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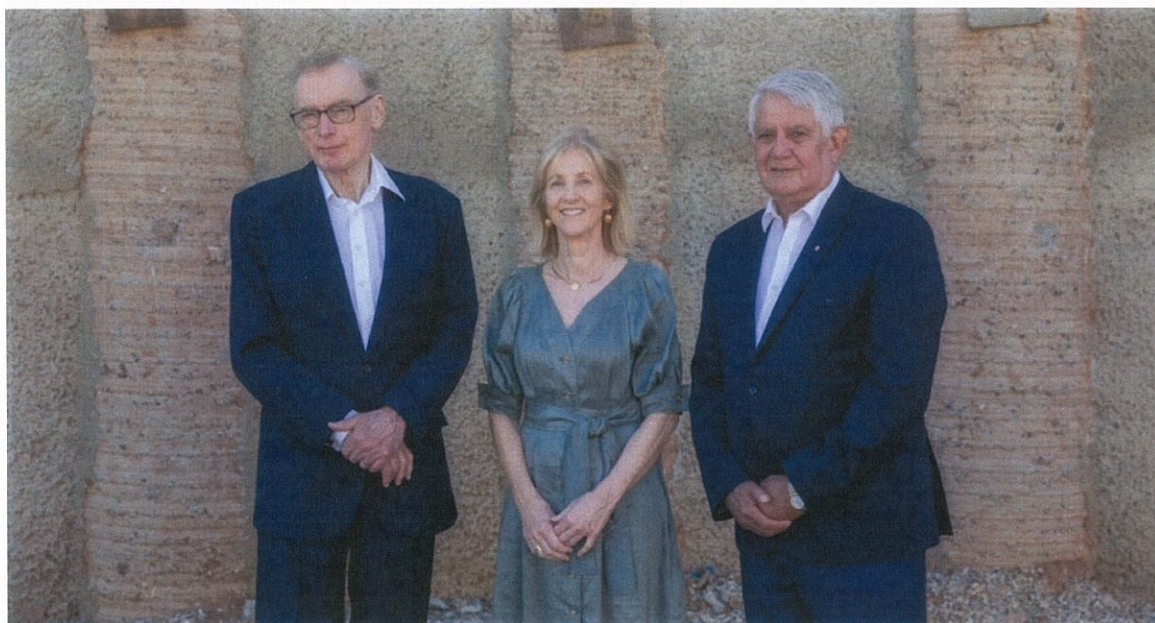
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# 'Ranks with the Opera House': Review hints at big Aboriginal cultural centre spend

## NEWS

**EXCLUSIVE** | The state government will need to invest a “big capital cost” to create an internationally-significant Aboriginal cultural centre at Lot Fourteen, but the end result could be a building that rivals the Sydney Opera House, the team reviewing the suspended project says.



Former NSW Premier Bob Carr, former investment banker Carolyn Hewson and former Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt at the Tarrkarri construction site. Photo: Ben Kelly/InDaily

Former Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt, former New South Wales Premier Bob Carr and former investment banker Carolyn Hewson told *InDaily* they believed the Tarrkarri Centre for First Nations Cultures, proposed for a site next to the Botanic Garden on North Terrace, would be “expensive” to build, but worth it in the long-run for the state.

The team, appointed by Premier Peter Malinauskas in October to review the project, said they were not contemplating scaling back the centre. Rather, they would tell the government how much it would cost to make the institution “the best in the world”.

“It’s clear it’s got to be a knock-out of a building and yes, that will be a big capital cost, but as a Sydney person when I look at this picture, I’m seeing a building that ranks with the Opera House or is second only to the Opera House,” Carr said this morning.

“It’s a sculptural piece of architecture, innovative but not gimmicky, not striving for effect. It’s authentic.

“This can be an opportunity to present to Australians the best of the culture of our Indigenous peoples.

“This will be expensive – very likely more expensive than what you’ve contemplated so far.”





The latest concept design of Tarrkarri – Centre for First Nations Cultures by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Woods Bagot. (Image: Supplied)

Wyatt, Carr and Hewson were appointed to review Tarrkarri after the project's managing contractor advised the government that the cost of the centre had blown out by \$50 million.

The contractor told the government that building the centre within the current \$200 million budget would require a "significant reduction in scope", meaning the building would only be of "local state-level standard".

Malinauskas ordered work on the centre to stop in October, with any further progress pending the results of the review Wyatt, Carr and Hewson are expected to hand down in April at a cost of under \$200,000.

Asked if they would recommend that additional taxpayer money be spent on the project, Wyatt said: "If it leads to that, yes we will, because if you're going to do this right and have the people of South Australia proud of a facility that no other state or territory will have, then that will require investment."

"The challenge is that you set a proportion of a state's budget and Commonwealth funding and sometimes they increase because of what you're trying to encapsulate in telling the story of this nation," he said.

"When you look at the massacres, you look at the colonisation of this nation through to contemporary Australian Indigenous people, we've got an incredibly rich tapestry and trying to capture all of that leads us to a point where we ask the question: What do you leave out?"

"You can't have everything in the building – otherwise we'd take up this whole precinct."



The Tarrkarri site at Lot Fourteen. Work on the project has halted while a review is undertaken. Photo: Ben Kelly/InDaily

Hewson said the team had not "capped" the project at \$200 million, or "put a line through anything because of expense".

She said the team would do a "full review" of the project's finances and operating costs.

"What we have actually been able to say is there are elements of revenue generation that we could put back into this project that will actually help the project," she said.

"There's a restaurant, café, black box theatre.

Carr said “huge inflationary pressure” in the construction sector is also impacting the project’s cost.

“Everything – roads, hospitals – is blowing out in every state and in fact around the world,” he said.

“But, we’ve got to get this right and we wouldn’t want to see South Australia with a cultural centre building that is full of compromises that people regret decades later – the story of the Sydney Opera House.

“Let’s get it right now and if it does need a big ingestion of investment in cash upfront then the state has got a building that is not only striking architecturally, but also viable in terms of the work that’s going to take place in it.”

Since October, the team have met nine times, with much of the work focusing on benchmarking other cultural institutions across the world.

It has also visited the SA Museum’s storage facility at Netley, where more than 30,000 spiritually and anthropologically-significant pieces sourced from across Australia’s approximate 250 Aboriginal language groups are stored.



Hewson described the collection as “extraordinary”, saying some of those pieces would be displayed at Tarrkarri alongside digital exhibits.

“We have listened to experts around the world, we’ve also had meetings with the architects of Tarrkarri and understood what they had as their initial model and we’ve just given a lot of input into what we think will take this from the existing Tarrkarri to something that is of global significance,” Hewson said.

“At the same time, we’ve brought the Indigenous reference group along and paid homage to their view and what was important in the original guide for this building.”

The government had hoped that pieces from both the SA Museum and Art Gallery of SA would be displayed at Tarrkarri.

But the review team said the Art Gallery’s involvement was a “work in progress”.

“I suppose you could say they’ve got a history of their contribution to this space and they’re very keen to see it protected,” Carr said.



Art Gallery it's a work in progress probably – that's the best way to put it."

"But, we're very optimistic with what this building will do to arts visitation to the state."

Tarrkarri project ambassador David Rathman, who also heads the project's Aboriginal reference group, said "in general", Aboriginal people throughout South Australia were supportive of the project.

"People are generally saying: 'When is it going to happen?'" he said.

"Nothing like this has happened in South Australia from an Aboriginal point of view, so I'm fairly confident that the community is going to come behind this.

"This is an institution about Aboriginal narrative and Aboriginal communities are interested in telling that narrative – creating a story around the items of cultural significance to them."

Former Premier Steven Marshall revealed plans to build an "Australian National Aboriginal Art and Culture Gallery" at Lot Fourteen ahead of the 2018 state election, at the time saying it would be "the jewel in the crown" of the Liberals' plan for the former Royal Adelaide Hospital site.

But the Marshall Government later dropped the word "national" from the centre's title, with the then Premier conceding that there was "further consultation that's required and approvals needed at the federal level when you're going to start naming things as national centres and we just thought it wasn't necessary".

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The project was later renamed "Tarrkarri", meaning "the future" in Kaurna.

The Northern Territory and Western Australian governments are also planning to build Aboriginal art and cultures centres.

Wyatt said the government shouldn't put the word "national" in the title of the centre, given the interstate plans.

"We're not about competing, we're about being different and unique," he said.

Funding for the project was secured under a "city deal" signed between the Marshall and Morrison governments in 2019, with the Commonwealth chipping in \$85 million and state taxpayers funding the rest.

The centre was scheduled to open in early 2025 and was expected to display pieces sourced from the SA Museum, Art Gallery and State Library collections – the majority of which is currently kept in storage – alongside new digital and performing arts displays that would tell the story of Australia's First Nations peoples.

Original plans showed the building would span 12,500 square metres over three levels, which would make it bigger than the SA Museum and Art Gallery combined and one of Australia's largest cultural institutions.

It was designed by local architects Woods Bagot in partnership with New York-based firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro, with Aboriginal architects contributing to the project.

The former government estimated between 485,000 and 581,000 people would visit the centre in its first year, with the figure estimated to increase to up to 665,000 people by 2040.

ADVERTISING



# Art

JOHN MCDONALD



## LEADING LIGHTS ON SHOW

*Ethel Spowers and Eveline Syme were trailblazers at a time when men dominated Australia's art scene.*

*Spowers & Syme* may sound like a firm of accountants, but we're dealing with an entirely different order of creativity. Ethel Spowers (1890-1947) and Eveline Syme (1888-1961) were groundbreaking Australian artists at a time when women found it difficult to make any impression on an art scene dominated by self-serving men.

A touring exhibition put together by the National Gallery of Australia, *Spowers & Syme* is showing at the S.H. Ervin Gallery on the fourth stage of a lengthy journey, before winding up in Brisbane later this year. As the display is mostly works on paper, the exhibited items will go into extended storage when the tour concludes, so it's worth catching the show while you can.

While a survey from late 2019 revealed women were now ahead of men in most categories of artistic representation in Australia, the one blemish was in the number of works exhibited in public collections, which is a function of history, not institutional will.

But museums must judge dispassionately in terms of what they collect and exhibit. When a gallery commits to 50/50 representation, as the NGA and the Art Gallery of NSW have done, this is a simple matter in the contemporary field (where women are in ascendancy) but becomes more difficult as we move back in time, as there aren't enough female artists to fill the quotas.

This provides an extra incentive to dilute the historical display with all sorts of contemporary items in the name of gender balance or righting the wrongs of colonialism. But such hangs become tedious and confusing. Overall, a survey of two significant female artists, such as Spowers and Syme, or a retrospective of Cressida Campbell, are much better ways of demonstrating a commitment to women artists.

In the catalogue for *Spowers & Syme*, curator Sarina Noordhuis-Fairfax discusses the context in which the artists worked and the special circumstances that enabled them to pursue their vocations. The two friends came from wealthy newspaper families. Ethel's father, William Spowers, was the owner of the *Argus* and the *Australasian*; Eveline's father, Joseph Syme, was a partner in rival daily, *The Age*. Both women lived in mansions, Ethel in Toorak, Eveline in St Kilda. They had the economic support of their families and were given excellent educations – Eveline excelled in classics at Cambridge. Few women enjoyed the advantages of



Spowers and Syme. In an era when most women settled for being housewives and mothers, they were able to travel and study in Paris and London, pursuing careers as artists. Neither woman ever married, which need not be taken as a statement of sexual preferences, but rather as a determination to retain their freedom.

They were involved with like-minded peers in clubs and societies which demanded equal opportunities for women and discussed intellectual, political and artistic topics. The chief difficulty was that they were working in an artistic milieu controlled by patricians such as J.S. MacDonald and Lionel Lindsay. For these gentlemen, the standard of excellence came from artists such as Arthur Streeton and Hans Heysen (both of whom would be knighted).

Women artists were often dismissed as hobbyists, while all forms of modernism were rejected in favour of a pastoral dream of the bush and a tradition of figure painting that had barely evolved since Rembrandt's day. The arrogance and insularity of the self-appointed guardians of national culture seems inconceivable today, but at the time there were relatively few people in Australia who had any knowledge of modern art.

It was logical that bright, independent women such as Spowers and Syme would gravitate to the modernist camp. Not only was the alternative stuffy and unattractive, there was a genuine excitement about the

new work emerging from Paris and London. Allowing for a few smaller travelling exhibitions, it would take until 1939, when Keith Murdoch sponsored a landmark show of British and French art, for the public to show interest in modernist innovation.

Spowers and Syme would study with the celebrated printmaker Claude Flight in London, learning the techniques of coloured linocutting, with which they would produce their most memorable works.

For Spowers, works such as *The plough* (1928), with its complex pattern of birds in flight, and *Wet Afternoon* (1930), all massed umbrellas and driving rain, are masterpieces of an underrated genre. Her print of a coal mine, *The works, Yallourn* (1933), is one of the great images of industry in Australian art. She makes the mine look as dynamic as a velodrome.

Syme took the same ruthlessly geometric approach in her print *Skating* (1929) but fell back on conventional landscape motifs in later works, such as *Sydney tram line* (1936).

One major difference is that Syme had gone on to study with Andre Lhote in Paris, at a time when cubism had become submerged in the return to order that swept through French art in the years between the wars. Lhote, a leading salon cubist, was one of the most influential teachers in Paris, whose ideas would make their way to Australia via students such as Syme, Dorrit Black, Grace Crowley, Anne Dangar and Edith Alsop.

Spowers' life was cut short by breast cancer, but her final years were spent writing and illustrating children's books. Syme's output slowed to a crawl after Spowers' death, and she produced only four more linocuts over 14 years.

There's a touch of melancholy about the relatively small amount of work we have by these two talented artists. They were trailblazers who influenced the course of modern art in Australia, but this compact exhibition doesn't fill the gallery, even when supplemented with documents, photos, memorabilia, and prints by fellow travellers such as Dorrit Black, George Bell, Nutter Buzzacott, Lill Tschudi and Cyril E. Power.

