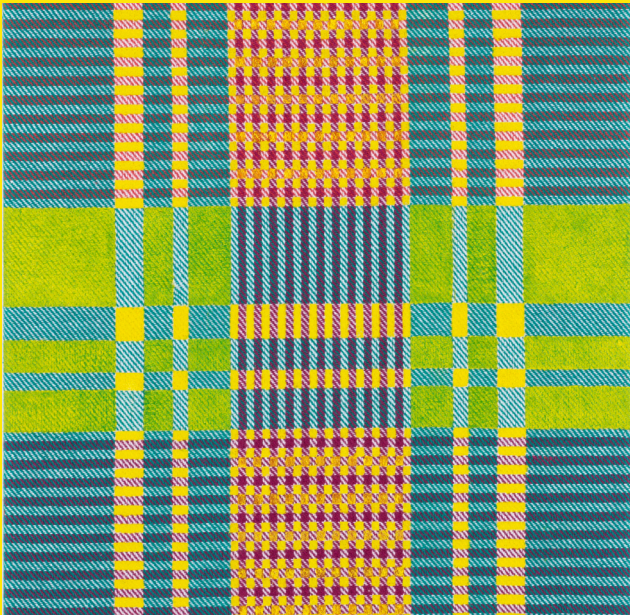


Rituals and Methods

10 November to 14 December 2023

Curated by Rhonda Davis and Lisa Jones



Lynne Eastaway
Nicole Ellis
Pollyxenia Joannou



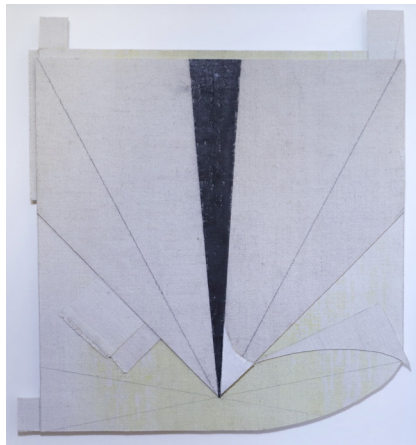
The everything of the everyday

Art permits you to accept illogical immediacy, and in doing so releases you from chasing after the distant and the idea. When this occurs, the effect is exalting.
– Fairfield Porter, 1964

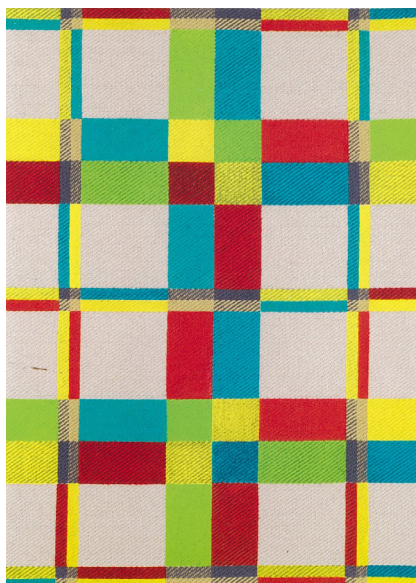
Rituals and Methods brings together the works of Lynne Eastaway, Nicole Ellis and Pollyxenia Joannou, established artists who share the ritualisation of what it is to layer, to fold, to disassemble and reassemble in making artworks that distil the experiences and sensations of their interactions with the world.

At various points the rituals and methods adopted by each artist intertwine in colour, pattern, form, tone and temperament. Their works show abstraction that lends meaning to the artists' encounters of history, memory, place, family and home, and that sets their works apart from formalist abstraction.

This abstraction is partly intuitive rather than tightly controlled, subjective rather than totally non-objective and reductive, poetic rather than pure abstraction. These three artists have upturned the legacies of modernism, their practices effected by the blended aspects of public and personal histories and sociocultural and political spheres of contemporary life and society. The artists share a vision that is not necessarily utopian but based on reality, snared by imperfections, chance elements, the erasures, the broken and the unruly. The rituals and methods that underpin each artist within this exhibition seek out a spatiality that lends a more embodied, personal response to the history of abstraction, and "the effect is exalting".



Lynne Eastaway *Triangle No 3*, 2023, laminated linen, gouache and graphite, 43 x 42 cm



Nicole Ellis *Double-Check 1*, 2017, acrylic paint on fabric, 77.5 x 62 cm

Lynne Eastaway experienced a breakthrough in her practice in 1991 after visiting an ancient Egyptian artefact exhibition at the Met (Metropolitan Museum of Art) in New York. The idea that cloth was permeated with a palimpsest of histories – a conduit for expressing ideas – channelled Eastaway into a new direction. To make those expressions tangible, she cites the work of artist Dorothea Rockburne, whose *Egyptian Painting* series uses 'layered folds', and the idea of the small cut-out, which would become centralised within Eastaway's abstract paintings.

In the spirit of production, Eastaway used offcuts, and left over canvas to make anew, a complex patterning of enfolding, enmeshing and layering that transposes into three-dimensional works as we see in the Triangle series. The flatness of cloth is harmoniously turned into a textured and tactile surface. The triangles advance in rhythmic motion. Eastaway's meditative act of folding encompasses seams without visible stitching. The stains, marks, those imperfections we prefer to dismiss, become part of the fabric's memories and histories – a cerebral process of containment, an expression of time and place. Using the medium of laminated canvas emphasises its materiality, declaring a narrative substance. Eastaway has no limitations in her practice but explores the everything of the everyday.



