

Room 1 – SIGNS

In this first gallery, an encyclopaedic grouping of small needle-point works made over the past decade attest to Paul Yore's honouring of labour-intensive craft and decorative art practices. Emblazoned with slogan-like texts, set within rainbow-coloured compositions and geometries, these works introduce the key role of language and linguistic play in his practice. Collected together these needlepoints establish a loaded lexicon or vocabulary of terms and signifiers related to art, politics, gender and sexuality, as well as the moralising and evangelical tenor of religion and advertising.

Harking back to gendered and domestic labour of the Victorian era, the embrace of slow craft by the Arts and Craft movement, as well as more recent art and social movements – such as the deployment of textiles, embroidery and consciousness-raising by feminist and queer artists – Yore's textiles embrace both ornament and agit-prop, where politics, decoration and desire sit side by side.

These small, intimately scaled needlepoints are reminiscent of traditional needlework samplers, as catalogue essayist Helen Hughes notes, and also recall the rainbow aphorisms of queer artist and activist David McDiarmid a century later:

Unlike McDiarmid's witticisms, however, the phrases that Yore selects to embroider are citational – they are not self-expressive but instead feel like quotes selected from the dregs of social media culture. Instead of citing the 'community pillars' of religion and the nuclear family as in Victorian samplers, Yore's phrases speak to the atomisation of contemporary society through platform capitalism.

Room 2 – EMBODIMENT

This salon-display of appliquéd quilts or ‘blankets’, set against a vivid, Rococo-pink backdrop, is thematically organised around the corporeal idea of embodiment. Encompassing a vast array of found materials and re-purposed cultural artefacts, these intricate textiles present complex and candid representations of queer and gender-fluid sexuality, playfully disrupting and complicating normative binaries. Embedded in these found materials are the hidden histories and traces of lives, bodies and labour, with a strong foundation in the idea of the body as a socially determined entity.

In a carefully considered method of assemblage, also informed by the artist’s training in archaeology and anthropology, Paul Yore’s quilts are layered with details and detritus from our everyday lives. The quilts include images of a range of global political, religious and monarchic representatives, and other media celebrities, as commentaries on contemporary Australian and global culture. In the spirit of satirical caricature, these figures stand in for various institutions – the state, the church, monarchy, patriarchy, capitalism and spectacle. Seeing his process of collecting and assembling cultural artefacts and objects ‘as a kind of experimental archaeology, an investigation of the value systems embedded in the materiality of a cultural environment’, Yore’s process of making and unmaking, stitching and unstitching, is delivered with equal measures of commitment and critique, as well as humour and irony, in beguiling, traditional, homespun forms that implicate the viewer in complex and, at times, troubling weavings of social norms, values and ideologies.

Room 3 – MANIFESTO

Paul Yore's graphic works extend from preparatory drawings, sketches, collages and texts to large scale banner-like mixed-media textiles and appliqués which, collected here in a room painted red to signify art's radical potential, might collectively be understood as a kind of 'manifesto'.

Yore's work embraces a rich and potent lineage, from the influence of Rococo – the 18th century art movement and style which conspired against the classical grandeur and symmetry of the Baroque, and the strict regulations of church and state – to 20th century movements and strategies informed by Dada and agit-prop, punk, camp, queercore and drag performance.

Central to the installation are three large triangular-shaped textile pendants, encompassing found and reclaimed fabrics, sequins, buttons and beads. Deploying the visual language of protest, informed by Yore's immersion in political activism, the suspended banners also evoke the tradition of hand-sewn suffragette and trade union banners, as powerful symbols of collective identity and representation. Their wedge-shaped form also references the pink triangle, a symbol deployed by the Nazi regime in its persecution of gay people during the Holocaust, and subsequently reclaimed by LGBTQI+ activists as a memorial symbol of pride and solidarity against oppression.

Decoration and kitsch play an equally political role in Yore's program, speaking to a sense of cultural decadence and material excess, as well as camp performativity, against decorum. As the artist notes:

Decoration also relates to queer performativity, via drag culture, wherein the exaggerated use of sequins and

rhinestones mimic and mock upper-class aspirations and gender norms. Collage, mosaics, junk assemblage and quilting all have a common strategic rationale, the assembling of a new, albeit illusory, whole from remnants or pieces of the 'real' world. In some ways I feel these forms, iterated through ceaseless embellishment, describe something of the surface and texture of forms under Late Capitalism: shimmering, illuminated, fragmentary.

