

Art Enquirer

A CRITICAL ART WRITING PROGRAM BY THE
INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART AND FLYING ARTS ALLIANCE

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This is the first year that the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) and Flying Arts Alliance have collaborated on the *Art Enquirer* program and publication. In May 2017, eleven senior high-school students (ten from around Queensland and one from Tasmania), participated in a two-day intensive where they visited some of Brisbane's best galleries and artist studios. With expert mentorship, they explored different ways to critically engage with contemporary art, both in the process of writing about an artwork and, more importantly, in viewing an artwork. For both organisations, connecting young people with new art and ideas has been an incredibly rewarding project.

As part of their two-day intensive, students had some formative experiences with art. In particular, their visit to artist studios in Yeronga had a profound impact on their understanding of art being made here and now. They had the exciting opportunity to see Gordon Hookey's incredible history painting *MURRILAND!* (2016–ongoing) just moments before it was shipped to Germany to be exhibited in documenta 14. To top this off, Ross Manning performed one of his sound sculptures live, and Ryan Presley shared stories of notable Aboriginal figures throughout history—many of whom the students were learning about for the first time.

Writing about art is challenging. The program offered insights and techniques that can otherwise take years to master. It has been exciting to see students transform their initial enthusiasm for an artwork into thoughtful reflections on the artists' intentions and motivations, as well as the works' symbolic meaning and impact.

Topics covered here are as varied and dynamic as the artworks the students saw during their two-day intensive. They range from cardboard box recycling in Hong Kong to the spectre of colonialism in Australia. The newspaper format reflects the freshness and currency of their insights, and the title of this publication attempts to capture some of the spirit of these enquiring young minds.

We take this opportunity to thank Brian Tucker for his generous support of the student travel bursaries, as well as Jan Murphy Gallery, Philip Bacon Galleries, Heiser Gallery, Edwina Corlette Gallery, artisan, Milani Gallery, Tim Walsh, and all of the artists for their studio and gallery tours.

The work the students have produced here represents a remarkable achievement, and we wish them all the best in their future writing careers.

Institute of Modern Art and Flying Arts Alliance, 2017

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The Bold Bogeyman

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by Leisl Askey-Doran
St Stephen's Catholic College

Commenting on Australian history, Archie Moore's *Bogeyman* (2017) boldly reflects on white society's continued predominance in Australia, and references how white settlers were initially thought by the Indigenous people to be apparitions or ghosts. As one source notes, "When the Aborigines first saw the ships of the 'First Fleet' enter Botany Bay in 1778 with so many white skinned people, they thought they were the spirits of their dead ancestors (after all, they were so white)."¹ Moore's unique installation immediately caught my eye while the work was on display at the IMA as part of the group show *Material Politics* (2017). A Brisbane-based Indigenous artist who explores identity through the many lenses of racism, heritage, and culture, and presents a new, confronting perspective on racism. Moore has used 'skins' composed entirely of acrylic paint in many of his previous works, but this most recent installation reveals a new method of draping the skin over a wooden frame. Moore's work questions the past white affiliation with skin colour, using his own Indigenous identity while also making reference to white colonial history.

A sheet composed entirely of white paint draped over a wooden crucifix-like structure, the installation dominates the space, its arms spread wide as if in a sinister welcome. A round bulge protruding at the top reveals the location of the head on a slightly downward angle, seemingly submissive, causing the structure to appear somewhat human beneath the thick sheet. With its feet spread sturdily apart, the frame stands unassisted, its rigid posture menacing as it silently maintains a certain indifference to all around it. Created by layering several coats of white paint, the sheet has a texture similar to that of rubber, thick enough to remain in position.





INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW: ARCHIE MOORE, *BOGEYMAN*, 2017.

A mysterious figure without an identity, the *Bogeyman* certainly appears as a ghost, though its opaque draping estranges it from traditional ghost portrayal. Its simple design allows the audience to attribute characteristics to the structure under the sheet that go beyond merely imagining a face. The submissive tilt of the head could be either ominous or weary, the arms open wide to dominate or embrace, though the unyielding pose gives the *Bogeyman* an independence completely foreign to the restrictive Western canvas. A mood of uneasy tension grips the viewer, as they surreptitiously wait for the apparition to spring to life.

Standing alone, the installation can be seen to portray white society being draped over Indigenous identity and history. The crucifix-like stance reminds the viewer of the cross from Christianity, possibly symbolising the overwhelming influence of white society in a religious context, with further significance emphasised by the span of the wooden arms, representing the wide reach of white influence in Australia. Indeed, an online educational article comments that “the Christian missionaries did think they were doing the best thing possible for Aboriginal people when they tried to turn them away from their ‘pagan’ customs and beliefs, but they were participating in the destruction of a culture”.² Moreover, much of Moore’s work makes reference to Christian proselytising of Indigenous peoples, including his ‘acrylic on nothing’ painting *Aboriginal Religion* (2012). Additionally, the name ‘Bogeyman’ encourages the idea that Aboriginal treatment by white people has been kept ‘under the bed’ (or at least under the white paint sheet), unseen because it reflects negatively on the character of early white settlers. Another ironic element to this captivating work is the significance of the white skin: the haunting purity of the skin could be seen as a reference to early ideals of skin colour, while the colour of innocence in this context appears deceptive—a white lie draped over a dark memory.

Evidently, the *Bogeyman*’s structure is similar to how we comically envision an apparition. In a disturbing sense, this first impression of colonial white society turned out to be prophetic, as white Australian society has haunted Indigenous existence since the late 1770s. The introduction of colonial society brought with it a multitude of disastrous consequences to the Indigenous peoples: violence, disease, forced removal from their land, and indoctrination.³

In conclusion, by combining implicit and explicit observations, Archie Moore’s *Bogeyman* boldly critiques white society’s predominance in Australia. A confronting piece, his work certainly detaches itself from traditional Western art forms with its deep historical meanings and symbolism. The bold *Bogeyman* can be perceived as a political, historical, and religious comment on early white colonial society and the impact that it has had on Indigenous cultures. Moore’s monumental work peels back the white skin of history and drapes it over the Christian crucifix, combining religion and culture in a single imposing structure.

¹ Senani Ponnampuruma, "Aborigines (Aboriginals) – The First Australians The First People to Come to Australia", *Australia: Its People and Places*, 13 June 2017, <http://panique.com.au/trishansoz/aborigine/aborigines-aboriginals-indigenous-australians.html>.

² "Life on the Reserves", *Skwirk Online Education*, 26 May 2007, www.skwirk.com/p-c_s-14_u-120_t-327_c-1125/life-on-the-reserves/nsw/history/changing-rights-and-freedoms:-aboriginal-people/the-aboriginal-experience.

³ Ponnampuruma, "Aborigines".

Behind a Person

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by Charlee Dornauf
Launceston Church Grammar School

Abbey McCulloch is a New Zealand-born, Queensland-based artist who has reached prominence in recent years, holding numerous solo shows and becoming a finalist at the Archibald several times.¹ Her exhibition *ZERO* was shown at Edwina Corlette Gallery 4–25 May, 2017. *ZERO* is a collection of (loose) self-portraits, which consider women as “social beings: mothers, daughters, sisters” and explore “emotions ranging from awe to frustration, from screaming abandon to resolute determination”.²

The expression on a subject’s face can often reflect the emotions felt by an artist or their subject. Beauty ideals and notions of femininity are reflected on in McCulloch’s subjects’ gazes. Beauty ideals refer to the pressures women feel compelled to comply with, and are often affected by notions of femininity. This occurs through females being expected to be in touch with their womanhood. This essay will analyse McCulloch’s paintings and will argue that there is a strong correlation between her work and issues of femininity and sexuality.

The eponymously titled work *ZERO* (2017), which is the only one to employ oil on canvas (as opposed to acrylic on canvas), portrays the image of a woman, head tilted upward, with a drowning expression on her face. Upon closer inspection, the audience can see that more detail has been put into the creation of the subject’s face when compared to other features on the body. Because the work’s title is the same as that of the whole exhibition, one could assume that it is the main piece in the show. The title is at odds with the number of breasts within the painting; there are at least ten. The breasts could represent that McCulloch feels weighed down by her femininity,³ because they are literally sacks of fat. The flailing arm that is wrapped around her front could symbolise her attempt to control the heft of this motif, or perhaps that she feels vulnerable because of her breasts, and this is her effort to cover them up. McCulloch has painted the work with streaky brush strokes, which could symbolise the imperfections that she sees within herself.

