

SENTIENT VISIBILITY

an exploration of traces

July 31 to August 18 2018

GRACE COSSINGTON SMITH GALLERY

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an exploration of traces

ROX DE LUCA

ELLA DREYFUS

ANNELIES JAHN

POLLYXENIA JOANNOU

ANITA LARKIN

GILLIAN LAVERY

MELINDA LE GUAY

ANNE LEVITCH

MOLLIE RICE

INTRODUCTION

*'A scar is the sign, not of a past wound,
but of 'the present fact of having been wounded'.*

*Gilles Deleuze**

This exhibition brings together work from emerging, mid-career and established artists who have sought ways to engage with the sentient consciousness of the immediate and distant past held within the visible present. The works explore temporality, identity and memory, on a sensory level. They capture moments in time, forsaking direct representation for symbolic visual language.

Deleuze's reading of difference, enables us to view the present in a broader context, to include a past that exists in the present. The 'trace' of experience, existence, use, event or action, persists.

The process of transformation is the constant journey between two changing states. The former existing within the latter. The artists here present visual cues, momentary framings, merely as evidentiary markers of fluidity in temporality, identity and memory.

There are visual recordings and erasures of sensory pasts, maps of invisible realms, reformings of obsolescent objects, three dimensional shadows of nonexistent forms, flattened visions, and captured moments. Here, the immaterial is equal to the material, both serving as springboards into internal worlds.

Through a line, object, stitch, fold, reflection, or imprint, the works provide a framework to engage the viewer as co-creator, in completing a backstory.

ANNE LEVITCH
Curator

** Difference and Repetition 1968*

TRACE

I entered the old boarding house after an age of absence. Far from daily thought, there had been years for the bitter and the sweet memories to fade. And yet, in the corners, pushed to the very edges of remembrance, traces remained. Among the thickly painted timbers, an image of beds and wardrobes, lined up. Like clouds under the high ceilings, drifted snatches of weekend laughter, of swallowed homesickness. Elsewhere, the passing scent of hidden biscuits and silly secrets. Despite the slick layers of fresh paint, whiteness and purposefulness of the gallery, something of the past remained – residue of another time, a different state, an altered self.

“So when this strange thing happened – when these new memories suddenly came upon me – it was as if, for that moment, time had been placed in reverse. As if, for that moment, the river ran upstream.”ⁱ

The artists of *Sentient Visibility* have created works that reference, in various ways, the sentient capacities of human experience – offering a perceptual platform for viewers to explore, construct and conflate temporality, identity and memory. Intriguingly, it was initially conceived as *an exhibition of traces in various forms, in which objects or images act as forms of memory.*ⁱⁱ This conception of non-linear, layered and interactive time within contemporary art has been termed a temporal aesthetic, in which the present actively holds the past.ⁱⁱⁱ The curation throughout the gallery rooms, with their traces of remnant domesticity (once a home, then a boarding house, now a gallery) is a palimpsest, lending itself to the suggestion of transitional temporal states. As such it relies on engaged viewing and open perception. Sentience, to feel, is distinct from thought and analysis, and these works share formal qualities that gently coax and stir the senses. Forms are elusive, light, soft and nebulous. A little hazy around the edges, colour is diluted, greyed or muted; yet there is an unmistakable intimacy of materiality – often manifested as traces of body or presence – conveying indeterminacy and in-between-ness. All is not as it seems.

The indistinct and the amorphous are given tentative form in Melinda Le Guay's works. Vessels, containers or just their shadowy approximations are suggested, the sheer fabric forms themselves recalling soft line drawings – mere mimesis of functional form. The promise of a not quite realised form is a means of challenging our expectations of familiar objects, by endowing them with a metaphorical capacity. Soft form as a commentary on things that are not wholly materialised is

ⁱ Julian Barnes (2011) *The Sense of an Ending*. London; Jonathan Cape, 122.

ⁱⁱ In discussion with the curator, Anne Levitch.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The philosophy of Michel Serres and Gilles Deleuze as developed by Timothy Barker in 'Recomposing the Digital Present' in Contemporaneity Vol. 1 (2011) <http://contemporaneity.pitt.edu/>*

also realised in the work of Anita Larkin. A knife, a gun, a hammer and other 'hard' things, are recreated in textiles and ceramics as non-functional 'soft' things. Separated from their former use, they are enfeebled; laid out softly and quietly on a mattress-topped table.

