckingham Belinda Buckley Dominique Burgoine Cantilever Interiors John & Christine Chamberlain Fiona Clyne Rebecca Coates Jeni Cooper Madeleine Coulombe Julia Cox Virgina Dahlenburg Daskysdalimit Pty Ltd Suzanne Dance Diana Devlin Sue Dodd Jennifer Doubell C. Douglas Fiction Film Company Elly & Nathan Fink Jessie French Vida Maria Gaigalas A. Geczy Amy Grevis-James Amanda Hall Katrina Hall Martin Hanns & Eliza Devlin Simon & Jane Hayman Gavin John & Francesca Black Kestin Family Annemarie Kiely Natalie King Allan & Wendy Kozica Cecily Kuoc Natalie Lasek & Martin Matthews Anaya Latter Georgina Lee Damian Lentini Nicholas Lolatgis Deb Lyon John McNamara Tash Mian Gene-Lyn Ngian & Jeffrey Robinson Chelsey O'Brien Alice Pentland Anouska Phizacklea Angela Pye & Jeremy Bakker Toby & Clare Ralph Andrew Rogers Allan & Eva Rutman Ryles & Associates Cathy Scott Katrina Sedgwick	Eugene Shafir Nigel Simpson Sisters Beach House Angela Taylor William Taylor Nga Tran University High School Ravi Vasavan Hon. Heidi Victoria MLA Anna Waldmann The Walls Art Space Rosemary Walls Jervis Ward Peter Westwood Andrew Wilson Brian Zulaikha Anonymous (17)	INAUGURAL ASSOCIATES Michaela Davis Richard Janko Melissa Loughnan Alrick Pagnon Wesley Spencer
Curatorial Intern Stephanie Berlangieri		Justin Paton is a curator and widely published writer from New Zealand. Since 2014 he has been Head Curator of International Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.	Peter Doyle Chair, Finance Committee	GALLERY ATTENDANTS Arini Byng Maya Chakraborty Nicholas Chilvers Dean de Landre Lucy Mactier Sean Miles Lauren Ravi Ella Shi Jacqueline Stojanovic Hana Vasak	LEGEND Tania & Sam Brougham J. Andrew Cook Vivien & Graham Knowles Jane Morley				
ACCA installation team Beau Emmett Patrick O'Brien Ned Needham Simon McGuinness Brian Scales SimoneTops Danae Valenza		Quentin Sprague is a writer and curator based in Melbourne.			CHAMPION Danielle & Daniel Besen Foundation Marc Besen AC & Eva Besen AO Morena Buffon & Santo Cilauro John Denton & Susan Cohn Peter & Leila Doyle Anna Schwartz & Morry Schwartz AO Michael Schwarz & David Clouston Robyn & Ross Wilson				
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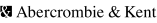
  
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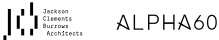
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