This exhibition gives us a working outline of Spowers and Syme, but there's room for a lot more detail.

*Spowers & Syme* is at the S.H. Ervin Gallery until February 12.

Above, from left, Ethel Spowers, *The Skaters*; Eveline Syme, *Skating*; Syme, *The factory* (detail); Spowers, *School is out* (detail); *The gust of wind* (inset). Source: NGA



## 10 Visual arts

### PUBLIC WORKS

Ebony Russell, *Piped Dreams: Pink and White Grotto with Roses and Bows*, 2019. Collection National Art School, Sydney. Gift of Ebony Russell, 2021.

Bronwyn Watson

When Ebony Russell was growing up, she says she was obsessed with ornaments and anything frilly and pink. Cake decorating was a particular passion and each year she longed for the most decorative cake for her birthday. She was also fascinated by the porcelain objects in her grandmother's cabinets and, for Russell, the more elaborate the detail and design of the porcelain objects, the better. Russell's love of porcelain and cake decorating is now evident in her ceramic work. She produces porcelain sculptures by squeezing clay through cake piping bags; a technique usually reserved for the cake decorating craft of royal icing.

"Most of my artworks start from a connection to an object that I already possess from my childhood or an object that I wish I had," Russell says. "I want to investigate how these objects and decorative processes have the capacity to evoke memories and engender a return to childhood reverie in adult life. I'm interested in clay, particularly porcelain, for many reasons. Porcelain was first used to imitate the sugar sculptures of the European court in the 14th and 15th centuries, a time in which the genius and skill of the confectioner was still highly valued. Porcelain was emblematic of imperial taste and not until later was it considered to be decorative, thus feminine."

One of Russell's works, *Piped Dreams: Pink and White Grotto with Roses and Bows*, from 2019, is in the collection of the National Art School (NAS) in Sydney where Russell received her Master of Fine Arts (Ceramics) and now works as a sessional lecturer in the ceramics department. At the NAS, the collections manager, Deborah Beck, says that this work is from a series called *Piped Dreams* in which Russell made elaborate pieces based on tiaras, crowns, and grottoes.

"This work took about three days to make, as each layer of clay had to be leather hard before adding the next," Beck says.

"It was chosen for the collection as an example of work by a student who is pushing the boundaries of what she could do with her chosen material. Ebony's talent was recognised early at the NAS when she was chosen to teach in the NAS short courses while she was still a student."

Beck says that in the school's collection rooms, Russell's work is sitting next to a Shoji Hamada pot made at the NAS in 1965 and a Peter Rushforth pot from 1950.

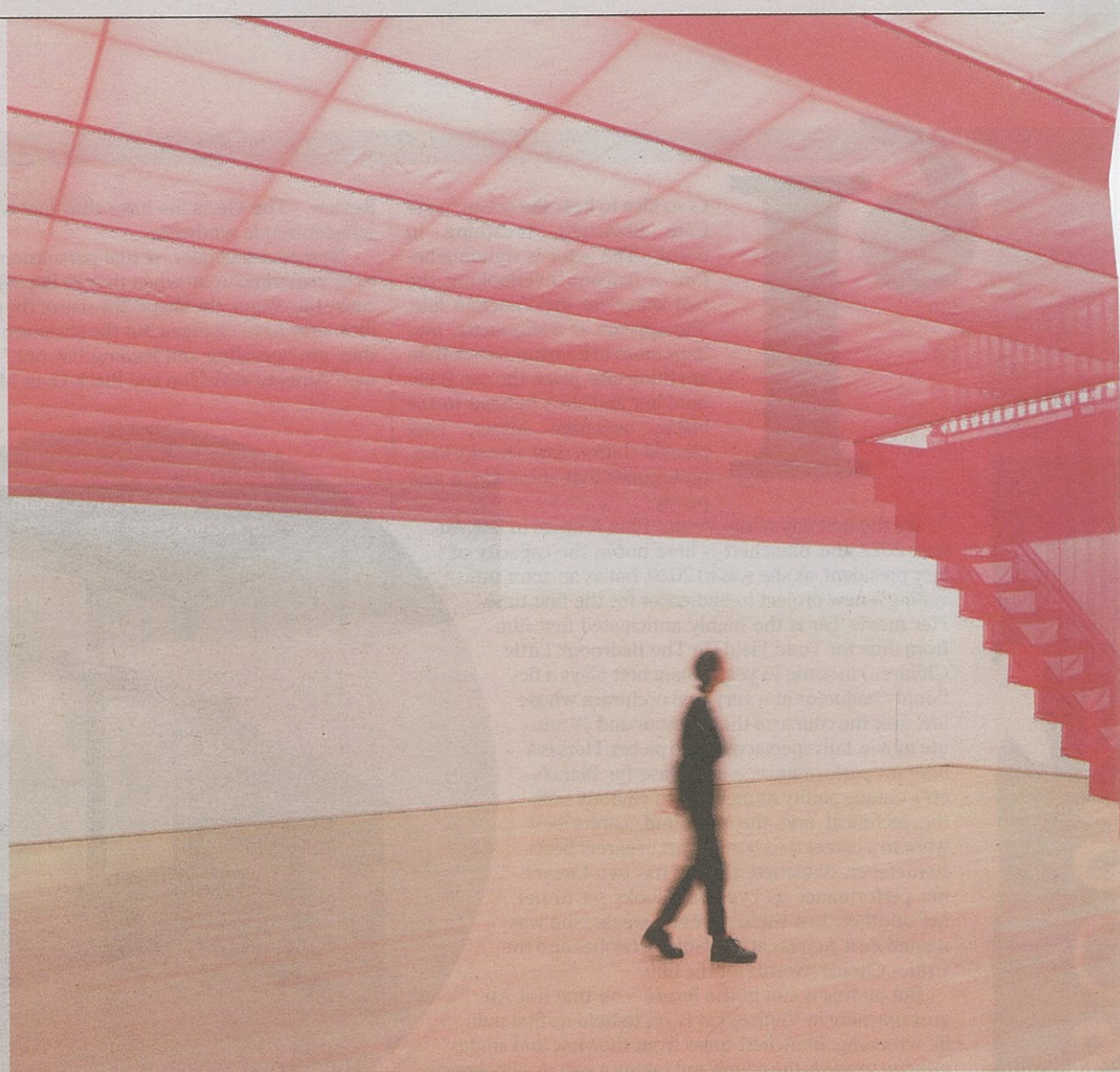
"It is a great joy to see this new work by a recent graduate next to works by these venerable potters," Beck says. "My personal response to Ebony's work is one of surprise. When you first see it, her work looks soft, gentle, and malleable, but when you touch it, it is so sharp that it can cut your finger."

**Materials:** piped Lumina porcelain and stain  
**Dimensions:** 25 x 17 x 14cm

### Saleroom

In 2000 Adam Cullen won the Archibald Prize for his portrait of actor David Wenham. Cullen, who died in 2012 at the age of 46, was associated with the Sydney grunge art scene of the early 1990s. Two of his paintings sold above their pre-sale estimates at an auction of Australian and international art held by Shapiro in Sydney. Cullen's acrylic and enamel on linen, *A Love Divine*, from 2005, sold for \$17,795 (including buyer's premium) from a pre-sale estimate of \$8000 to \$12,000, while Cullen's acrylic on canvas, *Foreign Correspondent*, from 2002, sold for \$11,659 (pre-sale estimate \$4000 to \$6000). Other lots also sold for above their pre-sale estimates such as Susan Norrie's oil on canvas, *Tomorrow's Beginning*, from 2011, which fetched \$19,023 (pre-sale estimate \$8000 to \$12,000), while British artist Nic Fiddian-Green's bronze sculpture, *Maquette for Still Water Marble Arch*, 2013, sold for \$25,773 (pre-sale estimate \$12,000 to \$18,000). Other sales included Tim Storrier's acrylic on paper, *The Night Stars and Approach*, 1996, which sold for \$35,591, and Charles Blackman's oil on paper on board, *Girl with Daisies*, 1966, which also sold for \$35,591.

Bronwyn Watson



Antoine van Kaam

# Recreating the place of memory

A Korean-born artist skilfully fabricates the unsettling relationship between our sense of being and our sense of place

Perhaps everyone remembers, as a child, waking up during the night in a hotel or an unfamiliar house and for a moment not being able to find the door of the bedroom. The whole orientation of the room seems unfamiliar; feeling your way in the dark, you discover a window-sash where you expected the door handle, a bookcase where you reached for the light switch.

Marcel Proust, who died just over a century ago on November 18, 1922, wrote memorably near the beginning of *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), of the experience of sleeping, waking and the sense of self: "A sleeping man holds in a circle around him the thread of hours, the order of years and of worlds. He instinctively consults them as he wakes, and reads there in a second the point on the earth that he occupies, the time that has passed until his waking."

But, as he goes on to say, we can lose our hold on this thread, especially in a strange place or when our habits are disturbed: "But it was enough, even in my own bed, for my sleep to have been deep and to have completely relaxed my mind; and then it forgot the layout of the place where I had fallen asleep, and when I awoke in the middle of the night, as I had forgotten where I was, I did not even know, for the first instant, who I was; I had only, in its primal simplicity, the feeling of existence as it might quiver in the depths of an animal; I was more naked than a caveman; but then memory – not yet of the place where I was, but of others where I had lived and where I might have been – came to me as an aid from on high to draw me out of a nothingness from which I could not have escaped alone."

This feeling of the intimate connection between our sense of being and the space we occupy is at the heart of Do Ho Suh's work, which is displayed on two levels at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in Sydney; for both formal and thematic reasons, it is advisable to start upstairs, saving the remarkable piece displayed downstairs for the conclusion.

Do Ho Suh was born in South Korea in 1962, the son of Suh Se-ok (1929-2020), himself a distinguished modern Korean artist, but has spent most of his working life abroad. He now lives in London after spending many

**CHRISTOPHER ALLEN**



**Do Ho Suh**  
**Museum of Contemporary Art, until February 26**

years in New York, and his departure from the flat he occupied there for many years there has led him to undertake an ambitious work that is explained in a video documentary included in the exhibition.

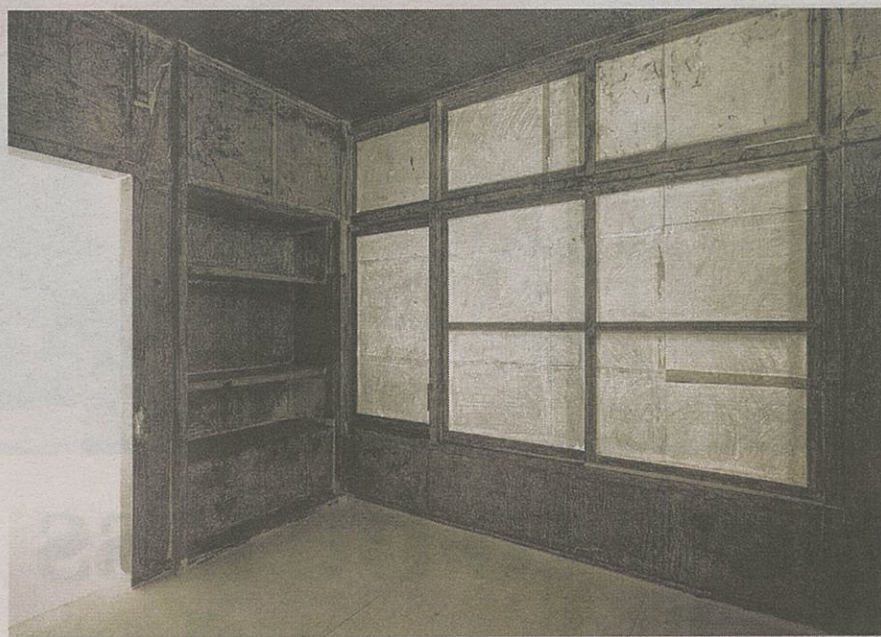
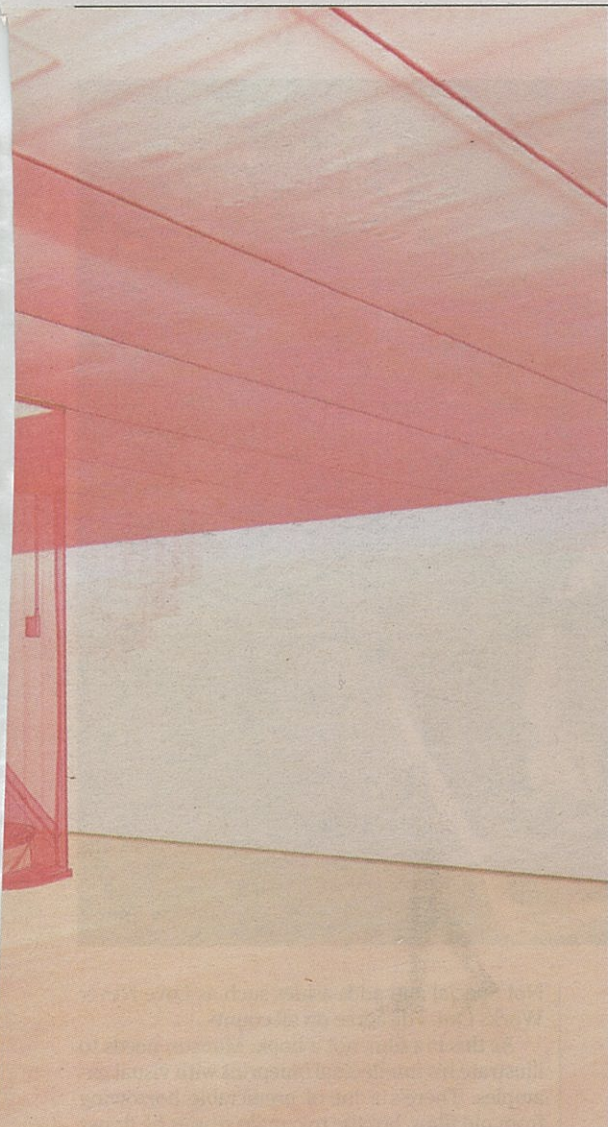
Before describing this project, however, we should consider his earlier fabric sculptures, several of which were already inspired by the same flat in New York. The earliest of these, *Staircase III* (2010), one of his most evocative and frequently reproduced works, occupies a central gallery at the MCA and is indeed the aesthetic high point of the first section of the exhibition.