Houses as forms connote domestic shelter and comfort. A chair form is designed to cradle a seated body off the ground. Wool felt, with all its history of hand making is heavy with the promise of warmth. Put together in the work of Pollyxenia Joannou, the reductive image, the geometric presentation and the material combine to convey universalities, open to translation as security ... or suffocation, comfort ... or pain, and an identity that is unique or incriminatory. Also working to combine the reductive and the geometric with the haptic is the work of Annelies Jahn. Elegant and clear forms, whether crystalline boxes encasing past measures or reflective surfaces act as mementos. The trophies seen within are coiled and compressed memories; preserved tape delineating past drawings, even the measure of the artist herself.

Charcoal drawing, mapping and handwriting are elemental human means of making sense of the unknown, marking signs of order and certainty. The works of Gillian Lavery and Mollie Rice present objects literally drawn from their own experiences. Lavery's work explores traumatic memory, and in it we experience a singular event; a fire as a memory-image, conveyed in charcoal and fragments from that fire. Rice's rolled scrolls record presently inaccessible field journeys, every change of bodily direction a tremor in the recorded score. Tremor is echoed in the fragile looping lines of Ella Dreyfus' photographic work, a map of personal histories. Here, the media of magnification documents the wavering hand, the assertion of name, the human pulse visibly trembling the hands of unseen signatories.

Rox De Luca is a beachcomber of discarded plastics. Resembling ceremonial and natural forms, her work is a reverent re-construction of the disposed detritus of everyday life, collapsing the consumption of the past into an altarpiece for now, and in that process posing a question for the future. Will the cycle continue? Time, or eternity is often represented by a circle; a snake swallowing its own tail. Circular motion as rhythmic reverie is evoked by the work of Anne Levitch. In a continuously looping video of a paint pour, action, materials and the work itself dissolve into a spinning vortex of colour. Looking into the mesmerising liquid action we occupy this aesthetic temporality – a river or lake in which memory, time and self are in a state of fluidity.

LISA SHARP (PANG)

Artist, writer and boarding alumna of Abbotsleigh

ROX DE LUCA

Every beach on the planet, sadly, is adjusting fragment by fragment to the deluge of plastic waste that our species generates daily. My current practice reflects my interest in this serious global issue and involves garlands and other assemblages made from weather-worn plastics sourced primarily from my local and the nation's most famous beach, Bondi Beach. Sometimes plastics are accessed from other sources too, for example, tamper-proof aviation seals or the thread-like remnants left by the drilling process. These plastics also find their way into the garlands.

The process of collecting and sorting the plastics by colour and size is fastidious, as is threading the components onto strings of wire like a jeweller. When completed, these constructions stand in stark contrast to the ease of disposability associated with the materials that arrive on the shoreline or accumulate as landfill, evidence of our collective human neglect and destruction of the environment around us.

www.elladreyfus.com
www.elladreyfus.gallery

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rox De Luca'.

Age and Consent #1 from
Age and Consent 1-5, 1999-2018
iris print on rag paper,
84.1 x 118.9cm

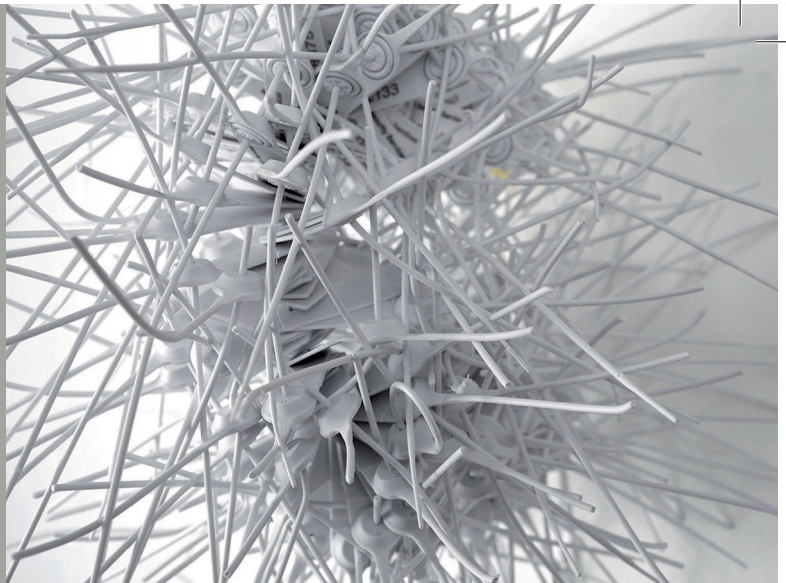
ANNELIES JAHN

In *Sentient Visibility* a shifting surface of reflective mylar mirrors and distorts its surroundings with moments of clarity and uncertainty. The thinness of the material allows it to interact with the movement of people and air. It holds the marks of these encounters. It is accompanied by the soft droning sound of a plane, which is familiar yet without context. This work may be seen to reflect the uncertainty and flux of memory, place, life and self.

