

FRESH! FRESH! FRESH! FRESH! FRESH!

craft
GRADUATE
SHOWCASE
18/02-11/03



INTRODUCTION
 OLIVIA POLONI
 CRAFT EXHIBITIONS
 MANAGER & CURATOR

FRESH! showcases Victoria's leading graduates engaging with contemporary craft practice. Graduates from art schools are handpicked by an advisory committee for their skill and experimental approaches to craft. This year's iteration sees 12 finalists selected across RMIT, VCA and Holmesglen TAFE from furniture, fashion, ceramics, jewellery, and fine art disciplines. Here we see Fresh!'s continuing commitment to present the diversity in conceptual and aesthetic craft approaches in contemporary making from future leaders in the field.

This year the FRESH! finalists are once again generously supported by awards from Sofitel, Pieces of Eight, Frankie and Future Leaders that highlight excellence and support further opportunities for emerging craft practitioners. Craft thanks these organisations for their dedication.

Craft would like to thank the 2016 advisory team: Eddy Carroll, Sarah crowEST, Dale Hardiman, Brendan Huntley, Sim Luttin and Claire McArdle.

Special thanks also to Louise Meuwissen for coordination of the project, Hope Lumsden-Barry for the catalogue design and Sarah Weston for her significant advisory contribution.

FRESH!
 FINALISTS

Katie Barter
 Matt Fairbridge
 Hannah Gartside
 Katherine Hubble
 Cara Johnson
 Tessy King

Claire Lehmann
 Michaela Pegum
 Rachael Siklic
 Bec Smith
 Siteng Wei
 Lauralai Wilson

FRESH!
 AWARDS

Sofitel Melbourne on Collins



An exhibition in their exclusive gallery/foyer space, valued at \$3000.

Pieces of Eight



\$500 cash prize plus professional development session with Melanie Katsalidis.

Frankie Magazine



Online interview or feature which will be promoted through social media plus a prize pack including subscription and products.

Craft Retail Development Award



Professional development sessions and opportunity to be showcased within the Craft retail space and exhibition program.

Future Leaders



A philanthropic initiative promoting leadership, achievement and potential among young Australians. Cash prize of \$1000.

In a rush of excitement, nerves and expectations about the unknown, hundreds of creative graduates presented their work across Victoria in late 2016. Institutional graduation exhibitions are hugely exciting: for students they mark the culmination of an often-intensive period of creative activity. The end of year show can be the high-water mark for an artist's years of making within the school environment but it can also be a stepping-stone to creative opportunities outside of that realm. It is also a time for celebration!

So it takes something extra special to stand out in a graduation exhibition. Of the hundreds of students exhibited across the state last year, 12 have been handpicked by the Craft Victoria selection panel to form this year's FRESH! graduate showcase.

Craft Victoria's history of championing innovative makers at every stage of their careers positions FRESH! as one of the most prestigious graduate exhibitions in Australia. New graduates are offered the opportunity to exhibit, often for the first time, in the hallowed space that is Craft. Their works are curated alongside a diverse range of other makers, and graduates then share with family, friends and industry professionals their enormous achievements – of having developed a creative practice that has generated public interest.

This exhibition should give confidence to participants – their ability to conceptually develop and physically execute a creative project has been recognised as exceptional and worthy of celebration.

It is not often that institutions or galleries courageously choose to exhibit the work of makers without previously having heard about their work or, at the very least, met the artist. FRESH! puts the artwork at the front and center of its priorities. Perhaps that is why each year the representation of female artists is so strong. This is something to celebrate and reflect upon.

With its focus on materiality, FRESH! is an exhibition that weaves between the restrained and the striking. In the pieces by Claire Lehmann, Rachael Siklic and Katherine Hubble we see boldness and clarity; there is delicacy and subtlety to the works by Hannah Gartside, Cara Johnson and Bec Smith; those by Katie Barter, Tessy King and Lauralai Wilson are tactile and visceral; and the works of Michaela Pegum, Siteng Wei and Matt Fairbridge are, by turns, poetic, elusive and decisive.

Importantly, FRESH! gives artists and audiences alike a chance to reflect upon what's next, how this privilege will be repaid and how it will shape the future.

Looking back, it's easy to see how an opportunity like FRESH! has been significant to my professional development. As an exhibiting artist in the 2010 graduate showcase, I was unsure what the future held for me. FRESH! was my first encounter with a public gallery and broad audience, and with catalogues and curators. Receiving recognition for my work galvanised my decision to continue to develop my practice. It was through FRESH! that then-director of Utopian Slumps, Melissa Loughnan – who was judging that year's finalists – first encountered my work. Melissa went on to give me my first commercial show and to represent

me in her stable of artists. She continues to advocate for my work. On top of this wonderful relationship, and as a result of other relationships I developed through being a FRESH! finalist, I was awarded a solo exhibition at Craft Victoria in 2013.

The peer support, professional guidance and patronage I have received from Craft Victoria have opened so many doors for me. What has been the most valuable part? I carry with me the confidence that was ignited when selected for FRESH! and I apply this to all my professional endeavours – public projects and commercial collaborations alike.

This annual exhibition is something to celebrate. It's a time to encourage diverse voices, it's a time to reflect on the privileges that have enabled these artists the brilliant opportunity to be exhibited, it's time to consider what's to come. As an audience member, I would like to congratulate this year's participants for their dedication to their craft and their courage to take risks and present their work in a new environment. Importantly, it's time now to consider what's next for these artists and how we can in some way to contribute their professional development.

Esther Stewart
2017

Working within languages of fashion and image making, Katie's practice creates both marketable pieces and designs that test current ideals of clothing and accessories.

The relationship and balance between the body and clothing is an underlying consideration throughout her practice, as she explores their roles and influence upon one another. She uses this notion to incorporate the form into her designs, while then also proposing garments without the body, documenting them as pure objects.