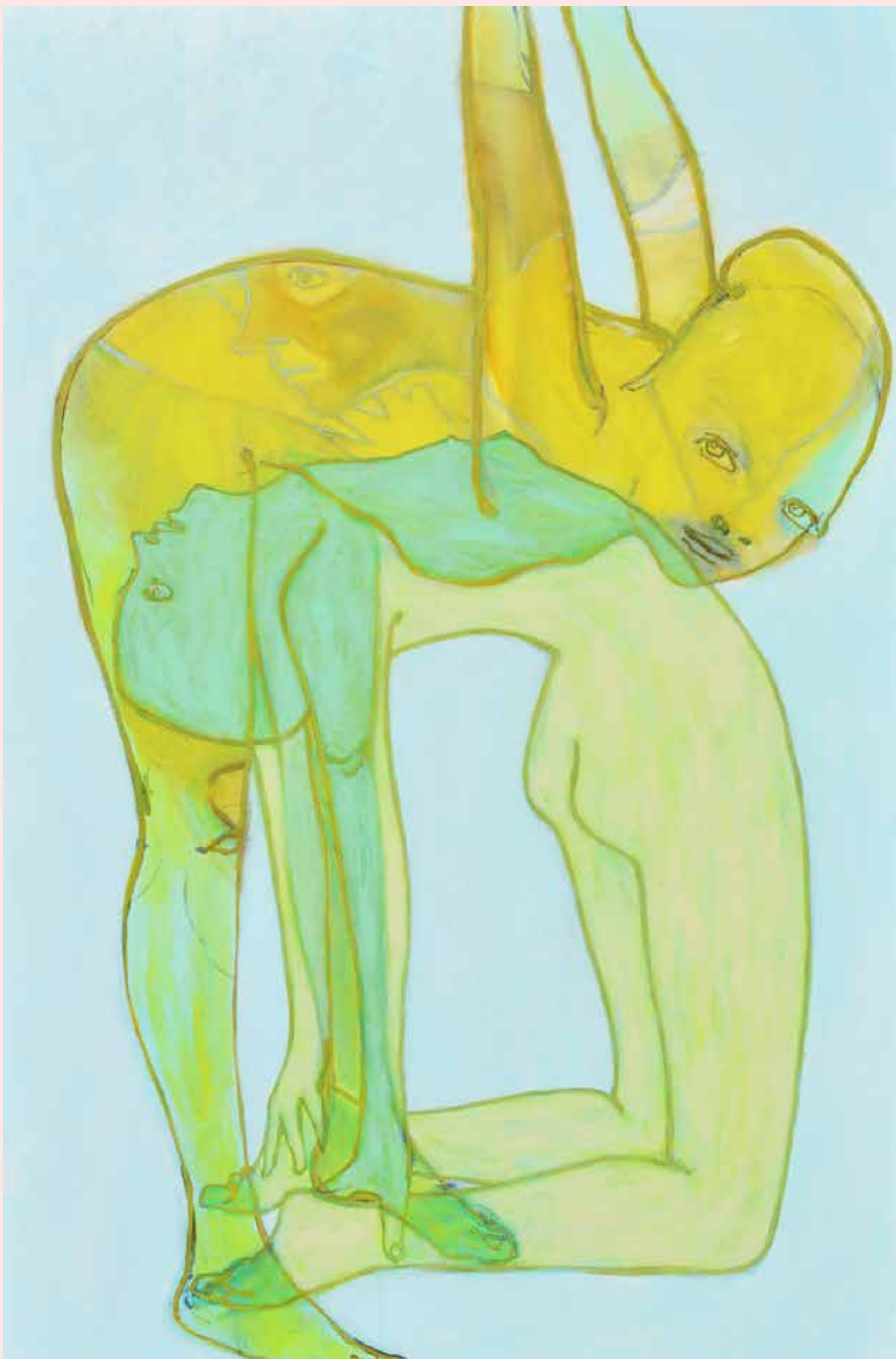


ABBEY MCCULLOCH, *ZERO*, 2017. OIL ON CANVAS, 150 X 120CM. COURTESY OF EDWINA CORLETTE GALLERY.

FUNPARK (2017) another work featured in the exhibition, could be seen as suggesting that women's bodies are fun, and as McCulloch taking a different approach to her femininity and sexuality than that assumed in *ZERO*. McCulloch's gaze here is directed at the audience. Since the body lacks detail, it could be assumed that the artist is trying to express that she will look at you, but her face is all she will let you see. She has used a palette of white and various tones of pink, which is a stereotypically 'girly' colour that reminds her audience of what she is wanting to express in her exhibition. However, the pose is distorted to a point, where there are exaggerations to the back of her head and the curves in her body. The face in *FUNPARK* is a lot less detailed when compared to that shown in *ZERO*. The composition of the figure helps to draw attention to her. This is also implemented by the subtle fade in of the pink vignette. Although McCulloch has used acrylic paint, the vignette looks as if it has been painted with watercolour. This could be an intentional reference to the traditional use of watercolours by women in art history,⁴ as it has been seen as a more 'feminine' form of painting. The bold outline that is rendered in a heavier pink clearly defines the body of the figure, and separates it from the vignette. One conclusion that can be drawn from the lack of pink, or any tonal variation, within the body is that McCulloch has not explored her sexuality and that she feels blank in this aspect of her life. Alternatively, the highlighted section of white within the body could represent that McCulloch still feels pure within herself, while the world around her changes.⁵



ABBEY MCCULLOCH, *FUNPARK*, 2017. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 167 X 140CM. COURTESY OF EDWINA CORLETTE GALLERY.



ABBEY MCCULLOCH, *EXILE*, 2017. ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 150 X 100CM. COURTESY OF EDWINA CORLETTE GALLERY.

In contrast to the lack of tone within the figure in *FUNPARK*, in *EXILE*, the audience can see two dominant figures, one painted in a darker acrylic yellow, and the other a more subdued yellow. Where the two meet in the middle, the colours mix to give off a bluish hue. It could be suggested that the darker of the two figures represents McCulloch's self that she shows to the world. The detail in her face—perhaps she is wearing make up—like that suggested in *ZERO*, could be her conceding to society's expectations and could allow her audience to assume that this version of her is a bit insincere. The faded figure could then represent McCulloch's inner self, the one that she does not show to the world around her. The detail in the facial expression is lacking when compared to that seen in the outer self. This could represent that McCulloch feels barer, and possibly does not feel the need to be fake, when she is by herself. The composition of the two bodies literally shows that the inner self is below the outer self, which could lead the audience to assume that McCulloch's true self is just below the surface of the one that she shows the world. The blue mix produced from the combining of both figures possibly could be the side that McCulloch shows to her friends, or people she trusts. This is because there is that part of her inner self where she is a bit more comfortable but she is not willing to fully present herself, and therefore needs the protection of her outer self. The inner self is also shown to be bending over backwards for the outer self, and from this it could be suggested that McCulloch feels that her true self is submissive to the one she shows the world. When the work is explored more closely, the audience can see a face blended into the body of the darker body. This could be society watching over McCulloch, and that she feels like it is always there, ready to pounce if she does something wrong. With this in mind, the title *EXILE* could be important in that McCulloch is trying to tell her audience that in a way she is exiling her inner self, so that she can be more like what society wants her to be.

As discussed here, Abbey McCulloch's latest paintings work through ideas of beauty ideals through a series of self-portraits. These motifs are hiding in each painting, such as those presented in *ZERO*, *FUNPARK*, and *EXILE*. McCulloch's audiences are able to undress these themes

and are given the opportunity to explore the ideas she expresses through her work, which include femininity and sexuality.

¹ See "Abbey McCulloch CV", Dianne Tanzer Gallery, 2016, <http://thisisnofantasy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/TINF-Abbey-McCulloch-CV-2016.pdf>; Art Gallery of New South Wales, "Abbey McCulloch: Archibald Finalist 2013", <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2013/29381/>.