Folded blue and earth red, 2015-16, acrylic gouache on Belgium linen on timber box, size variable

Nicole Ellis's practice is an alchemy of processes. Her studio is filled with the visible selection of woven fabrics sourced and found, organised and overlaid into groupings, waiting to be reordered and manifestly structured following the artist's conceptual vision. Ellis metaphorically works 'over the top of the fabric' injecting life back into it.

“The method I use with different textiles and canvas is one of using acrylic paint and acrylic mediums to adhere the different surfaces together, later pulling apart to reveal different marks and traces from the dyes and mediums used to adhere the surfaces. It is a layered result that can include tears or mends in the linen, and one that brings activity and life into the works.”¹

The optimum value of shading is paramount to bringing out the colours and textural qualities of the fabrics. Ellis reclaims the textured feel and look of weaving, simulated in her works through complex patterning, colour combinations and lines that collectively furnish the synergies between the decorative arts and abstraction. Ellis’s salutary and vibrant combines extend the parameters of geometric modernism, echoing the work of modernists H  l  ne Henry (1891-1965) and Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) in the brilliancy of textile design.

Meditations on colour, line and space, the *Horizontal* series (2022) is not a literal interpretation of the horizontal line, but constructed as a permutation, a levitation that can be felt, seen or known. Ellis expresses a temporal flow that surrenders into the sacred realms of the geometric sublime.

Pollyxenia Joannou’s practice focuses on the architectural indices of the urban landscape and how we perceive those renderings through abstraction. The mesmerising effects and complexities intrinsic to urban spaces, the essence of the inner and outer constructions often overlooked, Joannou extracts to reemploy its matrix of colour, line and shape. She focuses on the stillness, the quietness married within the folds of darkness and light. “I seek in my work a quiet corner. The work provides a pause or resting place before moving on. I try and achieve this through colour palette, a balance of aesthetics via shapes, lines, repetition and materiality.”²

In Joannou’s *Figure in the Horizon* series (2020-21), a cloaked silhouetted figure in a brown coat stands looking beyond the horizon line with a ladder painted in stark white lines. The interaction and flatness of the black and orange demarcating the horizon line and foreground slices through the picture plane. As the series progresses, the ladder elapses into variations of lines and crosses that interrupt at all different angles, playing on the mathematical ambiguities of geometric abstraction. The figure is reoriented and eventually subsides into the darkness amid the equations that parallel with formalist abstraction. Joannou questions the validity of understanding abstraction without symbolism or meaning; she upturns that legacy to present us with an open-ended narrative, sharpening and expanding the lengths of abstraction.

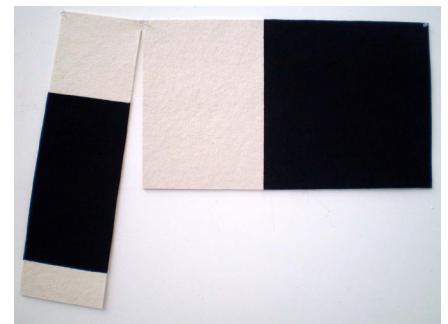
The crossovers and overlaps between the practices of Lynne Eastaway, Nicole Ellis and Pollyxenia Joannou point to an interiorisation of life pertaining to the intangible histories and memories embedded within the ordinary, the everyday lives to be retold, re-examined. They share an affinity for the materiality of the fabric they work with; the formal qualities of colour, line and patterning; the visceral beauty; and the ritualisation of the fold and the line that have no beginning and no end.

Rhonda Davis 2023

Senior curator at the Macquarie University Art Gallery



Nicole Ellis *Horizontal* (Red, Red), 2022, fabric and acrylic paint, 154 x 112 cm



Pollyxenia Joannou *Black Acrylic Split*, 2014, acrylic on felt, 85 x 104 cm



Pollyxenia Joannou *Figure in the Horizon 2*, 2021, oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm

¹Anna Johnson, ‘Cut and paste’, *Nicole Ellis Fabrications*, Drill Hall Gallery ANU, Canberra, 2021, p 7.

²Nick Vickers, ‘Vacant possession’, www.cbdgallery.com.au/vacantpossession, accessed 16 October 2023.



Lynne Eastaway in her studio. Photo: Richard Glover

Eastaway studied at The National Art School, Sydney before completing her Master of Fine Art (research) at UNSW. She has held solo exhibitions across Australia since 1978, having first exhibited with Sydney's historically renowned Gallery A. Eastaway had long lasting impact as an artist educator at the National Art School. www.lynneeastaway.com



Nicole Ellis in her studio. Photo: Hamish Ta-Me

For more than 30 years Nicole Ellis has worked with found materials and colour in her dedicated enquiry in material and surface. Born in Adelaide, Ellis studied at the South Australian School of Art and the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, where she received a Master of Fine Arts, in 1983. Nicole Ellis is represented by Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney www.nicoleellis.com.au



Pollyxenia Joannou in her studio.
Photo: Richard Glover

Pollyxenia Joannou is a widely experienced artist and for more than 30 years has been a teacher of experimental drawing at the National Art School. She is known for her three dimensional and felt works in which drawing is expanded and reconceptualised. Joannou's qualifications include an MA in Communication Design from Central Saint Martins in London, UK, and a BA in Visual Arts from the College of Fine Arts (UNSW), Sydney, Australia. www.pollyxenia.com

Images cover page:

Top: Nicole Ellis *Double-Check 2*, 2017, acrylic paint on fabric, 68 x 62 cm

Bottom left: Lynne Eastaway *Folded blue and earth red*, 2015-16, acrylic gouache on Belgium linen on timber box, size variable

Bottom right: Pollyxenia Joannou *Figure in the Horizon 1*, 2021, oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm



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