

As the first collaborative exhibition by Sydney-based artists Melody Willis and Vanila Netto, *Soft Openings* combined painting, drawing, installation and sculpture, and united the artists' interests in architecture, design and urbanism. The exhibition's title referenced a generic marketing term, and described a time when a new product or service is made available to the public, without having been officially launched or finalised. Thus, the soft opening provided the space for experimentation and risk, and allowed the possibility of failure within the usually-rigid structures of consumer capitalism. Both Willis and Netto have played with these ideas, reconfiguring familiar imagery and materials from contemporary architecture, product design and environmental structures into painting and drawing-based installations which freed them of their function and their dependence on marketing and consumerist logic. In this way, *Soft Openings* proposed a more open approach to the materials which surround us, and their transformative and dynamic potential within our lives. Vanila Netto completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the College of Fine Arts, Sydney, in 2001. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Cushion - Do Not Crush Insulation*, Sherman Galleries, Sydney 2004; *The Citygroup Private Bank Photographic Portrait Prize*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney 2005; *2004: Australian Culture Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 2004; and *Mix-Ed: Diverse Practice and Geography*, Sydney 2004. Netto had received numerous awards and scholarships, and was recently awarded the Moya Dyring Studio Residency at the Cite International des Artes, Paris. Melody Willis completed a Master of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts, Sydney, in 2003. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Now or Never*, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney 2003 and *Arcadia*, Kudos Gallery, Sydney 2002. Recent group exhibitions include *Chewing the Slacks*, Phatspace, Sydney 2004; *Helen Lempiere Traveling Scholarship*, Artspace, Sydney 2004; and *The History of Things to Come*, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney 2002. Willis is a member of the Imperial Slacks Collective and has received numerous grants and residencies.

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