Entrenched in process and material exploration, each project works towards establishing new considerations within clothing, while her use of imagery extends her concerns and considerations around the work.

Developed through a series of experiments, Katie Barter's honours project '*Handle With Wear*' explores the intimate expressions and experiences of the touch.

Within this research, the interaction of the wearer and gestures of the hand on clothing became the most prominent relationship to study. In documenting this influence, clothing inhabited a state of flux, in moments like a sleeve falling off a shoulder, the resulting shapes and its position on the form suggested how clothing was touched and experienced.

In exploring this relationship it also lead to considering the pieces without the body, documenting and understanding their ability to suggest purely as objects.

Katie Barter
Handle With Wear, 2016,
silk, satin, suede, velvet
and carpet



Interview with Katie Barter

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fashion (Design) (Honours) at RMIT.

I grew up in Melbourne and from early on I was interested in anything creative from drawing, design or drama. In which was lucky enough to move to a high school that had strong creative programs so I focused a lot of my time in photography and fashion design. However there was something about the challenges and considerations in designing for the form that I always gravitated towards and in terms of courses, I wanted to study fashion in a way that harnessed the creative and more conceptual aspects of it.

This all lead to the Bachelor of Fashion (Design) (Honours) at RMIT, which has been both the most difficult and rewarding experience in my life so far. Interestingly it also lead me back to photography or what I refer to as image making, as the course focuses on how we present and explore our work which has lead me to use images to understand and disseminate my projects.

Your Honours work is an investigation into the relationship between the wearer and gestures of the hand on clothing. Can you talk a little about this?

This project began with an exploration of our tactile experiences within clothing and in researching touch I understood the difficulty in expressing one's experience of it. This lead to conducting experiments in which I blindfolded participants and gave them miscellaneous objects and textures, however as participants reiterated their experience they struggled to clearly express their thoughts. Instead I found in observing how they handled each object it presented a visual language of one's experience and I began photographing these moments

and documenting these highly expressive gestures.

In continuing these experiments to incorporating garments, the interaction of the wearer and gestures of the hand on clothing became the most prominent relationship to study. In documenting this influence, clothing inhabited a state of flux, causing slippages within the garment's intended position or fit. There were also unconscious handles within garments, such as belt loops or sleeve cuffs which we gravitated towards, while the creases formed in actions like a strap falling off the shoulder, all suggested how clothing was touched and experienced.

These tropes or 'moments' became key design elements and the subtle gestures within garments drove my exploration, as the work was often constructed in suspense from the body. These 'off-kilter' moments were draped into the structure of the garment, in simple processes like extending the centre front or back panels, so that the pieces would always sit in suspense from the shoulders. Jackets draped from the wrist or skirts positioned as tops all proposed new methods of wear, while commenting on how the body influences the garment.

In further realising the project, the garments designed in suspense from the wearer created additional interest when placed back to their intended position. Lapels bucked and curated creases shifted to more abnormal shapes, continuing to portray these 'off kilter' moments even through its traditional position on the body. The work continued to evolve through changing its relationship or contact to the form, which lead to many of the pieces being considered purely as objects. Enabling a series of garments that could still express its relationship to the body, even without the context of it.

You have featured carpet in this body of work. Can you tell us what it was

like to work with this material?

The materiality within this project was important in unpacking our interactions and relationship with clothing. Pile based fabrications would preserve imprints and gestures of hand through the changes of lustre on the fabric's surface. In using suedes and velvets I continued to explore an extensive range of pile fabrications from bath matts to flux fur but there was something much more engaging and untapped in the materiality of carpet. I also began to make more vivid expressions of touch through trimming hand gestures into the pile, which also proposed how the wearer handled these pieces, providing new sensorial experiences within the garments and accessories.

In working with the material there were a lot of restrictions in how you could construct and finish the pieces, you couldn't run layers of carpet through the sewing machine, which lead me to use rivets to position panels together. However this process meant that the construction and panels needed to be minimal, while every piece needed to come from a flat shape, so I focused on the stiff drape of the carpet and playing with the shape of each panel to create dimension within the material. Another issue was in refining the finishes of the carpet; each panel is bonded to a fabric to form a lining while the edges have been finished with a tape binding.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

In aspects of fashion Hussein Chalayan has continually influenced how I want to approach clothing and design. His work provides new considerations around clothing and the body, while his performances and shows intensify this experience and their ability to suggest ideas continually informs how I want to design and create. He also achieves a very interesting balance and blend of conceptual and commercial aspects

of clothing, which resonates in how I want to approach my practice, to produce work that can be appreciated within multiple platforms.

While within my practice I also incorporate image making to understand and further the ideas of my work of which I've been heavily inspired by HART+LĚSHKINA the image-making duo. Their images explore highly ephemeral human experiences in simple yet loaded perspectives. Their ability to suggest and visually communicate ideas in a profound nature, aligns with my approach to image making and I'm continually drawn to how they explore these moments with clothing. Their images not only how challenge how you understand clothing and the body but the relationship between the two, which is something I continually explore within my practice.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

Although repeating myself, I would love to collaborate with HART+LĚSHKINA in creating a series of images, which explore ideas from this project. I'm still working within this concept through designing but I love the process of collaborating on shoots and stories. In fashion design the dissemination of a project is invaluable to communicating how others understand and read the work, so I believe it's important to explore it both within aspects of collaboration and self creation.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

This current project is still being explored through making images and developing pieces, however in a broader sense I'm trying to understand my practice without the structure of university. It was such

an intense final year that a lot of the realisations within my practice are relatively new so I believe I need to continue making and producing images in a more relaxed environment to further understand my practice.

I'll always see my work as being a blend of commercial and conceptual pieces however I hope through industry experience, my practice and its methods will be further realized, as I believe it will be influenced and shaped through being exposed to the workings of more established brands. Through experiencing both commercial and art based fashion practices I hope to gain a stronger sense of my process and how the combination of imagery and garments could evolve within a broader context of the industry.

