

La Femme Domestique



La Femme Domestique questions the perceived natural relationship between women and domestic space. The exhibition explores a recent artistic trend which has seen artists incorporate and rework craft techniques in contemporary visual art practice. The exhibition also investigates how artists utilise symbols and objects commonly associated with 'the female' and domesticity to question the art/craft divide, stereotypes and hegemonic history.



Rose Simmonds

Rose Simmonds was an internationally exhibited pictorialist photographer. Known for her use of the bromoil process, Simmonds' soft-focus and dramatically lit still-lives are representative of the pictorialist aesthetic. As camera technology developed, Simmonds explored the effects of atmosphere and light on surfaces in the manner of impressionist painters. Simmonds' still life works such as *Jugs* (1932) and *Old china* (c.1930s) are painterly in their approach and illustrate a subtle gradation in tone. The latter is particularly reminiscent of Dutch still-life painting with its chiaroscuro and attention to detail. *Native handiwork* (1930s) employs the same formalist treatment of the 'exotic' subject matter (for the period) that suggests an awareness of the European embracing of 'primitivism' in the early 1900s. Simmonds was a member of the Queensland Camera Club from the late 1920s.

Tiffany Shafran

Tiffany Shafran's work explores a number of themes including beauty, fragility, femininity, adornment and decoration. Shafran combines intricate paintings of craft techniques such as crochet with realistic depictions of both delicate birds and birds of prey. Her work perpetuates craft traditions of embroidery and associated needle work, and raises questions about the relationship between art and craft. Further, Shafran combines stereotypically feminine crafts and beautiful birds to create a dialogue about gender relations and to emphasise the continuing presence of misguided metaphors about female nature. These works also make analogies with the role a female's technique and artistic flair with needle work once played in determining her suitability for marriage, and the elaborate nature of the mating ceremonies of many birds.

In 50 words or less, interpret the symbolic meanings behind Shafran's work 'Why does the caged bird sing?'

Beata Batorowicz

Batorowicz plays the role of a discontented daughter to 'big-name' male art figures, such as Marcel Duchamp and in particular, the late German art hero Joseph Beuys. Batorowicz uses the fabricated stories surrounding Beuys and adds references to other patriarchs of western art such as Duchamp. Seemingly disappointed with 'traditional' art mediums such as painting, Batorowicz combines the German notion of 'fatherland' with traditionally feminine crafts to analyse male authority in the arts.

Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys was trained as an aircraft radio operator and combat pilot for Germany during WWII. During his years of duty he was seriously wounded numerous times. One of which was a plane crash where he was rescued by nomadic Tartars. These people rubbed him with fat and then wrapped him in felt to keep his body warm. Later, fat and felt became important in Beuys' artistic practice.

Felt is a fabric of wool, often mixed with fur, hair, cotton, or rayon fibers, which have been worked together through pressure, heat, or chemical action. Felt easily integrates into various environments by absorbing anything with which it comes into contact (fat, dirt, dust, water, sound). In his piece *Infiltration-homogen for grand piano* (1966), a piano was wrapped with a felt "skin," which trapped the sound inside, alluding to powerlessness and an inability to communicate.

Look at the image of Joseph Beuys' work below. What similarities can you see between his work and Beata Batorowicz's? What differences are there?



Why do you think Joseph Beuys uses the red cross in his work?

What do you think it symbolises?

Beata Batorowicz

Beata Batorowicz's giant knitted chess piece plays on the actions of artist **Marcel Duchamp**.

Marcel Duchamp

Marcel Duchamp was obsessed with chess. Chess players, pieces and motifs are often represented in his art. Duchamp's first painting with a chess theme was *The Chess Game* (1910), which featured his two brothers in the garden of his brother Jacques Villon.

**Right: Beata Batorowicz,
Duchamp's Knight (2004)**



Did you know?

**Marcel Duchamp supposedly
gave up art to play chess**

"I am still a victim of chess. It has all the beauty of art—and much more. It cannot be commercialised. Chess is much purer than art in its social position."

- Marcel Duchamp

**What is your symbolic interpretation of
Duchamp's Knight?**

Debra Porch

The work of Debra Porch is inspired by her personal history. The invisible space of memory, mystery and paradox all play an integral role in her objects and installations. Porch's work often explores how visual objects can evoke experiences and memories that are now invisible from sight, linking the past to the present. Notions of 'presence' and 'absence' are intertwined with objects within the artist's work. Porch states that memory is a potent experience, and has the capacity to transform the *ordinary* into the *extraordinary*. It can act as a powerful catalyst in connecting an individual's awareness of a past experience to particular visible objects.

When questioned about the fictitious nature of her works Porch commented that perhaps everyone's memory is somewhat like fiction, our own invention or fabrication. Indeed, involving yourself in an artwork has often been compared to immersing yourself in a novel.

