

reSATURATEryb

1 November to 6 December 2014

Curator: Nicholas Tsoutas

Exhibiting artists: Julia Davis, Lisa Jones, Tom Loveday, Stephen Little, Jonny Niesche, Nuha Saad, Nike Savvas and Mark Titmarsh

Curator's statement

Colour and space

reSATURATERYb is a spatial exhibition. The saturated colour space in which the work is presented is an essential feature of the exhibition. But why is this necessary?

Bauhausian modernism eschewed representation, figuration and perspective as 'illusions'. For modernist artists, these illusions were morally reprehensible because they deceived the eye. Instead modernists urged flatness in painting, they hoped to free two-dimensional images from perspectival representation and the illusion of 'natural', three-dimensional space. Once flatness is achieved, the work is freed from its role representing nature and is left to represent the supernatural. Thus the truth of existence, the cosmos, the spiritual or whatever is revealed in abstraction under a unified aesthetic system. However, this system relies on flatness, which means the reduction of the surface to flatness – no representational depth – in effect turning all art into architecture or at least some aspect of the flat surface of the building. This flatness, isolated from the supernatural after World War I, is reduced even further to formalism and becomes that most hideous of criminal convictions, decoration.

Postmodernism and subsequent movements in art felt the injustice of such a conviction and asserted the value of decoration, perspective representation and the figurative. While this meant the pre-abstract notions of figure and ground, object and subject returned in the kind of ironic way, colour as a flat surface mode of making art remains firmly abstracted.

To break with this kind of abstraction, reSATURATERYb, claims a spatial impact for saturated colour, freeing the colour from the surfaces of the room and allowing it to be in the space and not simply on the surfaces that define the space. This of course is the very 'illusion' that modernists rejected as immoral and yet which has remained a mainstay of even Postmodernist art. The spatial effect of colour moves from inside the picture, through the surface and into the room in which art is shown.

Colour and language

Colour has a figurative meaning in all languages. Passionate red, cool blue, green with envy are all common phrases in English, and in Finnish, the adage 'wearing black socks' means to be jealous.

There are many more complex forms of figurative colour associated with politics, history and other fields. Just to utter the word 'black' in English is to evoke an entire world of racial politics so complex that it is impossible to avoid.

All figures are related through the use of language; however, not all languages are structured, as spoken and written forms with grammar, syntax and so on. Body language for instance, is a language of meaningful signs dependent upon variable social context. The moment colour is used figuratively, it also operates linguistically and is connected to the other linguistic forms. Through these many forms colour operates socially, politically, historically and even philosophically. Yet there remains a sense that the linguistic operation of colour has an abstracted foundation and a connection to the ordering of colour into primaries.

Colour, history and theory

The Bauhausian use of colour, whether it is Johannes Itten's colour theory or Joseph Albers 'Interaction Colour' has bequeathed to art throughout the 20th century and even now, a sense that colour is a critically neutral, formalist aspect of art making only connected to an expressive 'inner necessity.' reSATURATERYb continues the re-examination of colour as a critical aspect of art.

In order to achieve this universal geometric hierarchy, colour has been abstracted from its figurative meaning, leaving it as an 'expressive' aesthetic effect. The various claims by Bauhaus artists that certain colours are associated with certain moods lead to the idea that there was also a direct connection between vision and hearing through which expression and synaesthesia was born.

However, in formulating colour as a technical or 'formalist' feature of art, the Bauhaus artists denied it a critical capacity, instead asserting only an expressive use for colour. The split between critique and expression mirror a split between the need for inner 'spiritual' expression and outer 'political' art. Inner spiritual expression required abstraction while outer political meaning required representation or 'theatre'. In art, this distinction was the difference between Expressionism and Dada in the 1920s. They did this by breaking the link between colour's figurative meaning in language and its use in art.