MATT FAIRBRIDGE
BIO

STATEMENT

Matt Fairbridge
Untitled, 2016,
marble, timber

Originally from the regional Victorian town of Beechworth, Matt relocated to Melbourne to commence studying in the visual arts. He holds a Diploma of Visual Arts from Swinburne University and has recently completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual Art) at the Victorian College of the Arts where he now looks forward to an honours year in 2017. Matt has partaken in numerous student and lecturer curated shows at the VCA as well as group shows at LON Gallery in Collingwood and c3 Art Space in Abbotsford. He also has commissioned public works at the University of Melbourne Parkville campus. Upcoming exhibitions include FRESH! at Craft Victoria with shows at c3 and LON later in the year.

Through avenues of sculpture and drawing my work presents a synthesis of the ancient and the prospective, the stable and the temporary and the linguistic and the technological. Using materials simultaneously indicative of ancient times and contemporary styles, the work contains almost unnoticeable relief abstractions contained within framing or freestanding structures utilised as supports. The imagery is conceived of an amalgam between floor plan, glyph, architectural design and ornamentation, amongst other references producing something akin to a glimpse of a lost, or yet-to-be-known world. They are constructed from a palate of collaged details that could be subjectively decipherable whilst simultaneously examining on the general proliferation and extinction of language and styles known and unknown. Extracting abstract qualities from a range of sources has resulted in a more intuitive practice, each work essentially constructing itself from an igniting gesture. What follows is a blurring between artefact, art and design and a melding together of support structure and artwork.



Interview with Matt Fairbridge

Please tell us a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at VCA.

I grew up in the northeast Victorian town of Beechworth and, after high school took a couple of gap years working and unlearning everything in a pub before deciding it was in my interests to relocate to Melbourne and study art, having been an endless drawer as a kid. I completed a visual arts diploma at Swinburne, which served as a gateway to understanding contemporary creativity. Having only scraped the surface, I wanted to continue in a bachelor degree and knew some people (also from Beechworth) going through the fine arts course at the VCA so I applied. After painting what I deemed unsuccessfully for the first few months I quickly realised the more natural extension to my drawing practice was through sculpture, this now being my primary medium.

Can you tell us about the different materials you explore in your practice?

I try to use economic, utilitarian or found materials where possible such as steel, plywood and recycled composite materials like chipboards and underlays with the more expensive and less recyclable materials like plastics and paint used sparingly. The marble I use is all salvaged from stonemasons, which would otherwise be extremely expensive. I guess I imagine my work won't last forever and that most of the materials will be reprocessed some day.

In your work the support structure and artwork are as important as each other. Can you talk more about this?

Where the marble might act like some sort of artefact and the focal point of the work, the supports are

framing devices that ground them as art or design objects. I want them to simultaneously evoke the ancient or otherworldly whilst contextualized in simple designs of functional display objects. To me they are like negative sculptures, the forms being imprinted into the pedestal rather than sitting on top of it making the display device the work itself. This method works to interrogate the different conduits that design provides in which culture is presented to us to inform our view, be it in our museums and libraries or homes and shops.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

I'm currently loving the work of Ruth Buchanan and Tarik Ahlip who employ different craft techniques to produce conceptually dense work that deal with design, architecture, language, socio-political issues and the way in which we curate culture for audiences. Darren Munce, Tomma Abts and Matt Hinkley come to mind when thinking about graphic abstraction in painting, drawing and sculpture and from an interdisciplinary viewpoint I look at Martin Boyce, Liang Luscombe and Per Kirkeby to name a few.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

As far as collaboration goes that is a difficult question! In addition to those I've named I'd love to work with many of my lecturers from VCA and I guess a project would be determined on who it is with and where we were. I have always wanted, though, to take part in a regional artist-in-residence program like ones offered in Cowwarr, Daylesford or in Tasmania. I've never really made work outside of the city or an environment where there are many distractions and would love an opportunity to get out and devote a few months to producing a body of work in a live-in studio scenario.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

I'm about to begin honours at VCA to expand more on the ideas of interdisciplinary practice and I have a couple more exhibitions coming later in the year, the first of which will be at c3 Contemporary Art Space in April.