Ostensibly, the work is a full-scale reproduction of a narrow wooden staircase leading up from the artist's flat to that of his landlord, a kindly man who became a close friend and perhaps something of a father figure to a young man living far from his family.

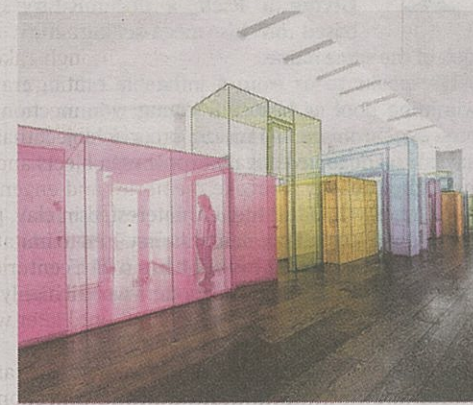
But although the original is precisely matched in scale, it is entirely transformed in its materiality, reproduced in a red mesh-like fabric that is insubstantial, translucent and fills the whole gallery with an ambient red glow.

The work was originally made for a gallery at the Tate, and there is a video on the Tate site showing the installation in progress with commentary by the artist who observes that, living as an expatriate and a traveller between worlds, he is particularly fascinated by doors, corridors and other points of transition between one space and another. His choice of material is significant in this regard too, since fabric works are light, demount-

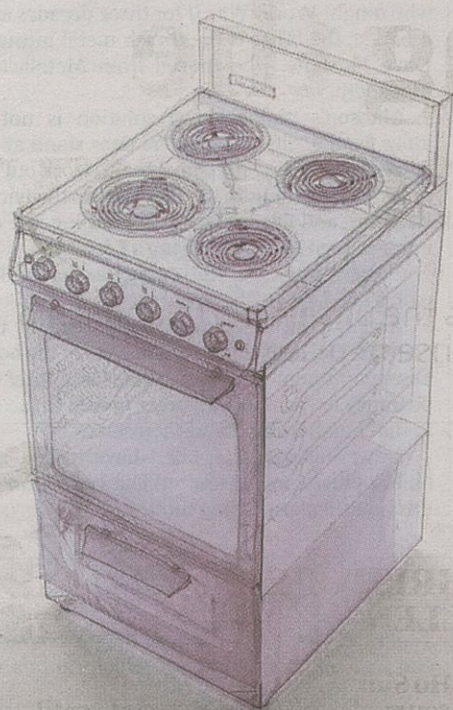




Daniel Dorca



Thierry Bol



Jeon Taeg

able and can be relatively easily packed, moved and installed elsewhere.

Interestingly, the work was originally designed for a much higher room at the Tate, so that the run of steps began well above the heads of the visitors to the gallery; here, hung lower, the stairs begin only just above the floor. In some ways it is more effective than in London because the implied invitation to climb the staircase, and therefore the affective involvement of the audience, is much stronger.

At the same time, the fragile fabric from which the installation is made contradicts the function of a staircase; sculpture, like dance, is an art that invokes the corporeal response of the body, and just as we subtly feel and virtually emulate the attitude of a figure sculpture, here we feel all the prompts and memories associated with climbing a flight of stairs, yet simultaneously feel the impossibility of setting foot on soft webbing. Instead, they leave us with imaginative after-images and associations, as of climbing into an aircraft, and because practical function is denied, symbolic resonances suggest themselves: why are we invited to ascend? What awaits us in the space above?

A few years later, between 2013 and 2015, Suh made a series of smaller pieces inspired by the same apartment, only this time they were separate items and appliances, collectively titled *Specimens*. A toilet, a handbasin, a medicine cabinet and a stove were crafted, with the most minute attention to accuracy and detail, out of blue syn-

thetic fabric, once again translucent and insubstantial, each inside a protective glass case, floating in blue luminosity.

The aesthetic principle behind objects like these is similar to the one I invoked a few weeks ago in talking about the work of Cressida Campbell, even though the two exhibitions could, on the face of it, hardly be more different. But once again it is that pleasure we have in the tension between sameness and difference, between illusion and artifice or mimesis and poesis: it is in the process of remaking something in an intrinsically different medium and material that we understand something about it, aesthetically and imaginatively.

The next important set of work is the *Hub* series, here represented by six pieces made between 2015 and 2018. Developing his theme of transitional spaces, Suh has once again used fabric, but has now reproduced a series of entrance spaces, lobbies, halls and corridors from different moments and stages of his life. Each space is specific and has been painstakingly reproduced by a process, it seems, of lining them with fabric, no doubt wet and lightly sized, pressed on to door frames, doors, windows and other details such as a fire extinguisher, then carefully removed when dry and moulded into the contour of the architectural detail.

Three of these pieces are based on spaces in London and three are from Seoul, so that each has a different architectural character, evoking different phases of the artist's own experience.

Each one is reproduced in fabric of a different colour, and they are presented in a row, end to end, so that the visitor walks through each of these spaces, appreciating their different qualities of scale and architectural style as well as their varying sense of enclosure, as some only have an entrance and an exit at either end, while others open rather disconcertingly in different directions. The installations are fragile and a team of gallery assistants has to remind visitors that only one person is allowed in each space – or colour – at a time.

This brings us back to the project that is described at length in the video near the start of the exhibition. For after two decades living in the New York flat, which included his living quarters and studio, Suh felt impelled to make a reproduction of its entire interior space.

If any space had for him that connection Proust wrote of between "where I was" and "who I was", this was certainly it. He had in fact made a fabric version of the apartment in 2015. Now, however, he decided to work with paper, which would no longer be translucent, but which would allow him to reproduce the textures of the walls and architectural details through the technique of rubbing. So the first stage was to line the entire flat with paper – no doubt wet and sized to take the form of mouldings and other details – and then followed the long process of rubbing with the side of a pencil over the whole interior surface of the space.

Watching Suh at work in the video and hearing him talk about what he is doing, it is clear that this work has become something like a meditation or spiritual practice. It is a way to commune with memory, to dwell in

**Clockwise, from top left, Do Ho Suh's Staircase III, 2010; Rubbing/Loving Project: Company Housing of Gwangju Theater 2012; artist Do Ho Suh; Passage/s 2018; Floor (detail), 1997-2000; Stove, Apartment A, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA, 2013**

spirit in a place in which he physically lived for such a long and decisive period of his life, but also to be present and at peace in the world.

It is with all this in mind that one is ready to encounter and to appreciate the remarkable work downstairs which forms the conclusion of the exhibition.

At first sight, this appears to be a full-scale model of a traditional Korean house. And indeed it is the house his father built, and there are images of it in the accompanying documentary video, a handsome pavilion situated in an elegant traditional Korean garden.

The choice of the motif is clearly deeply meaningful for the artist, perhaps all the more so when we consider that his decision to leave Korea was, it seems, partly to be able to develop as an artist outside the shadow of his father's eminence, to be more than simply Suh Se-ok's son. But with his father's death two years ago, this work is evidently a monument both to memory and to filial piety.

It is almost incredible to think what we see before us – supported of course by a light aluminium frame – is entirely made of rubbings on the traditional mulberry bark paper known as hanji which has been produced in Korea for at least 1500 years.

The documentary shows images of the rubbing process and of the paper being carefully removed in sections with scissors, and the whole task was clearly an enormous effort, even if Suh was no doubt aided by a number of assistants.

It makes a suggestive contrast, too, with the apartment project in New York. There, the interior represented the shell of his own intimate and personal life; here the exterior is more appropriate, for he did not have access to his father's interior life.

And yet the care and love he has expended on recording every detail of the exterior he knew has produced a moving if fragile expression of homage and devotion.







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## DESIGN AUSTRALIA

# Six of the best

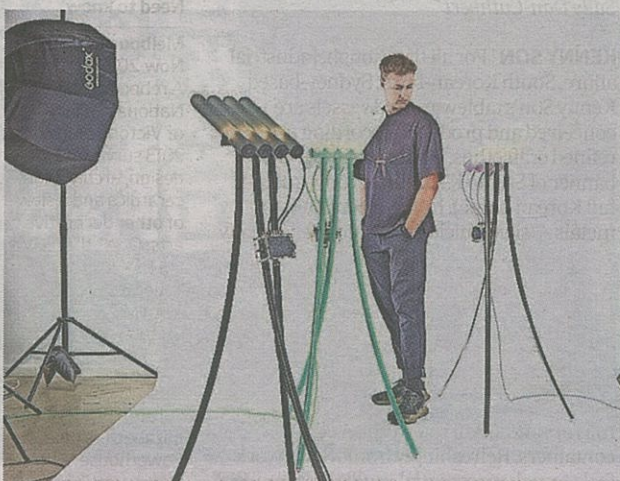
A new generation of talented designers are making their mark, writes **Stephen Todd**.

Marlo Lyda uses marble offcuts for her Remnants side tables, left; Jay Jermyn (below) with his Fauna lamps. PHOTOS: COURTESY MARLO LYDA, JAY JERMYN

There's a palpable energy in the Australian design scene right now, and it's not just from established galleries and museums. These young creatives are generating a lot of excitement.

**JAY JERMYN** | Skilled electricians are hard to find these days. Skilled electricians who do double time as a musician and have a degree in 3D design from the Queensland College of Art are particularly scarce. Jay Jermyn is such a rarity, and his work attests to his triple heritage – particularly his series of shoulder-height, tripodal "Fauna" lamps that appear strangely organic despite gleaming in steel and Day-Glo colours.

"They're an exploration into the euphoric ecstasy we feel when we're on a dance floor," says Jermyn, who reckons his artistic career began while clubbing in a cave in Serbia.



"I've noticed that the feeling is also replicated, say, when you're in a rainforest, or on top of a mountain. It's trying to find this middle ground between nature and the euphoria of dance music." [oigallprojects.com](http://oigallprojects.com)

**DANIELLE THIRIS** | Danielle Thiris reckons she played "with clay for about eight years" before her career as a ceramicist suddenly took off in 2021. First, she was invited to be part of a group show at Melbourne's Oigall Projects, where the work was spotted then nominated in the Best New Designer category at the Melbourne Design Show last February. Soon, Craft Victoria called, and the NGV, for its upcoming design/art blockbuster *Melbourne Now*.

"It's been a bit of a whirlwind," says Thiris, who is creating some of the most collectable hand-coiled, shaped and carved clay vessels in Australia today.

Born in Melbourne of Greek-Cypriot heritage, Thiris says her inspiration began as ethereal musings on Mesopotamian vessels, rendered contemporary with the addition of double or triple cavities and elongated, beak-like spouts. Right now she is fascinated with ancient German earthenware. Her pieces are unglazed. Thiris instead employs the *terra sigillata* sealing technique (a fine clay slip), which adds a silky finish to each piece. [dannypistachio.com](http://dannypistachio.com)

**MARLO LYDA** | Marlo Lyda's star has risen quickly. Her first collection, the "Remnants" series of low tables composed of offcut marble slabs, was a hit when launched at Melbourne Design Week last year.

"I've almost run out of supplies," she says. "Even though this stuff is often considered



From left: A brass pouring vessel by Kenny Son of Studio KYSS; hand-coiled ceramics by Danielle Thiris; a Julien Leigh May Introspection mirror. PHOTO: COURTESY STUDIO KYSS

waste, people can take a lot of convincing to allow something positive to be done with it."

She takes mismatched pieces – say, cut-offs from splashbacks or cabinetry – and creates metal scaffolding unique to each piece, then hand-ties the legs to the metalwork with copper wire.

Lyda studied at the prestigious Design Academy Eindhoven in Holland, in the Department of Man and Wellbeing.

A series of deliciously misshapen wall mirrors embellished with coils of hand-wound metal scroll work featured at Sydney Design Week last year. "A metaphor, maybe, for that feeling we get, sometimes, of running in circles." [marlolyda.me](http://marlolyda.me)

**JULIAN LEIGH MAY** | Melbourne-based Julian Leigh May creates evocative neo-Gothic furniture, lighting and glassware with a fragile-tough edge. His signature "thorn" – or maybe horn – motif rips through the surface of aluminium mirrors, sprouts from discombobulated goblets, or jauntily coalesces to form candelabras. "It's like a depiction of growth within me as a person," says the designer, who graduated from RMIT. "My work is an experimentation that teases out ideas about vulnerability and strength."

It's also about creating new forms from a reduced material palette of cast aluminium – a paradoxically pliable, industrial material that, in Leigh May's hands, take on a sculpted, unfinished allure. "It's considered 'ugly' by most people, but it's really quite beautiful to me." [oigallprojects.com](http://oigallprojects.com)

**JORDAN GOGOS** | Jordan Gogos is already renowned for his retina-spinning fashion

designs. His furniture propositions, while more quiet, are just as radically stylish.

Sydney-based Gogos has a degree in industrial design from New York's Parsons School of Design, and his penchant for heavy metal work bears all the trademarks of that training.

Monolithic benches, armchairs and low tables are conjured up from sheets of aluminium, each piece folded and welded into shape, eliminating the need for hardware. The result is monumentally blocky forms that are incredibly sensual to the touch.

"The functional artworks are objects-as-furniture in the purest sense," Gogos explains. "Standing or stacked they resemble totems, bookshelves or tumbling blocks; placed alone and horizontally, they become benches, chairs and tables." *Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert*

**KENNY SON** | For all their tough, industrial allure, South Korean-born, Sydney-based Kenny Son's tableware and vessels are conceived and produced according to a refined craft ethos. Designing under the banner of Studio KYSS (an acronym of his full Korean name), he has a penchant for metals – "silver, nickel brass, copper; it really depends on what the object's going to be" – and a no-nonsense approach to form-giving.

"I'm inspired by things I see in my daily surroundings, and tend to name things simply [as] what they are."