Nicholas Tsoutas, October 2014

Julia Davis

**Re(a)pture #2, 2014,
HDV video projection,
stereo sound
1.42 minute loop**

My work explores the effect of time on understandings of the body in relation to landscape and how this underpins our sense of self and place. I often work in 'active' landscapes such as deserts, volcanic areas, coastal precincts and salt lakes and I am interested in the idea that landscape is cultural space – a space informed by and informing culture.

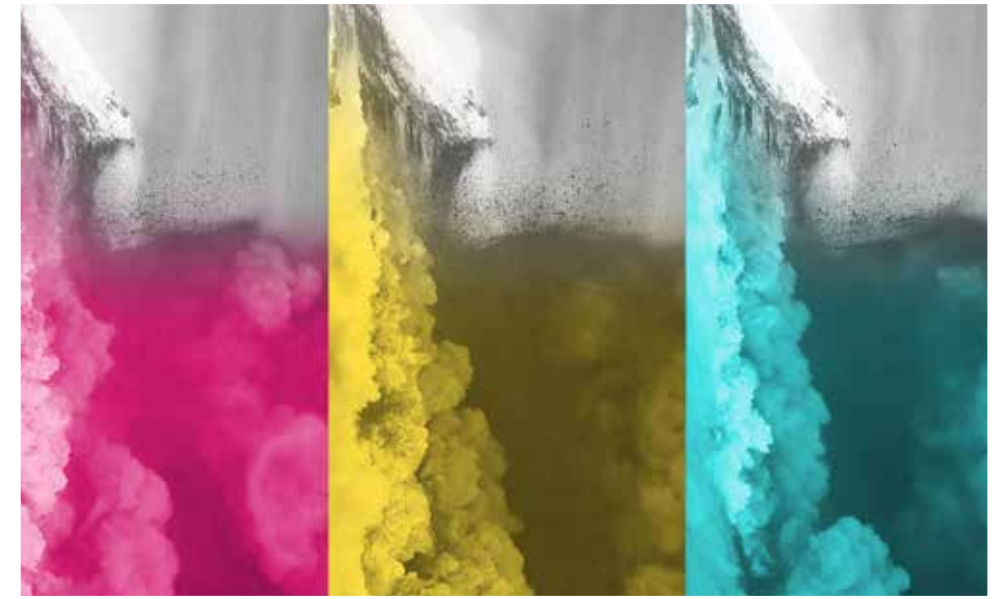
In geological time, the landscape moves, pulses and crashes in processes of coming into and out of existence. The often violent imagery of turbulent volcanic ash clouds and eruptive volcanic events elicits contradictory feelings of foreboding and rapture. Tension between anticipated loss and subsequent renewal, as well as the duality of process, which creates and destroys, corrodes and protects, are ongoing interests in my art practice. These 'active' places mirror the fragile human experience of movement, instability, rhythm, reflection and change. In my work, geological time and human perception merge into a single spatial experience and take us closer to a sense of the world as our place.

The work for reSATURATEryb is my most recent iteration from an ongoing project which utilises data and materials gathered from live volcanoes. In this instance I have introduced colour for the first time. The looped sequences of red, yellow and blue cascade vertically down the wall accompanied by actual sound from the site. The work references desire, vulnerability and anxiety. It is a reminder that we are poised on the edge of a world fraught with both man made and natural disaster.

About Julia Davis

Julia Davis is a Sydney based artist who works with a wide range of materials and processes. Her installations are often site specific and her work has been installed in salt lakes, deserts, coastal precincts and parklands, as well as within galleries and the built environment.

Recent exhibitions include Over View, International Festival of Video Art (represented by Dlux Media Arts, International Tour 2014/15), Ephemeral Coast, Mission Gallery Swansea, Wales 2014; Spaced: Art Out of Place, IASKA Biennale (National Tour Australia) 2012-14; Drawing Lines in the Sand, Cockatoo Island, Sydney 2012. She is the recipient of numerous awards including Australia Council residency in Rome (2013) and the Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Prize (2007). Her work is represented in many private collections in Australia and Europe and major commissions include a large public artwork at Sydney Water Headquarters (2009).



