

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a blue Game Boy Advance handheld console. The person is wearing a dark blue t-shirt with horizontal stripes in yellow, orange, and light blue. The console is held in a way that shows the front face, including the screen, the 'A' and 'B' buttons, and the 'GAME BOY ADVANCE' branding. The background is dark and out of focus.

Let's

Play:

The art  
of our time

**Let's Play: The art of our time**

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Bunjil Place Gallery

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*Game Boys Advanced* 2002 (detail)

silicone, acrylic, human hair, clothing, hand-held video game  
140.0 x 36.0 x 75.0 cm

edition 2 of 3

Photography: Viki Petherbridge

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# Director's Foreword

Georgia Cribb

It's a significant moment for Bunjil Place Gallery as we launch our inaugural summer exhibition *Let's Play: The art of our time*. The cultural precinct is shiny and new, and we observe our community stepping through the door for the first time with wide-eye openness and great enthusiasm.

For some, they may be seasoned gallery visitors but for others this might be their first art experience. *Let's Play: The art of our time* is a snapshot of some of the most innovative art made across the last decade, but what does art today look like?

Google the term 'art' and up pops masterpieces that adorn museums, galleries, churches and historical sites worldwide. Until the twentieth century, western art had one thing in common, it was all beautifully crafted and often awe inspiring.

A seismic shift in art came from a seemingly simple gesture by an accomplished French painter Marcel Duchamp. In selecting and exhibiting a mass-produced urinal which he signed 'R.Mutt' and titled 'Fountain' in 1917, Duchamp promoted its status to an artwork. Rejecting art that was purely visual, Duchamp developed an ideas-based approach to making art.

Art's boundaries are constantly reinterpreted and redefined by artists, influenced by the time in which they live and work, and they are equally as quick to respond to and repurpose new materials and techniques creatively to make visible their ideas.

*Let's Play: The art of our time* brings together a selection of art made and produced by artists living today. Painting, drawing and sculpture is exhibited alongside floor-based installations which repurpose Lego, astro-turf, virtual reality headsets and bean bags. Created by leading Australian and International artists, these works convey how toys, role-play, technology and the imagination have become a central component of the art of our time.

The inaugural summer exhibition *Let's Play: The art of our time* has been conceived and curated by Rodney James, eminent scholar, writer and curator of more than 80 exhibitions nationally. Rodney was a key contributor to the design and development of this gallery and we are grateful for the legacy of his work and this wonderful exhibition.

We are delighted to partner with the City of Casey's Digital team who have made possible a major commission by Troy Innocent. His work *Placemaker* an augmented reality game designed to lead you through key locations in our area, will launch as part of this exhibition and will be playable across our municipality throughout 2018.

On behalf of the Bunjil Place Gallery team, I wish to extend my thanks to the artists for sharing their incredible works, their representative galleries, the private lenders and major public galleries including the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Queensland Gallery of Modern Art for entrusting their collections with us.

This inaugural summer exhibition for Bunjil Place Gallery in Melbourne's South East is the first glimpse of our ambitions to bring the best Australian and International art to new audiences. There is plenty more on the horizon and we look forward to embarking on this journey with you.

# Let's Play: The art of our time

Rodney James

'Let's play' is a catchcry that invites people to come together and have fun. As distinct from the emphatic (and singular) 'I'm playing', 'let's play' suggests that the activity is inclusive, voluntary and potentially beneficial, irrespective of the age or background of the participants.

Artists can encourage audience participation and, through the process of making and experiencing art, raise valuable questions about the physical, intellectual, emotional and experiential connections between art and play. Artists who reach out to create opportunities for collective play can also break down the barriers that separate art from a broader audience.

The development of early childhood education owes much to the pioneering work of Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852), the father of the modern kindergarten. He was convinced that play was a pleasurable but biological imperative to discover who we are and what we can become. Play was a measure of the creative attainment of individuals and societies. Other theorists consider how art and the art world itself is a form of play, a game in a constant state of flux, where rules and conventions are constantly challenged, flouted, altered or deliberately ignored.

The desire to develop meaningful dialogue about art and play and to forge individual and social connections through audience participation is paramount in *Let's Play: The art of our time* and other recent survey exhibitions in Australia and overseas.<sup>1</sup> This is achieved in the exhibition through a range of ways; from commentaries on the social and political relevance of games and toys, the creation of fictitious worlds and alternative realities, exploring the imaginative potential of new media and technology, an emphasis on process and materiality and reflection, role-play and gender ambiguity, through to the perceived relationship between the body and mind.

Emily Floyd's *Steiner rainbow*, 2006, is a 'scaled-up 1:10 version of the classic stacking toy associated with Steiner Waldorf education'.<sup>2</sup> For Floyd, the work signals a complex set of ideas and relationships that relate to both her family background as well as the history of art and design. Floyd's father and grandmother were both toymakers and she acknowledges this through the use of wood as a primary material in many of her sculptures. The significant role played by Bauhaus and De Stijl workshop traditions and women artists in 20<sup>th</sup> century art and design are referenced, as is the philosophy of creating holistic learning environments that nurture the unique creativity of the child that is central to Steiner education.<sup>3</sup>

*Steiner rainbow* has the potential to change and grow. Just like the toy, it can evolve from tightly packed, uniform and cave-like to open and spread out. Implicit in this transformation is a recognition that open-ended systems encourage the sort of creative thinking that have no set solutions or end game. The capacity for experimentation, in this case using giant brightly coloured building blocks, is a microcosm of a learning environment that values individual expression in society and for Floyd is analogous to the work of artists and how they can imagine and create alternative, fulfilling worlds.<sup>4</sup>

**Emily Floyd**

*Steiner rainbow* 2006

two-part epoxy paint on MDF

nine parts: part a (dark blue): 54 x 131 x 60 cm; part b (light blue): 82 x 160 x 60 cm; part c (teal): 96 x 188 x 60 cm; part d (dark green): 110 x 217 x 60 cm; part e (light green): 124.5 x 245 x 60 cm; part f (yellow): 139 x 275 x 60 cm; part g (orange): 154 x 303 x 60 cm; part h (light red): 166 x 334 x 80 cm; part i (deep red): 180 x 362.5 x 60 cm.



Terry Batt's work also references the artist's life and the fertile intersections between personal history and society. On the simplest level, Batt is an avid collector of toys and these invariably feature in his art. *Codename: Yellow bird II*, 2017, is a replica of a 2006 painting of a tin toy that recalls the 'toy-making' cottage industry that was once synonymous with Hong Kong.<sup>5</sup> 'Operation Yellowbird', or 'Siskin', was a covert operation organised to help Chinese dissidents flee via Hong Kong following the Tiananmen Square anti-government protests of 1989. Through personal and professional relationships that he has developed in Hong Kong and China, Batt became more aware of the differences between the East and his own cultural background.