Room 4 – HORIZON

The idea of the Horizon suggests a space or threshold which is visible, but remains in the distance, as a place of hope, queer futurity and world-making. Set within a solemn, mystical space painted an ecclesiastical purple, large-scale appliquéd quilt works conceptually employ the panoramic format of landscape and history painting. Playing up to the grandiose historicism of European and colonial painting traditions, while undercutting their authoritative, heroic claims to ‘the real’, these works collectively appeal to a camp, playful approach to materials.

A series of hybrid human and phallic sculptural forms – soft, stuffed and sewn – are tenderly composed from a humble, devalued materiality which gives voice to that which is vulnerable, marginal and discarded, whilst also positing ambiguity and indeterminacy as generative sites of queerness. As catalogue essayist Daniel Fountain observes:

Yore imagines spaces and places in which normative ideas of gender and sexual identity are disrupted, fragmented, and are inherently ‘messy’ (in the best way possible). The crown, the state, and the church are all institutions of power and knowledge that Yore dismisses with a campy swish of the (limp) wrist. In their ruin, Yore builds a new queer world, or rather multiple queer worlds, where new ways of living, thriving, and desiring are made manifest.

Room 5 – WORD MADE FLESH

A new commission made for the exhibition, *WORD MADE FLESH* is conceived as an architecturally scaled *gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, anarchically composed from makeshift, prefabricated structures – a daunting tower of LED and video screens, emblazoned with information and advertising; an illuminated geodesic dome clad in textiles and painted slogans; and a mosaic encrusted hearse. The congregation of architectural forms is set within a tiled, polychromatic floor which frames a kaleidoscopic assemblage of illuminated junk and kinetic sculptures, water fountains, mannequins and vending machines, barbed wire and temporary fencing.

The immersive, carnivalesque atmosphere is heightened by video works featuring cacophonous montages of incongruous found images, animated GIFs, found videos, 3D animation and texts stuck in endless loops. It is further amplified by the discordant clanging and chiming of bells, organs, tambourines and xylophones, and original music created on GarageBand, creating a pulsing, riotous, ambient musicality – a mystical mix of new age music, experimental sound and ‘bad gay techno’.

WORD MADE FLESH 2022

mixed media installation comprising plastic flooring system, hearse, geodesic dome, industrial shelving system, DVD players, programmed LED scrollers, LED light stripping, LED neon light, video files, found images, animated GIFs, found and printed PVC banners, cardboard, wire mesh, reflective wall insulation, mirrored Perspex, mannequins, plinths, vending machine, taxidermied fawn, temporary fencing, barbed wire, corflute signs, reclaimed timber, tree branches, driftwood, pine wood, MDF, chipboard, found wooden crates, nuts, bolts, screws, nails, tacks, upholstery pins, hooks, eyelets, cable-ties, springs, electrical tape, gaffer tape, rope, chain, wool, cotton thread, string, twine, liquid

nails, mistinted house paint, acrylic, enamel, resin, nail-polish, found crocheted blankets, wigs, fabric remnants, used clothing, fringing, fairy lights, motorised disco ball, turntables, monitors, extension cords, power boards, water, found text, quotations, tyres, haybales, toilet paper, canned baked beans, water bottles, plastic tables, dildos, bicycle wheel, milk-crates, plastic play pool, aquarium water pumps, PVC piping, garden irrigation connections, toy xylophones, toy bells, toy tambourines, toy organs, metal bowls, feathers, stones, markers, pencils, plastic flowers, plastic toys, seashells, bottletops, sea-glass, found fragments of plastic, banksia pods, plastic beads, glass beds, wooden beads, sequins, rhinestones, glitter, second-hand and

Yore has noted:

The conceptual germ of the new commission is the deconstructive logic of collage, centring on an endless dismantling and reconfiguring, a dually destructive-creative act in which a great diversity of disparate waste and found materials are brought together in uneasy connection. The work mimics the expansive, proliferation of excess materiality and information that form the conditions of the post-industrial information age, in which a seemingly endless network of undifferentiated images, forms and objects foreground an increasingly dissociated and alienated existence.

Informed by Paul Yore’s interest in ‘psychedelic art and literature, naïve and folk art, vernacular architecture and visionary environments’, the work deploys a vocabulary of pathological excess, manifest in hoarded piles of rubbish, obsessive collections of toys and figurines, and packaging decorating labyrinthine structures in an erotically charged free association. Conceived as a queer alternative reality, erected from the wasteland of the Anthropocene, the installation proceeds, as Paul Yore suggests, ‘according to an auto-catalytic logic which reimagines the marginal human subject as embedded within the processes of sexual becoming, history, politics, institutional power, and capitalist modes of production’.

broken jewellery, smashed mirror fragments, glass tiles, broken crockery, aluminium cans, miscellaneous found objects ambient music and sound, and original music created on GarageBand
602.5 x 1938.5 x 717.5 cm (overall)
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