Expect pentagonal vases, decagonal water pitchers, hexagonal concrete desktop mirrors and small round concrete containers. Refreshingly frank, Son's work feels somehow essential. [studiokyss.com](http://studiokyss.com)



### Need to know

#### Melbourne Now 2023

A reboot of the National Gallery of Victoria's landmark 2013 survey of design, architecture, ceramics and a slew of other decorative arts. On at the NGV's Ian Potter Centre in Federation Square from March 24 to August 20.

#### New Australian Design

An exhibition curated by Emma Elizabeth, is on at the Powerhouse Ultimo in Sydney until April 30.



# THE AUSTRALIAN LIFE & TIMES

ARTS | CULTURE



THE AUSTRALIAN  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2023 P12  
theaustralian.com.au

A new play looks at the Australian art and social phenomenon that was Heide



MATTHEW WESTWOOD  
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

Nikki Shiels was a few years out of drama school at the Victorian College of the Arts when she made her first visit to Heide. Heide Museum of Modern Art, in Melbourne's northeast, is one of the cultural jewels of the city: a former dairy farm that John and Sunday Reed turned into an artist colony, a crucible of Australian modernism. Sidney Nolan painted his Ned Kelly sequence there, at the dining room table.

Shiels would go to Heide to explore the grounds, the beautiful garden Sunday planted, the Reeds' homestead, and the modern gallery and cafe. It's where the actor could gather her thoughts and learn her lines if she was in a play – and soak up the history of an artistic milieu that she likens to the Bloomsbury set in London.

Heide would become famous – notorious, really – for the sexually liberated atmosphere the Reeds cultivated there. At the centre was a ménage au trois comprising Nolan and John and Sunday Reed. As Heide curators and authors Lesley Harding and Kendrah Morgan reveal in *Modern Love*, their book about the Reeds, Sunday was also in a sexual relationship with Joy Hester – the Reeds would later adopt Sweeney, Hester's son with Albert Tucker – and Nolan with poet Barrett Reid.

"I became obsessed, in my early 20s, with the artistic and cultural



Nikki Shiels is to play Sunday Reed in a new play about the Heide circle. Below (from left)

Sidney Nolan, Sunday Reed, John Sinclair and John Reed at Heide circa 1945; Josh McConville as Nolan, Matt Day as John, and Shiels as Sunday in Melbourne Theatre Company's *Sunday*; Nolan's Ned Kelly, 1946, in the National Gallery of Australia

TOBY ZERNA, PIA JOHNSON

Sunday has been dropped into the middle of an early Nolan painting. It's a space in which memory flies out of every corner – things open and close, and she is surrounded by memory, and assaulted by it, in a way."

Weigh narrows the dramatic focus to a handful of players in the Heide story. Matt Day and Josh McConville play John Reed and Sidney Nolan, respectively. Ratidzo Mambo is Joy Hester, and young actor Joshua Tighe is Sweeney, Hester's son. The action ricochets backwards and forwards in time, starting in 1959 when Sunday is awaiting the arrival of removalists to collect Nolan's paintings, years after Nolan has left Heide for good.

"We didn't want to write a straightforward biography, so we took a series of dates and events that were very shadowy, and into those shadows we projected our fantasies about what might have happened," Weigh says.

"We know that on a certain date, Sunday and John and Nolan had an enormous argument at Heide. He left Heide, and they never spoke again. There were some letters, but they never saw each other again. No one knows what happened on that night, but we conjecture about what happened."

That episode forms the play's climax and, not to give too much away, is a terrific confrontation for Nolan, Sunday and John, complete with blame, recriminations, put-downs and threats.

The real-world history of the Heide circle was darkened by animosity and tragedy. Nolan married John Reed's sister, Cynthia, who died by suicide in 1976. He later married Mary Perceval (nee Boyd) and died in 1991 at age 75. John Reed was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1981. Sunday died by suicide 10 days after John's death. Hester, diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, died in 1960 at age 40. Sweeney died by suicide in 1979.

Weigh's drama, *Sunday*, has taken some years to bring to the stage. A planned season at MTC in 2021 was delayed by the pandemic. He is delighted with the cast, and with Shiels in particular. The role of Sunday Reed is a gift for an actor – imperious, vulnerable, tender

# SUNDAY *in the* CENTRE



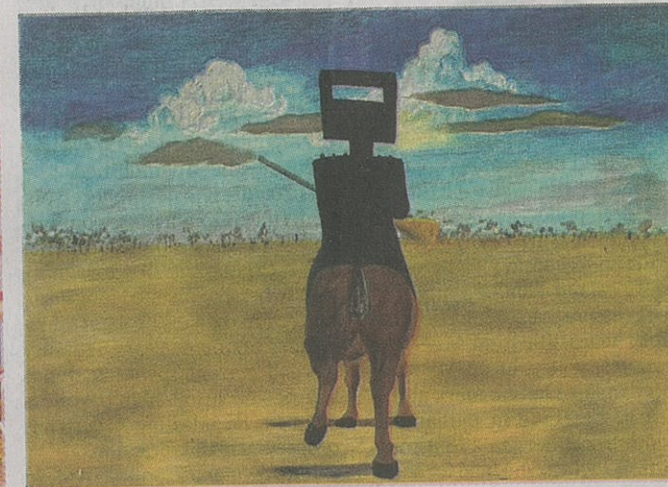
history that occurred out there," Shiels says. "It changed art in Australia, and these people were devoted to developing a distinctively Australian cultural identity – but concurrent with that, the personal lives of these people were stranger than fiction and I found that fascinating."

"Everyone slept with everyone. John and Sunday were lifelong partners, but their marriage was completely open from a certain point ... There were numerous affairs on both sides, and menage au trois. Sunday and John, from what I can understand, slept with men and women, both of them. It was a really open, free life, a complete rejection of conservative, well-to-do Melbourne."

Shiels's fascination with the Heide circle has become more than an interesting diversion. On Friday, she takes the stage as Sunday Reed in a new play for Melbourne Theatre Company, Anthony Weigh's drama, called Sunday, or A Fantasy of Life at Heide, is not a biography or stage documentary but an imagined psychodrama with Sunday at the centre: a portrait of obsession, love, privilege, depression, longing, wilfulness, jealousy, desire – and, yes, art. It asks the audience to consider what life would have been like in mid-20th century Australia for a woman with Sunday's intellect, cultural ambitions and appetites.

"She was way ahead of her time," Weigh says of the real-life Sunday Reed.

"She was very free-thinking, very independent, extremely



strong. But also, I think, deeply troubled. She had a slew of unsuccessful relationships. I don't want to play the amateur psychologist, but I think she could lapse into some serious depressions. But very bright and excited by the possibilities of modernism."

The Heide circle of artists encouraged and supported by the Reeds from the mid-1930s included Danila Vassilieff, Gray Smith, Arthur Boyd, John Perceval, Albert Tucker and Joy Hester, as well as Nolan. The Reeds provided food, lodgings, art materials and a bold creative impetus. They were committed to modernism in the visual arts and literature – John Reed took over publication of Angry Penguins magazine – and encouraged artists to seek out

**'It changed art in Australia, and these people were devoted to developing a distinctively Australian cultural identity – but concurrent with that, the personal lives of these people were stranger than fiction and I found that fascinating'**

NIKKI SHIELS  
ON THE HEIDE CIRCLE

fresh sources of creative material. Anything that was second-hand, unoriginal or creaking with academic realism was anathema to them.

"They were trying to cultivate a group of artists who often lived there for long periods of time," Weigh says. "Sunday would cook for them. They were given roof and board, they were given small amounts of money, they were given canvases and paint – Sunday famously bought the Ripolin paint (for Nolan)."

The play explores the idea of patronage: the relationship between benefactor/mentor and artist such as has existed throughout history, and which may or may not be complicated by sex. As Weigh describes it, Sunday's investment

in Nolan was more than merely practical.

"(Director) Sarah Goodes and I were keen to use the story of the Reeds and Heide to think about art in Australia, and the relationship between patrons and artists," he says. "And also to think about things such as gender, and sex, and artistry, and what it was to be an intellectual in Australia in the mid-20th century – the kind of people the Reeds surrounded themselves with."

To what extent could Sunday Reed claim to have "made" Nolan as an artist?

"This is the argument that is made in the play: who owns the art?" Weigh says. "Of course, the artist says he does. Sunday feels very deeply that she owned the art,

that they had provided the means for this art to be made. Would the art ever have been made, if not for the Reeds?"

Weigh, who grew up in Queensland, studied at NIDA in Sydney and now lives in New York, was not familiar with the Reeds and the Heide circle before he started work on the play. He was in the Western Isles of Scotland in 2017 when Chris Mead, then the literary manager at MTC, called to ask if he'd be interested in writing a play about Heide. The theatre company had for some time been wanting to produce a play about that potent chapter of the city's cultural history. Goodes was on board as director. Now they needed someone to write the play.

Later that year, Weigh was in

Melbourne and made a trip to Heide. As he and Goodes explored the garden and house where the Reeds lived, Goodes turned to him and said: "We must never, ever, see the house." She meant that the play should avoid a literal representation of Heide, or a depiction of the Reeds' domestic arrangements as a kind of kitchen-sink drama.

"The ideas are so much bigger than the house," Weigh says. "The house is tiny. And these ideas, these people, are enormous – they're giants of Australian history. We didn't want to contain them in a setting that was banal or concrete."

"The designer (Anna Cordingley) has created a deeply psychological space – it's almost like

and ferocious – and Weigh says Shiels brings a "deep truthfulness" to the role.

"Everything is deeply honest, deeply truthful. She has this wonderful sense of Sunday's angularity as well – her strangeness, and her wicked sense of humour, and her cruelty. She's very mercurial. She really turns on a dime, and Nikki can do that so effectively."

Shiels says the creative, bohemian lifestyle the Reeds encouraged at Heide was incredibly generous but also deeply flawed.

"What really interested me was the power imbalance – the interplay between the creation of art and who ultimately owns it," she says. "As an artist myself I have a strong opinion about that. But of course I'm playing a patron, and I'm playing a woman."

"The complexity of the argument sits at the heart of this play. There's no right answer, we are all arguing from our different experiences and values as characters inside the piece. It's an interesting argument to put to audiences."

Sunday, she adds, was more than simply a patron.

"I regard her as an artist," she says. "She was a woman who curated the way she lived, and nurtured and imagined a way of life that had the collective experience at the centre."

"You understand that when you go to Heide."

*Sunday is at the Southbank Theatre, Melbourne, until February 18.*



**News** > [All Arts](#) > [News](#)



2023 Arts Conference Calendar. Image: Shutterstock.

**ALL ARTS**

# 2023 Arts Conference and Summit Planner

**Whether you're a curator, a visual artist, theatre performer, writer or festival director, conferences are returning in 2023, offering professional development opportunities.**

23 Jan 2023

**Gina Fairley**



Whether you're looking for professional development, seeking to tap into sector trends or hoping to rub shoulders with cultural entrepreneurs (remember what that was like?), *ArtsHub's* 2023 Conference and Summit Planner maps out what's on offer.

Note from editors: We've tried to be thorough, but additional dates are sure to be announced later in the year, so bookmark this story and check in with us again.

Jump to **JUNE CONFERENCES** in second half of the year.

## February

### **CONFERENCE: Ausglass (Vic)**

With the theme 'Future Past', Ausglass conference – the peak organisation for the art glass profession – will be held in Melbourne, and will explore skill, sustainability, education and technology, with sessions and demos on offer. International speakers include Simone Fezer (Germany).

Dates: 3-5 February, in person, presented at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne (Fitzroy).

### **SUMMIT: Museums, Health and Wellbeing Summit (online)**

From improving mental health to combating social isolation, and building resilience in children to serving those suffering from age-related conditions, this virtual event shares what's next for health, well-being and museums.

Details: 6-7 February, online.

### **SUMMIT: Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) (Bangladesh)**

The Dhaka Art Summit (DAS) is an international, non-commercial research and exhibition platform for art and architecture related to South Asia. It has a core focus on re-examining how we think about these forms of art in both a regional and an international context. With the theme Bonna, meaning flood, the word extends beyond a singular connotation of 'disaster' to challenge binaries – between necessity and excess, between regeneration and disaster, between adult and child, between male and female. Australian curator Alexie Glass-Kantor has been part of the Summit development team.

Details: 3-11 February, in person, presented at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.



## **CONFERENCE: Sydney WorldPride Human Rights Conference (NSW)**

A three-day exploration of LGBTQIA+ human rights across three levels of Sydney's International Convention Centre (ICC), including inspiring keynotes, panels and roundtables with interactive workshops, performances and facilitated networking events. This will be the largest convergence of human rights defenders, community members, government and political representatives, philanthropists and corporate leaders committed to LGBTQIA+ rights ever held in Asia Pacific.

Details: 1-3 March, presented at Sydney's International Convention Centre (ICC).

## **CONFERENCE: Regional Public Galleries NSW 2023 Conference (NSW)**

With the title, Transformative Conversations: Empowered Actions – From art world peripheries to centres for the future, the conference will bring together gallery staff, creative practitioners and industry professionals to explore the role of galleries as dynamic, sustainable and transformative spaces, as we tackle future challenges and continue to evolve as creative centres for our regions. The jam-packed program includes keynotes, panel discussions, a visit to the stunning Tathra headland for a talk by Aboriginal heritage specialists and a conference dinner at Navigate Arts Church.

Details: 2-3 March, in person, presented at South East Centre for Contemporary Art, formerly Bega Valley Regional Gallery, Bega NSW.

## **CONFERENCE: Perth Sculpture Conference (WA)**

The Perth Sculpture Conference is presented in partnership with Storm King Art Center, US – one of the great sculpture parks in the world – with Artistic Director and Chief Curator Nora R Lawrence and President John P Stern attending. The event coincides with Sculpture by the Sea Cottesloe.

Details: 8-9 March, in person, location to be announced.


## **TALKS/SUMMIT: All About Women (NSW)**

There will be 25 events featuring more than 60 international and Australian artists, thinkers and storytellers at the 11th **All About Women** festival. Its centrepiece talks will be about gender, justice and equality. Expanding to a three-day program for the first time, the vibrant annual festival will feature lively in-person and online conversations and events. To **view the full program** and book.

