



Grace Cossington Smith art award 2015

National art award supporting
contemporary Australian artists



Exhibition of finalists 7 November to 5 December 2015



Grace Cossington Smith (1892–1984)
The Curve of the Bridge, 1929–30
Pencil and pastel on paper
Collection of Abbotsleigh
Courtesy the estate of Grace Cossington Smith



Grace Cossington Smith
Calf in the Landscape
Oil on paperboard
Collection of Abbotsleigh
Courtesy the estate of Grace Cossington Smith

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Selection panel: by Anneke Jaspers, Assistant Curator Contemporary Art,
Art Gallery NSW and Dr Stephen Little, Head of Painting, National Art School

Judges: Geoffrey Legge, Director, and Damien Minton, Gallery Manager of Watters Gallery

Jake Blaschka
Marinka Bozzec
Penelope Cain
Tamara Dean
Chris Dolman
Sara Freeman
Adrienne Gaha
Erika Gofton
Ryan Hoffmann
Pollyxenia Joannou
Tom Loveday
Janet Parker-Smith
Senye Shen
Mark Titmarsh
Sean Wadey

From the Director

2015 marks the second year of the Grace Cossington Smith art award. Like the gallery itself, the award is developing and finding its place in the art community. The engagement with artists locally and nationally has enabled the art award to become one of the gallery's most significant and popular events and a focus for artists and visitors. The location of the gallery on a school campus allows consistent focus on exhibitions and artworks that provide meaningful experiences and encounters with the visual arts. The artworks we see in the exhibition are produced by highly imaginative individuals who connect to ideas and concepts from which creative and educational experiences can be derived.

Applications were received from 300 Australian artists who were invited to submit two-dimensional works in any media and reflect the theme of *Making Connections*. This year 15 artists have been selected. The winner receives a prize of \$15,000 and the other finalists receive \$1,000 each. The winning work becomes part of the Abbotsleigh Collection, a collection that we hope will grow to provide a wonderful learning resource for students and teachers and a heritage of art for the northern area of Sydney. The winning artist for 2014 was Margaret Loy Pula with her painting *Anatye Bush Potato*.

The GCS art award is indebted to the artists who enter the prize and submit rich and diverse artworks. We admire the talent and passion of each and thank you for contributing to the success of the 2015 art award. Congratulations to all artists selected for exhibition as you have ensured that this event continues to demonstrate the highest standards.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have been involved in making the art award such a significant program for the creative and cultural sector of our region. The encouragement, knowledge and experience of our judges, Geoffrey Legge and Damien Minton, and our selectors, Anneke Jaspers and Stephen Little, have been invaluable. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to them for taking the time out of busy schedules to make the most difficult decisions.

The support from the Abbotsleigh Old Girls Union, the Abbotsleigh Parents Association and Fuji Xerox is also very much appreciated. It is a wonderful recognition that the art award is an important means of contributing to our culture and society, a conduit for artists to progress their art practice and a means for Abbotsleigh to develop a fine art collection that exposes students to creative ideas and practices.

Mary Faith

Director, Grace Cossington Smith Gallery

2014 Grace Cossington Smith art award winner **Margaret Loy Pula**

Margaret paints 'Anatye' or Bush Potato dreaming which, is portrayed using a series of fine, detailed dots.

Her painting is an aerial view of the growth pattern of the plant. The centre cross is the plant. The vines send out tendrils into the soil and this is where the potato (or bush yam) begins to grow. The bush potato vine grows after the rains. The women go out to collect the potato. Once collected, they are cooked in the hot coals of the fire.

This painting is about my culture, my family. That's my father's dreaming. This is from my father's country, that country is called 'Unjangola'. That is north of Utopia, not too far, but really desert country.

Margaret Loy Pula comes from a distinguished artistic family, she is the daughter of well-known Utopian artist Kathleen Petyarre.

2014 judge: Rachel Kent, Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

2014 selectors: artist Janet Laurence and curator Nicholas Tsoutas



Anatye Bush Potato
acrylic on linen
150 x 150
Courtesy Muk Muk Fine Art

From the Headmistress

It is with great pleasure that we celebrate the winning nominations for the 2015 Grace Cossington Smith art award. Each of the chosen finalists has interpreted the theme of *Making Connections* in different ways demonstrating a diversity of creative thought. Grace Cossington Smith made connections with her world through artworks, and this vibrant exhibition serves as a joyful celebration and reminder of this famous local artist and Old Girl of Abbotsleigh. We also celebrate 130 years of artistic pursuit by students of Abbotsleigh this year, which began with our founding Headmistress, Marian Clarke.