In *Codename: Yellow bird II* realist painting techniques adopted from both American and Chinese Pop art merge with the altered scale, bright colours and flat picture surface reminiscent of commercial illustration and advertising. Batt endows the subject with balance and repose and these formal attributes signal the pleasure to be gained from playing with or admiring the toy. However, they also mask a more sinister connotation in the way a 'simple' toy can allude to the brutal crushing and dissent and subsequent dispersal of people because they hold opposing ideals.



**Terry Batt**

*Codename: Yellow bird II* 2017

oil and wax on linen

152.0 x 152.0 cm

Photography: Mark Ashkanasy



Toys are associated with innocence, learning and fun but they are also part of the vapid commercialisation that has infiltrated and eroded every aspect of life. For the celebrated American Pop artist Jeff Koons this fetishist appeal of Western consumer culture is something that, ironically, he builds upon to create monolithic expressions of pure form and unadulterated joy.

*Balloon dog (Red)* is a compact version of the 10-foot original that Koons first designed in 1995. Using balloons twisted into the shape of a dog and then coated in shiny metallic colours, Koons draws attention to sentimentality and materialism and how birthday party celebrations can be transformed into something enduring and monumental as well.

Jeff Koons  
*Balloon dog (Red)* designed 1995  
porcelain  
11.3 × 26.3 cm diameter  
edition 1113 of 2300



'The Christmas tree bucket: Trent Parke's family album' is a series of documentary photographs from the mid-2000s that has been characterised as 'an emotional and psychological portrait of family life in Australia that is poetic and often darkly humorous'.<sup>6</sup> Here the annual Christmas get together with Parke and his family is portrayed as a tradition that can involve equal amounts of pleasure and pain, seriousness and humour, fun and boredom.

The immediate source of the series has been candidly recounted by Parke 'while staring into that bright red bucket, vomiting every hour on the hour for fifteen hours straight - that I started to think how strange families, suburbia, life, vomit and in particular, Christmas really was ...'<sup>7</sup> The dark and absurd reality of commonplace existence, where reality can take on a heightened or other worldly presence, is a feature of *Just one more photo*, 2008, and *Santa loses fight with Storm Trooper*, 2008, (reprinted 2017). For whom has not experienced the long build-up, post-feast bloat, trashing of toys and tired physical and emotional torment that accompanies that day?

**Trent Parke**

*Just one more photo*

(from the series *The Christmas tree bucket: Trent Parke's family album*)

2008

pigment print

72.0 x 90.0 cm

edition of 8



Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro use Lego and IKEA bathroom shelves in *Downstairs Entertainment Area - Manta Ray*, 2014. For these artists both products are trademarks of late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism. Easily made, duplicated, flat-packed and transported, these products have become standardised designs that have developed world-wide consumer appeal. Having used Lego and IKEA in their art installations since the mid-2000s, Healy and Cordeiro view the brands as symptomatic of a global market that renders domestic interiors as uncannily similar: '... the quintessential model of this all-encompassing sameness that is rapidly spreading across the world, infiltrating our public space, homes and workplaces.'<sup>8</sup>

*Downstairs Entertainment Area - Manta Ray*, 2014, comprises a magnificent but fake sea creature that has been taken from its natural environment and is pierced and pinned down by planks. Ironically, these planks become shelves that support an (unnatural) plastic nature herbarium, a simulacrum. By bringing these diverse elements together the artists introduce a sense of unease about the way in which nature is controlled and manipulated to suit the 'banal longings' of humankind. Their work also expresses a more playful interest in ectoplasm and the uncanny and the way the spirit of inanimate objects can be carried away or replaced by ghost-like apparitions.<sup>9</sup>

**Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro**  
*Downstairs Entertainment Area - Manta Ray* 2014  
Lego, Ikea bathroom shelves, light and terrarium  
112.0 x 220.0 x 175.0 cm



An emphasis on materiality and the transformation of toys or objects from one form into another is a feature of the work of Tim Silver. Silver's most recent work comprises photographic documentation of clay or earth forms that have disintegrated into various states of decomposition, echoing 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painting and the idea of *Memento mori*. The works have also been characterised as possible commentaries on material excess in today's culture and 'reminders of the environmental death and destruction our society is causing.'<sup>10</sup>

Silver's 2005 series of skateboards, guitars and miniaturised cars use children's crayons as the primary material. Crayola is used to make 'sculptures' that contain an in-built obsolescence, holding the seeds of its own destruction. Each time (*What If I Drive?*). *Datsun*, 2005, is exhibited it is intended to leave a crayon tyre mark on the floor nearby. This burn-out mark is activated by 'driving' the car on the floor and adds a performative element to what is an otherwise static object. Through this process, Silver explores the interface between time and decay and challenges the traditional notion of sculpture as monumental, static or permanent.

Brook Andrew  
*The Cell* 2010  
vinyl with fan blower  
300.0 x 1250.0 x 600.0 cm  
Photography: Roger D'Souza



In Brook Andrew's *The Cell*, 2010, the traditional use of 'heavy' metals such as welded steel, bronze, or stone for large public sculptures and outdoor memorials are replaced by a giant plastic inflatable that can be repeatedly blown up and reassembled in a variety of contexts and places. For the exhibition *Let's Play*, the work will be erected in the Studio, adjacent to the gallery. The striking modernist red and white design will stand out in the otherwise darkened space, as a visual beacon (or warning) to visitors. For them the form will initially present as a large rectangular sculpture. When it is open to the public over January, the same visitors can participate with the work by climbing into an inner chamber via a specially constructed tube or tunnel. The participants will wear suits; these resemble crime scene investigator's outfits except that in this case they will be adorned in linear patterns. The abstract designs relate to the Wiradjuri diamond-shaped forms that

covers the internal walls of the chamber. These reference Andrew's maternal bloodline and traditional shields and dendroglyphs, carved trees that mark special places and have a ceremonial purpose.

Art Gallery of New South Wales curator, Wayne Tunnicliffe, has written eloquently about *The Cell* and the related work *Jumping Castle*, 2010, and the way these works pose ambiguous meaning(s). Is it an organism, a prison, or an underground political organisation? 'Life and death, entrapment and potential stasis and revolution; all are reflected in its simple title, *The Cell*.'<sup>11</sup> Participants are free to explore, allow themselves to be subsumed by the optical and sound elements, or simply sit and reflect. In each case, their immersion in the work provides a space for activity and reflection that can range from feelings of liberation, loss of personal identity, through to incarceration.



Patricia Piccinini's *Game Boys Advanced*, 2002, is a celebrated work that was shown as part of her exhibition at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Two young boys pore over the latest version of a Game Boy, the portable computer game that had been released in Australia in mid-2001 by Nintendo. Significantly this design had replaced the earlier model by changing from portrait to landscape profile and by incorporating operating buttons on each side – a change that facilitated more dexterous manipulation and user comfort as well as demonstrating the constant evolution in game hardware.