Lisa Jones

The Blue Line, 2014
120 x 120 x 30 cm
Acrylic and cable ties

My art is about my experience of losing my home, my place and my locale through migrating to Australia. In my art, the maps of these lost places represent and signify my loss, but the maps are transformed with materials more associated with art and design than with place and locale, so that they become abstracted. The transformation creates new spaces within the artwork, a new locale and a new kind of home. However, in creating a new, imaginary place, my lost place remains in the shapes and colours of the maps used to make each work. Through a complex relationship in coding colour and line, I create an imaginary 'conversation' between an old place, a previous home and a new place that merges with a new home.

Each work is a nomadic iteration of this old home to new home process. The iterations of my work in acrylic rely on the manufacturer's delivery of product in 'delicate tints, vivid primaries and fresh pastels.' In *The Blue Line* the colours are Red 102, Blue 302, Orange 202 and Yellow 212 and yet even intuition reflects my experience of place, as this selection makes clear. The colours I have listed here are the Bauhaus primaries that have been associated with European design for about a century and which form the basis for some of the most famous place-based design in public life.

One such design of the map of the London Underground seen in stations and trains that uses basic Bauhaus design principles. Harry Beck's London Underground maps use reduced diagrammatic maps and simple colours to show train passengers their routes and destinations in the simplest possible way. Beck's maps are designed as abstract diagrammatic information to illustrate territory in terms of lines and links.

About Lisa Jones

Lisa Jones is a Sydney based British artist whose contemporary art practice explores drawing, sculpture and video. Jones has exhibited nationally and internationally in solo and collaborative project based shows in institutional spaces, artist run initiatives and commercial galleries.

Jones has exhibited at Conny Dietzschold Gallery, Sydney, Form Gallery, Perth and in numerous group exhibitions in Sydney and London. In *Drawing Lines in the Sand* (2012, Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour), Jones presented a soundscape installation in the convict-cut dogleg tunnel, which explored her interest in the tension between the natural and made worlds.

She has been a finalist in several art awards including ABN AMRO Emerging Artist Award, Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing and the Hobart City works on paper art prize and in 2010 her work was acquired by the Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award. Jones has been the recipient of an Emerging Artist New Works Grant, Australia Council for the Arts and her work in in the collection of Artbank and private collections in Australia and Britain.

Jones studied at Goldsmiths, London and holds a MFA from University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK and a MVA from Sydney College of the Arts.



Stephen Little

Armature (Green), 2011
Armature (Yellow), 2011
Wooden easel, coloured acrylic
Dimension variable (each)

The works presented in this exhibition, *Armature (Green)* and *Armature (Yellow)*, invoke a range of characteristic traits and historical legacies that pertain specifically to painting. As a curated exhibition, the format of the show transposes and repurposes the works beyond the scope of their original brief as stand alone works of art and separates them across the different exhibition spaces. Read as components within a broader extended zone of exchange, the works function as modulating lenses to filter, magnify and transform colour, projected light and pictorial space.

As a reflection on the material, conceptual and perceptual shifts that have transpired within painting, my abandonment of traditional materials has, ironically, brought me closer to the complexities that surround, inform and characterise the territory of critical painting today. Through this, anomalies are generated that continue to provoke pertinent questions about painting's classification, and its continued indiscernibility.

About Stephen Little

Stephen Little's practice explores alternatives to traditional models and conventions commonly employed in the classification of painting. Rather than draw on familiar materials and pictorial traditions to construct meaning, Little highlights painting's unorthodox potential by reworking it through other media. Having side stepped the use of traditional materials and methodologies, Little draws on everyday objects, materials and often unconventional associations to reflect on the current condition of painting.