Inside the installation is a resting measure, taking its length from my height. Space is measured in a personal context, not by a universal abstract – a measure of habitation. The smaller works, “compressed measures”, were made during the de-installation of wall drawings – diagrammatic images of a resting measure. As compressions of larger space, their mutability explores ideas on the nature of space itself. They also serve as memories of the previous temporary work.

www.roxdeluca.com

Untitled, 2018
Singapore/aviation seals,
acrylic
50 x 45 x 30cm
Photography Ian Hobbs Media



ELLA DREYFUS

How we write is intrinsically connected to what we write and why. When our signature is required, we take extra care; or we used to when signatures were a unique method of declaring our identity and authenticity. As writing becomes less a task of the hand and is more often done with a keyboard, a profound transformation takes place and loss is inevitable.

When I photographed old, infirm people in the Aged Care Unit of Liverpool Hospital in Sydney, I was required to gain their written consent. With great care and to the best of their ability, they tried to complete what seemed like a momentous task – signing their own names. I watched this last vestige of pride in knowing one's name, fading and being taken out of their hands. I recognised these signatures as exquisite vestiges bestowing agency and respect to those on the precipice of death.

Age and Consent was first exhibited at Stills Gallery, Sydney, 1999

instagram @anneliesjahn

Untitled (mylar piece), 2016
installation view (detail)
mylar, aluminium tubes + sound
dimensions variable
Photograph by Robin Hearfield



POLLYXENIA JOANNOU

My work revolves around an evolution of various autobiographical narratives, which has always spoken of absence, impressions, traces and memory. The work and process is a translation of my history and those of my parents creating a new history far from their culture and roots.

In the instance of the work entitled "Safe", I have made a house profile set on castors and constructed from layers of white felt laid one upon another (the layering of time). The warmth and tactility of the felt forms a structure that is both soft and tough. This mobile home serves as a stimulus for thinking about what we mean by the security and permanence of the 'home'.

The best description I can give about my process is through the following few words:
*To arrive, far from what is familiar, bringing what is familiar,
The past, the future the unknown, the hybrid.*



www.anitalarkin.com

The bridge between you and me, 2018
(detail)
collected objects, silk
250 x 170 x 60cm
Courtesy of Defiance Gallery
47 Enmore Rd, Newtown.
lauren@defiancegallery.com

GILLIAN LAVERY

My practice sits at an intersection between drawing and contemporary textiles with an emphasis on materiality and repetitive acts of making. The two series in this exhibition are part of a larger body of work created following a fire that destroyed my home, my studio and previous artwork.

Material remains of the event are physically embedded within the textile samplers held to the linen with map-like markings. These pocket-sized pieces record time spent reimagining the event in subsequent months. The charcoal drawings trace a half-stitched piece of silk falling into blackness. They allude to the traces left by traumatic experiences.

Through repetitive mark-making: stitching, drawing and erasure; these works mark time and attention and the process of coming to understand what art practice means if the material work no longer exists.

www.pollyxenia.com

Safe, 2012
5mm felt, wood, castors, cotton
120 x 70 x 160cm



ANITA LARKIN

Used objects are witnesses. They are a trace of human experience, a point of contact from the past to the present. Portals, collected objects can be direct triggers for a series of associative memories.