Piccinini's works address a similar evolutionary process in humans. She focuses on advances in biotechnology, the erosion of natural/artificial dualities and the creation of hybrid forms of life. On closer inspection, *Game Boys Advanced*, 2002, reveals that the two figures are prematurely aging: they have greying hair, wrinkles, body hair and yellowing teeth. They are in fact clones, the result of experiments in genetic engineering. Although we might ponder what has led to this and what might be their plight, the boys are so engrossed in their game that they do not elicit pity or concern from the viewer. For Piccinini, the work raises questions about how science and technology have transformed life, for better and worse, without her becoming sentimental or judgemental.<sup>12</sup>



Patricia Piccinini

*Game Boys Advanced* 2002

silicone, acrylic, human hair, clothing, hand-held video game

140.0 x 36.0 x 75.0 cm

edition 2 of 3

Photography: Viki Petherbridge



One result of developments in information technologies, such as smartphones, is that the ways in which we experience the world and interact with each other is constantly changing. Robert Pulie's *I message me :(*, 2015, uses finger painting and text to create a new visual language. Pulie is interested in the morphology

of objects and materials - how things appear but also how they can be recombined and reformed. The reductionist language of text messages and Twitter exemplifies how communication has evolved just like our constantly changing digitally created identities.

**Robert Pulie**

*I message me :(* 2015

alkyd and oil finger painting on etched glass, felt, marine ply, sterling silver, epoxy

16.3 x 7.8 x .50 cm

Photography: Sofia Freeman, The Commercial, Sydney



In Chayni Henry's *A life well-lived*, 2009, the artist takes over her stepson's domain as a sign of regression and resistance to change. Play is often seen as the province of children, whereas it captivates people of all ages. She hogs his game time and furtively hopes for a more advanced Xbox and an extra controller for herself. In Henry's irreverent world, quirky illustrations are

matched with profound and sometimes profane text, traditional roles are reversed, and small gratifications latched onto. This is the era of blinds down, couch-ridden obesity and Henry wants her piece of the pie.

Chayni Henry

*A life well lived* 2009

synthetic polymer paint on wooden panel

40.0 x 30.0 cm



Jan Nelson's 'Walking in Tall Grass', by way of contrast, is a series of recent paintings that focus on how a teenager's immersion in their own world defines the way they see themselves and the world. *Lucy*, 2010, features a fellow artist's daughter, eyes closed, her sensations muffled by earmuffs, as she is transported to another world. Her pleasure is amplified through her rock star outfit and the striking

rainbow colours that vibrate and sizzle in the background. Jan Nelson has spoken about the way traits such as defiance and vulnerability form part of generational separation and transition – a period in which she explains – 'you can't go back, can only go forward, but can't see exactly where'. 'Walking in Tall Grass' is an apt metaphor for precisely that sort of all or nothing experience.<sup>13</sup>

**Jan Nelson**  
*Walking in tall grass, Lucy* 2010  
oil on linen  
77.0 x 60.0 cm  
©Jan Nelson/Licensed by Viscopy, 2017.



Jess Johnson and Troy Innocent are at the forefront of artistic interventions into imaging technologies and the creation of new and radically different individual experiences and social connections through play and games. *Ixian Gate*, 2015, is a 360-degree virtual reality animation by Jess Johnson and Simon Ward. Based on Johnson's drawings that have been re-engineered by Ward, the work premiered at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2015 and has since been transformed and reconfigured for Edinburgh, New York and now Casey.

Activated by the audience standing in a designated spot and donning a headset, *Ixian Gate* combines the artist's fascination with technology, video games, film, architecture and the creation of imaginary worlds. Wall to wall vinyl images of interconnected humanoid figures punctuated by giant alien heads face the viewer. *Ixian Gate* recalls elements of popular science fiction including Frank Herbert's classic

**Jess Johnson and Simon Ward**

*Ixian Gate* 2015  
virtual reality animation with audio  
animation duration 5:35 minutes  
Installation view Talbot Rice Gallery,  
University of Edinburgh, Scotland 2016

sci-fi 1965 novel *Dune*. Some of the themes of the book are important, including the concept of how technology is central to the creation and maintenance of a world order, as well as more generally the concepts of 'ecology, drug use, precognition and spiritual enlightenment'.

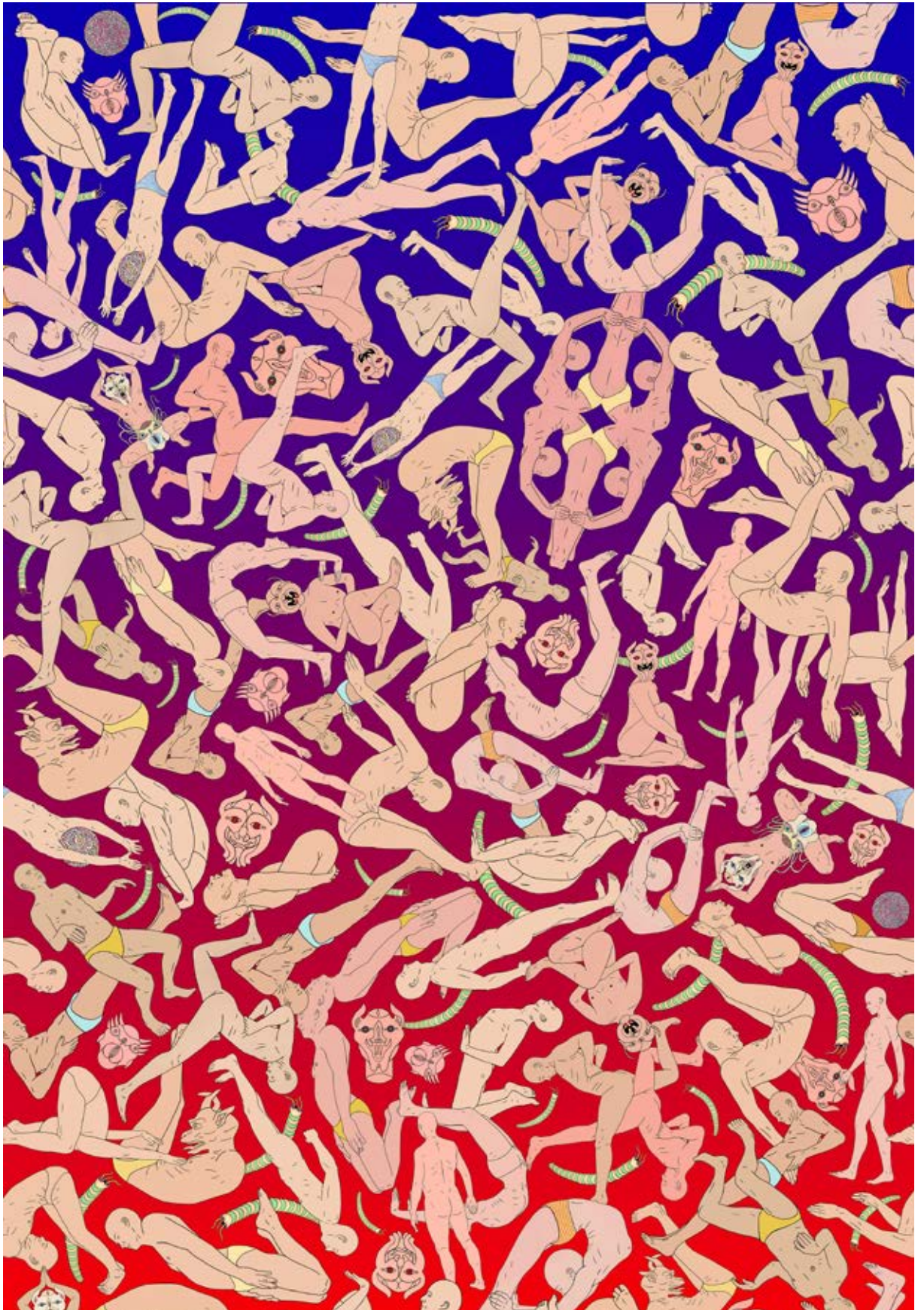
Johnson aims to create new artificial realities to see how far the imagination can be stretched. As Johnson has explained: 'I think of it [reality] as flowing lava, moving under the surface of time. Reality can be different speeds and densities. It can be multidimensional. It can be harnessed and brought into existence by words and symbols.'<sup>14</sup> Designed to create an all-encompassing sensory assault, *Ixian Gate* shows the capacity of virtual reality to create portals into parallel worlds.