HANNAH GARTSIDE
BIO

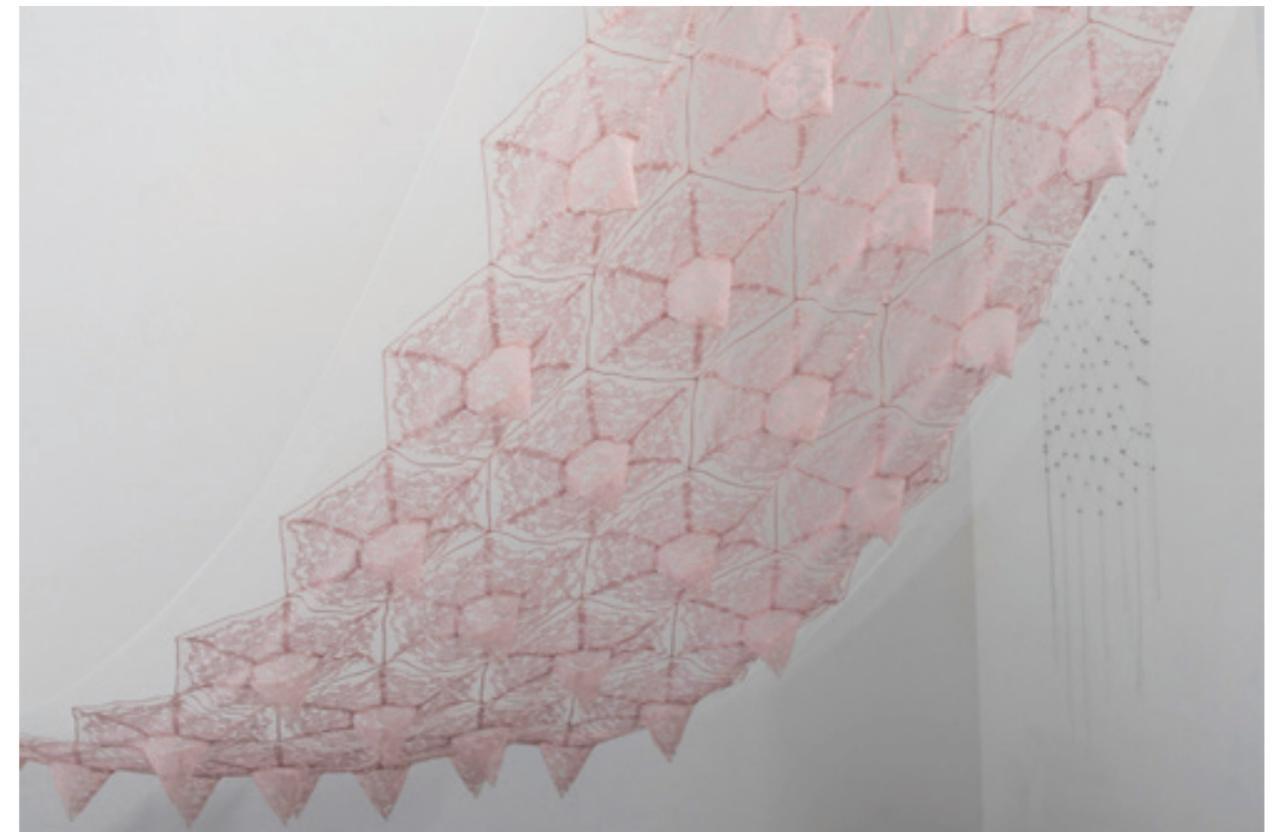
STATEMENT

Hannah Gartside
New Terrain (The Fantasies), 2016, petticoat lace trim, tulle, thread, garter belt clips, 165cm x 560cm x 12cm

Hannah Gartside (b. London, 1987) is a textile artist and costume designer/maker based in Melbourne. In 2016 she completed a Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture and Spatial Practice at the Victorian College of the Arts, and was the recipient of the Lou & Mary Senini Student Art Award, and a National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association prize. For five years Gartside worked as a costume-maker for classical ballet, theatre and opera. She also holds a BFA (Hons) in Fashion Design from Queensland University of Technology. Gartside uses processes including sewing, quilting and wet-felting to reveal the sculptural, emotive and interactive capacities of her materials. Her work examines desire, intimacy, and the female gaze.

New Terrain (of The Fantasies) is a suspended textile sculpture made from found 1960's petticoat lace trim, tulle, thread and garter belt clips. New Terrain is made from 92 metres of lace, cut into trapezium shapes and stitched back together to create 46 hexagons. The hexagons are tessellated in the style of a patchwork quilt. Cones of the same lace protrude from the centre of each hexagon.

The cone shape references breasts and spikes; it is both generous and aggressive. The soft malleability of the lace is contradicted by its presence in space. Gartside's series The Fantasies presents her queer erotic vision of an expansive and fecund femininity.



Interview with Hannah Gartside

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at VCA.

I moved to Melbourne because I was getting really bored in Brisbane, things felt easy and I needed them to be new and difficult again. I decided to study at VCA in part because I wanted the validation and legitimacy as an artist that university training can foster. Many of my friends are trained artists and I wondered what they knew that I didn't. Originally I studied a BFA in Fashion Design and even then, my work was always about the story of the outfit, the craft of making it, or the performance of dressing a body in cloth and I never felt like I quite fitted in. Mostly though, I wanted to make more/ "better" art, and I thought having specific training might facilitate that.

Your main material in New Terrain (of The Fantasies) was found lace from the 1960s. Do you always incorporate materials that have had a past life into your work?

Yes. For me, objects and materials have an energetic presence. This comes from their construction, base material, usage, and context. It is a strategy and conceptual decision that operates in three main ways: 1) we live in a capitalist, patriarchal society, which broadly privileges working and buying as pathways to fulfilment. Giving attention and care to discarded and devalued materials disrupts commodity fetishism. I wish for my practice to place no more pressure on the environment and our resources than is absolutely necessary. 2) I work with textiles and the first world has a particularly fraught relationship with clothing production. Most of our clothes are still made in third world countries in conditions where people are treated inhumanely, their environment and

personhood suffering for our vanity. I prefer to re-use materials which are already around, so I am not directly supporting that practice. Obviously it's more complicated than that. 3) I have a feminist practice, and use domestic, known materials (with their particular references and usages) to (amongst other things) address my experience of female-ness.

For five years you worked as a costume-maker for classical ballet, theatre and opera. Can you tell us what it has been like to bring your experience and knowledge into sculptural and spatial practice?

I mainly worked at Queensland Ballet, the state company directed by Lee Cunxin, as well as running the wardrobe and designing for a university dance course. Working in costume-making encouraged my perfectionism, ability to concentrate for long periods of time, do repetitive tasks, work closely with others, plan time-lines, problem solve under pressure and complete projects quickly. Looking back, it has been great training!

Broadly, working in sculpture and spatial practice is another way of telling stories involving bodies and textiles: through-lines of my career thus far.

Also, I'm being a bit of a joker here, but visual art is different to theatre in that you generally don't pay to see it, don't dress up and don't look at it for 2 hours! I like how close you can get to artwork, and am particularly keen on making work that people can touch and engage with. I remember getting into trouble for touching the edge of the set of Cats when I was a child. It was kind of a wall of trash.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

I am inspired by the honesty and attention to materials of Louise Bourgeois (in particular her hand-stitched textile works using striped fabric from 2002-2005 were a major influence on my work with two colour optical patterns, and use of hexagons),

the scale and community making of Judy Chicago, the integrity and consistent vision of Yayoi Kusama, the playfulness and aggression of Valie EXPORT and the angular, choreographed video worlds created by Daria Martin. Locally I am drawn to and connect with the work of Sandra Selig, Claire Lambe, Julie Rrap, Mirka Mora Fiona Hall and many more.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, crafts person, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

Here is one: Collaborating with an organisation like Vinnie's or Salvos, and a multi-storey public gallery like GOMA to create a large scale installation using recycled textiles. Running anti-consumerist workshops teaching sewing and other forms of material making to children, and in the process building the work together.