Congratulations to all short-listed artists who were chosen to exhibit in this wonderful space. The variety of media and the different interpretations of the theme provide an interesting and thought provoking exhibition. It will be viewed by many visitors over the next month and the works will be integrated into the teaching program to inspire the visual arts students. Teachers, Old Girls and students will enjoy the works at their leisure along with the public.

I would like to thank our selectors, Anneke Jaspers and Dr Stephen Little, who carefully chose the 15 artists on display from 300 entries, and Geoffrey Legge and Damien Minton from Watters Gallery who served as the judges for 2015. We are fortunate to have such highly respected art professionals involved in our Grace Cossington Smith art award exhibition.

About the selectors

Anneke Jaspers is assistant curator, contemporary art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where she worked on the major historical survey *Pop to popism* 2014-15, and has organised numerous exhibitions of new work as part of the AGNSW Contemporary Projects series. Her writing on contemporary art has been published nationally and internationally, and from 2008-11 she was a contributing editor of the Australian experimental arts journal, *Runway*.

Dr Stephen Little is an artist, academic and writer and has lectured in key arts institutions since the early 1990s. These included Goldsmiths College in London, Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Western Sydney Nepean, the Australian Catholic University and Penrith College of TAFE. For many years Stephen worked for private galleries and public art museums in Australia and the UK. Major galleries included the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; White Cube, London; and Lisson Gallery, London.

Stephen is currently Head of Painting at Australia's National Art School in Sydney, and is represented by William Wright Artists Projects.

About the judges

Geoffrey Legge started Watters Gallery in 1964 with Alex Legge and Frank Watters. For more than 50 years Watters Gallery has represented significant artists and forged a formidable reputation for its support and advocacy of the visual arts in Australia. Geoffrey, through his close association and representation of various well known Australian artists, has an extraordinary knowledge of contemporary Australian art practice.

Damien Minton is the Gallery Manager of Watters Gallery. Commencing in Newcastle, NSW, Damien operated his own gallery for 14 years and helped promote the early stages of artists' careers. Starting his journey in the visual arts industry in 1988 coordinating the Bondi Pavilion Community Art Gallery, he then moved on to learn the trade of a commercial art dealer at Ray Hughes Gallery.

I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Director of the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery, Mrs Mary Faith and the Gallery Coordinator Ms Lisa Jones. As we celebrate the second year anniversary of the GCSG, we rejoice in the success of their work. I invite you to enjoy this exhibition and join our community of learners as we share in the artist's concepts of *Making Connections*.

Judith Poole
Headmistress

The Finalists



Obelus 3, 2015

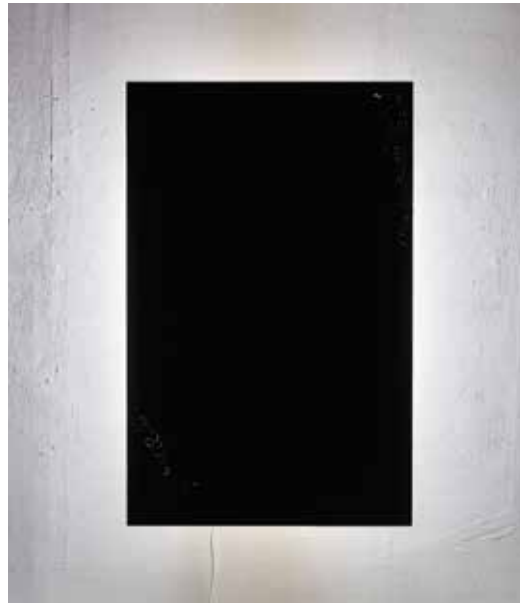
Aluminium composite panel,
timber, fluorescent light, acrylic paint,
steel angles and paper
150 x 100 cm

Exploring connections between art and advertising, my work questions the role that advertising plays within our contemporary society. Completely negating the function of back lighting a transparent advertisement, *Obelus* draws the viewer in to observe a surface that could have once supported an advertisement. Depicting only small traces of characters left on the surface of the aluminium, I intend to present the work only as suggestions of advertisements rather than artworks. Recontextualising the term *Obelus*, a mark used in ancient manuscripts to point out spurious, corrupt, doubtful or superfluous words or passages, the small markings on the work signify a suggestion of an untrustworthy advertisement. Manifesting an entropic vision of advertising, the work presents a form of social, political and economic debris.

