



2007



ARC DESIGN & CRAFT BIENNIAL 2007

BIENNIAL EXHIBITION

To Be Confirmed...
TEACHERS' RESOURCE

6 october – 2 december

QUT Art Museum

OVERVIEW

To Be Confirmed suggests a work in progress or an absence of closure - things aren't quite finished and there's more to come. Wikipedia, the quintessential 21st century resource and itself an imprecise beast¹, defines 'to be confirmed' as "an expression used to signify a lack of definitive information"¹. In the case of the 2007 Arc Biennial exhibition rather than indicating something lacking, the title *To Be Confirmed* is intended as a positive term signalling the diversity of contemporary artistic practice and its refusal to be pinned down to singular definitions. If something is confirmed, it is firmly established. This seemingly indefinite title also queries the canon of art history and the long established notions of what art, craft and design are and should be. *To Be Confirmed* questions entrenched ideas regarding what form art should take. To do this, the exhibition presents a selection of work by 50 artists across the fields of fashion, jewellery, furniture and interior design, visual art and craft which questions the possibilities of what this work can be and do.

Within the milieu of contemporary art practices style-based categorisations are not only increasingly harder to define but also mean less. While an overview of international art exhibitions and events may suggest that screen-based art has risen to dominance, in reality many practitioners may dabble with video in an effort to address a concept rather than to investigate this medium. Painting maintains a high position in contemporary art, a fact that some people may dislike but this cannot be refuted. Photography has been in some ways defined by its rise in status over the past few decades and similarly fashion is increasingly recognised as a legitimate art form. Due to the practical purposes of many craft and design products allegations of a lack of art-theoretical frameworks are often levelled at the disciplines. It is a cultural line-in-the-sand that undermines the skills of the practitioners in question, but rather than being led into a meaningless debate about status they simply continue to create objects of functionality and beauty.

What is of real interest is the manner in which practitioners engage with media appropriate to the ideas they are investigating. Incongruous combinations of subject and medium, the use of text, role-playing, recycled materials, art-as-craft and craft-as-art all feature in *To Be Confirmed*. There is the abstract, the meditative, the representative, the humorous, the political, the lewd and, for some viewers, the offensive. What is expected and socially acceptable, and how does this compare to art currently being produced in Queensland and further a field? There is no singular, definitive framework underpinning the fields of contemporary art, design and craft as practitioners follow their own paths in the pursuit of their artistic concepts. As the exhibition curators we celebrate this diversity, rather than trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Artistic endeavours are a response to and a reflection of life - life in all its glory and misery, in its purity of ideals and the sadness and tawdriness that tinges daily existence.

Gordon Craig and Simone Jones
Curators, 2007 Arc Biennial

Artists

Tony Albert
Lincoln Austin
Jenni Baxter
Krista Berga
Dean Brough
Penny Byrne
Nadine Cameron
Eugene Carchesio
Emma Coffey
Ray Cook
Margot Douglas
Clare Dyson
Franz Ehmann
Leah Emery
Nicholas Folland
Hannah Gartside
The General Will
Mark Heslop
Lily Hibberd



ART, DESIGN & CRAFT BIENNIAL 2007

PJ Hickman
Amanda Joe-Asare
Liana Kabel
Bibi Locke
Alasdair Macintyre
Archie Moore
Paul Mumme
John Nicholson
Ben Quilty
Scott Redford
Victoria Reichelt
Geoffrey Ricardo
Alexander Seton
Julie Shepherd
Arryn Snowball
Van Sowerwine
The Upholstery
Alick Tipoti
Jonathan Tse
Emma Van Leest
Nicole Voevodin-Cash
Rebecca Ward
Judy Watson
Judith Wright
George Wu

HANNAH GARTSIDE



Construction on Croydon St #3, 2006
lace curtain and zip
Courtesy of the artist.
Photo: Kate Woodcroft

Hannah Gartside's collection *Construction on Croydon Street* explores the transformation of humble, everyday objects, and most particularly discarded junk, into items of appreciation. Gartside acknowledges the meaning held within second hand, recycled or found objects and how the history of an object is created and can alter the meaning of an item.

Each of the garments was formed from items found randomly at #3 Croydon Street the site of a house demolition. Gartside was drawn to the rejected objects scattered on the site, such as crocodile skin, wallpaper, 1970s lace curtains, floor lino, and old shade cloth. These relics were then used by the artist to create a fashion range posing questions about contemporary consumption patterns and the high disposability of items within the glamorous fashion world.

Through this range Gartside presents an alternative process of socially conscious consumption along with a new understanding of the fashion genre.