² "Abbey McCulloch 'Zero'", Edwina Corlette Gallery, 2017, http://edwinacorlette.com/exhibitions/7525_abbey-mcculloch-zero/~text.

³ Marcia Reynolds, "What Is Femininity?" *Huffington Post*, 6 October 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcia-reynolds/what-is-femininity_b_748070.html.

⁴ "History of Watercolour", University of Wisconsin, 2012, https://arthistory.wisc.edu/exhibitions/victorian-watercolors/history_of_watercolor.html.

⁵ Lauren Treiser, "Women in Art: Abbey McCulloch as Herself", *Creative Women's Circle*, <http://www.creativewomenscircle.com.au/abbey-mcculloch/>.

Cardboard Connections

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by Tom Doyle
Marist College Ashgrove

Every day, people are connected, whether it be through e-mail, social media, or cardboard recycling. Tintin Wulia is an Indonesian-born artist currently based in Brisbane. *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* (2016) is part of Wulia's 2014–2016 project *Trade/Trace/Transit*, which she describes as “a series of public interventions into the trade route of cardboard waste in Hong Kong”.¹ A sculpture from this series, *172 Kilograms of Homes for Ate Manang* was on view at the IMA as part of *Material Politics*, 6 May–15 July 2017, but this essay will discuss the larger project. *Five Tonnes* was formed during Wulia's time in the Eastern Asia region, and was first exhibited at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016. The work, which features bales of cardboard, gives an unparalleled insight into the vast and intricate cardboard recycling network that exists in Hong Kong and encompasses a large number of diverse people. Wulia's work uncovers the hidden connection of recycled waste among varying social classes, ranging from Filipino domestic workers to Hong Kong billionaire, ‘Queen of Trash’ Zhang Yin.

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Wulia named her series of interactive installations as one of the inspirations for choosing cardboard for *Five Tonnes*, with another work, *Eeny Meeny Money Moe* (2012), using arcade claw machines and toy passports to draw on her personal experiences with migration and the universally relevant ideas of mobility and identity.² As the artist comments, “I was creating objects that made a link between people, so I thought, ‘Now I’ll try and find the object first, and see how that object links people and how different people use that object.’”³ Wulia reflected on this unique connection between the different inhabitants in Hong Kong through her work, calling the five-tonne bales of cardboard waste “physical digests of their route” as they travel through Hong Kong. As Wulia followed the cardboard's cycle throughout Eastern Asia and started collecting the material, she met some of the groups that were involved in the recycling process. Throughout the journey, the work gathered “physical traces of people, stakeholders that make up the nodes of the route, attaching diverse values to the cardboard waste along the way”.⁴



INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER.
IN VIEW: TINTIN WULIA, *172 KILOGRAMS OF HOMES FOR ATE MANANG*, 2017.





INSTALLATION VIEW, MATERIAL POLITICS, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW: TINTIN WULIA, 172 KILOGRAMS OF HOMES FOR ATE MANANG, 2017.

Wulia recognised that the 'stakeholders' most impacted by the material are Filipino domestic workers. The drawings and traces shown across the outer structural layers of *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* provide an illustration of these workers' lives inside and out, with Wulia having spent time in their cardboard shelters where she gained an insight into their daily routines and their involvement in the recycling of cardboard waste. The detailed imagery on the outer layers of the work gives an eye-opening look into the many Filipino domestic workers who are connected in this process, with both the artist and the workers participating in creating the illustrations. Wulia and the workers used crayons and markers to draw on the cardboard, with the artist having previously drawn lines flowing seamlessly across the cardboard, resembling trees and flowers, to form links for the workers to draw separately.⁵

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In its simplicity, the work could be considered by passers-by to be a piece of trash, which in fact was Wulia's intention—she purposefully aimed to juxtapose this 'anti-aesthetic' work with all the other fashionable and aesthetically pleasing artworks at the 2016 Art Basel show in Hong Kong.⁶ But it is not your average pile of waste, because absorbed within the five tonnes of cardboard bales is the vast network of hidden relationships between the various inhabitants of Hong Kong who are involved in the continual process of cardboard recycling. With the work starting out as a lightweight box being easily moved around the streets of Hong Kong and ending in its final form as a 5,000kg immobile object, it imitates the cardboard's continuous and increasing life of recycling as it goes through the different social classes and their varying forms of use encompassed in all facets of Hong Kong.

The installation of *Five Tonnes* at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016 showed the bales of cardboard waste in a spiral arrangement, with the boxes being hung and reinforced by heavyweight metal cables at differing heights. The suspended and urban composition of the work evokes certain characteristics of the Hong Kong atmosphere, mimicking the environment in which the work was formed, resembling something of a building or skyscraper. The rising height of the cardboard bales is also interesting, as it seems to link back to the different ranking social classes that reuse and recycle the lightweight material in Hong Kong. Wulia expresses this by visually creating a hierarchical structure, as the artist carefully positions the cardboard bales to identify the ranking classes of people who are involved in the Hong Kong cardboard recycling network.

Tintin Wulia's *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* brilliantly encapsulates the cardboard recycling network in Hong Kong, with the bales symbolising the trade route of growing cardboard waste throughout the vibrant and densely populated streets of Hong Kong and the different stakeholders involved along the way. The work gives an insight into the social classes of Eastern Asia and uncovers a strong connection between the different individuals living in modern Hong Kong society.

¹ Tintin Wulia, *Trade/Trace/Transit*, 2014–2017, <http://www.tintinwulia.com/tradetracetransit/>.

² Sarah Bond, "7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art", *Artlink* 33, no. 1 (March 2013), <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3934/7th-asia-pacific-triennial-of-contemporary-art/>.

³ Oliver Giles, "How Tintin Wulia's Art Exposes Inequality", *Prestige*, 8 July 2016, <http://prestigeonline.com/hk/Art-Culture/Interviews/How-Tintin-Wulia-s-art-exposes-inequality>.

⁴ "Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories", *Trade/Trace/Transit*, 2014–2017, <http://www.tintinwulia.com/tradetracetransit/?portfolio=fi-ve-tonnes-of-homes-and-other-understories>.

⁵ Tintin Wulia, "Wall Drawings", *Trade/Trace/Transit*, <http://www.tintinwulia.com/tradetracetransit/?portfolio=wall-drawings>.

⁶ "Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories, 2016", *Art Basel*, 2016, <https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/35013>.

Not Another Feminist Slogan

by Jamie McDougall
Emmaus College Rockhampton

The idea that art is a reflection of the artist's experience has transcended previous conceptions of art, and remains evident today, especially in the case of feminist groups such as the Sydney Women's Art Movement (1974–),¹ which is dedicated to using subject matter specific to life experiences.² It is also evident in the works of artists such as Raquel Ormella, whose art practice gives a nod of recognition to those who have actively resisted power. Ormella is an Australian artist focused mostly on responding to events documented in the news media—in particular, stories about resistance—since such stories have made her question her obligations as an artist. This is where the impetus for her series *I'm Worried This Will Become a Slogan* (1999–2009) arose. Comprising a range of double-sided banners of sewn wool and felt, the works open up a discussion of events in the news, such as Xanana Gusmão's release from imprisonment (1999), the decapitation of a Margaret Thatcher statue (2002), and Julia Hill's residence in a 1500-year-old redwood tree in order to prevent its destruction (1997–1999³). All of these events are the product of resistance and power struggle. Based on the statements included in her work, it is evident that Ormella feels that her position as an artist requires her to discuss these social situations in a more explicit manner.

In order to fully understand the connection between second-wave feminism and Ormella's work, it's important to first understand the history of protest and resistance through the first and second waves of feminism. Like most movements of this nature, the first wave of feminism that started in the 1830s was spurred by a struggle for power; i.e., women demanding increased opportunities for themselves,⁴ such as voting and equal contract and property rights. After their success with creating voting opportunities (though exclusively for white women) came the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. This wave was more concerned with sexuality and reproductive rights;⁵ however, it is most famous for the many strikes and marches that took place, recalled in the popular imagination as angry women bearing banners with even angrier words plastered across them. This is most likely what caused the carrying over of the 'angry feminist' stereotype into the current wave, and, more importantly, into the art produced by third-wave feminists.



INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW: RAQUEL ORMELLA, *I'M WORRIED THIS WILL BECOME A SLOGAN*, 1999-2009.



This is particularly obvious in one of the fragments of Ormella's work that reads on one side "I'm worried I'm not radical enough" and "Paul Kelleher lopped the head off the Margaret Thatcher statue because he didn't want it to enter the Houses of Parliament without the mark of the people" on the other. The design of all banners within the series has evidently been inspired by the suffragettes and the 'bra burners' of the past, highlighting the ties between feminism and the obligation to be 'radical'. This also perhaps comments on the idea shared by the community that third-wave feminism is irrelevant in today's society, or that "feminism is over, [...] time to move on"⁶, which obviously disregards the relevant content of artworks such as these banners. Such content mirrors the first and second waves of feminism, as the statements used by Ormella discuss 'the people' and resistance in a way that would make those under the scrutiny of the resistance even more uncomfortable than they would have if someone had just quietly called them out on their ignorant or misogynistic actions.

Ormella's series sends a message about the pressure to conform to the stereotypes of the political artist; the pressure to comment on things that other people 'wouldn't dare' comment on...



DETAIL, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: JAALA ALEX. IN VIEW: RAQUEL ORMELLA, *I'M WORRIED THIS WILL BECOME A SLOGAN*, 1999-2009.

...the pressure to go against society; the pressure to reject feminist beliefs but also not completely surrender to the pressure provided to artists by the feminist movement. Ultimately, this message is about resisting such pressures.

Resistance is an ongoing theme across Ormella's installations, appearing in *I'm Worried This Will Become a Slogan* multiple of times and providing a range of different examples of resistance in the news. If the theme wasn't obvious enough with the presentation of the work, the mentioning of Gusmão would have had to have been. His release from unjust imprisonment occurred around the time of the creation of the work bearing the phrase "I'm worried I'm not radical enough". This makes the point of the artwork obvious, as Gusmão was imprisoned for being the leader of the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, which, as suggested by the political party's name, worked towards the independence of their country.⁷ However, while Gusmão's name may not be particularly familiar to people of my generation, one name that sparked familiarity but was not featured in the *Material Politics* exhibition presented by the IMA is Julia 'Butterfly' Hill, an author who lived in a 1500-year-old redwood tree for 738 days in order to prevent it from being cut down.⁸ This is a contrasting display of resistance to that of Paul Kelleher's, as Hill did not act violently in order to prove a point; instead, she lived in the canopy of an extremely old tree for two years. In my opinion, this action is just as powerful as knocking the head off of a statue of the Iron Lady.

I'm Worried This Will Become a Slogan as a series is reflective of the second wave of the feminist movement, particularly its ideals of resistance. Ormella's work raises a number of issues followed by the news over the span of ten years. The chosen presentation of these events plays a significant role as it helps the audience to better understand the motivation behind the series, and the ideas that Ormella intends to convey.

Perhaps, as this essay has shown, Ormella's work isn't just another feminist slogan.

¹ Jude Adams, "Looking From With/in: Feminist Art Projects of the 70s", *Outskirts Online Journal* 29 (2013), <http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-29/adams-jude-looking-with-in>.

² Robin Secomb and Rosemary Francis, "Women's Art Movement (1976-)", *The National Women's Register*, 2004, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE1034b.htm>.

³ Nessim Watson, "Julia Butterfly Hill, American Activist", *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Julia-Butterfly-Hill>.

⁴ Martha Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism", Pacific University, Oregon, 25 October 2015, <https://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/four-waves-feminism>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Emily Hill, "Feminism Is Over, The Battle Is Won. Time to Move on", *The Spectator*, 24 October 2015, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/10/the-decline-of-feminism/>.

⁷ "Companion to East Timor - FRETILIN", University of New South Wales, last modified 31 August 2015, <https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/timor-companion/fretilin>.

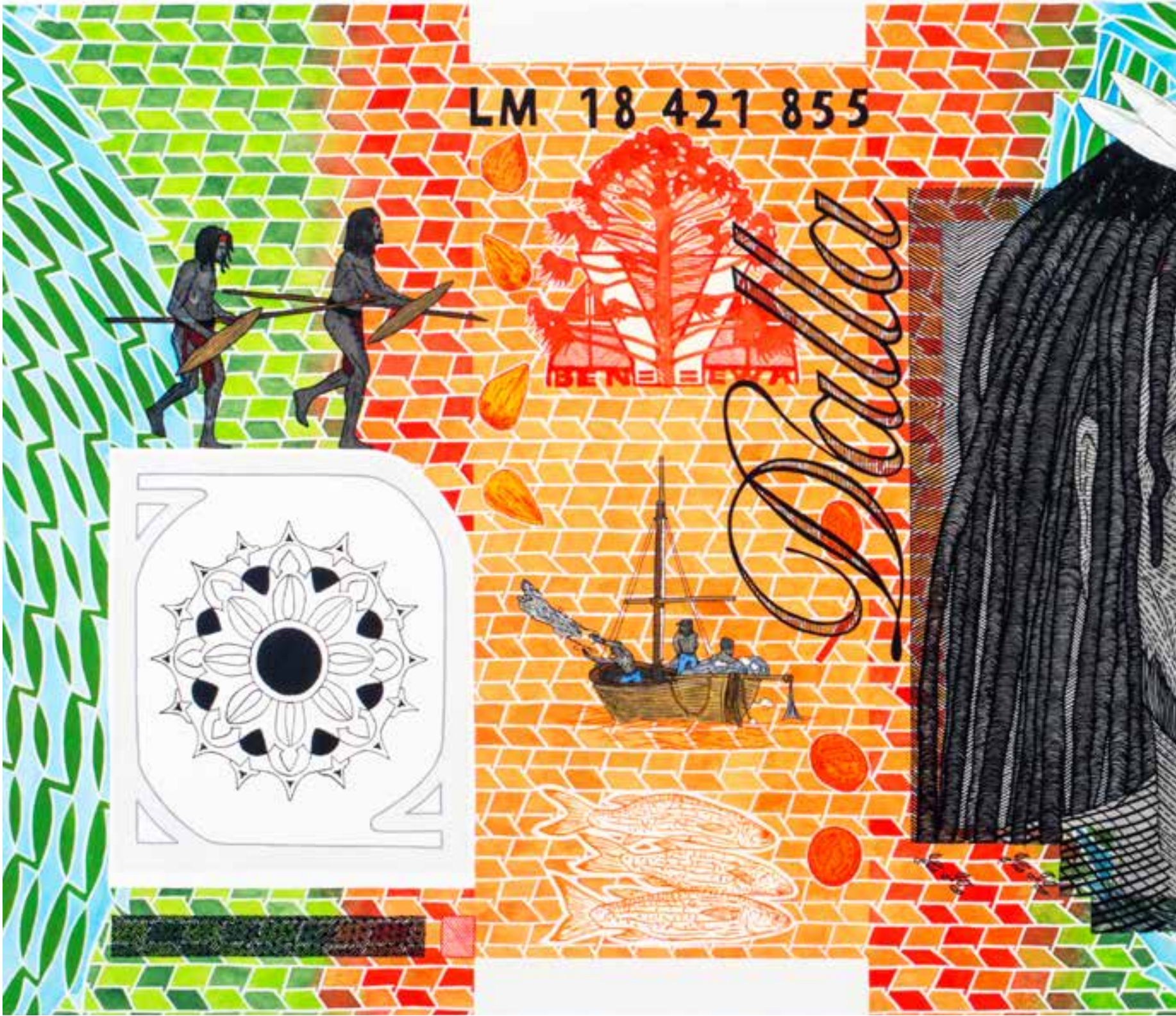
⁸ Watson, "Julia Butterfly Hill".