rebajas من افس. خصم (Drawing as object 3), 2015

Untreated steel, duratrans print, acrylic,
fluorescent lights, timber
156 x 104 cm

In *rebajas*, cropped image of large scale collages are re-presented in a depository resembling backlit bus stop advertisements, processing advertising imagery through yet another layer of mediation. Being installed irregularly on the floor with exposed wiring and uneven lighting, the work infers a deliberate decommissioned quality. By emphasizing this dysfunctional character, I intend to intervene with technology used in high-end advertising in the same way I exploit the didactic content within printed advertising imagery. Preserving a connection to the original source material, the finished size of the work is that of printed billposters, while the depth and material of the frames replicate those of the bus stop ad shells. Revisiting Wolf Vostell's application of dé-collage to modern technology, this work forges connections between art, life and advertising.



Marinka Bozzec

Grave Fears, 2015

Coloured pencil on paper

97 x 147 cm

14.9 x 21 cm, 40 x 45 cm framed

Melancholy Mystery, 2015

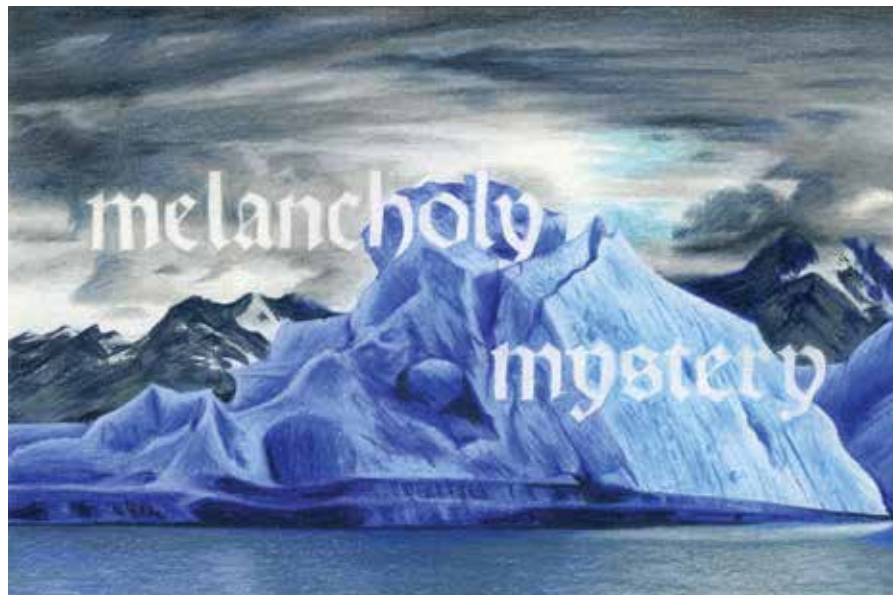
Coloured pencil on paper

97 x 147 cm

14.9 x 21 cm, 40 x 45 cm framed

Meticulously drawn photo realist images are overlaid with found phrases that are isolated from their original context in written and spoken language. In an exacting use of negative space, the text occupies the remaining white of the paper. Like lugubrious postcards, they tell of sublime horrors, timeless and modern.

Represented by William Wright Artists Projects



*View From the Forest Towards the Mountain
(Crown Casino building Site), 2015*

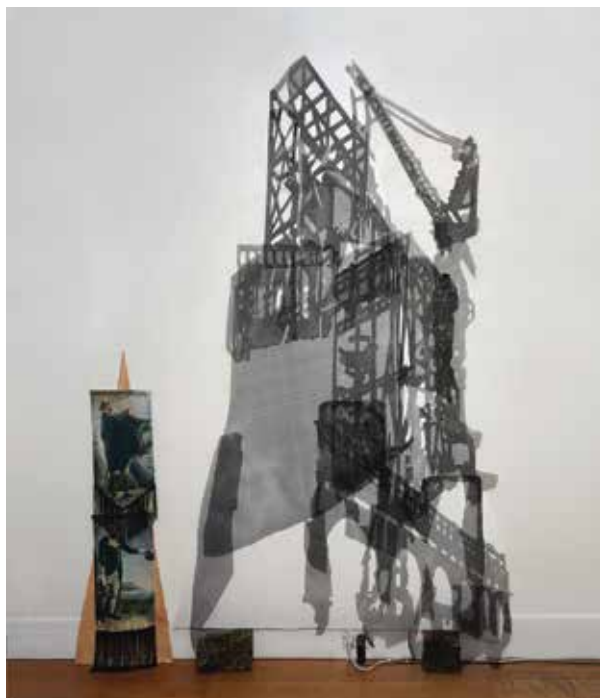
Flyscreen mesh, pins, tape, digital print on fabric,
trimming, coreflute, bricks
200 x 200 cm