(p. 24-25)

**Nick Selenitsch**

*Argon* 2017  
chalk on cement paving  
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne











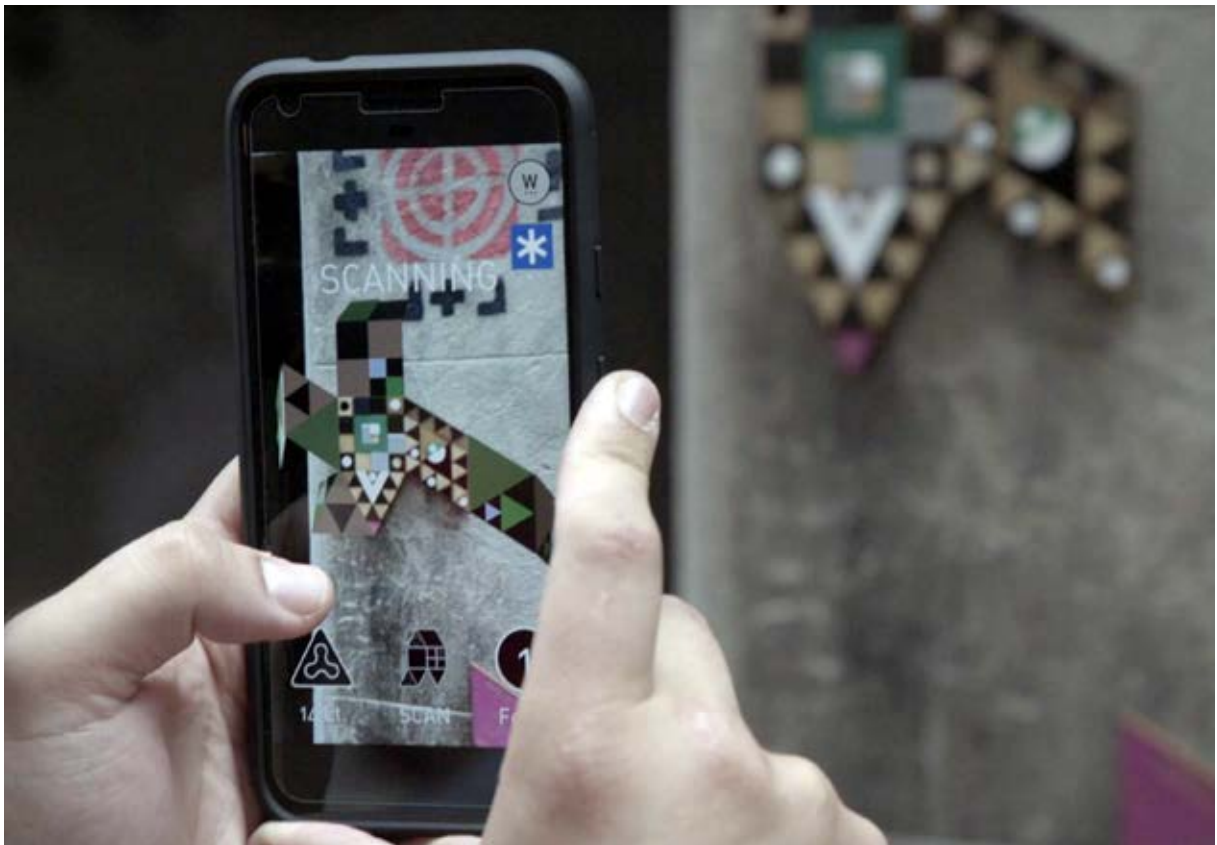
Troy Innocent, by contrast, recreates real-world locations through digitised images, making actual cities 'playable' through games. *Placemaker*, 2017, has its origins in alternate reality games that Innocent initiated in Australia, Turkey and Japan. These projects link Innocent's conceptual interest in building the 'Micronation of Ludea', a micronation whose primary premise is a culture and society based on play and ideas.

*Placemaker* is a location-based augmented reality game that was commissioned for *Let's Play*. Players can remap the City of Casey by downloading an App to their phone and scanning each of the urban codes, small geometric urban signs, that are placed in the gallery and surrounding precinct as art objects, wayfinding markers and game tokens. After scanning the urban codes, players collect game objects that they may use to build their

own places on the virtual map of Casey - in the process becoming 'placemakers'. After leaving the gallery at Bunjil Place, participants can continue to play with the map by building places on their journey home that then 'become populated by digital entities and creatures, generating a living alternate city that evolves and grows through the participation of players over the course of the next year.'<sup>15</sup>

Through this process of game play and revisualisation, Innocent's aim is to create experiences of urban spaces as 'fluid and malleable'. As he has recorded: 'Situating play in this way transforms public space for the player and the expanded audience observing the game in action.'<sup>16</sup> It is an alternative way of seeing and responding to our surroundings, a mixed reality in which perception is changed via digital interventions into the real world.

**Troy Innocent**  
*Wayfinder Live 2017*  
interactive game and community project



Central to the virtual world of Johnson and Innocent's augmented reality is the role played by rules and systems to create and explore self-generating visual codes or language. Sport and organised games also operate on visual codes and physical markings, providing a physical context for the game and opportunities for players to create their own variations. The ball intercept and subsequent spread of players in Australian Rules football is one example of the way organised sport can find infinite variety within its accepted or known structures.