The Importance of Contemporary Art for Indigenous Recognition

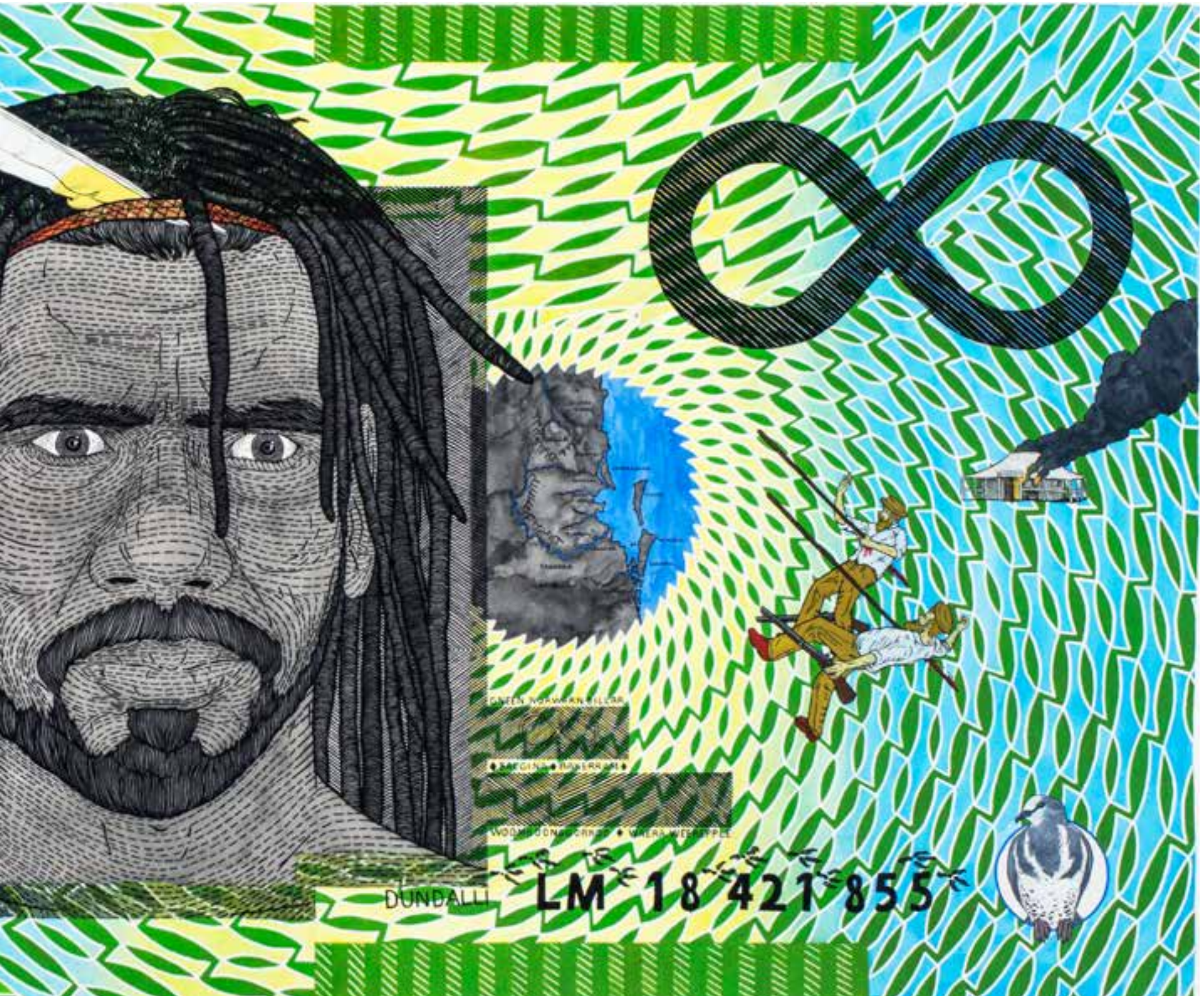
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by Didi Mulligan
Corinda State High School

Two hundred and twenty-nine years on, Australia still refuses to legally recognise its first peoples in the nation's founding document: the Australian Constitution.¹ Where the Constitution has failed, art has been an important visible platform for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to redress a lack of visibility and acknowledgment. However, this is a complicated relationship as art itself is a Western-dominated cultural form, which has historically overlooked Indigenous perspectives. In response, some Indigenous artists have rejected the traditions of Western art, thus establishing their own visual language within Australian contemporary art. Indigenous artists Archie Moore and Ryan Presley exemplify the significance of contemporary art for Indigenous recognition, for it is the voice that Australia's first peoples have been systematically denied. Despite their disparate mediums, the respective works of *Boogeyman* (2017) and *Infinite Dollar Note – Dundalli Commemorative* (2017), both exploit Western conventions to repudiate them and explore the impact of these cultural inculcations. Ultimately, these artists ironically manipulate yet another form of oppression to oppose the standards instilled in society, hence turning it into a medium of empowerment.



RYAN PRESLEY, *INFINITE DOLLAR NOTE - DUNDALLI COMMEMORATIVE*, 2017. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



Archie Moore is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists, whose works explore identity and the potential implications of ingrained cultural attitudes. As a descendent of the Kamilaroi people, Moore is deeply invested in Indigenous politics, Australia's colonial history, and racism in a wider sense.² These themes are recurrent in his practice, which encompasses painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, photography, and video.³

Commissioned by the IMA, *Bogeyman* (2017) was a central piece in the gallery's recent exhibition *Material Politics* (2017). The sculpture, which was constructed on site, consists of a thick sheet of white paint draped over a wooden pedestal.⁴ Despite the simplicity of the materials used, this ghostly imagery evokes potent connotations. Firstly, the figure stretched across a wooden 'cross' alludes to crucifixion. This reference to Christianity, a Western religion, embodies how its principles were forced upon the Indigenous people after colonisation. Secondly, this faceless white cloak strikingly resembles the hooded robe of the Ku Klux Klan: the epitome of white supremacy and abject racism. Lastly, this apparitional form is also reminiscent of the myth that the Wurundjeri Tribe believed the arriving colonialists were the visiting ghosts of their ancestors.⁵ With mere paint and wood, Moore creates a haunting and confronting homage to Australia's abhorrent history.

However, Moore's deliberate choice, and lack thereof, of substrate adds a deeper layer of meaning to the work. Painting on canvas is a traditional method found in European art. Thus, Moore's refusal to work on canvas is a rejection of European culture. In turn, this *Bogeyman* embodies not only the exclusion of the Indigenous people from Western art but also society. Furthermore, the repetitive, arduous

layering of paint symbolises the endless layers of suffering of the Indigenous community through their systematic oppression. This 'ghost' then becomes a blanket, signifying how white colonialism threw a cover over Aboriginal people, stifling their culture and traditions. This cultural suppression remains evident in contemporary art, as Indigenous artists are often segregated or are forced to adhere to Western standards.⁶ Additionally, the heinous acts committed by the European invaders are excluded from Australia's historical art, delicately swept under a white rug. Therefore, Moore's highly considered presentation of *Bogeyman* amplifies the piece's elaborate symbolism to criticise Australian history and the ensuing, continuous struggles of the Indigenous people.

Ryan Presley, who holds a PhD in visual arts from the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, is another renowned Brisbane-based artist, though he was born in Alice Springs. Like Moore, Presley is also of Indigenous heritage as his father's family is Marri Ngarr and they descend from the Moyle River Region of the Northern Territory.⁷ Presley's works also traverse the themes of colonialism, racism, and power through an array of techniques and mediums, including linocut, watercolour, etching, ceramics, and illustration.⁸

Presley's series *Blood Money* (2010–ongoing) consists of appropriated Australian banknotes, created with watercolour on Arches paper. The substitution of the figures celebrated by white Australian culture (Dame Mary Gilmore, Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Henry Parkes, and Banjo Patterson) with Indigenous resistance fighters (Dundalli, Jandamarra, Fanny Balbuk, Vincent Lingiari, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Pemulwuy, Tjedaberiyn, Truganini, Gladys Tybingoompa, Woloa, and Yagan) not only demands

acknowledgment of these figures who are so often unacknowledged but also questions the morality of Australia's wealth.⁹ Presley's 2017 contribution to *Blood Money* is the culmination of the monetary value assigned to earlier work in the series. Instead of recreating each individual banknote, here, Presley amalgamates every value and replaces the number with an infinity sign. This removes the notion of value and rank, as Presley deems it unjust to order these heroes, since they all hold equal significance in Australia's history.