Details: 11-13 March, presented from Sydney Opera House (NSW), in person and online.



**WRITERS WEEK: Adelaide Writers' Week 2023 (SA)**

 An inspiring program, curated by Louise Adler AM as part of Adelaide Festival, will draw international and Australia contemporary writers together to discuss current topics, under the theme Truth be Told.

Details: 4-9 March, presented at Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden.

**CONFERENCE: Australian International Documentary Conference (Vic)**

The southern hemisphere's premier industry forum and marketplace for documentary and factual content – the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) will take place in-person at ACMI, followed by an online international marketplace. Among the headlining speakers are US documentary filmmaker **Sara Dosa**, Delhi-based filmmaker and writer **Shaunak Sen**, **Fatima Salaria**, Managing Director of UK Production Company Naked Television and Emmy Award-winning Moroccan-American filmmaker **Rita Baghdadi**, among others. The theme is Agents for Change.

Details: 5-8 March Conference (in person) at ACMI, Melbourne (Vic), and 9-11 March Marketplace (online).

**CONFERENCE: Design Research 2023 (Vic)**

A three-day conference dedicated to design research and researchers, this year's event will seek to explore the breadth of design research practices that contribute to these challenges at every level, from initial assessment to planning and conducting, and analysis and use. Design Research 2023 is divided into one day of workshops followed by two full days of conference presentations.

Details: 14-16 March, in person and online, presented at ACMI Melbourne.

**SUMMIT: Green Museums Summit (virtual)**

Presented by the international organisation MuseumNext, the Green Museums Summit will bring together museum professionals from around the globe to share inspiration, actionable ideas and new ways of working. It will ask: How can museums champion sustainable choices and educate the public about environmental impact? How can we make our museums more sustainable and embrace practices that reduce waste and move us towards net-zero?

Details: 27-28 March, presented online.

**CONFERENCE: ArtsRaise Conference 2023 (Vic)**

A new addition to the arts conference offering, ArtsRaise is an arts and culture fundraising conference presented by **Fundraising and Philanthropy (F&P)**. It will gather arts



fundraising professionals, sponsors, philanthropists and foundations over two days in Melbourne to discuss fundraising best practices, inspirational case studies, emerging methods, and thought leadership from Australia's leading arts and cultural organisations and practitioners.

Details: 28-29 March, in person, presented in Melbourne.

## April

### **SYMPOSIUM: The NAS Drawing Symposium (NSW)**

The NAS Festival of Drawing held in conjunction with the **Dobell Drawing Prize #23** includes the NAS Drawing Symposium, featuring Australian and international artists and speakers, a series of tours and panel discussions. It is returning for its third edition in 2023. NAS Head of Drawing Maryanne Coutts tells *ArtsHub*: 'This year for the Drawing Symposium, we are focusing on the importance of those conversations artists have with other artists that last over years, and across distances. We are inviting four artists to each invite another artist who they often talk with about their practices – one of the panels will be **Hiraku Suzuki** in Japan talking with Gary Warner in Sydney.'

Details: 1 April, in person, presented at the National Art School campus.

### **CONVENTION: Australian Partner Acrobatics Convention (Vic)**

Tickets for the four-day annual training convention have been released, with workshops on acro-yoga, cheer stunting, circus, sports acrobatics and dance acrobatics for all skill levels. The festival will be held at Camp Cooriemungle, around three hours south-west of Melbourne in Victoria. Registrations open.

Details: 18-23 April, in person, presented at Camp Cooriemungle, Victoria.

## May

### **MARKETPLACE: Showcase Victoria 2023 (Vic)**

Attended each year by over 250 industry members, Showcase Victoria is an arts market with extraordinary outcomes. Showcase Victoria will return to a two-day format this year. Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for artists and producers are now open and will close on 6 February. Presented by the **Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres (VAPAC)** and **Regional Arts Victoria** with support from **Creative Victoria**, Showcase Victoria is Australia's leading state-based performing arts market playing a key role in facilitating touring.



Details: 9-10 May, presented at The Drum Theatre, Walker Street and Lonsdale Street,  
 hub\* Menu

**CONFERENCE: AMaGA National Conference (NSW)**

Each year AMaGA (Australian Museums and Galleries Association) holds a National Conference at a different capital city or regional location, aimed at being a networking opportunity for museum and gallery workers. The AMaGA 2023 theme is Discomfort, encouraging brave conversations and new connections in a changing environment.

**Registrations open.**

Details: 16-19 May, in person, presented at Murrook Cultural Centre, Newcastle City Hall and Civic Theatre on Awabakal and Worimi Land/Newcastle.

**SUMMIT: Digital Museum Summit (virtual)**

The ever-changing nature of digital can mean that it's hard for museums to know where to focus their energy for the best results. The MuseumNext Digital Summit brings together more than 40 international speakers to share action orientated presentations to help museums find digital success. They will discuss how museums can stay up-to-date with the latest technology, strategies and tools, with case studies.

Details: 15-16 May, online.

Read: **Arts festivals and events calendar 2023**

**ONLINE CONFERENCE: ALIA Information Online 2023 (virtual)**

The **ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association)** national conference provides the platform as a meeting point for all library and information professionals, from all sectors across Australia and the international community. The conference this year is a virtual event. The theme is Shaping the Future.

Details: 17-18 May, online.

**TALKS: Vivid Ideas 2023 (NSW)**

Vivid Sydney is a festival of Ideas, Light and Music presented by Destination NSW in partnership with the City of Sydney across key venues. It is the largest festival of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Alongside the spectacular site-responsive light works, a three-week program of panel talks, masterclasses and keynote speakers is presented, which has garnered its own reputation for innovative thinking. Details of the 2023



program are yet to be announced.

**ARTS Hub** 17 June, in person, presented across multiple Sydney venues. [Menu](#)

**TALKS: Semi Permanent 2023 (NSW)**

Semi Permanent presents an annual line-up of talks and events canvassing design, art, technology, fashion, music, film, video games, architecture and more. It is presented each year in May at its venue partner, Carriageworks.

Details: to be announced.



*Feel engaged with your sector at a conference or talks festival in 2023. Image: Shutterstock.*

**JUNE**

**CONFERENCE: APAM Gathering (virtual and in person)**

The next Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) Gathering will be in June alongside RISING in Naarm/Melbourne. The Gathering is a unique opportunity to see new Australian and New Zealand contemporary performance (as pitches and full-length productions), participate in formal and informal networking, engage in Exchange (the talks and ideas program) and make new national and international connections. Performing artists, producers, presenters and curators are invited to join colleagues and friends from across the country and around the globe, for the opportunity to engage in a curated in person and digital program of performance, networking and dialogue. Tickets for the Gathering



go on sale on 14 April 2023.



Details: digital Gathering: 7-9 June, in person Gathering: 14-18 June.

Menu

### **CONFERENCE: REMIX Sydney 2023 (NSW)**

REMIX Sydney is a global conference that has roots in Australia, and explores the intersection of art, technology and entrepreneurship.

Details: 8-9 June.

### **CONFERENCE: 2023 BookPeople (SA)**

BookPeople (formerly Australian Booksellers Association) has announced that the 99th annual conference and trade exhibition will take place in June. The 2023 conference will begin on Saturday afternoon with a unique Adelaide experience, then will officially kick off on Sunday morning with a packed program of guest speakers. Monday will cover many aspects of the business of selling books, plus showcase as many authors as can be squeezed in.

Details: 18-19 June, in person, presented at Adelaide Convention Centre.

### **SYMPOSIUM: ISEA 2023 Symposium (France and online)**

ISEA (International Symposium on Electronic Art) is one of the world's most prominent international arts and technology events, bringing together scholarly, artistic and scientific domains in an interdisciplinary discussion and showcase of creative productions applying new technologies in art, interactivity, and electronic and digital media. The theme for the 2023 event is Symbiosis, and it is described as transdisciplinary and inter-sectorial event (including visual arts, theatre, music, design, cinema, sociology, philosophy, economics, engineering, mathematics, biology and more).

Details: 16-21 June, in person plus online registration, presented in Paris, France.

## **July**

### **CONFERENCE: Eighteenth International Conference on the Arts in Society (international/online)**

The Eighteenth International Conference on the Arts in Society offers an interdisciplinary forum for discussion of the role of the arts in society, under the theme New Aesthetic Expressions: The Social Role of Art. It is a place for critical engagement, examination and experimentation, developing ideas that connect the arts to their contexts in the world – on stage, in studios and theatres, classrooms, museums and galleries, on the streets and in communities. As a research network, Arts in Society is defined by its **scope and**



**concerns** and is motivated to build strategies for action framed by its shared **themes**

**ARTS** hub\*

Menu

Details: 5-6 July, in person and online, presented at Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland.

## August

### **CONFERENCE: Arts Activated Conference (NSW)**

The next biennial Arts Activated Conference will take place in 2023, presented by Accessible Arts in partnership with a range of industry, community, government and corporate partners. It is a two-day event to share information and ideas about advancing arts and disability, both for arts practitioners with disability and audiences with disability. It is usually held in August.

Details: to be announced.

### **CONFERENCE: Australian Festival Industry Conference (AFIC) (NSW)**

Established in 2019, the Australian Festival Industry Conference (AFIC) is the only conference in Australia and Asia Pacific dedicated exclusively to servicing the thousands of festival industry professionals that produce quality music, arts and culture, food and drink. This year's conference will be held in Sydney.

Details: 30-31 August, in person, presented at Luna Park, Sydney.

### **MEETING: Australian Performing Arts Exchange [APAX] (Qld)**

In 2023, the Australian Performing Arts Exchange will be presented in Cairns/Gimuy. APAX has evolved from an arts market and a conference into a single national gathering of more than 450 performing arts workers to develop tours and cultivate the partnerships that support the ongoing creation and presentation of Australian performing arts.

Details: 28 August – 1 September, in person, presented in Cairns.

### **CONFERENCE: UX Australia (online)**

UX Australia is Australia's premier conference about UX (user experience), product and service design, and the surrounding disciplines of research, content, operations, management and more. Now in its 15th year, this online event includes conference presentations, activities and workshops, with local and international presenters covering topics and ideas relevant to experienced practitioners, newbies and everyone in between.

Details: 22-25 August, online and in person, presented in Sydney.



**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE: ICDIAVE 2023: 17. International Conference on Digital Installation Art and Visual Effects (NSW)**

Menu

ICDIAVE aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of digital installation art and visual effects. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends and concerns, as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of digital installation art and visual effects.

Details: 24-25 August, online, presented in Sydney.

## September

**CONFERENCE: ARTLANDS 2023 (ACT)**

Returning in 2023, Artlands will bring together 80 regional practitioners: 20 people under 20, 10 Knowledge Circle First Nations leaders and 10 people from other industries in a part symposium/part think tank/part workshop event. The three-day event will facilitate the creation of an ambitious set of guiding principles for Regional Arts Australia and the regional and arts sector into the future. Artlands provides a series of critical narratives across industry, research and academia that reflect current emerging trends and case studies and respond to challenges and opportunities experienced throughout regional Australian arts practice. One of the key outcomes will be a printed publication that documents the discussions.

Details: 6-8 September, in person, presented at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

**TALKS: Sydney Contemporary (NSW)**

Sydney Contemporary is set to return to its physical venue, Carriageworks in September, showcasing 80 leading galleries and four days of art with a full program of talks on topics of the day influencing the art market and contemporary practice.

Details: 7-10 September, in person, presented at Carriageworks, Sydney.

**CONFERENCE: 2023 ASA Conference (VIC)**

Delivering an in person or online hybrid conference, the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) will meet on Naarm country/Melbourne this year with the theme Rising to our Challenges: Archives at the G, drawing inspiration from the Melbourne Cricket Ground (the 'G') as an iconic Melbourne sporting venue. Archives, like those of the 'G', can also reach across the community and evoke passion, emotion and devotion.



Details: 4-7 September, in person and online, presented at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne.


[Menu](#)

### **CONFERENCE: 20th ICOM-CC 2023 (international)**

The 20th Triennial Conference of the International Council of Museums' Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) will be held in Valencia, Spain, with the theme Working Towards a Sustainable Past. It will consider sustainability from other vantage points, such as cultural sustainability, institutional sustainability and even professional sustainability. The conference will attract around 160 international speakers and around 900 delegates, including conservators, scientists, historians and art historians, curators, librarians, archivists, students, collection managers and directors from the world's leading cultural heritage institutions and the private sector.

Dates: 18-22 September, presented in Valencia, Spain.

### **CONFERENCE: Sixteenth International Conference on the Inclusive Museum (Canada and online)**

The Inclusive Museum Research Network (part of the Association of Art Museum Curators – AAMC) is brought together by a shared concern for the future role of the museum and how it can become more inclusive. The conference offers a selection of panels, keynotes, workshops and breakout opportunities for socialising with other conference-goers under the theme for 2023 – Museum Transformations: Pathways to Community Engagement. Details: 18-20 September, in person and online, presented in Vancouver, Canada.

## **October**

### **TALKS: Panpa-panpalya, Tarnanthi (SA)**

The Tarnanthi Festival begins at AGSA with a public celebration. AGSA also hosts the insightful panpa-panpalya ideas conference for the opening weekend, led by notable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, curators, thinkers and writers, alongside an extensive array of talks, tours, performances, workshops, creative activities and education programs.

Details: Opening weekend, 20-22 October, in person, presented at Art Gallery of South Australia.

## **November**



**CONFERENCE: CIMAM (Argentina)**

**ARTS hub** This year's annual CIMAM (International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art) conference will be presented in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Victoria Noorthoorn, Director of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, has invited the global museum community, noting that this year's event will include a third day of customised visits for each of the (approximately) 220 museum professionals in attendance. Details: 9-11 November, in person, presented in Argentina.