View From the Forest Towards the Mountain (Crown Casino building Site) continues an ongoing line of enquiry about landscape and land ownership, focusing on the performance of land ownership and the economics of the landscape. The mountain is provisionally formed from shapes of building works, and the white male figures are from 18th and 19th Century Australian landscape paintings, gesturing discovery and ownership.

Growth Solution #1 Sydney, 2015

Sequins, maps
120 x 175 cm, 132 x 175 cm framed

Growth Solution #1 Sydney is made from maps of Sydney that have been mirrored to create a Rorschach-based reflective form. Flat black sequins are placed on all areas on which there are built structures, then parks, open lands and other undeveloped areas have been cut away from the map. The resultant form is a lace-like structure offering an alternative perspective on the city as it is untethered from the land on which it sits.



Tamara Dean

Cosmos, 2015

Photo media

75 x 100 cm, 85 x 110 cm framed

Catching Moonbeams, 2015

Photo media

75 x 100 cm, 85 x 110 cm framed

My work explores the connection between humans and the natural world and the role of instinct and ritual in our contemporary lives. Natural cycles within time and space, life and death, nature and spirituality contribute to my way of investigating and engaging with the world around me.

Catching Moonbeams and *Cosmos* explore the relationship between humans and the universe, and ways we engage with spirituality through the natural world in contemporary life. The upper-world and underworld within this work is representative of consciousness and the subconscious, dream states and memory. The absence of clothing and the natural setting is designed to symbolise a universal sense of humanity; an acknowledgment that we are indeed a part of nature.

My practice relies on my subjects experiencing and engaging with their environment and emotions. The action of 'going to' and experiencing the location and subsequent ritual is as important as the photographic representation at the end.

Represented by Olsen Irwin Gallery



Chris Dolman

Order Anxiety, 2015

Mixed media and collage on paper
150 x 110 cm, 160 x 120 cm framed

Bigmouth Strikes Again, 2015

Mixed media and collage on paper
150 x 110 cm, 160 x 120 cm framed

Chopsticks spinning in an empty bowl like the hands of time, 2015

Mixed media and collage on paper
150 x 140 cm, 160 x 150 cm framed

My trilogy of food paintings use the visual language of modernism and employ non-traditional self-portraiture to explore the search for self, the uncanny, and the grotesque with an irreverent humour.

Linking print-making with painting, collage and the cut-out, each work also examines the connections we share through the experience and ritual of sitting down to eat.

Order Anxiety is a painting of a restaurant interior exploring the anxiety brought on by too many menu options. *Bigmouth Strikes Again* is a flattened interior of a mouth where images of food hover like animated objects. *Chopsticks spinning in an empty bowl like the hands of time* shows the abstracted restaurant where things are not quite what they seem.

Represented by Galerie pompom



Sara Freeman

Falling in, 2014

Wax and egg tempera on board

140 x 94 cm, 146 x 100 cm framed

I am constantly drawn to stories and myths about weaving; where nets or veils become almost a base element of being. Threads speak of connectedness, webs of life itself. Light, movement, grief, and love seem to me to be rich warps and wefts where something far greater than we can comprehend takes over, shaping and forming us. In this painting, the red spots could be showering petals or drops of blood. The lines are carved with a needle into layers and layers of wax that build up the painting's surface like residues of different stories that life has taken.



Adrienne Gaha

Aisha Kandisha, 2015

Oil paint on linen

153 x 117 cm

This portrait is of *Aisha Kandisha*, a water nymph or 'jinn', who exists in the mythology of the Mahgreb. She is the personification of female beauty, but hides the legs of a camel or goat beneath her robes. Despite some differences in the details, the stories centre on her seduction and possession of men. They are sent mad or, in some versions, devoured. Her realm is water and, in some of the stories, her victims can be released from her spell by performing various water rituals.