The figure exalted in *Infinite Dollar Note – Dundalli Commemorative* (2017) is Aboriginal leader Dundalli (c. 1820–1855). His name is predominantly mentioned in contentious accounts between the European settlers and Indigenous peoples in South East Queensland, as he was accused of murdering several white men. Although he was historically depicted as a savage murderer, he is now regarded as the leader of a decade-long resistance against white colonisation. Contrary to historical accounts, most crimes committed by Indigenous people were not wanton, but acts of retribution for heinous outrages perpetrated by the settlers.¹⁰ *Infinite Dollar Note – Dundalli Commemorative* aims to rewrite other historical accounts, finally recognising Dundalli for the hero he truly was.

The adept skill exhibited in the creation of this work heightens its impact. Presley pays extreme attention to detail, and the repetition of shapes and lines mimic that of a banknote, albeit on an enormous scale (each note is around a metre in length). This intricacy highlights the entrenchment of Indigenous oppression; Australia's system of wealth is largely founded upon the mistreatment and enslavement of its Indigenous people. Conversely, impoverishment continues to be prevalent within Indigenous

communities: a direct impact of colonialism and subsequent institutionalised racism. Furthermore, the gentle gradation of blues, greens, and oranges obscures the 'value' of the note. Consequently, Presley rejects the modern Western social hierarchy of capitalism. By coupling this with the substitution of white figures, Presley ultimately undermines white authority and concepts of power. Moreover, the contrast between the muted colours and monochromatic greys draws attention to the featured historical figure. This emphasises their importance, and forces the audience to recognise their contribution to Australian history.

Regardless of their different approaches, both artists manipulate aspects of Western culture to rebuke it. Moore layers paint to signify the layers of ingrained racism and cultural suppression faced by the Indigenous peoples of Australia, while Presley reclaims Australian banknotes to duly recognise powerful resistance fighters and forgotten heroes as well as to question the integrity of Australia's wealth, built on the back of genocide. When viewed adjacently, *Bogeyman* and *Blood Money* elucidate the exclusion of Indigenous voices in contemporary art and Australian history, respectively. In turn, these pieces showcase the importance of contemporary art, as it allows Indigenous artists to provide their own perspective on Australia's racist history and its continual impact. Evidently, contemporary art has become the voice for the voiceless, and all that is left is for Australia to listen and respond.



INSTALLATION VIEW, MATERIAL POLITICS, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: JAALA ALEX. IN VIEW: ARCHIE MOORE, BOGEYMAN, 2017.

¹ “Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Australian Constitution”, last modified 2017, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/about-constitutional-recognition#main-content>.

² “Archie Moore”, The Commercial Gallery, last modified 2017, <http://www.thecommercialgallery.com/artist/archie-moore/biography>.

³ “Archie Moore”, QAGOMA Learning, last modified 2017, <http://learning.qagoma.qld.gov.au/?p=2213>.

⁴ Wes Hill, “Material Politics | Céline Condorelli”, *Artlink* 37, no. 2 (June 2017), <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4607/material-politics-7C-cC3A9line-condorelli/>.

⁵ “Attitudes and Perceptions between the Wurundjeri & the British”, *Aboriginal History of Yarra*, last modified 2017, http://aboriginalhistoryofyarra.com.au/6-attitudes-and-perceptions-between-the-wurundjeri-the-british/#_ednref1.

⁶ Henrietta Wilson, “Material Politics”, *Art Asia Pacific*, June 2017, <http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/WebExclusives/MaterialPolitics>.

⁷ “Ryan Presley”, Griffith Centre for Creative Arts Research, last modified 2016, <https://www.gccar.com.au/griffith-centre-for-creative-arts-research/members/higher-degree-research/ryan-presley/>.

⁸ “Ryan Presley”, Metro Arts, last modified 2017, <http://www.metroarts.com.au/artist/ryan-presley/>.

⁹ Daniel Browning, “New Currency: Ryan Presley”, *Artlink* 33, no. 2 (June 2013), <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3969/new-currency-ryan-presley/>.

¹⁰ “Dundalli—A Story of Aboriginal Resistance in Brisbane”, *Brisbane History*, last modified 2017, <http://www.brisbanehistory.com/dundalli.html>.

Restless Light

44

by Ryan Turner
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Kinetic art was created by artists who pushed the boundaries of traditional, static art forms to introduce visual experiences that would engage the audience and profoundly change the course of modern art.

—Theo Jansen¹

Kinetic art serves as an extension from traditional art forms; as an outlet of expression, it enthralls the audience through a sensory experience incorporating abstraction and dynamism. With a history dating back to the early twentieth century, kinetic art began as an avant-garde movement of artists who embraced methods that went against the norm.² In an age of technological advancements, Brisbane artist Ross Manning explores kinetic art in a contemporary setting. He selects common household materials, to illustrate the beauty found in simplicity. His work *Spectra III* (2012) reveals the potential found in altering the meaning or interpretation of an object(s) simply by its relation to other objects and their surroundings.³

Spectra III is the third piece in Manning's *Spectra* series. It was first shown at Milani Gallery in 2012, and then exhibited at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) later the same year.⁴ *Spectra III* is typical of Manning's practice, which almost exclusively makes use of refracted light and colour.⁵ The formal components of *Spectra III* are rudimentary, consisting of household fans and fluorescent tube lights attached to five separate wooden poles suspended from the ceiling. These horizontal poles are chained together at different points and hung above and below one another in perfect balance. Attached to one end are fans that push and pull the poles out of sync with each other, creating random spurts of movement due to their varying speeds. Each pole has a different coloured fluorescent light attached to it that also projects colour onto the walls and floor. These colours mix together, creating soft blends of light that are restless in their interactions with each other. The combination of this spontaneity in colour and movement stimulates the senses of sight and touch, with the cooling wind of the fan and soft light patterns reflected around the room. When presented at QAGOMA colour mixes could be viewed in an adjacent room through three differently sized holes in the wall. The three apertures act as a light filter, separating the colour mixes back into their individual red, green, and blue constituent parts.



INSTALLATION VIEW, ROSS MANNING: *DISSONANT RHYTHMS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW: ROSS MANNING, *SPECTRA XIII*, 2017.



Viewed on a deeper level, *Spectra III* could be seen to illustrate the globally recognised concept of a societal structure through its metaphorical representation of simple household objects. In a physical sense, the domestic fans propel the wooden poles and fluorescent lights with random timing; however, in a conceptual sense, the fans could represent power and the ability to influence others. Every part of the structure is at the mercy of the fan; it alone generates the thrust and kinetic energy whose movements affect one another. The movement and activities of the fan at the very bottom affect the fan at the very top, despite their physical separation. Visually, the fan attached to the highest pole appears to be superior because of its height and distance from the audience, yet it is still affected by the apparently weakest fan.

This separation does not negate the fact that each pole has the same purpose. Projecting light onto the walls and floor, they mix with each other and create new colours and shapes. In physical terms, each pole projects a unique colour onto the walls and floor; yet, in relation to the concept of societal structure, each colour represents a unique skill, value, or contribution that is added for the common good. Through their combination, all these elements become united in purpose and inter-connected through kinetics. Organisation into classes based on colour isn't apparent in the creation of new mixes and thus there is no ability to prevent this.

Related to this are the apertures that act opposite to the fluorescent light tubes. Stepping into the adjacent room and viewing the individual red, green, and blue lights makes the differences between each one clear. In a conceptual context, the adjacent room could be viewed as a place where differences are exposed and used as a tool of discrimination. The three apertures could be seen as lenses that societal classes have created, manipulating those who look through them to become critical and unjust in their treatment of others based on visual differences.

Spectra III highlights that the placement of seemingly ordinary objects in a dynamic composition lends itself to vast interpretations and deeper meanings that are discovered upon further investigation. A sensory experience that uses cheap materials found at any hardware store, *Spectra III* highlights how kinetic art can convey messages unable to be achieved through traditional, static forms. The combination of spontaneous colour mixtures and random movement allows the audience to appreciate the individual purpose of each component of the work. *Spectra III* truly demonstrates how seemingly ordinary objects can create metaphors and combat societal stigmas when they are combined.