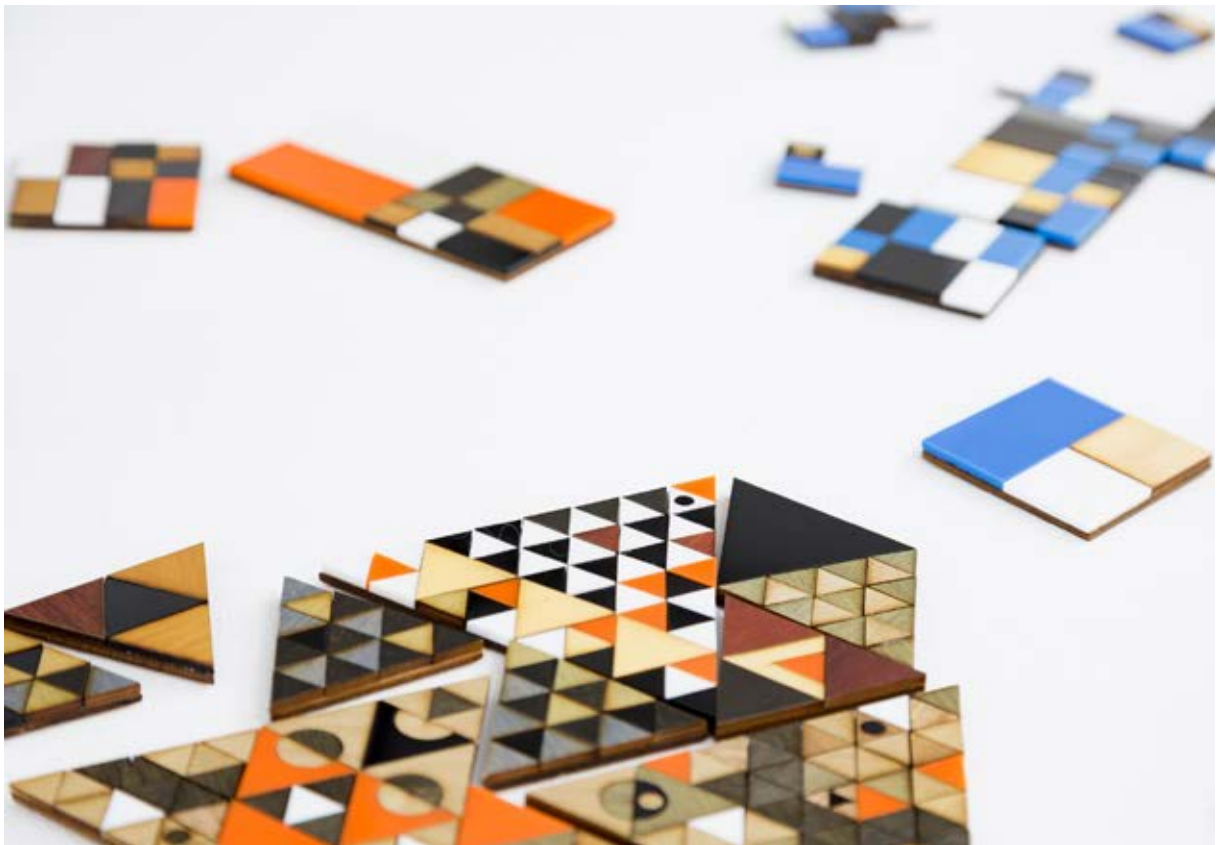
**Troy Innocent**

Selection of 64 urban codes 2013-16

laser cut plywood and acrylic

interactive, dimensions variable

Photography: Vivian Cooper Smith



Nick Selenitsch is intrigued by the way sports fields, arenas and playground markings, such as cricket stumps painted on brick walls, can develop an extended life of their own. These markings take on distinct personal associations as well as their own peculiar visual logic. *Felt 5*, 2012, evokes the colourful markings of a basketball court or soccer pitch. In its balanced abstract configuration, stripes and bright yellow palette, it also references the work of significant 20<sup>th</sup> century artists including the Swiss Dada and Constructivist exponent Sophie Taeuber-Arp. In his felt assemblages and interactive constructions, Selenitsch aims to adapt 'motifs from games, sports and street markings to create open-ended visual systems that flirt with the rules and procedures through which they are usually understood.'<sup>17</sup> The works are intentionally playful. They contain a subversive element that relishes the transformation of one visual language to another.

In a second series of works included in the *Let's Play* exhibition, Selenitsch will take his line-marking ideas and apply them to the pavement and tiles outside of the gallery. Selenitsch has explained that he started making the *Linemarking* series when he realised 'the abstract potential of children's chalk drawings at school.'<sup>18</sup> In the Bunjil Place 'drawings', Selenitsch designs will change over the course of the exhibition providing a fresh and unexpected take on the aesthetic language of games, sports, and civic markings. The resemblance to abstract art once again blurs the boundaries between high art and popular culture in Selenitsch's practice and are a humorous take on the similarities between art and life.

Nick Selenitsch  
*Felt 5* 2012  
synthetic and wool/ synthetic felt, glue, museum board  
82.0 x 102.0 cm



Fiona McMonagle's recent watercolours and animation also focus on 'organised' sport, as well as the social, mental and physical ramifications of playing games. *The ring*, 2014, is a digital animation incorporating 800 watercolour images of women boxing, including members of her own boxing training group. In this work McMonagle reveals her respect for the courage and mental discipline that the sport demands, as well as the physical fitness and skill demonstrated by female boxers. Both elements are borne out by the artist's dedication to the task of making the work: 'By the end of the day ... it physically hurts to paint another picture', she commented on that process.

*The huddle*, 2016, is a more recent response to female participation in male-orientated sports. This work comprises eleven freestanding, life-size watercolour-painted cut outs of soccer players in team uniform intently listening to their coach's words of encouragement. McMonagle has spoken about her passion for women's sport and the way it has been traditionally undervalued and dismissed by the mainstream. However, by concentrating on a female team involved in a suburban match in *The huddle*, McMonagle paints a story of collective endeavour and grass-roots momentum. The one figure that stands slightly back from the group is a picture of strength and studied concentration. It is through her that the viewer is drawn into the group and bonded with the rest of the players.

**Fiona McMonagle**

*The huddle* 2016

digital print cut outs on Dibond, sound (looped), soccer ball, synthetic grass

180.0 x 240.0 x 240.0 cm



Fiona McMonagle  
*The ring* 2014 (video stills)  
digital video animation, 16:9 ratio, colour, sound  
video duration 7:24 minutes



Maria Kontis's *Gigantic youth*, 2014, and *The earth on its axis*, 2016, recall the public spaces inhabited by children – in this case the playground and school gym. Curiously, these finely detailed drawings are less about sport than the articulation of memory as a series of disconnected and fragmented associations. Based on family photographs, memorabilia and personal recollections, these images preserve significant moments. They capture that sense

of sublime bliss that can be reached when physical and mental boundaries are temporarily put to one side – when you can literally fly like a bird or stand upside down. The grainy quality of each work, the soft and diffuse application of pastel on velvet paper and the elimination of background detail make them appear photographic, leaving that sense of a mysterious and ethereal moment in time.