There are many aspects of Aisha Kandisha's myth that seem familiar: the Succubus of medieval times, the African Quarnah, Indian Yakshi, European Lilith and Miranda, not to mention the many versions that exist in fairy tales, anime and computer games.

I have taken a 17th Century French beauty for my Aisha and given her the legs of a camel. Her face is indistinct and watery, surrounded by birds, bows and flowers. She could be a reflection.

I am interested in the idea of the familiar and often use well known paintings or imagery as a starting point, but more interesting for me is the way my choices in the act of painting transforms that image.

Represented by Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art



Liminal 2, 2015

Oil on linen

85 x 75 cm

More frightening. More intense. More complicated. More beautiful. More painful. More uncertain. With motherhood, the world becomes intensified in innumerable ways.

My work has become my way of reconciling and understanding the very deep emotional response I have to being a mother, and in particular that liminal state of adolescence. You are acutely aware that you are no longer responsible for just your own wellbeing, but for that of another human. Your anxiety is doubled, your fear is doubled, your guilt is doubled, your uncertainty is doubled, but you inevitably are only really in control of your own self. Your own sense of self is irrevocably altered as your child's sense of self develops. There exists an ever present niggling anxiety and concern for them; a heightened internal fear of being so close yet distant in the same breath. With the constant 'What if...' resounding in your head.

I am really interested in making works that sit somewhat precariously between the beautiful and the ugly. I want the viewer to feel that sense of fear, anxiety, discomfort, disquiet and uneasiness. The work has become a way for me to confront the discomfort both through the image and the process. It has become the nadir, the point of letting go. The mark has become both the conduit and the counsel.



Ryan Hoffmann

Mirage I, 2015

Oil on canvas

117 x 95 cm

Mirage II, 2015

Oil, marble dust, acrylic
and aerosol on linen

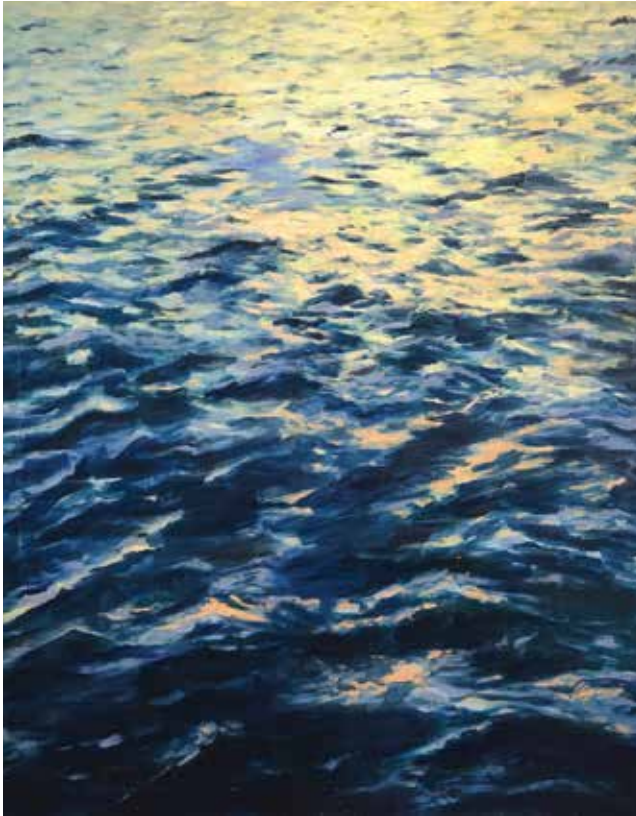
36 x 26 cm

We are in a contemporary moment where a constant flow of digital images is paramount in life. My practice for a long time now has used the digital image as a departure, having focused on the superfluous nature of images, re-contextualising them as a way of keeping painting current.

Painting from the digital image for an extended period of time was a way of rejecting the romanticism of painting; I saw painting as a flat constellation of marks that made up the source image with a defined beginning and end point.

As a departure from this, the two new works made for the GCS art award have been built up over time, the focus of the works is surface and how this can be manipulated to examine the conflict between image and paint, surface and representation.