**December**

**CONFERENCE: 2023 AAANZ conference (Australia or New Zealand)**

The annual AAANZ Conference takes place in either Australia or New Zealand. The conference attracts around 500 delegates for a two- to three-day program, which typically includes over 150 papers, keynote lectures, graduate masterclasses, networking, round tables on publishing, funding and other events. It is an important event for scholars working within the fields of art history, art theory, curatorship, art education and arts practice. In the past it has been held in December. Details: to be announced.

**What did we miss? Email [editor@artshub.com.au](mailto:editor@artshub.com.au) with updates and inclusions.**



**Gina Fairley**

Gina Fairley is ArtsHub's National Visual Arts Editor. For a decade she worked as a freelance writer and curator across Southeast Asia and was previously the Regional Contributing Editor for Hong Kong based magazines Asian Art News and World Sculpture News. Prior to writing she worked as an arts manager in America and Australia for 14 years, including the regional gallery, biennale and commercial sectors. She is based in Mittagong, regional NSW. Twitter: @ginafairley Instagram: fairleygina

**Related News**



# Easter Art Exhibition calls for show entries

The Islander

Thursday 19th January 2023

459 words

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660cm on the page



## Easter Art Exhibition calls for show entries

ENTRIES are now open for Kangaroo Island's bi-annual 36th Easter Art Exhibition with a top prize of \$10,000.

The Easter Art Exhibition began more than 35 years ago from inauspicious beginnings when a few artists participated in the Penneshaw Annual Flower Show.

The 36th KI Easter Art Exhibition's theme is "Precious Moments", and the judges are artists Nici Cumpston and Olga Sankey.

The event is becoming increasingly popular with residents and visitors and is organised by 100 per cent volunteer group Artists Collective KI.

Artists Collective member Michele Lane said visitation numbers increased by more than 46 per cent from 2018 to 2021, up 1340 in 2021 compared with 908 in 2018.

"The 2021 event broke all records with over 200 entries produced by over 100 artists and more than 1300 attendees," she said.

Michele said the Diana Keir Award, valued at \$10,000, to be awarded at the 2023 KI Easter Arts Show, would help attract a larger spectrum of artists and visitors to the event.

"This year, we're looking forward to attracting even more artists to showcase their work and more visitors to admire it," she said.

The deadline to enter is Feb. 26. See details on the bottom right of this page.

When KI artist and identity Diana Keir died in 2019, her childhood friend Alexandra McCarthy resolved to ensure that Diana's artistic legacy lived on by supporting her favourite event.

Alex has established the Diana Keir Art Award honours and pays tribute to this lively and eccentric character who contributed so much to Kangaroo Island art. A corpus funds the prize, under the auspices of Guildhouse, to award \$10,000 every two years.



Easter Art Exhibition committee members Michele Lane and Desiree Jurgs, with Artists Collective Kangaroo Island member Toni Skrigin and the 2023 Easter Art Exhibition poster. Picture by Vanessa Wilson

Supporting the drive to encourage artists and maintain high standards, the Art Gallery of South Australia has committed one of the two judges since 2014.

For the 2023 exhibition, the Artists Collective is honoured to welcome two re-

spected artists as judges:

■ Nici Cumpston is artistic director of Tarnanthi and curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, is also a practising artist/photographer.

■ Olga Sankey is a practising artist interested in

printmaking and digital art and a retired senior visual arts lecturer at University of South Australia. As a child, Olga lived for several years on Kangaroo Island at Cape du Couedic while her father, noted artist Voitre Marek, was light

housekeeper.

The 2023 Exhibition opens Friday night, April 7, which is Good Friday, and runs until Saturday, April 22.

The Meet the Judges session will be on Saturday morning, April 8, at the exhibition.





Daniel Browning. Photo supplied.

Ballina's Northern Rivers Community Gallery is launching its 2023 Public Programs this weekend, with a free after hours in-conversation event featuring exhibiting artist Marian Tubbs and ABC Radio National presenter Daniel Browning.

This will be followed by a live improvised sound performance by Eora/Sydney-based electronic and mixed-media artist Laura Hunt.

Commencing in the gallery at 3pm on Saturday, Bundjalung and Kullilli man Daniel Browning will provide unscripted insight into Marian Tubbs' current NRCG exhibition *Reversible Destiny*, and delve into her practice and career.

Mr Browning is an award-winning journalist, broadcaster, documentary maker, sound artist and writer from the Bundjalung and Kullilli peoples of far northern New South Wales and south-western Queensland. Currently, he is Editor Indigenous Radio with the ABC and presents *The Art Show* on Radio National.

A visual arts graduate, Daniel Browning is also a widely published freelance arts writer and has worked on publications by the Art Gallery of NSW, the National Gallery of Victoria, QAGOMA and the Art Gallery of South Australia.



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# New public artworks to seek out

**Public art is booming. ArtsHub takes a look at new commissions, and others on the horizon in NSW, Victoria, the ACT and Queensland.**

20 Jan 2023

**Gina Fairley**



**VISUAL ARTS**

Lindy Lee at Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf. Photo: Steven Siewert.

Public artworks have the capacity to shift our view of the world through everyday encounters that make us rethink a site and our relationship to it.



It is not surprising, then, that its popularity continues to be on an exponential growth path, with more artworks commissioned by local governments, sponsors and developers every year. Their presence adds to those concepts championed today as selling points – walkability, liveability and ‘creative cities’ – with Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane all heavily investing in public art to win favour.

*ArtsHub* takes a look at some new public artworks recently unveiled, and others slated for 2023.

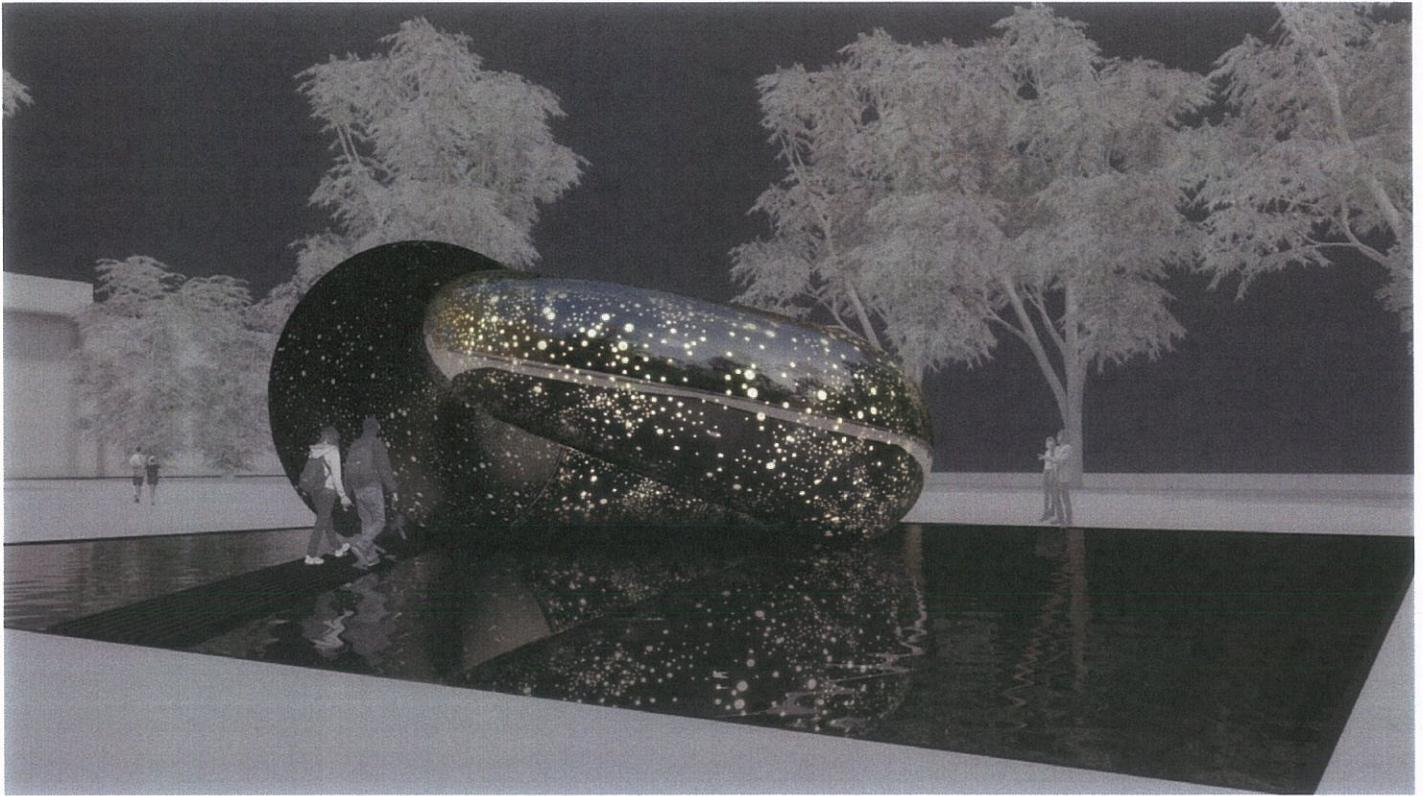
## Lindy Lee, Brisbane, Qld (2023) and Canberra, ACT (2024)

In recent years, **Lindy Lee**’s name has become the ‘must have’ on the desired public art list. She has consistently delivered major works since 2015, proving popular in China (Shanghai, Zhengzhou, Sanya Bay Hainan Island, Qingdao, Hong Kong and Xi’an all have had major pieces in the last five years). Adding to this are Brisbane’s *Moonlight Deities* (2018), *Secret World of a Starlight Ember* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 2020, and *Life of Stars* at the Art Gallery of South Australia (2018) – making her arguably Australia’s most successful artist working in the public domain.

Last year she added to that list *The Spheres* for the 2022 Brisbane Festival (September 2022) – an immersive installation aboard **Brisbane’s Art Boat** (UAP), and *One Bright Pearl* at Woollahra Gallery at Redleaf (November 2022), which is described as ‘a 260-kilogram mirror-polished stainless steel sculpture, measuring two metres in diameter [that] reflects on new beginnings and modern migration.’ There are now five public artworks works in the *One Bright Pearl* series internationally.

A \$1 million budget project that hit the skids, however, was her controversial *Drum Tower* for New York City’s Chinatown, a commission awarded in 2019 that remains undelivered (there is no mention of it on her website). When announced, it received some pushback, with locals asking, ‘How does that represent Chinatown?’





*Artist's impression of the 'Ouroboros', National Gallery of Australia. Image: Supplied.*

Lee has had a long relationship with Brisbane company UAP to fabricate her major artwork – it is **currently working** on major commissions for Lee to be delivered this year, including *D-bar* (which skins a building on the Gold Coast (2023), *Being Swallowed by the Milky Way* (a 2023 public work for Brisbane's Queen's Wharf) and, of course, her \$14 million commission to celebrate the National Gallery of Australia's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary – ***Ouroboros***. The 13-tonne, four-metre high sculpture of recycled metal is due to be installed by 2024. It is the NGA's most expensive commission in its history. Lee will turn 69 in 2023.

## Judy Watson, Dubbagullee (Bennelong Point), Sydney, NSW (2022)





*Judy Watson's 'Bara' was unveiled May 2022. Courtesy the artist and City of Sydney. Photo: Brett Boardman.*

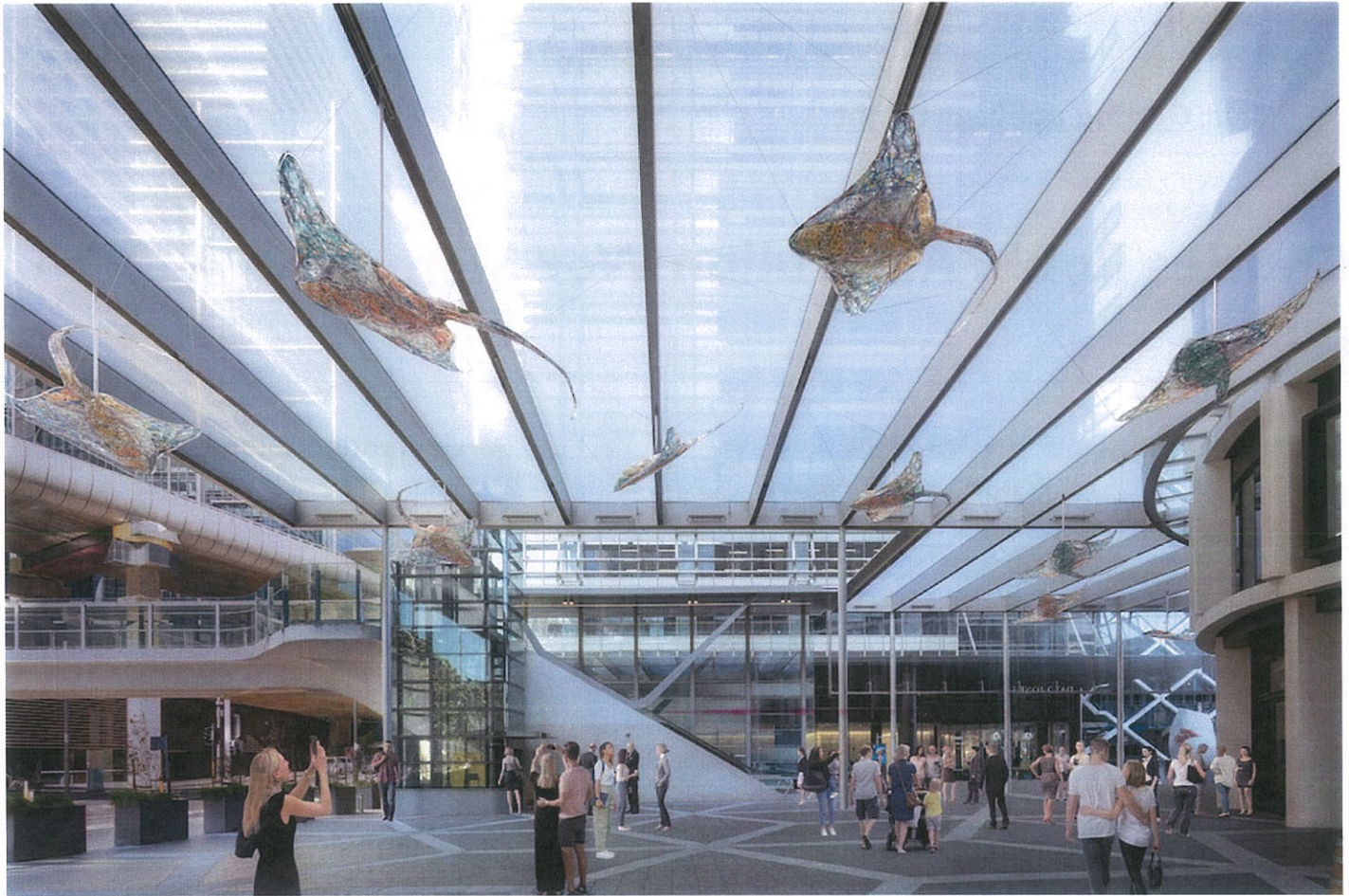
Commissioned in 2018 and unveiled in May 2022, ***Bara*** (meaning shell hook) was **delivered by Waanyi artist Judy Watson** to honour the Gadigal of the Eora Nation. It is located on the Tarpeian Precinct Lawn above Dubbagullee (Bennelong Point) and Warrane (Circular Quay), and was commissioned by the City of Sydney.