- Unique series of work created from rejected objects
- Transformed these objects into a fashion range
- Questions the consumption based culture of the fashion industry and offers an alternative

PENNY BYRNE



Shark Fin Soup 1, 2006
altered vintage porcelain figurine,
retouching medium, powder
pigment and epoxy resin
Keating / Ip Collection, Sydney
Photo: Jeremy Dillon

H5N1 #2, 2007
vintage ceramic figurine, epoxy
putty, epoxy resin, modern figurine,
re-touching medium and powder
pigments
Private collection, Sydney
Photo courtesy of the artist

Penny Byrne does not shy away from contentious issues in her work. Her ceramic figures are aesthetically striking but also politically engaged, exploring such important current issues as homosexual rights, global warming, John Howard's anti-sedition laws and subservience to the United States, topical environmental issues and the Iraq war.

Her practice is a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of mass produced, kitsch ceramic figurines to create works that reveal some alarming truths. Penny's everyday profession both feeds her art practice and is at odds with it; she is a specialist ceramics conservator and restorer, a profession that requires exactness and precision, with the intention being to maintain the integrity of the original object. In the case of her artworks this reverence for the original pristine object is put aside as she dissects and reconstructs ceramics to create new meanings.

Through her work Byrne brings world events closer to home, compelling audiences to be aware of the reality of current affairs and examine their own ignorance to the violation of rights happening across the world. She asks audiences to assess their compliance with breaches of the rights of humans, animals and the environment through their ignorance.

- Deconstructs and reconstructs mass produced ceramics to create new meanings
- Aesthetically striking, but also politically engaged works
- Asks audiences to assess their knowledge of and compliance with human, animal and environmental rights breaches

TONY ALBERT

Tony Albert's series *Gangsta Supastar* references African American popular culture giving it a new context. Albert is *50 perCENT* a play on Curtis Jackson's stage name 50 Cent. Albert's pseudonym also references his dual heritage as a contemporary Indigenous artist with an Aboriginal father and a white mother.

Using the iconography of black America, such as slick sportswear, gaudy bling, bandanas, and a female posse, *50 perCENT* revels in the apparent excess of fame and fortune. In his imagery Albert isn't parodying the African American rap scene, but celebrating a culture through which African Americans have found a voice and can gain financial success. This culture has strong relevance for many young Australian Indigenous people who are also finding a voice through rap culture.

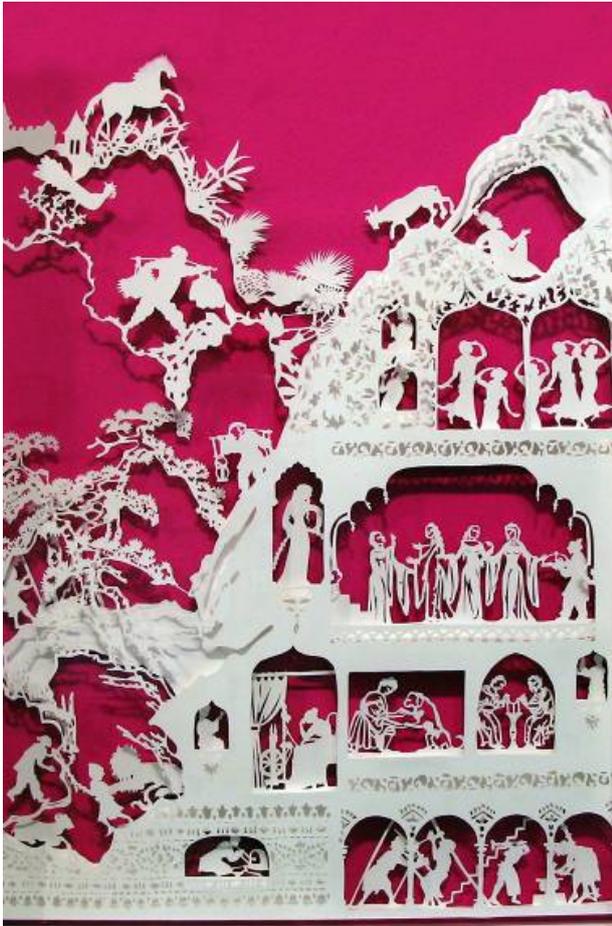
The series considers issues of racism, making connections between black America and black Australia. To paraphrase Public Enemy's Chuck D, Albert is proud to be black.

- Reflects African American popular culture and its relevance for young Indigenous Australians
- Not a parody, but a celebration of African American culture's prominence and the finding of their voice
- Makes connections between black America and black Australia



50perCENT, 2006
C-Type photograph
Courtesy of the artist and Jan Manton Art

EMMA VAN LEEST



Attainment, 2007

Synthetic paper, paper, glue and foamcore
Courtesy of the artist and
John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne

Emma Van Leest uses the ancient Chinese practice of paper cutting to depict images from classic children's stories such as Hans Christian Andersen fairytales and European fables. This craft practice dates back over 1500 years and was passed between women and utilised to depict traditional stories.