**Maria Kontis**

*Gigantic youth* 2014

pastel on velvet paper

56.5 x 76.0 cm

Photography: Roza Marciniak Photography





**Maria Kontis**

*The earth on its axis* 2016

pastel on velvet paper

76.0 x 56.5 cm

Photography: Roza Marciniak Photography



A common feature of the works included in *Let's Play* are the references to other well-known artists, artworks and styles. Shaun Gladwell's *Reversed Readymade* and *Reversed Readymade (Bicycle wheel)*, 2016, digitally simulate Marcel Duchamp's famous bicycle wheel readymade of 1913. In the work, shot in a VR format, viewers put on headsets and experience Gladwell performing technical tricks that eventually transition into Duchamp's sculpture. The bicycle wheel used in the video is re-presented as the 'real' object in *Reversed Readymade (Bicycle wheel)*. Gladwell developed the concept of simulation for this piece and a companion work for the 2016 Basil Sellars Art Prize. In referencing sport and the use of prosthetic limbs in war, Gladwell echoed George Orwell's famous pronouncement that sport and war resemble a battlefield. 'Serious sport ... is war minus the shooting', he wrote.

Body-centred experiences as the basis of art is the focus of much of Gladwell's work and his competition in extreme sports. *Leap (Mike Parr)* 2013, features Gladwell parkouring off Mike Parr's *Untitled* sculpture from 1988, an abstract concrete work situated in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. Mike Parr is an Australian artist that Gladwell admires and feels an empathy with. Gladwell felt Parr's concrete wedge cried out for intervention, not only because of the challenge it presented but also because it allowed him to comment on Parr's visual practice and performances.<sup>19</sup> Gladwell thrives on the prospect of art being a form of mental and physical engagement with other art and his surroundings.

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Reversed readymade* 2016 (production still)  
virtual reality video, headset, phone, sound  
video duration 6:35 minutes



*Thinking machines*, 2015, by Melbourne artist Fleur Summers, extends the idea of combining mental and physical relationships within the one work. At first glance, these two beanbags, that have pedals attached, present a misnomer. One part of the work is traditionally identified with lounging around and the other with physical activity. However, the two things are not necessarily antithetical as the work is designed to bring them together. Summers uses the

phrase 'disassociative dialogue' to designate an activity in which engaging in a physical activity enables the users to become mentally released. Just like the brain responds to rest and stimulation, her work encourages audience participation that brings with it the potential for innovative ideas and liberated patterns of thought.

**Fleur Summers**

*Thinking machines* 2015

bean bags, pedals

dimensions variable



Contemporary neuroscience and cognitive brain theory, especially *Embodied cognition*, suggests that the mind is not only connected to the body but also that the body influences the mind. Just as 1960s Minimalism returned the body and sensory experience to the realm of art, so too contemporary neuroscience investigates the plasticity of the mind and its ability to adapt and evolve.<sup>20</sup> Tina Douglas's work in *Let's Play* takes cognition and brain function and turns it into a visual soundscape. Douglas's practice ranges from large monochrome paintings, that combine intuitive mark-making and the self-imposed rule of the grid, free-hand drawings and improvised sound and video performances. The connecting thread is the parallels that can be drawn between patterns and grids and how information is reproduced and communicated through digital forms.

*Felt*, 2017, is an interactive wall work that was commissioned for *Let's Play*. In it, Douglas engages the viewer physically, visually and aurally. People are drawn to touch the work through their attraction to soft, natural materials. Sensors trigger unexpected sounds and subtle vibrations upon touch. Douglas likens the work to a non-naturalistic terrain that allows participants to take any number of paths. Sounds are triggered by proximity, broadness of strokes and the depth and angle of touching. The triggers operate concurrently so that complex layered combinations of sound can evolve.<sup>21</sup>

Douglas's work follows a long tradition of experimental sound performances by 20<sup>th</sup> century artists who used discordant sound patterns to create music based on random elements, breaking down the traditional division between the artist and the audience. In *Felt*, the soundtrack shifts and changes through the movement and position of the audience. Sound loops created by processing recorded sounds from the real world through computer programs foster a hybrid experience that is neither natural nor digital. Much like our everyday experiences, it lies somewhere in between.

**Tina Douglas**

*Felt* 2017

wool, stainless steel fibre, micro controllers,

speakers, sound

260.0 x 140.0 cm

Photography: Viki Petherbridge



Performance and role-play associated with child's play and dressing up has long captivated artists. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century French-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois blurred the boundaries between male and female creating highly sexualised images that translated her subjective experiences into a symbolic language. Diane Arbus showed people disfigured, maimed or on the margins of society. Another influential American artist, Cindy Sherman took the idea of creating a new persona, often based on herself, to a new level. Her ideas concerning role-playing and the fluid nature of identity; sexual and cultural stereotypes; the pressure to conform to the images of perfection promulgated through television, film and advertising influenced artists from all over the world and opened fresh territory in the ideas of polymorphism and contemporary life.

Miwa Yanagi is a contemporary Japanese artist best known for her large photographic compositions in which she dresses up models and digitally manipulates images. Yanagi's 'My grandmothers' 2000, is one of her most acclaimed series of works. In it she presents a visual portrayal of young women projecting an imaginary role for themselves, 50 years

from now. Unlike earlier images in which she presented Japanese women as clone-like and socially compliant, the 'Grandmother Series' presents women who are mature, independent and free-spirited. These traits are seen by Yanagi as central to counterbalancing the ultra-conservatism of Japanese society – and the rigid conformity governing Japanese girls and women – as well as presenting a role model for the important work of being a grandmother.<sup>22</sup>

The immediate setting of *Sachiko* is a plane bound for an unknown destination. The central figure is composed, powerful and open to new experiences. The light that pierces the cabin illuminates her facial features, reinforcing her happiness and enlightened aura that stems from her enjoyment of a magical sunset. The accompanying text panel, spoken by the model who is depicted, gives a potent indication of her state of mind and her hopes and desires for the future.

(p. 39) **Miwa Yanagi**  
*Sachiko* (from the series *My grandmothers*) 2000  
type C photograph + text  
photograph: 86.7 x 120.0 cm image/sheet;  
text: 21.6 x 30.0 cm sheet



## SACHIKO

Even though I thought that I had become totally used to living alone by now, yesterday, no matter how hard I tried, I just could not stand being in the house by myself. It seemed as if the winter sunset had overtaken the entire world, and was, little by little, scorching everything in its path. I got up and drove to the airport, and, not surprisingly, got on the first airplane I could find. I was trying to escape from the sun, but now I was the one chasing it.