My art practice focuses on collected objects with a strong history of human use. These functional objects can become imbued over time with a sense of otherness, with a sense of relationship to the human body. They show marks of wear and tear, and as sculpture they also bear evidence of my making process. There is thus an intermingling of history and bodies. The re-making of objects using other materials like bronze, porcelain, felt and silk, conjures forth responses to the object that are no longer tied to the expectation of practical function. A ghost is created. It is both absence and presence of the object, evoking associations of loss and love, disconnection and belonging.

www.gillianlavery.com

falling 6, 2016
(detail)
charcoal on archival paper,
56x76cm
Photograph by Felicity Jenkins



MELINDA LE GUAY

Using a pared back vocabulary of lines, common materials, and skills often associated with domesticity and home crafts, my art-making has become less about the finished object and more about the process, the act of "getting there" rather than "arriving". As I focus on, or move from one activity to another in my domestic realm, I am always gathering and processing materials to do with my practice; everyday "stuff" provides a lot of matter I use in my art-making. The labour intensive processes I employ – gathering, cleaning, drying, pressing, sorting and ordering – are concurrently time consuming, contemplative and compelling. In a culture where continuous change, speed and efficiency signify progress and success, slowness has become synonymous with time wasted. My work is an ongoing attempt to document and trace the passing of time.

Whether drawn, stitched, folded, wound or unravelled, constructed lines continually threaten to defy order, requiring constant correction and adjustment.



www.annelevitch.com.au

Obscura, 2017
(installation detail)
84 x 30 x 30cm
wood, glass, acetate, video

MOLLIE RICE

My work crosses both site and studio in explorations of human spatiality and the contemporary city with a focus on shifting sensations of place. *Field Studies* and *Field Drawings* #10 #11 and #12 are part of a larger mapping exercise in which I engaged with sites in Botany, Sydney for my recently completed Master of Fine Art. This involved performing place through a process of field-working that integrates walking, active listening, sounding and drawing.

In *Field Studies*, the mark making expresses a direct responsiveness to the process of active listening on site. Juxtaposed to this, the *Field Drawings* #10 #11 and #12 employ processes of fragmenting, reproducing, removing and repetition in the studio translations of the direct experiences with site. By manifesting intersections between the visible and the audible, the work mediates between literal and abstract levels of physical and sensory perceptions of place.

www.mayspace.com.au

Dark Matter IV, 2014
(detail)
deconstructed organza
71 x 61 x 13cm variable
Courtesy MAY SPACE
409b George Street,
Waterloo NSW 2017
www.mayspace.com.au



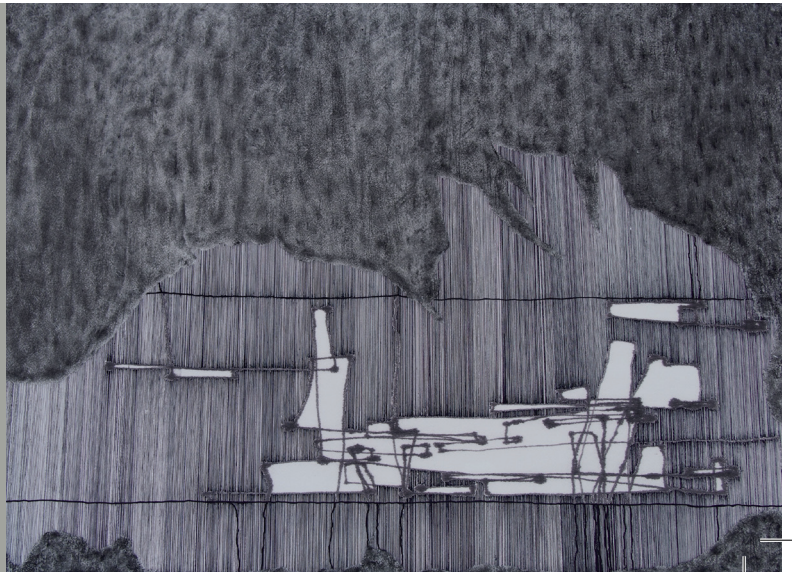
ANNE LEVITCH

Rotating around the life force as centrepiece, my works exhibited here explore the generation of life as well as the erasure of generational traces. Life is explored in the context of temporal fluidity. We make marks, establish an identity and create memories. However, while events, tasks and processes consume our thoughts and actions, they are merely moments that come to be and pass. Constant transformation takes us from one state, one moment, one experience to the next. Traces of the past remain as influence on our experience of the present.

The linear temporal axis is here extended and looped becoming circular to explore the cycling of mark making and erasure. Layering is an important formal element in the exploration of cyclical regeneration.

The circular viewing ports in these works, serve as a lens that facilitates this sentient vision, within the frame of a static completed circle, a singular cycle.....finitude.

Field Drawing #10,
Botany 2017
digital print, ink and charcoal
on torn cotton rag
94 x 69.4cm





GALLERY HOURS: Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm Saturday 9am-4pm
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