Recently she travelled to China and Indonesia to research paper cutting, craft and furniture design to further develop her skills and understanding of the practice.

Children's stories often seem somewhat irrelevant in modern day society but of course historically they had a much more prominent role. Cautionary messages of odious incidents involving naughty children helped keep the younger generation in check, and it is these messages that are clear in Van Leest's work. Her intricate, complex imagery suggests multiple timeframes and sites. Journeys pass in, out and through layers of paper, building up rich imagery from simple forms.

- Uses the ancient Chinese practice of paper cutting
- Tells stories through her work, particularly children's folk and fairytales
- Explores the layers of these traditional stories with their range of meanings

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE



Elevation, 2007

Polymer clay, polyurethane resin, wood, polystyrene, string, flocking, hobby grass, acrylic paint, foam core, acrylic plastic, rubber.

Courtesy of the artist, Ryan Renshaw, Brisbane and Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

- Popular culture is heavily referenced in Macintyre's work
- Diverse and clever intertextual references are present
- Believes the role of an artist is to reflect on and interpret the world around them

Popular culture is the entry point into Alasdair Macintyre's work. But though a basic understanding of the work is achievable on first sight, to grasp the intertextual references is much more difficult.

Macintyre's work is popular, playful and childlike in looks, with works featuring cute action figurines in miniature dioramas, but is simultaneously dense with meaning. In his work 'Elevation' (pictured above) the members of the rock band U2 are aboard a scissor lift tending to a replica of Jeff Koons' famous sculptural work *Puppy*, theories of what this would mean are diverse, perhaps he is highlighting Bono's passion for the environment and human rights and celebrating the human spirit; but the inclusion of Koons' *Puppy* indicates another meaning. Critics have long been divided on the work or Jeff Koons, some believing him to be a visionary avante garde artist, others believing that he is simply a self-promoter using art to create hype. Similarly, Bono's genuineness is at times doubted, and his use of fame as a political tool has been questioned.

Macintyre believes that the artist's role has always been to reflect on and interpret the world around them; he certainly does this by utilising popular culture and art historical references in his own work.

VICTORIA REICHELT

Through her work Victoria Reichelt explores the complex relationship between painting and photography. Her latest series is titled *Retrophilia* and the objects depicted include an electronic adding machine, a radio/cassette player, and a typewriter. Each of these objects has been technologically superseded and exists in an awkward space; not quite valuable antiques but also not quite items of kitsch adoration.

Using the photo realist style she has depicted them as objects of reverence and worth, in a style that resembles portraiture not still life. Each picture features the solitary object foregrounded against a stark white background, making these now redundant objects the complete focus. Through this depiction Reichelt questions what subject is worthy of painting.

Each of the items is depicted in pristine condition, yet they are rendered unusable. Reichelt explores how quickly objects become irrelevant, and triggers a yearning for the past where these now seemingly clunky items were useful.



Retrophilia (Typewriter), 2007

oil on canvas

Courtesy of the artist, Dianne Tanzer Gallery and Schubert Contemporary.

- Explores the relationship between painting and photography
- Depicts items that have been technologically superseded in a photo realist style, which suggests they are items of worth
- Highlights the loss of these classic, beautiful items as we move into the future

PJ HICKMAN

In his series *White Box (Venice Biennale 2007)* Hickman questions what constitutes 'painting'. In this series he presents twelve paintings consisting of two identical versions of six paintings. Each work fulfils only the minimum requirements to constitute a painting; a matte black background with a name (preceded by the indefinite article 'A') in white capitalised text across the centre of the canvas. Individual white cardboard packing boxes for the paintings are displayed alongside.

Each of the paintings features the name of an artist being featured in Venice Biennale 2007, indicative of the celebrity cult that surrounds prominent artists in the art world. No longer is an art piece referred to according to the style, or form, instead it is just referred to as 'A' [insert name here].

Hickman also references the physical and philosophical construct of the art museum/gallery where work is displayed in 'a white box', outlining the peripheral aspects of gallery culture that become so closely associated with art works.

Each of the works in the series is purposely uniform in size, composition, materials, display and the artists names featured come from a defined list. In this way Hickman creates work that is not a mystifying masterpiece but that is merely the sum of its physical components, again questioning the way in which art becomes commoditised.