I taught workshops with the Brisbane City Council for many years and my favourite memory is a child of 7, Isolde, who'd recently attended a workshop running up to me in Lincraft and saying "Hannah! I made a dress out of a pillowcase!"

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

I have two more shows coming up which present my graduate work, a Contemporary Sculpture Association exhibition next month in Abbotsford and then Hatched at PICA in May. Later this year I'm going to Holland to work for a fabulous textile artist Claudy Jongstra. The studio works mainly in felt, and has their own flock of sheep and garden of botanical dye plants. I am also learning photography, and will continue to do occasional costume collaborations with fabulous female musicians. Currently I'm working with Kalyani from Willow Beats and V (Berlin/Melbourne). I'm also hoping to attend a residency on a house-boat in California!

KATHERINE HUBBLE
BIO

STATEMENT

I have recently completed my BA of Fine Art Gold and Silver Smithing in 2016 from RMIT. In the 2016 Graduate exhibition I was awarded the Wolf Wennrich Award for Gold and Silversmithing. In 2012 I graduated from North Metropolitan TAFE in West Australia with an Advanced Diploma in Jewellery Design. In 2013 I moved to Melbourne and found my love of making objects and wearable art and exploring their possibilities in the realm of craft art.

These works set out to challenge and regain ownership of female beauty standards placed onto us by society and consumerist industries. This is a response to the use of slang words such as fish taco, fur burger and shaven heaven that I have been subjected to and confirms that objectification of women's bodies is still a real experience for women. I use traditional methods of craft through the jewellery and object making to recreate these slang phrases into objects with humour and empowerment.



Interview with Katherine Hubble

Katherine Hubble
various objects,
2016, ceramic,
polypropylene, synthetic
fur, cotton, polyester,
paper and sequins,
dimensions variable

Please tell us a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art Gold and Silver Smithing at RMIT.

You use a variety of materials within your practice. Can you talk about your connection to the materials and the concepts they are portraying?

I choose to use an array of materials that come from a traditional craft background side by side with contemporary craft materials. The traditional craft components I have used are ceramic, fresh water pearls, fabric and embroidery

thread with hand stitching. The contemporary craft materials I use are acrylic, nylon netting, Japanese paper and polypropylene. All these materials together combine the traditions of female craft skills and the contemporary resurgence of female empowerment through craft.

Your jewellery works and the objects inform each other. Do you plan to continue practicing both forms?

I enjoy making both jewellery and objects. The making of objects is new to my practice with this body of work. As where I have been making jewellery for many years now and jewellery is where my training has come from. I wish to continue both object and jewellery making running parallel to each other with concepts but may not always work together.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

Artists that influence and inspire me are Tracy Emin, Sally Hewett, Juz Kitson, Pip and Pop, Grayson Perry, Denise Juila Reytan, Lisa Walker and Helen Britton

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, crafts person, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

My dream Collaboration would be with designers Luke Sales and Anna Plunkett from the brand Romance was Born. To collaborate on a wearable art fashion collection. Where the female body is for the world's gaze in all the right ways. All things glitter, pink and female empowerment in wearable art.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

This year I will be completing an Honours degree in Fine Art at RMIT with a focus on building a body of exhibition work. I will also be working on a group show with other emerging artists later in the year that is a part of Radiant Pavilion.

CARA JOHNSON
BIO

STATEMENT

Cara Johnson
38°21'20"S 144°16'37"E,
2016, paper tape,
mild steel, linen,
dimensions variable

Cara Johnson completed her Honours degree within a Bachelor of Fine Art at RMIT University in 2016, and will be continuing her studies at RMIT this year, commencing a Master of Fine Art by research. Her practice is concerned with fragility and preciousness in nature, while also addressing human impact on the landscape. Cara resides in the Otways in southwest Victoria.

Each of the components that contribute to *Hinterland (survey)* has a correlation to a point within the environment. Observed details, qualities and histories are referenced in the forms and rhythms of making. The objects become intertwined with the land when they are placed, and left, in the environment. Rust and rot creep in and the weather contorts and shifts the materials, removing them from the artist's hand, and returning them to nature.



Interview with Cara Johnson

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at RMIT.

Before I began studying at RMIT I had a drawing practice, but never quite knew where to take it. I spent years working in jobs that allowed me some creativity but I got to a point where I became tired of working hard for somebody else's vision, so I applied to study.

The scale and intimacy of an object-based practice suited me more than I had anticipated, and I believe that working within a jewellery context is a way to engage with a very long history of making.

Your work explores connections with the environment. Can you talk about the processes in your work that enable these connections?

My work all begins with a site, a physical place in the natural environment where I feel some sort of an affinity. I research botany, geology and history from all different perspectives so I can make work that is coming from a place of this combined knowledge.

I spend a lot of time in the sites that I work with, walking, drawing, writing and taking photos until ideas begin to form. My making is an accumulation of my research and I engage each piece in a continued dialogue with the place that it is derivative of, such as leaving the works within the landscape and letting go of control.

Can you talk about the materials involved in making your work?

My material selection is dependent on the intention of the piece, and what qualities I am trying to articulate. I tend to select common, processed materials like strings and papers and tape, partly as they all have reference to manufacture, which allows me to use making as a way to draw them

back, closer to nature. I don't use many tools when making my work, occasionally basic hand tools, but mostly just my hands, and these simple materials allow me a lot of malleability and variation.