Among all the skies I've seen so far, this is the most extraordinarily divine. At this very moment, this is probably the most beautiful brightness. Although I used to hope I would die while gazing upon such a heavenly sky, my bearing witness to this brilliance right now makes my prior wish nothing but a trivial dream.

As I was about to depart from the airport, I called my friend Kimiko and told her that I was on my way...and my, was she surprised! Since I chose this airplane at random, my trip has encountered quite a detour. I wonder how many hours it will take to get to Iviza via Singapore? Until I reach that far away island where Kimiko resides, I shall surrender myself to the light.

Australian-born artist Polly Borland, now living in Los Angeles, photographs well-known subjects ranging from Cate Blanchett to Queen Elizabeth II to musician Nick Cave. In these works, Borland draws out their inherent quirks and traits, marking the differences in their personalities from that which is portrayed in tabloid images. This interest in the private versus public face of her sitters, the ambiguous and sometimes the grotesque is a feature of her art.

*Untitled (Nick Cave in a blue wig)*, 2010, is a large type C photograph that plays with the idea of malleable body forms and polymorphous identities. The singer-songwriter is dressed in a stockinette bodysuit and a pretty cotton dress while the garish blue nylon wig hides his distorted face. His lips are covered in thick swathes of bright red lipstick. While the scene resembles a fashion shoot, it also suggests something more personal and intimate.

Cave has commented in relation to these images that, 'Polly seems to me to be shooting into a distorted mirror and simply bringing back heartbreaking refracted images of herself.'<sup>23</sup> Borland's controlling presence, her interest in dysmorphic body parts and transgressing conventional gender roles, is symptomatic of a widespread contemporary interest in the transgressive and potentially liberating qualities of play.

In his essay 'Creative writers and day-dreaming', Sigmund Freud speculates: 'Perhaps we may say that every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer [we may read: artist], in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly, he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better.'<sup>24</sup> This idea of play as art (and art as play) is a concept that underpins the work included in *Let's Play*. Viewers are invited into the works, physically, imaginatively, intellectually – and this engagement sets up a creative meeting of minds, the sharing of ideas and experiences and the possibility of transformative change.

When you are so in the moment that time stands still. This is one of the many achievements of the artists included in *Let's Play*. Through their references to games, toys, technology, sport and role-play, these artists forge new connections and have created exciting works that following the trajectory of recent and 20<sup>th</sup> century art that situates audiences and audience participation at the centre of their work. In the end, art and play share a similar trajectory – they are both intrinsically meaningful to our lives, but they have no set rules or pre-ordained purpose.



Polly Borland  
*Untitled (Nick Cave in a blue wig)* 2010  
type C photograph  
181.5 × 150.0 cm



# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For example, *Design & Play* at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, 29 April–14 May 2016; PLAY TIME, contemporary art biennale, Les Ateliers de Rennes, France, 27 September–30 November 2014; *Play with Me*, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> Jane Devery, 'Emily Floyd: The Dawn', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2014, p.3.
- <sup>3</sup> This is most closely identified with the educational philosophies of Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) and Maria Montessori (1870-1952).
- <sup>4</sup> See Peter MacKay's lucid discussion of *Steiner Rainbow* in 2011. <https://blog.qagoma.qld.gov.au/emily-floyds-steiner-rainbow-2006/>
- <sup>5</sup> Terry Batt, in conversation with Rodney James, October 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.stillsgallery.com.au/artists/parke/index.php?obj\\_id=bio](http://www.stillsgallery.com.au/artists/parke/index.php?obj_id=bio)
- <sup>7</sup> Trent Parke, 'The Christmas Tree Bucket', <https://vimeo.com/2559373>, 2009.
- <sup>8</sup> Anna Davis, Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2012, p.13.
- <sup>9</sup> Healy and Cordeiro, quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> University of Queensland interpretative guide. <http://asset.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/docs/NeoSilver.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> Wayne Tunnicliffe, 'Exploding Plastic Inevitable', in *Brook Andrew: The Cell: A guide to the ordinary function of the cell and the affiliated creation*, Sherman Contemporary art Foundation, Sydney and institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2010, p.36.
- <sup>12</sup> See Linda Michael, 'We Are Family: Patricia Piccinini at the 50th Biennale of Venice', 2003, <http://www.patriciapiccinini.net/writing/27/40/49>
- <sup>13</sup> 'In the flesh', Jan Nelson in conversation, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, uploaded 11 March 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGnNrIOSKxg>
- <sup>14</sup> Jess Johnson, quoted in Serena Bentley, 'Jess Johnson: Ixian Gate', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2016.
- <sup>15</sup> Troy Innocent, correspondence with Rodney James, October 2017.
- <sup>16</sup> Troy Innocent, 'CITIES OF SIGNS // WORLDS OF PLAY' artist statement.
- <sup>17</sup> See *Nick Selenitsch – Play*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2014.
- <sup>18</sup> *Op cit*, p.11.
- <sup>19</sup> Shaun Gladwell, 'Artist's Choice: Mike Parr's Untitled', <http://trishclark.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/6.-51.3-Artists-choice-February-2014.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> Fleur Summers, 'Infinitely malleable - approaching contemporary sculptural practice through the notion of neural plasticity', Proceedings of the ACUADS 2014 Conference: The Future of Discipline, Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools 2014.
- <sup>21</sup> Tina Douglas, conversation with Rodney James, October 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> See Mako Wakasa's 2002 interview with Miwa Yanagi in which she discusses her thoughts on the conservatism in contemporary Japanese society: 'Miwa Yanagi', 'Journal of Contemporary Art', [www.jca-online.com/yanagi.html](http://www.jca-online.com/yanagi.html). Accessed 27.09.2006.
- <sup>23</sup> Nick Cave, quoted in 'Polly Borland: Everything I want to be when I grow up', University of Queensland, <http://asset.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/interpretive-resources/Polly-Borland-Learning-Guide.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, quoted in Ellen Handler Spitz, Zigzagging with full stops from play to art', *From Diversion to Subversion: Games play and Twentieth-Century Art*, ed. David J. Getty, The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 2001, p.171.

# Catalogue of works

All works are from the collection of the artist, unless otherwise noted. Dimensions are given in centimetres (cm), height preceding width, followed by depth.