Madonna Staunton

Madonna Staunton is a local Brisbane artist who has worked in a range of mediums including painting, collage and assemblage. Staunton reworks both new and found materials to create fresh meanings and suggestions. Domestic objects are revived and instilled with new life in Staunton's coat-hanger and safety-pin works. Indebted to twentieth-century art pioneers such as Marcel Duchamp, her work questions the divides between high and low art and culture.

DONNA MARCUS

Donna Marcus recycles discarded and obsolete aluminium kitchenware from the post-war period and assembles these objects into modernist forms. Her work features familiar and recognisable items such as anodised teapots, egg poachers, saucepans and colanders. Marcus celebrates the form and previous function of these objects, while simultaneously rendering them functionless. That is, Marcus preserves the shape, textures and intrinsic symbolism of the aluminium but strips the utensils of their purpose by transforming them into wall, floor and freestanding sculptures.

GEODESIC DOMES AND SPHERES



Look at Marcus' work, *Dodecahedron I* (left). The shape of this work is known as a geodesic sphere. Geodesic spheres are incredibly strong structures, so too are Geodesic domes (half a sphere). Geodesic domes are light, aerodynamic and are able to endure high winds and earthquakes better than conventional structures.

Spherical space is very efficient. Both domes and spheres enclose more space using less materials than other shapes. The geodesic division of space is very similar to what is found in the natural world in seed pods, eyes, eggs, raindrops, and bubbles.

Geodesic principles are found in many natural and created environments. Some natural examples can be found in snake skins, viruses, insect eyes and pineapples.

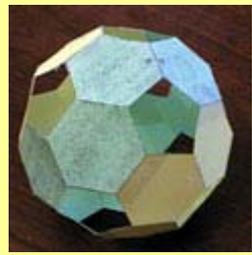
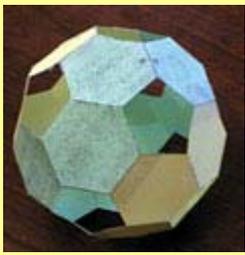
Q: Have you ever wondered why planets and baseballs are spherical, as well as oranges, grapes, hailstones and atoms?

A: IT IS BECAUSE IT IS THE STRONGEST, SIMPLEST AND MOST EFFICIENT SHAPE.

Q: Do you know of any other geodesic spheres?

CLUE: ONE CAN BE FOUND IN A VERY POPULAR INTERNATIONAL BALL GAME.

HOW TO MAKE A GEODESIC DOME (A.K.A BUCKYBALL)

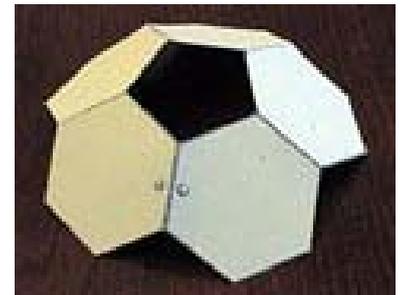


Two make a geodesic dome you will need:

- Two printed copies of Pattern 1 (see page...)
- One printed copy of Pattern 2 (see page...)
- A pair of scissors
- Cellophane tape

Here's what you do:

1. Carefully cut out one copy of Pattern 1.
2. Using cellophane tape, attach the two edges marked with the letter "C" together. Notice that there are now five hexagons surrounding a pentagon-shaped space.
3. Do the same thing with the second copy of Pattern 1.
4. Cut out Pattern 2. You should have two pieces, each made of 5 hexagons.
5. Using the cellophane tape, attach the edge marked "A" on one strip to the edge marked "A" on the other strip.
6. Using cellophane tape, attach the edge marked "B" on one strip to the edge marked "B" on the other strip.
7. Attach one of the pieces you made from Pattern 1 to the piece you just completed from Pattern 2 by taping the free edges of the hexagons together.
8. Turn your construction over and tape the other Pattern 1 piece in the same way



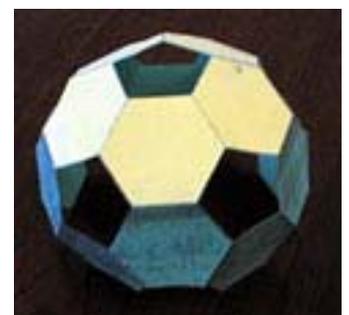
Step 2



Step 5



Step 6



Step 8

You now have your very own geodesic dome !

Sandra Black

Sandra Black is one of Australia's foremost artists working with ceramics. Her porcelain vessels are recognised for their small-scale and intricately carved and pierced surfaces. Black has explored the material's character through throwing, hand-building and casting techniques, and its ability to transfer light through carving and piercing. She finds porcelain the most seductive of all clays; the fine surface is ideal for carving and piecing and she was initially attracted to its translucency and hardness. The purity of the medium added to its appeal, allowing her to infuse her pieces with a presence that she had not achieved using other clay. Thematically, Black pursues simple forms to carry the elaborate surface treatments. Her pierced forms are influenced by both geometric and organic patterns and surfaces. Sandra Black has been a practicing ceramic artist for over 30 years.