I rarely take any material from a site, but whenever I do there is strong reasoning behind it, and I remove it with great care. It is very important to me that I am mindful of the impact of my actions.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

John Kinsella's writing resonates with me very deeply, as does Judith Wright's poetry. I also tend to look towards land and environmental artists including John Wolseley and Hamish Fulton and I really like Gabriel Orozco's work. I think that I find most inspiration in the ideals of other artists, rather than aesthetics.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

I feel that I collaborate with the places that I derive my work from, so I think that my dream project would be to be able to spend a long time in one area with no other distractions, allowing me to become completely invested in the workings of it, with no other goal than to let the work unfold.

I enjoy working in solitude so if I were to collaborate with another person I think it would be ideal if they also worked in a personal and isolated way. I would like to work with artists that have completely different approaches to landscape than my own, so that we could challenge and learn from each other.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

My Masters research will be my main focus for the next two years.

I also have a few other projects on

the go including a show up in Canberra at ANCA Gallery called *Elapse* with Thomas O'Hara and Ruby Aitchison, which is another iteration of a show that we had at Gray Street Workshop in Adelaide last year.

Later in the year I am looking forward to heading up to do a residency at the Sturt Craft Centre in Mittagong, as well as being a part of a show called *Distillations* within the Radiant Pavilion event in Melbourne.

I am also working towards a range of wearable pieces to sit alongside some work that will be in a show at CODA Museum in the Netherlands mid year.

TESSY KING
BIO

STATEMENT

Tessy King
Sun Room (Blue Vessel),
2016, glazed stoneware,
lustre, granite, steel,
turmeric dyed calico,
dimensions variable

Tessy is an emerging artist from Melbourne who works predominantly with clay. Her practice reflects on the ceramic vessel's physical and cultural significance within the prosaic and examines notions of purpose and the decision-making systems related to taste and habit. Her vessels sit within constructed areas for viewing, referencing the process of arranging objects in domestic and commercial settings. More broadly, Tessy's work examines the relevance and influence of craft practices within a fine art context. Tessy completed Fine Arts (Hons.) at RMIT in 2016 and has exhibited in Australia and the USA. She maintains a practice that encompasses both sculptural and installation work for exhibitions and functional objects for domestic use.

Sun Room is an investigation into the possibilities for spatialising the ceramic vessel. By deconstructing the vessel and emphasising its historical prevalence Tessy considers the meaning and value attached to the ceramic form. Referencing antiquity, garden ornaments and domestic ware, the work explores how the space around everyday objects is imparted with meaning on the objects behalf. Exploration into additional materials acting as props for these vessels fragments the surrounding space into areas for viewing. This intervention into space blends the vessel with the constructed supports, reflecting on the constant exchange between object and that which acts as its physical platform.



Interview with Tessy King

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at RMIT.

I originally studied jewellery at NMIT (now Melbourne Polytechnic) which lead me into the undergrad degree at RMIT. During the first year at RMIT I swapped out of Gold and Silversmithing and into ceramics as I felt more connected to and excited by the material. I had little experience with it prior to this. Honours felt like a good way to resolve some of the things I was thinking about in the undergrad. I felt three years was a little too short, honours helped me to consolidate theory and practice.

Your work is interested in investigating the ceramic vessel.

Can you tell us what drew you to this object and how you challenge traditional ideas of the form?

The vessel is an accessible yet ambiguous symbol. I think it can be read in many ways and so I enjoy attaching meaning to it by using it as a starting point for my expanded installations. It is also synonymous with the material that I use as clay just lends itself to the form. The vessel is instantly recognizable and can be attributed to times and locations. Personally, to me the image of the vessel makes me think of daily ritual and history in the domestic environment. The vessels that I am making in this (ongoing) body of work are deconstructed and large. I'm attempting to challenge notions of value and function. I think of these objects as sculptures as I also aim to explore a dialogue around the relationship of Craft and 'Fine Art' or the hierarchical structures within which these methods of working co-exist.

Can you talk about the spatial and material relationship between the

vessels and constructed supports in Sun Room?

I build these areas for viewing my pots around them as a means of extending the work into the space and to prop the vessels up without using traditional exhibition structures such as plinths. By arranging these accessory materials I try to give a sense of the objects belonging to the space and not just being placed there for the purpose of being exhibited. I'm interested in the significance of the materials as well as their physical qualities. I like playing with the relationship of these things – finding how they are connected. There's an element of chance when collecting and arranging these objects together, as some – like the piece of granite and the steel frame – are found objects, while others like the muslin and calico, are sourced. The work becomes intentional once it is all assembled in the space.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

Some of my favourites are: Basquiat, Beatrice Wood, Franz West, Claes Oldenburg, Karla Black, Mikala Dwyer, Ken Price, Jonathan Lasker, Betty Woodman, Trudy Benson and June Schwarcz. There is an amazing video of Schwarcz working in her studio that can be viewed on the internet. It also shows the interior of her home and much of her incredible collection of objects.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

I don't really have a dream project as I tend to just take things as they come and let my work progress comfortably. Having said that, I would love to one day work on a film – composing a scene using furniture and objects would be really exciting. I am obsessed with interior domestic spaces and how objects reveal things. I love seeing the inside of friends homes and

understanding how their belongings relate to their personalities. it would be magic to express the idea of a person by constructing a scene around them.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

I am looking forward to a solo show this year and some collaborative shows with friends. I like focussing on exhibition work as it stretches my abilities and pushes me in new directions conceptually. Next year I am hoping to complete a residency in Buenos Aries so a lot of 2016 will also involve applying for funding, working hard and planning for the trip.

CLAIRE LEHMANN
BIO

STATEMENT

Claire Lehmann
Untitled, 2016, cast
porcelain and aluminium,
600 x 350 x 80mm

Claire Lehmann is a ceramicist and graphic artist with qualifications in art history, multimedia and ceramics.