Represented by Liverpool Street Gallery



Pollyxenia Joannou

Duplicity, 2015

Polymer acrylic on felt
70 x 75 cm

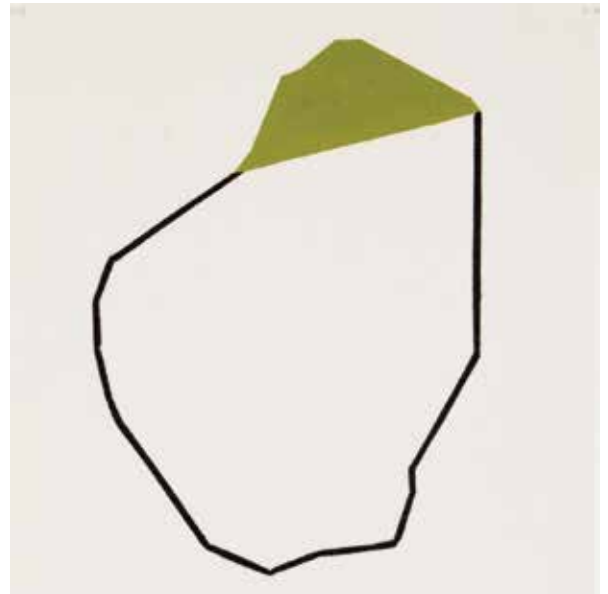
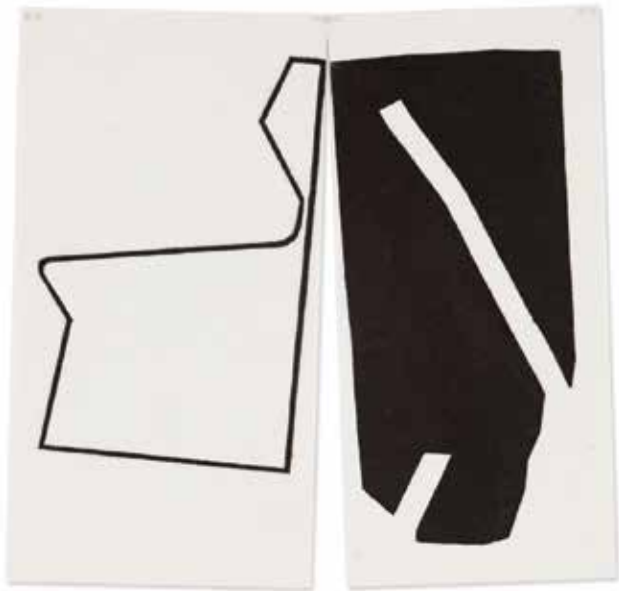
Ring Road, 2015

Polymer acrylic on felt
70 x 70 cm

The works *Duplicity* and *Ring Road* are just two works that are part of an ongoing serial narrative. The narrative itself harks to my notions of a migratory history and their remnant traces that incorporate personal memory; the experience of duality between two cultures and a distant hum or rhythm.

I adhere to a simple aesthetic reducing what I absorb and observe in my urban landscape and life via initial drawn and written notations. These are then further reduced to shapes, textures, line and colour as to reach a place of balance and rest.

My use of felt is a conscious one. Its innate properties possess a sense of tactile safety, memories and traces of a simpler, less complicated world.



Tom Loveday

Blue Mountains Close up, 2015

Acrylic on canvas

107 x 107 cm

Red Square Close up, 2015

Acrylic on canvas

107 x 107 cm

My paintings, *Blue Mountains Close up* and *Red Square Close up*, reduce images within popular imagination to the thinnest possible painted surface – or ‘infrathin’ (Marcel Duchamp). These paintings are close-up versions of much smaller paintings presented, originally exhibited along with fifty other small works, as advice for aliens – specifically to allow aliens access to our culture. The term ‘alien’ means both ‘from space’ and ‘foreign’ and provides a way of addressing difficult ideas, like the ‘other’, in a less academically charged way. The paintings are close ups because they are bigger; one is ‘closer’ to the Blue Mountains or the Red Square to emphasise the reductive aspect of the infrathin.

Represented by Conny Dietzschold Gallery, Sydney.



Janet Parker-Smith

Ordinary, Extraordinary, 2015

Digital print from collage on archival paper

182 x 103 cm, 100 x 120 cm framed

Through the process of collage, different worlds become unified. The anonymous individual with her hybrid parts shows a natural dysfunction as she struggles to perform her task with her moth hands. This work explores the mingling of human and non-human, serving as a reminder of how vulnerable we are to the destructive impact of our own actions.