Little received his Bachelor of Visual Arts from Nepean College of Advanced Education, a Graduate Diploma of Visual Arts and a Master of Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, and a Research Doctorate (PhD) from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Stephen Little is currently Head of Painting at Australia's National Art School in Sydney.



Tom Loveday

The Animated Edge 1, 2014
One painting: 110 x 110 cm,
HD video, 7 minutes on loop

The Animated Edge 2, 2014
Nine Paintings: 20 x 20 cm
spaced in 3 x 3 grid, at
20 x 20 cm spacing.,
HD video, 15 minutes on loop

The Animated Edge 1 and The Animated Edge 2 use video animation projected onto paintings to find the limits of colour in moving geometric images. The relationship between animated effects and static painted surface effects creates dissonances and harmonies both in colour and shape. The saturated exhibition space shifts the dissonances and harmonies, thereby emphasising some and de-emphasising others. The Animated Edge 1 uses colour dissonance as a spatial affect. The subtitles in The Animated Edge 2, Cell, Organ and Organism indicate that the sections allude to the emergence of life and consciousness.

About Tom Loveday

Dr Tom Loveday is a contemporary artist and academic working in Sydney. He is a senior lecturer at Sydney College of the Art, University of Sydney where he supervises postgraduate research students, advises postgraduate painting students, has coordinated the postgraduate coursework program, Master of Studio Arts and has taught postgraduate and undergraduate art theory.

He exhibits artwork regularly both in commercial and independent galleries as well as maintaining an international and national research practice in art and architectural theory. Loveday has also practised and taught art and architecture, lectured in art history and theory and maintains a research profile in art theory and contemporary art practice.



Jonny Niesche

Untitled, 2014
120 x 120 cm
Voile, acrylic mirror
and wood

My practice is concerned with the cultivation and manipulation of aesthetic 'experiences'. The primary content of my work is the physiological affect activated in the viewer whilst navigating the work. My work attempts to return our bodies to the immediacy of the senses; to offer an embodied experience that is outside of language, closing off words and opening up the world.

Using a vocabulary of transparent, reflective and translucent materials such as voile and coloured acrylic mirror, the 'paintings' create immersive experiences of spatial ambiguity as the viewer navigates them. Employing an illusory play of objects and visualisations of deep space combined with references to Minimalism, magic and psychedelia, in a performative way an experiential exchange is created between the works, the space and the viewer. The works are activated by the viewer's presence and movement, creating a visual conversation. This visual conversation is the aesthetic 'experience' of the work. In unhinging the medium from its physical parameters – giving painting agency – I depend on an aesthetic vocabulary that perverts the lineage of art history combining a classical modernist language with the noise and viscera of consumer culture. Bisectioning the relationships between object and illusion, reduction and excess, the digital and the handmade, I am interested in teasing and stretching the spatial limitations of traditional painting, speculating upon various ways in which painting might transcend and articulate space.

About Jonny Niesche

Jonny Niesche is a Sydney based painter and a casual academic lecturer at Newcastle University. After 10 years in New York playing experimental music, Niesche completed his BVA (Hons 1) at Sydney College of the Arts in 2008 and his MVA in 2013.

He has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions and has a thriving painting and installation practice influenced by Minimalism, psychedelia, magic and Glam Rock. Niesche has exhibited nationally and internationally and was selected as a finalist in the Blake (2006), Sulman (2007), Hatched (2007) at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art and Stanthorpe (2009) prizes. Recent exhibitions include group shows at Minerva, Linden Centre for Contemporary Art, Artspace, Yuill/Crowley, Gesso Artspace Vienna, The Cat St Gallery Hong Kong and Roslyn Oxley9.

Niesche received an Australian Post Graduate Award in 2011-2013 and this year he was awarded the Sydney College of the Arts annual Fauvette Loureiro Memorial Artists Travel Scholarship and he will use the prize to travel to Vienna in 2015 to undertake a six month research, study and mentoring program, working with two world leading authorities on minimalism: Professor Heimo Zöbner and Professor Andreas Reiter Raabe.