Her work reflects an interest in shape, texture, process, weight and material. Claire has a studio in North Melbourne and has been making ceramics for seven years in-between freelance work. She initially made tableware, but is now more interested in lighting and sculptural, non-functional ceramics.

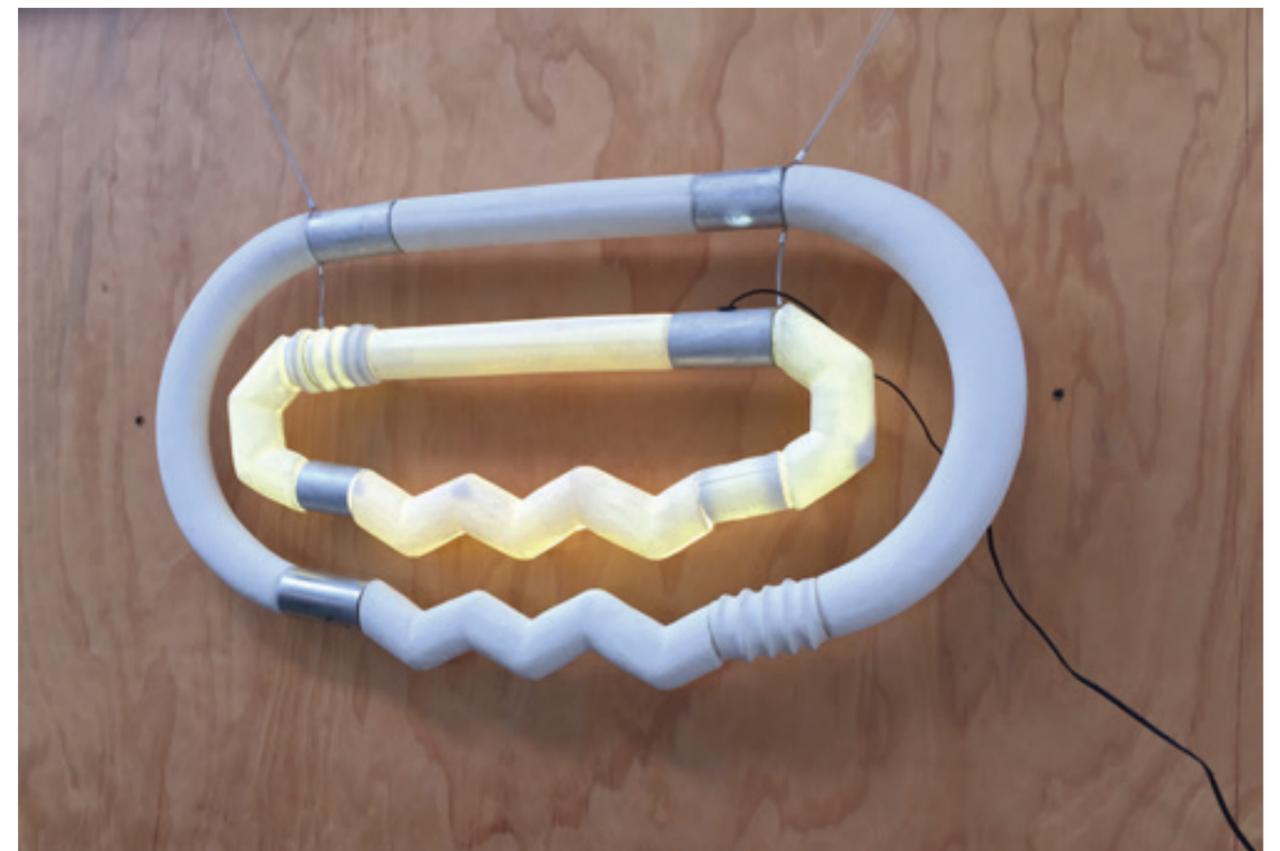
Claire is currently exploring ceramics and industrial design at a 3 month ceramic scholarship at the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in Oisterwijk, The Netherlands. She likes ceramic design that bridges industrial design, fine art and craft and is interested in what happens when you make something that lacks function.

Brutalist architecture and sci-fi films/interior design from the 1970s and 80s inspire her work.

Lehmann is influenced by the industrial design objects and systems usually kept hidden behind walls and ceilings: plumbing, air-conditioning, heating and wiring.

In this realm, function leads and aesthetic follows. The materials and design are still informed by the usual concerns of cost, tolerance, weight and performance but the priorities are different, everyday human interaction isn't considered so nothing has to be humanized, scaled or softened for our sight or touch.

She started designing lights from porcelain and immediately realized how difficult the material was when thin enough to be translucent. The strict parameters of the material provide a design challenge, one that continues to be interesting to problem solve.



Interview with Claire Lehmann

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Diploma of Ceramics at Holmesglen TAFE.

I had been making ceramics for about 6 years, I did some short courses and then worked by myself and needed some structured teaching to help kick me along. I'd already studied a BA in Art History at Melbourne Uni so just wanted hands on, practical learning, so I chose TAFE.

Can you tell us about the challenge in design and material when producing your graduate works?

Porcelain has the translucency I want when it's 1-3mms thick, coiling and throwing for this thickness didn't give good results. Coiling couldn't be thin enough without cutting away at the form and throwing large closed forms in translucent porcelain wasn't great: the forms dried quickly, the reclaim separated and was patchy and the clay was very soft yet had no plasticity. A friend who gets migraines from exposed globes wanted me to design closed lighting and it presented a good design challenge. I chose slip casting. When clay is slip cast it has less structural strength so I had to 'trial and error' the shapes that would work. I used Lumina, which had just been released, so I couldn't ask anyone how to use it and just had to 'trial and error' firing temps, casting times and thickness. Then I had to find out about the electrical side of lighting, learn how to solder, how to display and hang my lights, how to join the pieces together and how to incorporate another material into the process. I wanted the whiteness and completeness of the forms to be broken with another material, and after much debate, I chose aluminum, then I learnt about metal types, metal finishes and moulding. The work I'm exhibiting in

FRESH! represents the first 8 months of a lighting project that is now ongoing.