The six-metre high marble monument was inspired by the shell fishing hooks handcrafted and used by local Aboriginal women for generations. 'The crescent shape is a beautiful expression of Aboriginal technology... The bara is like a reflection of the moon in the sky, the bays in the harbour, the sails of the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge,' Watson said of the work.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore added in a formal statement: 'This stunning artwork is about recognising the destructive impact of invasion on the Gadigal people, honouring Sydney's first inhabitants and their descendants and promoting respect for the Aboriginal people that make this city what it is today.'



# Ghost Net Collective, Barangaroo Exchange Square, NSW (2023)



*Impression of installation by Ghost Net Collective commission at Barangaroo South. Image: Supplied.*

Curated by Nina Miall, a group of stingrays will hover above the bustling South Barangaroo's Exchange Square at the base of the Wynyard Walk in the coming month, becoming one of the largest hand-crafted, public artworks in Australia. It has been created by the Ghost Net Collective and Erub artists, among them Jimmy John Thaiday, a 2022 NATSIAA Prize-winner.

Titled *Mermer Waiskeder (Stories of the Moving Tide)*, the massive public artwork will be unveiled in early 2023. Miall told *ArtsHub* **in an earlier interview**: 'Situated at the harbour's historical tide line, the artwork engages with Barangaroo's earliest history as a place for fishing by the Gadigal people, having developed out of respect for the deep and continuing connection of First Nations people to the site, as well as the rich tradition of civic spaces as places of shared knowledge and community engagement.'

Around eight tonnes of sea waste was collected with the assistance of **Tangaroa Blue** (a not-for-profit dedicated to the removal and prevention of marine debris), to create these



artworks – which was largely done during 2022 in both Cairns and on Erub Island. Barangaroo docklands was also a site for roping factories, adding another layer of connection, along with some salvaged nets from Sydney Fish Market. The project was commissioned by Lendlease.

Read: [\*\*Getting public art right\*\*](#)

# Charles Robb, Australian War Memorial, ACT (2023)



Charles Robb, 'Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel' (maquette), 2021. Image: Supplied.

Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Bullwinkel, a nurse who served during World War II, will become the first sculpture of a woman commissioned by the Australian War Memorial council. Designs for the commission were revealed in December 2022, with the sculpture to be installed later this year.

Head of Art at the Australian War Memorial Laura Webster said in a statement: 'Artist Charles Robb is creating a moving sculpture, which features a life-size portrait of Vivian Bullwinkel in a standing pose in working summer uniform. Her hands are gently

clasped, in a pose that reflects her dignified composure and unrelenting dedication to nursing principles of care.'

On her return from the war Bullwinkel became Director of Nursing at Melbourne's Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital. Brisbane-based artist Dr Charles Robb was appointed the commission following a limited invitation design competition in 2020. The sculpture will



include 22 stainless steel discs, representing the 22 women killed in the Banka Island Massacre, which Bullwinkle survived. The discs will be arranged at the base of the sculpture as a reflection of the stars that would have been visible in the night sky on 16 February 1942, the date of the massacre.

Read: [12 new public artworks unveiled](#) (2021)

## Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Parramatta Square, NSW (2022)



*Healy and Cordeiro's 'Place of the Eels', Parramatta Square. Image: Copyright the artists.*

Unveiled in late September last year, the ***Place of the Eels*** takes its name from the Gadigal word – *Baramattagal*. Artist couple Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro are no strangers to major public commissions, with works for Green Square Library Tower, City of Sydney and QT Designer Hotel, Melbourne being key pieces.

They said of this work's concept: 'It is near impossible to say the two words "Parramatta" and "Eels" in the same sentence without thinking about rugby league,' adding that the upended



1960s repurposed bus is a tribute to local football legends and the 'can-do' vision of Coach Jack Gibson, who bought a Leyland Worldmaster to ensure his team could get to training and win the premiership.

Sitting in Parramatta Square, it presents like a trophy, reaching for the stars. It also speaks to the square's role as a transport hub. Passers-by can catch their image in its mirrored-surface, becoming part of this place's history and contemporary narrative. Taking it a step further, the surface showcases other moments in Parramatta's history with text and markings.

## Alex Seton, Australian War Memorial, ACT (2023)



Alex Seton, 'For every drop shed in anguish' (artist concept). Image: Mr.P Studios.

In June 2021 it was announced that Alex Seton had been awarded a major commission with the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The proposed work, **For every drop shed in anguish**, will be installed in the Sculpture Garden in 2023. It will comprise a field of sculpted Australian marble droplets suggesting blood, sweat and tears to recognise the sufferings of war and service.

Seton's proposed work 'was unanimously selected by veterans and their loved ones,' said the Museum.



# Artists to be announced, Sydney Metro–Western Sydney Airport line, NSW (2024)

With EOIs invited in September last year, the new **Sydney Metro–Western Sydney Airport line** is in the process of commissioning nine new artworks that will span its length and feature in each station. The line will service Greater Western Sydney and the new Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport, and will become the transport spine for the Western Parkland City's growth for generations to come.

Public art budgets are planned to range between \$600,000 and \$1.8 million for each of the nine commissions. With artists advised last month, the project enters Stage Two this year, with the installation for the public artworks planned for 2024-2026.





*Installation view Francis Upritchard, Sydney Modern. Photo: ArtsHub.*



## Francis Upritchard, Sydney Modern, NSW (2022)

Unveiled in December 2022 for the opening of the new Sydney Modern, the bronze sculpture ***Here Comes Everybody***, by the New Zealand-born artist Francis Upritchard, can be enjoyed anytime in the gallery's Welcome Plaza, positioned between the old and new wings of the Art Gallery of NSW.

The playful figures seem to hold up and dance around the Plaza's enormous awning, caught between folklore and figuration. Installed just a couple of months now, the piece is proving to be a popular one for people to engage with, and take the mandatory 'selfie' alongside.

## Natasha Johns-Messenger, Southern Way McClelland Commission, Vic (2023)

In August last year, installation artist and filmmaker Natasha Johns-Messenger was awarded the \$300,000 **Southern Way McClelland Commission 2023** for her dynamic sculpture project, *Compass 23*, which will be installed on the Peninsula Link freeway in Melbourne's south-east in October this year.

It will replace *Lover Flower* (by John Meade with Emily Karanikolopolous), which will be relocated to McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, to join its permanent collection.

*Compass 23* will be a 12-metre high simple powder-coated and stainless steel geometric form based on the navigation pillars of north, south, east and west. The artist says that the sculpture speaks to the way 'we all play a role in authoring our world', adding, 'engaging perceptual shifts inside simple geometric framing, my artworks aim to question our expectations of space and three-dimensional form.'

It will be the seventh work in the series run in partnership between McClelland Sculpture Park and Southern Way, with the program wrapping up in 2037.

## Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan, NSW (2023)





*Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan working with the UAP team in Brisbane to realise their new major public artwork for 2023. Image: Courtesy of the artist, Rachel See [@rachelseephotos](#) and UAP | Urban Art Projects.*

Filipino-born Australia-based artist duo, Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan have made Brisbane home. For years they have been exploring the meaning of 'home' and a sense of 'belonging', and are known for their large installations using found objects and often cardboard. Over the past 12 months they have been working with UAP in Brisbane to help develop a major new commission in New South Wales this year. Details are to be announced soon.

Read: [Good public art starts before the 'art'](#)

# Dinni Kemarre Kunoth, Sydney Football Stadium, NSW (2022)







*Dinni Kemarre Kunoth 'One Big Mob, All Mixed Up', was completed last year in the peak of COVID, for Sydney Football (Allianz) Stadium. Image: Courtesy of the artist, Rachel See [@rachelseephotos](#) and UAP / Urban Art Projects.*

Dinni Kemarre Kunoth's *One Big Mob, All Mixed Up*, was completed last year in the peak of COVID, for Sydney Football (Allianz) Stadium.

With curation by Cultural Capital, the stadium will become home to a number of new public artwork commissions, which will continue to be rolled out.

Fabricated by UAP, in collaboration with the artist and Mossenson Art Projects, *One Big Mob, All Mixed Up* has been described as speaking 'to afternoons bonding over a friendly match, the fierce pride that comes with watching your team win, and the friendships forged through a universal love for the sport'.

Essentially, it is about celebrating the role sport plays in bringing communities together.

## Linda Marrinon, National Gallery of Australia, ACT (2022)





*Linda Marrinon, 'Woman in Jumpsuit', 2022, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra. Commissioned with the generous support of Art Makers. Image: Courtesy of Linda Marrinon and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.*

Melbourne-based artist Linda Marrinon's practice includes painting and sculpture to explore social types and challenge neoclassical tropes. The artist, now in her 60s, uses a mixture of wit, irony and feminist critique, with her works being described as 'anti-heroic and anti-monumental'.

A new commission by the National Gallery of Australia, titled ***Woman in Jumpsuit***, joined the NGA's Sculpture Garden in September 2022. It is made from bronze and emulates Marrinon's characteristic delicately painted plaster and terracotta figurative style with a sense of hand surfacing. Again, it was a project realised by the Brisbane-based UAP, and was the first in the company's Art Makers commission series. It will be on display until September 2023.



**Gina Fairley**

Gina Fairley is ArtsHub's National Visual Arts Editor. For a decade she worked as a freelance writer and curator across Southeast Asia and was previously the Regional Contributing Editor for Hong Kong based magazines Asian Art News and World Sculpture News. Prior to writing she worked as an arts manager in America and Australia for 14 years, including the regional gallery, biennale and commercial sectors. She is based in Mittagong, regional NSW. Twitter: @ginafairley Instagram: fairleygina

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# ARTIST PROFILE

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## Ryan Presley

By Wes Hill

**Art, Ryan Presley's work suggests, should be a bridge between institutional and vernacular culture, as if each would become shallow without the other.**

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5

Ryan Presley photographed by Claire Letitia Reynolds for Artist Profile 2022

Ryan Presley's work is full of symbolism, but I also like to think of it as testing the line between iconography and insignia, directing viewers to consider rank and responsibility, status and standing. Presley, who has both Aboriginal and Scandinavian ancestry, is fascinated by official/unofficial roles and jurisdictions, creating works of a predominantly illustrative bent that hinge on their capacity to be decoded. His particular penchant is for standalone objects – uniforms, banknotes, tasers, welfare cards, gavels, detention centres, boats, CCTV systems, graffiti tags, mining equipment – which are used to thematise situations of postcolonial sovereignty, or lack thereof. Like many Aboriginal-identified artists who have at one time been inspired by Gordon Bennett, the question of power – actual, symbolic, and imagined – pervades everything he does.

When I caught up with Presley at his Yeronga studio, in Brisbane's inner south, preliminary sketches for his exhibition, *Inferno*, held at Milani Gallery in July, were still taped to the walls. As with his 2017 exhibition, *Terror Island (Wish You Were Here)*, at Brisbane's Boxcopy Contemporary Art Space, his latest exhibition could be read, convincingly, as another attempt to get out of the shadow of his hugely successful series, *Blood Money*, 2010–ongoing, which he began at the age of twenty-three. Religion, rather than the economy, has in recent years become for Presley both a central inspiration and a bugbear, turning to Byzantine codes to capture something of the sacral and retributive air driving matters of Aboriginal social justice.

But back to *Blood Money*, which has to be one of the most iconic bodies of work produced in Australia over the last decade. For those out of the loop, the series consists of large, detailed watercolour versions of Australian banknotes that Presley has re-designed to depict leaders from Aboriginal history, reminding us that the "invisible hand" of the market now also refers to those "hidden" subjugated peoples that colonialist capitalism depended on. Presley's historical figures are offered as alternatives to those on existing Australian banknotes, many of whom could be regarded as beneficiaries of colonisation. An exception, of course, is Ngarrindjeri author and inventor David Unaipon (on the \$50 note), whom Presley substitutes for

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Since completing a practice-led doctoral project at Griffith University in 2016 – about the imbrication of monetary systems in religion, culture, and law, going all the way back to antiquity – Presley began pairing the *Blood Money* watercolour works with *Blood Money Currency Exchange Terminal*, 2016-ongoing, an ersatz currency exchange booth in which a performing teller can exchange your AUD for BMD (Blood Money Dollars), but always at a loss. Staged at the TarraWarra Museum of Art in 2016 and refined for the 2019 *Primavera* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), Sydney, the piece is surprisingly redolent of relational and social-practice art (Plamen Dejanov and even Stuart Ringholt come to mind), offering the artist respite, perhaps, from his usually intensive pictorial labours.