Nuha Saad

Soft Landing, 2014
Acrylic paint, wooden
plant stands, fabric

Three pieces:
29 x 26 x 100 cm
25 x 29 x 110 cm
26 x 27 x 120 cm

The installation *Soft Landing* explores the elemental relationships of geometry, colour and form within the modern and imagined domestic sphere. Each of the three forms, otherwise recognisable as early 20th century wooden plant stands, features a geometric form: the triangle, the hexagon and the square. Their applied tertiary colour schemes (purples, greens and oranges) create a colourist dialogue with the temporary 'saturated' and modernist colour palette of the gallery spaces, bathed in primary red, blue and yellow. The sculptures' extant forms are sympathetic to the historic architectural details of each of the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery spaces – ceiling ornaments, cornices and skirting boards, thereby forming a type of architectural alliance or knowing. The upholstered components of the sculptures are a counter pose to the elements of geometry, colour and form with something more liveable and tactile. The missing plants from each of these new shapes are an invocation to a primary form and colour.

About Nuha Saad

Nuha Saad received a Bachelor of Visual Arts from City Art Institute (now College of Fine Arts UNSW) and a Master of Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

Saad has exhibited extensively in some of Australia's most respected galleries, from institutional galleries such as Artspace, Sydney; UTS Gallery, Sydney; Performance Space Sydney; Tin Sheds Gallery Sydney, Hazelhurst Regional Art Gallery; Casual Powerhouse; Newcastle Regional Gallery NSW; RMIT Gallery, Melbourne; Queensland University of Technology Art Museum; Bond University Art Gallery; as well as artist run initiatives including Firstdraft, MOP, Peloton, Penthouse and Pavement, to commercial spaces including Gitte Weise Gallery; Esa Jaske Gallery and was represented by James Dorahy Project Space for seven years prior to its closure in 2013.

She has worked on a number of public art commissions and has recently been awarded a public art commission for Wulaba Park Green Square, part of a City of Sydney Development Project. She has also been awarded an Australia Council New Work Grant; Artspace Gunnery Artist Studio; Pat Corrigan Artist Grant, City Art Institute Sculpture Award; and has been a finalist in the Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award, Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, NSW Ministry for the Arts Women and Arts Fellowship, ABN Amro Art Award, RBS Art Award, Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship and the Blake Prize. Her work has been reviewed in local and national arts media.



Nike Savvas

Moiré: Spark 2
Blue moiré vinyl wallpaper
160 x 160 cm

Sliding Ladder:
Dihexagonal #1
96 cm x 96 cm x 40 cm

The moiré work entitled Spark 2 (from my Sparks series), developed from a period of crisis. Traumatized and devastated as I was at this time by tragic news, I felt I had metaphysically flatlined. I had become momentarily lost, and overwhelmed by the powerful and emblematic motif of an exploding sun, a sun without limits – a boundless experience that came to embody a deep cathartic release. ‘the moiré demands an optical specificity so impossibly rigorous that one must eventually abandon the quest and submit instead to a state of perceptual disarray’

Stephen Little - press release for Nike Savvas: Sparks, Paradigm Stores exhibition, London. 11.09.2014.