- Questions what constitutes a painting
- Uses only the minimum requirements to constitute a painting
- Looks at the commoditisation of art practice and artists
- Highlights the physical and philosophical construct of the art museum/gallery



White Box: A ROSEMARY LAING, 2007
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Sophie Gannon Gallery
Photo: John Downs

ALEXANDER SETON



Finance (from *Bags of... [Wish Fulfillment]*) 2007
Wombeyan marble
Courtesy of the artist and Jan Murphy Gallery

Playing with illusion and the perception of surface Alexander Seton creates sculptures that trick the eye. His works can be described as three dimensional *tromp l'oeil* which unlike traditional *tromp l'oeil* occupy real space, and create a false impression about their existence and purpose.

An example is Seton's *RTW II* (2005), which appears to be an everyday t-shirt hanging on a clothes rail. At first glance the work appears to be an updated version of Marcel Duchamp's influential ready-mades that explores links between consumerism, fashion phases and contemporary art. On closer inspection though the layered complexity of the work is revealed, as the t-shirt is in fact a precisely carved marble sculpture, finished to create the illusion of suspended fabric.

It may appear an arbitrary choice to spend hours faithfully rendering a t-shirt out of marble, but it is through this process that Seton questions what items should be the subject of sculpture. He also offers a new context for the use of marble in contemporary sculpture. Marble's associations with classical Greek and Roman monuments mean that it is viewed as a traditional and conservative medium, weighed down by centuries of expectations. However, Seton's works demonstrate that subject matter and form are not inextricably linked to medium. As a result, the artist catapults marble into the 21st century and reveals it as a flexible medium that can embody whimsy and humour, as well as serious contemplation of the ephemeral and everyday.

- Plays with illusion and perception in his work
- Questions the reverence with which some items are treated and others are not
- Contextualises the marble medium in the 21st century

MARGOT DOUGLAS



Calling Card Neckbook + Object, 2004
sterling silver, tracing paper, Perspex and printed
aluminium
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: M Bosworth

Margot Douglas creates jewellery that tells stories. Each piece she creates is imbued with historical elements; old letters, photographs, newspaper articles, poems; records and other paper ephemera. Many of these elements are informed by her family history. Her great Grandfather was parliamentarian John Douglas (after whom Port Douglas was named) and through her work she shares his story with a new generation.

Douglas' works are delicate pieces made of precious metals into which stories are etched. Red silk thread is often used as the 'chain' of these works, representing the bloodlines and the passing on of history. Douglas has created perspex boxes for the works to be displayed in holding dual meanings as archival boxes for preservation and as jewellery boxes where one's 'special' things are kept.

Remembrance and reverence are key themes in this work, a sharing of history in a new contemporary form but still with respect for stories past.

- Creates wearable works that carry meaning beyond adornment
- Contain historical elements; family history, newspaper records, personal stories
- Emphasizes the shifting nature of memory
- Almost like wearable artist books, personal carriers of meaning

JUDY WATSON

a black and white history of queensland according to the artist 1-10 is a series of cushions made from hessian industrial sugar shipping bags featuring statements and imagery reflecting Watson's views about the history and modern life of the state.

Using these bags Watson makes reference to the domination of the sugar industry in Queensland along with the history of this common item as a war time material utilised by women for creating home furnishings such as cushion covers, tablecloths and curtains. This is indicative of Watson's beliefs of the strength of women to 'make do' with whatever little they have.

Watson has also utilised female craft traditions, but subverted them as a means of political statement. The cushions feature such statements as 'white out' and 'queens land' referring to the colonisation and displacement of Indigenous people. Some also feature kitsch Queensland iconography such as the 'big pineapple' which serves to question the Queensland story that sees a roadside replica of a large pineapple as a source of patriotic pride.

For the display of this work all of the cushions are placed in a shopping trolley, representing the way in which homeless people transport their possessions. Most particularly this refers to the displacement of Indigenous people.



a black and white history of queensland according to the artist 1-10 (installation view), 2007

jute, calico, linen, screenprinting, appliqué and hand stitching.

Production Assistant: Megan Williams
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Milani Gallery
A Campbelltown Arts Centre commission

Photo: Ian Hobbs

- Explores Queensland's history through her work, putting forward her views as an Indigenous woman
- Often explores the inner strength and tenacity of women in her work
- References the historical, but also ongoing displacement of Indigenous people in Queensland
- Subverts classic images and iconography

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Presented by QUT Art Museum

2 George Street Brisbane QLD 4000 (*next to City Botanic Gardens*)

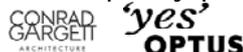
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Education Kit compiled by **Cate Brown** (QUT Art Museum Intern 2007) based on research from the Arc Biennial catalogue published by Artworkers Alliance.

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