## **Brook Andrew**

born Sydney, NSW 1970; lives and works Melbourne, Victoria and Paris, France

### *The Cell* 2010

vinyl with fan blower

300.0 x 1250.0 x 600.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2010

## **Terry Batt**

born Bristol, England 1949; arr. Australia 1953; lives and works Melbourne, Victoria

### *Codename: Yellow bird II* 2017

oil and wax on linen

152.0 x 152.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

## **Polly Borland**

born Melbourne, Victoria 1959; lived England 1989-2011; lives and works Los Angeles, USA

### *Untitled (Nick Cave in a blue wig)* 2010

type C photograph

181.5 x 150.0 cm

Hayman Collection, Melbourne

Courtesy of Murray White Room, Melbourne

## **Tina Douglas**

born Canberra, ACT 1966; lives and works Melbourne, Victoria

### *Felt* 2017

wool, stainless steel fibre, micro controllers, speakers, sound

260.0 x 140.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

## **Emily Floyd**

born Melbourne, Victoria 1972; lives and works Melbourne

### *Steiner rainbow* 2006

two-part epoxy paint on MDF

nine parts: part a (dark blue): 54 x 131 x 60 cm; part b (light blue): 82 x 160 x 60 cm; part c (teal): 96 x 188 x 60 cm; part d (dark green): 110 x 217 x 60 cm; part e (light green): 124.5 x 245 x 60 cm; part f (yellow): 139 x 275 x 60 cm; part g (orange): 154 x 303 x 60 cm; part h (light red): 166 x 334 x 80 cm; part I (deep red): 180 x 362.5 x 60 cm.

Collection: Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Gift of the artist through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 2011. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

## **Shaun Gladwell**

born Sydney, NSW 1972; lives and works Sydney and London, UK

### *Leap (Mike Parr)* 2013

type C print, framed with coloured acrylic  
168.0 x 114.0 cm

### *Reversed readymade* 2016

virtual reality video, headset, phone, sound  
video duration 6.35 minutes

### *Reversed readymade (Bicycle wheel)* 2016

bicycle wheel and stool  
dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

## **Claire Healy**

born Melbourne, Victoria 1971, lives Blue Mountains, NSW

## **Sean Cordeiro**

born Sydney, NSW 1974, lives Blue Mountain, NSW

### *Downstairs Entertainment Area - Manta Ray* 2014

Lego, Ikea bathroom shelves, light and terrarium  
112.0 x 220.0 x 175.0 cm

Courtesy of the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

# Catalogue of works

## **Chayni Henry**

born Elizabeth, SA 1983;  
lives and works Darwin, NT

### *A life well lived* 2009

synthetic polymer paint on wooden panel  
40.0 x 30.0 cm

### *A new neurosis* 2009

synthetic polymer paint on wooden panel  
40.5 x 30.5cm

Courtesy of the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart

## **Troy Innocent**

born Melbourne, Victoria 1971; lives and works  
Melbourne

### *Placemaker* 2017

interactive game and community project

Courtesy of the artist

Commissioned with the assistance of Casey  
Digital Innovations Hub, City of Casey

## **Jess Johnson**

born Tauranga, New Zealand 1979, arr. Australia  
2002, lives New York City, NY

## **Simon Ward**

born Takapuna, Auckland, New Zealand 1979;  
lives and works Melbourne, Victoria

### *Ixian Gate* 2015

virtual reality animation with audio

animation duration 5:35 minutes

Developer: Kenny Smith

Sound: Andrew Clarke

Courtesy of the artists and Darren Knight  
Gallery, Sydney

## **Jeff Koons**

born York, Pennsylvania, USA 1955; lives and  
works New York City, NY

### *Balloon dog (Red)* designed 1995

porcelain

11.3 x 26.3 cm diameter

edition 1113 of 2300

Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,  
Melbourne. Gift of Eric Harding and Athol  
Hawke, 2006

## **Maria Kontis**

born Canberra, ACT 1969; lives and works in the  
Blue Mountains, NSW

### *Gigantic youth* 2014

pastel on velvet paper  
56.5 x 76.0 cm

### *The earth on its axis* 2016

pastel on velvet paper  
76.0 x 56.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery,  
Sydney

## **Fiona McMonagle**

born Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland 1977,  
arr. Australia 1977; lives and works Melbourne,  
Victoria

### *The huddle* 2016

digital print cut outs on Dibond, sound (looped),  
soccer ball, synthetic grass  
180.0 x 240.0 x 240.0 cm

### *The ring* 2014

digital video animation, 16:9 ratio, colour, sound  
video duration 7:24 minutes

Technical production: Declan McMonagle

Courtesy of the artist and Sophie Gannon  
Gallery, Melbourne

## **Jan Nelson**

born Melbourne, Victoria 1955; lives and works  
Melbourne

### *Walking in tall grass, Lucy* 2010

oil on linen

77.0 x 60.0 cm

Collection: McClelland Sculpture Park+Gallery,  
Langwarrin. Purchased 2011, The Fornari Bequest

## **Trent Parke**

born Newcastle, NSW 1971; lives and works  
Adelaide, SA

### *Just one more photo* (from the series

*The Christmas tree bucket: Trent Parke's family  
album*) 2008

pigment print

72.0 x 90.0 cm

edition of 8

# Catalogue of works

*Santa loses fight with Storm Trooper*  
(from the series *The Christmas tree bucket: Trent Parke's family album*) 2008  
pigment print  
72.0 x 90.0 cm  
edition of 8

Courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery,  
Adelaide

## Patricia Piccinini

born Sierre Leone 1965; arr. Australia 1972;  
lives and works Melbourne, Victoria

*Game Boys Advanced* 2002  
silicone, acrylic, human hair, clothing, hand-held  
video game  
140.0 x 36.0 x 75.0 cm  
edition 2 of 3  
Private collection, Sydney. Courtesy of Roslyn  
Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Tolarno Galleries,  
Melbourne

## Robert Pulie

born Sydney, NSW 1969; lives and works Sydney

*I message me :(* 2015  
alkyd and oil finger painting on etched glass,  
felt, marine ply, sterling silver, epoxy  
16.3 x 7.8 x 0.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial,  
Sydney

## Nick Selenitsch

born Melbourne, Victoria 1979; lives and works  
Melbourne

*Felt 5* 2012  
synthetic and wool/ synthetic felt, glue, museum  
board  
82.0 x 102.0 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne

## *Linemarking B* 2017-18

chalk on pavement  
dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery,  
Melbourne. Commissioned by Bunjil Place  
Galley, City of Casey

## Tim Silver

born Hobart, Tasmania 1974; lives and works  
Sydney and London

*(What If I Drive?) Datsun* 2005  
Crayola crayon  
7.0 x 24.0 x 9.0 cm  
edition of 10  
Private collection, Melbourne

## Fleur Summers

born Brisbane, Queensland 1965; lives and works  
Melbourne, Victoria

*Thinking machines* 2015  
bean bags, pedals  
dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

## Miwa Yanagi

born Kobe, Hyōgo Prefecture, Japan 1967; lives  
and works Kyoto, Japan

*Sachiko* (from the series *My grandmothers*)  
2000  
type C photograph + text  
photograph: 86.7 x 120.0 cm image/sheet; text:  
21.6 x 30.0 cm sheet  
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales,  
Sydney  
Purchased with funds provided by Naomi  
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2002

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Hayman Collection, Melbourne  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
Bett Gallery, Hobart  
Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney  
Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide  
Murray White Room, Melbourne  
Niagara Galleries, Melbourne  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne  
Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney  
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne  
The Commercial, Sydney  
Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

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