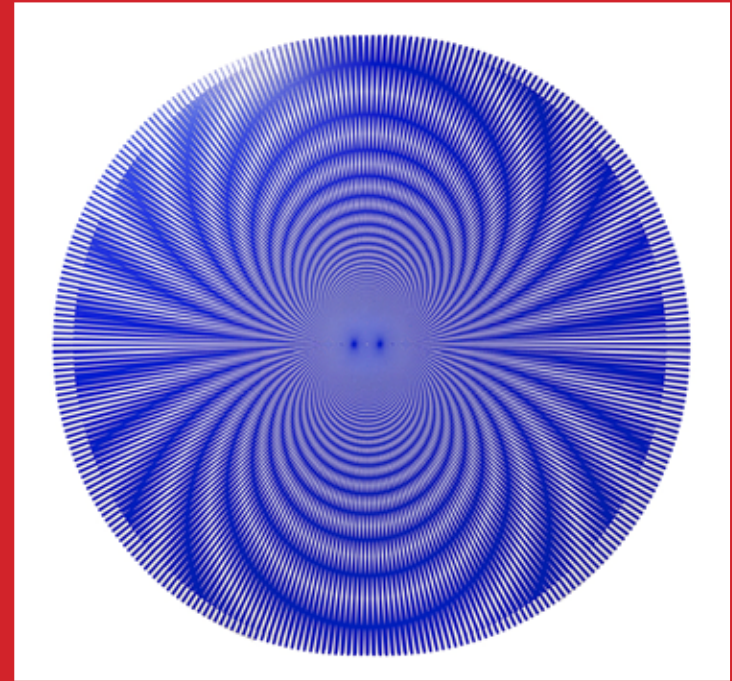
A work from my Sliding Ladder series, Sliding Ladder: Dihexagonal #1 is named after an algebraic equation ($x^2/3 + y^2/3 = L^2/3$) that gave rise to string art in the 1960s and '70s. In this I reference optical art (eg Riley) and, in a broader sense, use this as a means to address different perceptual modalities through colour, optics, space, form, process and material properties.

The work offers a glimpse of a different world layered in striated bands of richly coloured wool. As a work based on the translation of equations into geometric patterns and abstract forms it combines aspects of mysticism, theories of sun gazing, altered states and reflections on expanded painting practice.

About Nike Savvas

Savvas received her BVA from Sydney College of the Arts and an MFA (honours) from the College of Fine Arts in Sydney. In 1996 she was awarded the Anne and Gordon Samstag scholarship, subsequently studying at Goldsmiths College (University of London).

Much of Savvas's work has consisted of large scale installations that 'translate' painting into three dimensions and popular culture into high art. Blurring the boundaries between disciplines, genres and materials she has create a unique iconography. An extensive monograph on her work was published by Black Dog Publishing UK in 2012. She has had extensive solo exhibitions and has developed a number of significant site specific public art commissions. She is included in the collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand.



Mark Titmarsh

eyelet, 2014
Slumped acrylic
2.4 x 1 x .4 m
(approximately)

Flump, 2009 - 2014
Slumped acrylic,
LED lighting
70 x 60 x 50 cm
(approximately)

In my work there is a regression into the natural presence of paint showing what becomes most hidden about paint. What appears is its tendency to flow, to form smooth curves, to mix, to distribute colour, to interweave, to seek out boundaries and edges dispersed across surfaces and architectural interfaces. The tension between paint doing its own thing and painting as a set of conventions for disciplining paint is made apparent. In getting beyond the discipline, I have sought out materials that substitute for paint, thereby revealing a porous boundary between good form, studio disciplines and institutional infrastructure.

In this work, all of the elements of painting have been removed except one: colour. Painting's almost complete absence lingers as an honorific presence, functioning as a kind of homeopathic dose, intensifying painting the more diluted and negated it becomes. It asks the question, if colour is the limit point of painting, what counts as colour for painting? Colour in any situation is capable of invoking the presence of painting even when painting is otherwise absent. Anything that carries colour, from string to video pixels, functions as a substitute for paint in a tube.

About Mark Titmarsh

Titmarsh is a visual artist working in painting, screen media and writing. His current 'expanded painting' work is painting about painting or painting that dissimulates into objects, videos and texts. He is a tenured, part time lecturer in the School of Design, University of Technology, Sydney. His artworks are held in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, most state galleries and in private collections overseas. He has also published widely including the journal Art Monthly Australia and contributed to the book Baudrillard Live.





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