The MCA piece capped off an almost ten-year project for Presley that explicitly linked racial identity with commodification, riffing on the theme of indebtedness: the real debts born from colonialism, but also contemporary (white) guilt. Before Richard Bell's *Pay the Rent*, 2022, hit the world stage at documenta fifteen – a work that consists of an endlessly changing LED sign calculating the debt (rent) owed to Aboriginal people since the 1901 Federation – *Blood Money* could, in retrospect, be about the price of identity politics itself. The project suggests that, while contemporary art can provide the historically dispossessed with symbolic power, icons of inclusivity may also be in high demand simply because they're good for business. Everybody's got to make a living, even those whose job it is to point to the system's exploitative, contradictory mechanics. As Presley told me at Milani Gallery: "People just really like buying paintings of money."

From September this year, works from *Inferno* will be on display at Adelaide's ACE Open, forming part of a new exhibition, *Fresh Hell*. In keeping with the cheery titles, Presley's 2022 paintings and drawings – close to what you would call "realistic" but also a bit folkly – reflect something of the techno-dystopia of recent times. I'm referring, here, to life post-Covid, but also to what Ben Davis calls "art in the after-culture:" the sense that, in an era of climate catastrophes, everything cultural has been sucked into our phones. Art increasingly looks superseded by bespoke virtual platforms, presentist ideologies, endless identity affirmations and moral feuds, turning all aesthetic experience into dislocated, self-directed appraisals of relevance. The works in *Inferno* and *Fresh Hell* don't reference this situation directly, but their dramatic depiction of individuals and symbols in decorative yet supposedly natural environments do invoke "survance" – a conjunction of "survival" and "resistance" that was coined by Gerald Vizenor in the 1990s to define a First Nations ontology. Survance is what Tyson Yunkaporta intimates is the "clean up" position everyone will need to occupy for future existence: "A thousand years of making our land liveable again, and patiently bringing former settlers back under the Law of the land again."

Created in the months before and after the birth of Presley's first child, *Inferno* and *Fresh Hell* reference a range of Christian icons, particularly Byzantine thematic conventions such as St. Theodore the general, St. Francis receiving the stigmata, and the transfiguration of Jesus. Moving from Alice Springs to Brisbane with his family when he was eleven, Presley grew up in a religious household but claims there was an important anxious moment in his Northern Territory childhood when the Christian symbolism he had become accustomed to was unceremoniously revealed to him by his mother as mere myth.

The desert palette of his Northern Territory past certainly makes its otherworldly presence felt in works such as *THE TRIAL (Live Dogs and Dead Lions)*, 2021, and *THE DUNES (How Good is Australia)*, 2021, the former work alluding to Franz Kafka's classic short story written in 1915, known for its guilt-ridden, labyrinthine unreality. These and other works, which include large oil paintings and drawings on paper, redirect the succinct pathos of early Byzantine messaging towards the authentic credo of "Blak Power," portraying white policemen and judicial figures in the roles of bureaucratic, foreign, authoritarian chumps. Here, the gold halos of Byzantine art become apparitions behind the heads of Black protagonists, resembling the gaudy flames stencilled on the sides of hot rod cars.

Viewers don't tend to be left wondering in front of Presley's work. While he may not think of his practice as religious per se, it's hard not to see it as an attempt to glorify and inspire, conveying, at the same time, a clear sense of moral and political duty, particularly where injustice is concerned. Although verging on displacement, Presley's symbols rarely look like they're about to poetically float free. Instead, his highly codified works, mixing iconography and insignia, are alluring only insofar as, once they have our attention, they might then get us thinking about their inculcation in actual systems, laws, and conventions.

This essay was originally published in *Artist Profile*, Issue 60, 2022.

Images courtesy the artist, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE), Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Artspace, Sydney, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Milani Gallery, Brisbane, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, UNSW Galleries, Sydney, and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands.

## EXHIBITION

Fresh Hell

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# The poetics of pollution

By Tristen Harwood

## The Saturday Paper

Saturday 21st January 2023

1555 words

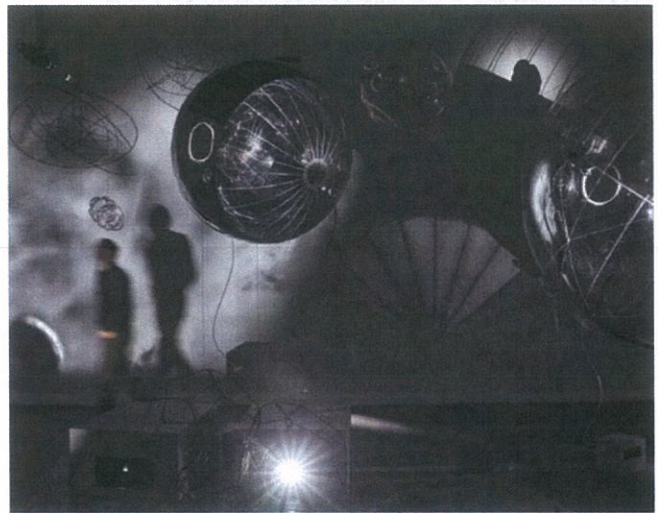
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Tomás Saraceno's exhibition at the Museum of Old and New Art, *Oceans of Air*, finds beauty in ecological trauma.

# The poetics of pollution



Tristen Harwood is an Indigenous writer, critic and researcher.

"Beginnings are apt to be shadowy," writes Rachel Carson in her visionary book of the sea and its lifeworlds, *The Sea Around Us*. Like Carson, who breathed poetry into science, artist Tomás Saraceno bends science with the phantom hand of art. It's fitting, as I wait with others at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) for Saraceno's exhibition *Oceans of Air*, that the artist invites us into the show with words that echo Carson's: "It's very dark... be careful... walk slowly."

I tread cautiously along the dusky passageway and, before my eyes have time to adjust, turn a corner into the first room. A stream of light cuts across the space at about eye-height, sculpting floating particles of dust to form a kind of starlike mirage. The light beams from its source at one end of the room and gathers into a moonlike sphere, flat against the black wall at the other end. Although the little moon is right there, my impressions of *Particular Matter(s)* (2021) are only partially of the astral. The dust softening the light casts the whole room into a submarine gloom.

This first artwork is not just visual but visceral. I see and breathe *Particular Matter(s)*: I swallow this particulate dust, it enters my lungs. In those first moments I fall for the

poetics of this gesture, how Saraceno attends to the ecology of the gallery. Its dust is rarely thought of except, I imagine, by cleaners and conservationists who do the work of managing the relationship between art, dust and the space.

But as I read the materials list for *Particular Matter(s)*, I'm disenchanted by its literalness. It doesn't only evoke a connection between stars and dust: it contains actual cosmic dust, along with PM<sub>2.5</sub> (particulate matter), stellar wind, air movement, kinaesthetic feedback and sonic waves. There is a tension between the poetics of gesture and the literalness of the work, the directness or urgency of its "message".

Saraceno is an Argentinian-born and Berlin-based artist whose work aspires to an ethical collaboration with the atmosphere in the Capitalocene era – a term that names capitalism as the primary proponent of environmental catastrophe. In a general sense, he's an artist who wants to draw attention to things that supposedly have gone unnoticed. For the current time, he might better be thought of as an artist concerned with restoring some kind of attentiveness and ethics to our eroded perceptual capacity (hello, social media). His work consists of floating sculptures, most notably his fully solar-powered hot air balloons, and international collaboration and community-building, such as his Aerocene Foundation.

In another room, overhead light permeates the atmosphere so it's easier to see

*We Do Not All Breathe the Same Air* (2022), which hangs on the wall. An iteration of work that has been ongoing since 2018, *We Do Not All Breathe the Same Air* uses long strips of paper tape that are marked with dots of varying gradients of colour. These strips are arranged horizontally and presented in frames, one for each of the Australian states. They are produced by beta attenuation mass monitors, which measure pollution over time by sucking air through the filter tape, which catches particulate matter. Tasmania's air creates the lightest-coloured dots, while in Western Australia the air has dots in hues of red.

For legal reasons, the company that made the strips for Saraceno is not able to divulge the exact location of where the air pollution was measured. The red is highly unusual, Saraceno tells us. For me, the red conjures images of the colossal pits of iron ore mines in WA. Even though purity is an ideal loaded with value judgements and assumptions about the world, these dots are a grim reminder of the ecological degradation that is typically invisible to the eye.

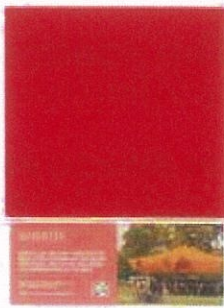
Importantly, *We Do Not All Breathe the Same Air* moves beyond a universalist framework of climate change. The work alludes to the asymmetrical experience of petro-capitalism. Environmental catastrophe does not affect us all equally. The air we breathe is determined by socioeconomic and geographical factors. This work is the most indicative of Saraceno's engagement with the notion of the Capitalocene.

Evoking the politics of pollution, Saraceno leads us to consider other absent presences around *We Do Not All Breathe the Same Air*. It invites us to think about extractive industries elsewhere. I walk towards the next room thinking of mining on Indigenous lands, the abhorrent conditions in which Congolese people mine the red earth for cobalt to be used by wealthy countries in lithium batteries, and ecological imperialism. I think these are the kind of connections Saraceno wants us to make, even if he doesn't make them himself.

His work often balances on the border between the compelling and the merely compulsive. The amount of information Saraceno is trying to convey in his research-heavy practice causes the visually spectacular works to lose some of their immediacy. This isn't necessarily a bad thing – it's a mediation that requires a viewer to take a step towards their own implication in networks of extraction and consumption.

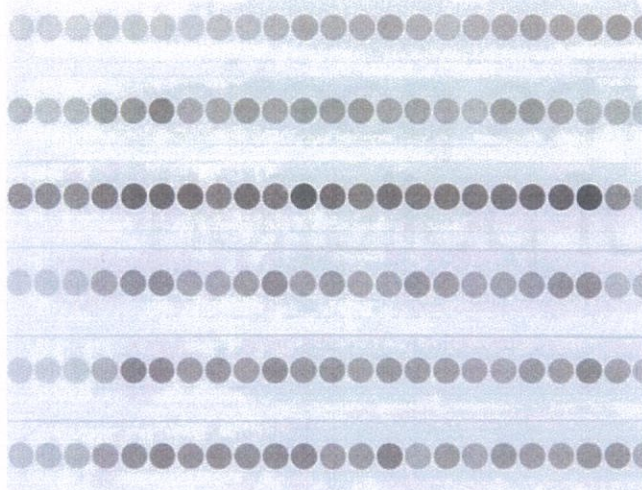
*Oceans of Air* isn't only concerned with air (pollution). In the next room, beautiful spiderwebs are encased in large glass display cases. *Webs of At-tent(s)ion* (2018) consists of webs that have been woven by social spiders. Saraceno provides a metal frame, the spiders come and go and do their thing, and later the intricate tangles of web are placed inside glass cabinets. The web is an easy, almost too-heavy analogy for Saraceno's practice, which constantly looks for and makes connections between things, though the exhibition themes of air (pollution) and arachnids seem





Pollution ... is who we are – it's an ecological extension of our interconnected lives, our patterns of consumption, our ways of inhabiting the world; it is both a form and a product of colonialism.

*A Thermodynamic Imaginary* (left), and *We Do Not All Breathe the Same Air* (detail, right), Studio Tomás Saraceno and The Shed, NYC (left), Studio Tomás Saraceno (right)



more adjacent than entwined. The webs' glass housing seems all too like a museum or a zoo, except that it is not the spiders or their husks that are on display but their life's work. Instead of being drawn to think about the intentionality or creativity of the absent spiders, I leave the space thinking about the ways that perspective and experience are culturally constructed, the museum or the zoo being both manufactured ways of encountering the natural world. Just as the air we breathe is not all the same, neither is the way we see and experience things. Here the museum or the gallery loads the spiderwebs with "value".

Carson bookends my experience of *Oceans of Air*. Towards the conclusion of the exhibition's shadows and webs is *Silent Spring 1805/2021* (2022), a series of four frames with black metal shutters across which is distributed a flattened garland of pressed red poppies. The shutters, Saraceno tells me, are like lens shutters, a reference to the former Agfa factory in Berlin (now his studio) where the poppies were grown and picked. Saraceno uses the title of Carson's seminal 1962 book *Silent Spring* to allude to the soil around his studio, which is still contaminated by the chemicals used by Agfa.

I ask MONA's senior curator Emma Pike if this is also a reference to the opium poppies farmed in Tasmania. Not directly, she tells me, but it need not be, as with much of Saraceno's work the connection is there if you want to make it.

Saraceno's work doesn't reach the level of Carson's, who is, after all, one of the forerunners of ecological art and literature. He's not drawing our attention to unknown knowledge or offering a way out of our current ecological crisis. The significance of his work is that it opts for directness without forgoing beauty, reminding us that we're never outside the messiness or the glossiness of the Capitalocene. With Saraceno, there is none of the moralising that often accompanies eco-critical work; instead he openly negotiates the relations between people and pollution.

Pollution, however unevenly distributed, is who we are – it's an ecological extension of our interconnected lives, our patterns of consumption, our ways of inhabiting the world; it is both a form and a product of colonialism. Saraceno wants us to imagine that there is another way to do all of this, but stops short of saying that the only way out of the Capitalocene is to abolish capitalism and colonialism. His work provokes viewers to look at ecological and atmospheric miniature from a place of comfort, acting more as a reprieve from ecological trauma rather than mobilising against its perpetuation. •

*Oceans of Air* by Tomás Saraceno is at MONA, Hobart, until July 24.

#### ARTS DIARY

##### VISUAL ART

*Beating about the Bush*  
Art Gallery of Ballarat,  
until February 19

##### MULTIMEDIA

*Frida Kahlo: The Life of an Icon*  
The Cutaway, Sydney,  
until March 7

##### CABARET

*Jamie Mykela: FLOOZY*  
State Theatre Centre of WA, Perth,  
January 23-28

##### EXHIBITION

*Treasures Gallery*  
National Library of Australia, Canberra,  
until April 30

##### VISUAL ART

*Courage and Beauty*  
Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane,  
until June 25

#### LAST CHANCE

##### EXHIBITION

*Nalini Malani: Gamepieces*  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide,  
until January 22