¹ Theo Jansen, quoted in "2015 International Kinetic Art Exhibit & Symposium–Boynton Beach, FL, USA", *LibQuotes*, last modified 2017, <https://libquotes.com/theo-jansen/quote/lbn1h7u>.

² See The Art Story Contributors, "Kinetic Art Movement, Artists and Major Works", *The Art Story*, last modified 2017, <http://www.theartstory.org/movement-kinetic-art.htm>; Guang-Dah Chen, Chih-Wei Lin, and Hsi-Wen Fan, "The History and Evolution of Kinetic Art", *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 5, no. 11 (2015): 922–930; and Jessica Stewart, "Art History: The



INSTALLATION VIEW, ROSS MANNING: *DISSONANT RHYTHMS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW: ROSS MANNING, *SPECTRA XIII*, 2017.

Creativity in Banality

50

by Ysabel Usabal
St John Fisher College

Cereal. Cardboard. Sticks.

Although it is difficult to appreciate these everyday objects as glamorous or noteworthy, behind their masks of ordinariness, such objects have shaped individuals, cultures, and societies. In the age of technology and materialism, we often overlook commonplace items and devalue them as mundane and bleak. Through visual art, these ordinary materials are transformed beyond their daily purpose to become vehicles for commenting on socio-political issues.

Material Politics (2017), an exhibition at the IMA, consisted of seven installations by different artists using readily available materials. Contemporary artists Tintin Wulia and Keg de Souza were among the artists included, and they both use everyday materials to present issues associated with rapid urbanisation and its effects on society. While both artists exploit mundane materials to narrate the uniqueness of communities and the issues of urbanisation and displacement, their distinctive approach to their artworks highlights critical issues that are overshadowed by more prominent affairs in the media.



INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017. PHOTOGRAPHY: JAALA ALEX. IN VIEW: KEG DE SOUZA, *THE EARTH AFFORDS THEM NO FOOD AT ALL*, 2017.



We often discard cardboard as junk. But in the streets of Central, Hong Kong, cardboard represents the stories of communities and individuals. Brisbane-based Indonesian artist Tintin Wulia has witnessed the complex yet covert cardboard recycling network in the heart of Hong Kong's business district and has documented it in her installation, *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* (2016). This work formed part of her project *Trade/Trace/Transit* (2014–2016), wherein Wulia sought to intervene the intricate trading network between local cardboard waste collectors in Hong Kong and various international suppliers, distributors, and consumers.¹ The sculpture presented in the IMA exhibition, *172 Kilograms of Homes for Ate Manang*, features a bale of compressed cardboard waste decorated with crayons drawings, which is suspended from the ceiling as if it is being transported away.

The installation exposes an intimate network “[under] the canopy of a vast and globalised industry” of Hong Kong.² Featured on the outer layer of the structure is Wulia's earlier work *Wall Drawings* (2015–2016), in which she collaborated with Filipino domestic workers. For Wulia, the cardboard bale embodies the realities of domestic workers living in Hong Kong and communicates “to the rest of the world the real Hong Kong”.³ These drawings show the inhabited experiences of this group of workers and give an unwanted object a renewed identity. She has transformed these bales into a storytelling medium by representing the collective memories and personal experiences of its human agents. The thick layers of cardboard suggest the social significance and magnitude of the cardboard recycling network in Hong Kong. Through the recollection and re-vitalisation of cardboard, *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories* amplifies the social meaning of ‘waste’.

According to Oliver Giles, the installation collides the two parallel worlds that exist in Hong Kong. Foremost, it allows waste to have new visibility

and emphasises its social significance to small communities dispersed throughout the city.⁴ We can recognise Wulia's own political commentary on pervading socio-economic disparities where there exists an invisible hierarchy that is causing disconnected relationships between people, cities, and nations.⁵ Instead of distorting the shape of these cardboard bales into something unrecognisable or with a more aesthetic appeal, Wulia has kept their rawness. In doing so, the installation highlights the reality of the lower class of Hong Kong and their lived experiences. From the elders who gather discarded pieces of cardboard to the crowds of Filipino domestic workers who ritually gather and sit on cardboard, these groups form an integral part of Hong Kong's concrete jungle. In a way, these two vastly distinct groups can be related in that they both belong to an underclass society amid Hong Kong's elites. Accordingly, these bales of cardboard introduce the stories of the lower- and working-class that have been overshadowed by the upper-class society of Hong Kong. Wulia shows that these cardboard bales are more than a simple storage solution; they intersect incongruent lives in a restless urban society.

By using cardboard in *Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories*, Wulia has narrated the lives of domestic workers while also revealing the impacts of rapid urbanisation on small communities. Likewise, Australian artist Keg de Souza collaborates with locals to create artworks such as her site-specific inflatable domes used to foster discussions about food and politics around the world.⁶ However, her work featured in this exhibition, *the earth affords them no food at all* (2017), requires less participation from her audience. Instead, it traces the history and cultures that have occurred in Australia due to colonisation, migration, displacement, and gentrification.⁷

With a background in architecture, de Souza is recognised for manipulating space in her installations.⁸ Accordingly, across a wall of the

Material Politics exhibition are twelve elongated, vacuum-sealed food storage bags of various food items carefully chained together to form a transparent wall. It combines naturally occurring foods such as seeds, rice grains, and pepper berries with processed items such as Twisties and Barbeque Shapes in one space. They are arranged in a way that explores the progression of the Australian food industry through a cultural and historical context.

The installation begins by echoing the natural foods sourced by the Indigenous people of Australia for centuries. This is further emphasised through the title, which is derived from a statement made by English seafarer William Dampier in 1697.⁹ Along with early settlers, Dampier had limited knowledge on the Indigenous people and readily dismissed Indigenous nourishment as not being ‘proper food’, adding that “...[there] is neither herb, root, pulse nor any sort of grain for them to eat that we saw”.¹⁰ By quoting Dampier, the installation draws upon Australian history. De Souza comments on European colonisation and gives prominence to the displacement of the Indigenous population, and their traditions and cultures. She distinguishes the native plants, berries, and grains that are dispersed throughout the sealed bags as an integral aspect of the nation. Moreover, the use of rice paper and uncooked pasta recalls the influx of Chinese immigrants in the 1800s and European immigration in the 1950s.¹¹ Immigration significantly transformed Australia by not only exposing the country to new palates but also further enriching the nation’s diversity. The installation portrays both the changing food culture and its society in Australia from its Indigenous roots to today’s food landscape. The diversity of foods included in the installation suggests that Australia’s food culture is not defined by a single tradition, unlike other societies with a dominant agrarian history. Rather, it invites people to witness Australia’s extensive history of migration and culture by combining these

layers of everyday foods into one location.

Material Politics showcases the extraordinary abundance of the ordinary. Tintin Wulia and Keg de Souza both use the mundane in their installations to reveal our connections to the everyday. Wulia’s cardboard bales expose the realities of minority groups in Central, Hong Kong. Conversely, de Souza’s panels of common food items convey the transformation of Australian society throughout centuries. By using everyday materials, both artists establish the way quotidian objects have shaped everyday life; more notably, they confront matters of displacement and globalisation.

¹ Tintin Wulia, “Invisible Skeleton”, *Tintin Wulia* (blog), posted 24 October 2016, <http://tintinwulia.com/blog/?p=2636>.

² “Five Tonnes of Homes and Other Understories”, *Trade/Trace/Transit*, 2014–2017, <http://www.tintinwulia.com/tradetracetranst/?portfolio=five-tonnes-of-homes-and-other-understories>.

³ Coconuts Hong Kong, “Self-Destruction and Harsh Realities at Art Basel Hong Kong”, 24 March 2016, <https://coconuts.co/hongkong/lifestyle/self-destruction-and-harsh-realities-art-basel-hong-kong/>.