This work is an extension of my fascination with humans and nature and their boundless capacity for re-invention and rejuvenation. Using the transmutation of humans and animals, morphology and the desolation of our environment, the work explores the human collective's chaotic and purposeless existence in the universe.



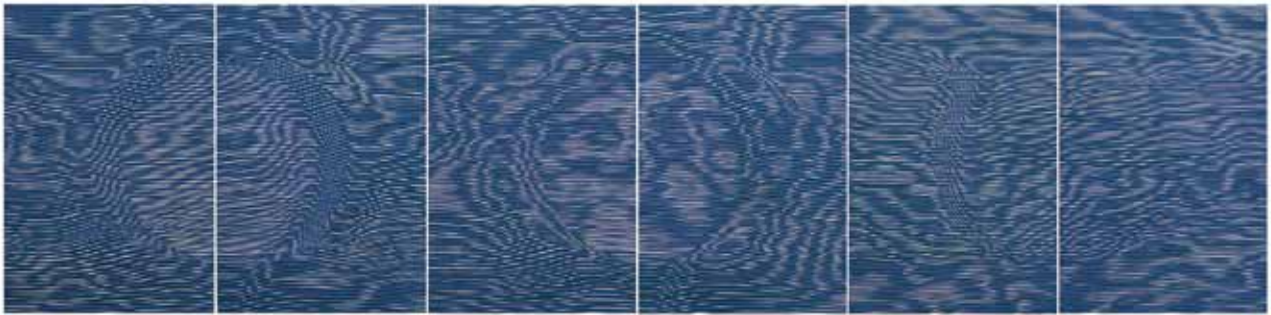
Senye Shen

Trace, 2015

Linocut

45 x 180 cm

My work explores the invisible forces and energies in nature through space and time. The work entails a glimpse of reverberation in our surroundings and seizes the sequence of rhythmic vibration. It is through interference of waves with dazzling optical sensation of movement to raise consciousness of the ever-changing entity, and the spaces between the multiples act as breaks within the union flow, that allows pause and reflection on the nature of existence.



New Earth (Magenta), 2015
Metallic vinyl on aluminium
200 x 110 cm

North West Passage, 2015
Acrylic and resin on aluminium
110 x 90 cm
(Photo: Arthur Georgeson)

Even on a 'new earth', synthetic materials created by industrial and technological processes must conform to the law of the earth. So plastic and digital componentry buckle and bend under the pressure of gravity and time, just as all other material things have always done. Colours that were once created from natural pigments taken from the earth, are now generated in the laboratory competing with the electronic colours of contemporary display. In this work, the traditional elements of painting: surface, brush, paint and colour have been replaced by post industrial substitutes: aluminium, vinyl and adhesive, resulting in a landscape of metallic colour reflecting a connection between painting as it once was and painting as it might become.

The Northwest Passage is a sea route connecting the northern Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Arctic Ocean, sought by explorers for centuries as a possible trade route, until it was finally navigated by Roald Amundsen around the same time Picasso was going through the Blue Period. In this work I have explored an aesthetic North West passage between geometric and biomorphic abstraction. In Australia it seems that geometric abstraction has dominated, but a tension between the two is demonstrated in the work of Ralph Balson, who made a startling and late move from geometric work to his final 'Matter' paintings. Thinking of him, I have navigated between the continents of geometry and bios, searching for primary forms hidden in natural ones and vice versa. I believe I have found it in the Spirograph, a device that generates shapes by geometric means turning hard edges in on themselves until they become flowers, bee hives, seed pods, and galaxies.



Grey Topographical painting #2, 2015

oil on linen

168.5 x 124 cm

Gradient Feedback Loop painting, 2015

Synthetic polymer on polyester

70 x 52 cm

Determined by the working parameters of materials, tools and process, the painted image is captured as a record of its production and contemplated as an illusion.

Through the presentation of illusionary form on the two-dimensional surface of a painting support that also occupies a three-dimensional trajectory in space, its physical and idealistic characteristics are the subject of my work.

Of primary concern is the perception of the topography of a surface through tonal gradation relative to inherent object-hood and context. Through an inventive use of paint application and mark making in the form of a commercial spray-painting machine as well as heavy body impasto medium, the perception of a surface is experienced primarily as an image through illusion and as object, physical in space.





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