Natalya Hughes

Natalya Hughes' work draws on imagery from eighteenth and nineteenth-century Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Emerging in the early seventeenth century, these prints portrayed the fleeting pleasures and fads of affluent Japanese society; thus ukiyo-e means 'pictures of the floating world'. Manipulating scanned images on the computer screen, the artist deconstructs and reconstitutes the imagery so that only fragments of the subject remain. Patterned fabrics, still holding the shapes of bodies, morph into abstract forms which appear to 'float'. This references their ukiyo-e origins while creating new meaning and resonances.

Gwyn Hanssen-Pigott

Gwyn Hanssen-Pigott creates still life 'families' inspired by domestic tableware including plates, bowls, cups, and other vessels. Her poised, smooth-sided families are highly evocative and reference the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi's Still Life Studies.

Hanssen-Pigott's works are delivered in pure simplicity, where the profiles, volumes and materials of the vessels are endowed with special significance, perhaps even a metaphysical dimension. Groups within a work may be interpreted in terms of duration, interval, repetition and variation, and may even encourage a musical interpretation. The titles and groupings of Hanssen-Pigott's work indicate the artist's interest in social relations, movement and travel. The pots can be compared with human forms, and seem like groups of people standing, sitting or squatting.



Image: Giorgio Morandi (Italian, 1890-1964), *Still Life*, 1960, oil on canvas

...Question...

Above is an image of one of Morandi's Still Life Studies. What similarities can you draw between this still life and Hanssen-Pigott's '*Pale suite with cups*'?

Mel Robson

Brisbane-based artist Mel Robson makes a diverse range of ceramic vessels that are at once functional, decorative, and sculptural. Robson's work explores the coalescence between utilitarian objects and personal narrative. The artist transforms imagery found in the domestic landscape such as old maps, letters, sewing patterns, recipes, vintage wallpaper, and photographs into custom made decals, which she then applies to eggshell-fine porcelain vessels.

Consequently the objects explore the histories, stories and associations embedded in everyday items, in turn evoking memory and nostalgia. Robson's works are responses both to her own past, as well as the stories of others. As a grouping her work references the tenuous and fragile ways in which people access their history. Robson's work has been shown extensively in Australia and has also been exhibited in America, Korea and Singapore.

Look at Robson's work and compare it to Gwyn Hanssen-Pigott's.

- What similarities and differences can you see between their works?**

Robson likes to display her works in small groups or families.

- What do you think the meaning behind this is?**
- How do you think the significance of Robson's work would change if she displayed the pieces individually? Why?**

Alice Lang

Alice Lang hand makes fantastical garments and soft sculptures using traditional craft techniques such as the Suffolk Puff. Her works comment on the conformity of these techniques and explore both the fantastical grotesque hidden in the realm of glamour and the appeal hidden in the bizarre. Lang's work lures the

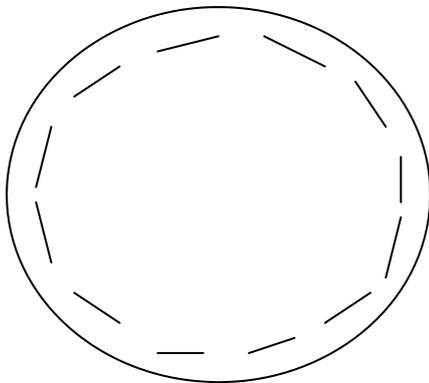
viewer with materiality, while the monstrous forms simultaneously repel.



Lang looks as though she is being consumed by her garments in her Ectoparasitic Portrait series. What do you think this means?

Suffolk Puffs

Suffolk puffs are a circle of material sewn to make a puff. Traditionally, they are stuffed and sewn together to create quilts and blankets. Suffolk puffs are very easy to make. Try some and see what interesting things you can make!



How to make a Suffolk Puff:

1. Cut a piece of material into a circle.
2. With a needle and thread, stitch around the outside of the material, as shown in figure 1.
3. Either stuff or leave empty and pull the stitching tight.

It should scrunch up into a puff!

4. Tie a knot in the string to secure the puff.

Julie Shepherd

Julie Shepherd is a local Brisbane ceramicist whose work references the fragility of life. Her porcelain objects are pierced in a process very similar to using a needle while sewing. Shepherd describes her works as an expression of her femininity with their strong connection to traditional textile crafts. The intricate pierced surface of *The Emperor's New Tea Set* (2005) references a bygone era when women would gather for tea and show off their latest textile creations. However, the work is also an ironic take on the allegory of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

The Emperor's New Clothes is the tale of an emperor who only cared for elegant clothes and appearances. One day two scoundrels posing as exceptional tailors promise to weave the emperor a cloth so light and fine it would look invisible to anyone too stupid and incompetent to appreciate its quality. Of course no one can see the faux clothes; nor can they admit they have been duped (especially the Emperor!), instead praising the 'magnificent' clothes.

Explain the connection between Shepherd's work, *The Emperor's New Tea Set* and the tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

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2 November - 28 January

Exhibition curated by Jessica Dix
Education Kit compiled by Jessica Dix

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