⁴ Oliver Giles, “How Tintin Wulia’s Art Exposes Inequality”, *Prestige*, 8 July 2016, <http://prestigeonline.com/hk/Art-Culture/Interviews/How-Tintin-Wulia-s-art-exposes-inequality>.

⁵ Tintin Wulia, “After the Suits Leave, Another Hong Kong Economy Thrives”, *Next City*, 12 October 2016, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/hong-kong-economy-cardboard-collection-recycling>.

⁶ Sydney Ball, “Keg de Souza Gives Us Food for Thought”, *Beatroute*, 9 September 2016, <http://beatroute.ca/2016/09/09/keg-de-souza-gives-us-food-thought/>.

⁷ Ellie Buttrose, “Keg de Souza”, *The National: New Australian Art*, 2017, <http://the-national.com.au/artists/keg-de-souza/changing-courses/>.

⁸ Alannah Maher, “The Most Revolutionary Artworks of the 2016 Sydney Biennale”, *altmedia*, 16 March 2016, <http://www.altmedia.net.au/the-most-revolutionary-artworks-of-the-2016-sydney-biennale/114439>.

⁹ Michael Symons, “Australia’s Cuisine Culture: A History of Our Food”, *Australian Geographic*, June 2014, <http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2014/06/australias-cuisine-culture-a-history-of-food>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ SBS, “About Modern Australian Food”, 16 September 2013, <http://www.sbs.com.au/food/article/2008/07/01/about-modern-australian-food>.

History Throughout Art

56

by Lily Whitaker
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Visual art has always encompassed accounts of sociological history and could possibly be considered the purest form of factual storytelling there is. Indigenous artworks have been dated back to 27,000 BC (some rock art is thought to be 40,000 years old), and include paintings and engravings on cave walls and stones that notated surrounding environments.¹ Historical accounts of colonisation from the perspective of our Indigenous peoples can often be left behind in contemporary society, but art can help to keep diverse and factual stories alive. Overlooked historical accounts can be communicated in a way that is extremely powerful when in the form of an artwork.

Australia's Indigenous culture is the oldest living culture in the world, and the driver of a dynamic contemporary arts movement. In the IMA exhibition, *Material Politics*, viewers were given a captivating look into the impassioned stories belonging to Indigenous artists Megan Cope and Archie Moore. Both Cope and Moore are recognised as leading visual artists in Australia. While both artists tend to use Western historical research methods to form their artworks, their resulting work undoubtedly contribute to the preservation of Indigenous historical storytelling culture. Megan Cope is a Quandamooka woman from North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah) in South East Queensland. Her main mediums include site-specific sculptural installations, video work, and paintings, and through them she considers the myths and facts of colonisation. These fascinating practices enable Cope to explore issues linked to human identity, the environment, and mapping practices.² Similarly, Archie Moore works across a variety of mediums in an effort to portray autobiographical and national histories that have often been hidden from the general Australian public.³ Specifically, Moore is known for questioning key signifiers of identity and the outcomes of misinformation in society. His practice is immersed in Aboriginal politics and widespread communal issues of racism, depicting social historical accounts throughout visual art.

INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017.
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAALA ALEX. IN VIEW: MEGAN COPE, *FOUNDATIONS II*, 2016.





INSTALLATION VIEW, *MATERIAL POLITICS*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, 2017.
PHOTOGRAPHY: CARL WARNER. IN VIEW (L-R): RAQUEL ORMELLA, *I'M WORRIED THIS WILL BECOME A SLOGAN*, 1999-2009; ARCHIE MOORE, *BOGEYMAN*, 2017.

Appearing in *Material Politics*, Cope's *Foundations II* (2016) employs materials that hold extensive significance to colonial history. This arresting combination of oyster shells set in small concrete blocks works to capture the essence of two key materials: the natural and the man-made. The artwork itself is quite a spectacle with its uniformly placed oyster shell structures that are arranged in a 13 x 10 formation. The shells possess great diversity in shape, size, and colour. Some exhibit deep shades of purple and mauve, while others appear grey. The overall composition of the piece employs both uniformity and repetition. Cope has gathered oyster shells, which are a core material used to form the ancient middens on the artist's country, and cement, a Western-generated substance that involves extraction from that land to form foundations in modern-day infrastructure. Middens are mounds or deposits that would indicate a site of human settlement to Indigenous Australians.

Today in Australia, the demolition of Aboriginal architectural property (e.g., middens) along with brutal environmental interventions (e.g., mining) have become prevalent. On the artist's country of Stradbroke Island, the mineral silica is being mined where these middens once stood. Silica is used in the formation of concrete.⁴ With this destruction comes the deletion of meaningful markers throughout the artist's country and, subsequently, the denial of ancient Indigenous existence on that soil. In her artwork, Cope has successfully brought this story of Indigenous loss to light. The beautifully arranged visual installation captures the eye as well as the mind as it surveys a vital piece of Australian

history. Cope has cleverly chosen to assemble to the oyster shells in a uniform composition, perhaps to depict the architectural repetition of modern-day infrastructure. It is Cope's decision to incorporate these time-worn significant materials that ultimately captures the historical context embedded so deeply in contemporary visual art.

Moore's *Bogeyman* (2017) similarly adopts historically significant materials as his focal point, albeit in different ways. The sculpture is visually intriguing as its simplicity keeps the viewer wanting to know more about the work's meaning. In this piece, Moore has veiled deep historical stories that reference colonisation. At first sight, it reads as a traditional ghost-like figure. The use of stark white against the subtle brown wooden easel makes the object appear as if it is fading away, like a spirit. Moore has primarily experimented with shape and colour to form a sculpture with great intrigue. Upon further inspection, the exceedingly white, glossy sheet looks as though it might be a latex material. In fact, Moore has used white 'paint skins' to compose the work. This paint skin technique ultimately denies the use of the traditional Western support structures of stretched canvases on board. He has painted layer upon layer of paint, letting it dry in between coats, and thickening the matter to a point where it becomes extremely durable.

Moore's decision to carefully drape this sheet of acrylic paint over a wooden easel works to incorporate traditionally Western mediums. Perhaps Moore is commenting on

the Westernised glorification of Indigenous stories and the inaccuracy that this can pose. More specifically, Moore's work references a commonly told story than when white settlers first set foot on Australian soil, the Aboriginal population mistook their existence for the ghosts of their loved ones returning. This component can be seen in the ghost-like physicality of piece as well as in the name *Bogeyman* itself.

Both works by Megan Cope and Archie Moore transmit society's memories of a nation's past. Both raise questions about portrayals of nationality and the factuality of modern stories being told about Australia's Indigenous culture. The representation of the ancient cultural phenomena of middens in a contemporary setting perpetuates important educational awareness in audiences who may otherwise have been blind to the existence of such historical Indigenous architecture. Both artists have chosen to convey the primary meaning of their artworks through the use of materiality. These materials have been carefully selected as they hold significant connections to the pieces of history the artists are trying communicate to audiences. Cope has incorporated a material widely used among Indigenous people (oyster shells) alongside the popular Western material of cement. The natural quality of the oyster shells is represented in their organic variance of shape and size. Meanwhile, Moore has skilfully manipulated the paint skin's positioning on the easel in a way that it can form the ideal shape and optical nature intended—the shape being of a ghost and the optical nature being faded and remnant-like. His idea to use paint without

a canvas cleverly rejects traditional Western support structures along with the conventional practice of simply painting an image on a canvas. Both artists' choices to use significant materials as a focal point successfully conveys the vivid portrayal of historical Indigenous and colonial events through visual art.

¹ Clarity Communications Australia Pty Ltd et al., "Australian Indigenous Art", Australian Government (website), last updated 9 June 2015, <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-art>.

² Dianne Tanzer, Nicola Stein, and Jemma Clarke, "This Is No Fantasy, 2017: Megan Cope Bio", Dianne Tanzer Gallery, <http://thisisnofantasy.com/artist/megan-cope/>.

³ The Commercial Gallery Board of Trustees, "Archie Moore CV, 2017", The Commercial Gallery, <http://www.thecommercialgallery.com/artist/archie-moore/biography>.

⁴ Mining Link, "Silica Sand", 2017, <http://mininglink.com.au/natural-resource/silica-sand>.

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