You are currently on a three-month ceramic residency the European Ceramic Work Centre in Olsterwijk in The Netherlands. Tell us about the experience of being award this scholarship.

I heard that the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) was one of the best residencies in the world, I applied by writing a proposal about gravity and material tolerance and was accepted starting a month after I finished at TAFE. I'm at the EKWC until mid March 2017 and it has been amazing. I live and work with 15 other artists/designers and ceramicists from all over the world, people either have ceramic experience or experience in visual arts, architecture, industrial design, interior design, sculpture and fine arts. People often come here to work on large scale projects as the biggest kiln is 6m squared, a lot bigger than my previous maximum of 55cm squared. This opens a whole range of possibilities, there is also 3D printing, 3D scanning, professional mould making, a metal workshop, wood workshop and engineers and glaze specialists to help realise any project you can imagine. In the first 8 weeks I learnt lots of little tips and tricks and was overwhelmed by the possibilities.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

I have different influences in different mediums but some of my all time favourites are Yayoi Kusama, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Alan Constable, James Turrell, Gillian Wearing, Ettore Sottsass and Rachel Whiteread.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

My dream project would be designing lighting, tableware and sculptural objects from ceramic, metal and

stone. I would like to collaborate with different design companies who specialise in each material and can locally and ethically manufacture each item and maintain a high craft standard. I just met the team from Waarmakers and that is a great example of the kind of business I want to run and work with. Based in Amsterdam, hiring refugees for their production team, ethically sourcing all local materials, no waste from manufacturing to shipping.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

Right now I'm working on interlocking ceramic bedside tables (which may glow) and translucent porcelain threading lights. My purist dream is to make ceramic furniture and objects that have no glue, no screws and no nails. I'm into modular, interlocking forms that can be reassembled and remade, design that isn't static. I'm also working on a lighting system that can be assembled and designed by the consumer; giving people creative control over an item they have to live with is one of my goals.

MICHAELA PEGUM
BIO

STATEMENT

Michaela Pegum
Quale III (from The Shape of Night) 2016, velvet, copper, silver, 75 x 75 x 60mm

Interview with Michaela Pegum

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art, Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT.

Your works convey a sense of lyricism and movement. Can you talk about your background in dance and

With more than fifteen years as a contemporary dancer and choreographer behind her, Michaela embarked on a Bachelor of Fine Art, Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT. She commences her Masters of Fine Art by Research there this year, and will continue to explore her interest in embodied knowledge through her intuitive approach to materials and form.

Through phenomenological, poetic and material investigations her current work explores experiences that hover on the thresholds of knowledge and mystery and how these experiences can be expressed in material form. She is particularly interested in the generation of new and unique materials and in the resonance that is created between art object and beholder.

These works seek to honour our perceptually rich experiences in the natural world and give material form to the fluid space of interweaving where we meet it – a space that is both human and other.

I hoped that the quality of wonder in the original experience might be triggered in the encounter between art object and beholder, creating a chain of encounters between nature, maker, material and audience.

Quale translates as 'a quality or property as perceived or experienced by a person'. Each work was partnered by a piece of poetic writing that guided its creation. The written response is referenced in brackets in the title.



whether this informs your practice?

Improv. Surprise. That there will be more in the material/body than you could possibly know at the outset.

Can you talk about the processes and materials involved in making your work?

I am interested in the nuances of phenomenal experiences that connect

us to a greater sense of being in the world. These experiences are not easy to describe or rationalise but lend themselves to expression in art. My work explores the sense of mystery inherent in these encounters with the world, and the ability of beauty to move beyond a more superficial aesthetic sensibility to embody this deeper mystery.

I start with experience and with this body of work these experiences were encounters in nature. After being immersed in my environment for some time I wrote spontaneously and responsively, this writing veers away from being literal or visually descriptive and is instead more precipitated and poetic, which for me is the best way to express the fullness of the experience and explore its metaphoric potential. The writing serves as a way to then re-enter the experience in the studio when I am making and also informs the sensibilities and structures of the pieces.

I spend a lot of time experimenting materially before I begin work on forms to find substances and processes that suit the sense of the work. I love exploring material potential and have come to believe in instinctive, collaborative play with material as an important part of my process because it always surprises me with possibilities I could never have imagined from the outset. The technique of material generation for these works happened in this way, through experimenting with the possibilities of electroplating. Through transforming textiles through heat and then electroplating them I found I could create a hybrid material that was structurally designed by hand but took on a life of its own in the plating process where copper particles integrate themselves into the material, reading and embellishing its textures. My work is based on the dynamics of human perception in natural environments – a meshing of natural forces and imagination. I found that this hybrid material - being held in the tensions between synthetic and naturally occurring substances, and human design and organic growth processes – resonated with the heart of the project.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

Recently I've been reading the work of poet Rainer Maria Rilke, whom I find enormously inspiring. His perception

of the world was so incredibly sensitive and subtle and filled with insight. Mary Oliver is another poet whose work I love, she writes beautifully about the natural world. The visual artist Meret Oppenheim is another inspiration whose conceptual concerns I feel some kinship with. She made very moving work and was so prolific – working across painting, sculpture, wearable art and furniture. She was also a poet. Magdalena Abakanowicz was an extraordinary textile artist, very innovative for her time, whose large scale sculptural work I always consider when I think about an artwork's capacity to move one's entire being. Her work was intricate and so carefully crafted and at the same time wild and brave. Heidi Yardley is a Melbourne artist whose paintings and drawings seem to pull you mid way into another world. They contain a sort of disconcerting beauty, a delicious danger that makes reality seem fragile, or like a beautiful, unstable prism. They prise things open a little, which I find inspiring. I really enjoy the way Kadri Malk speaks about jewellery and our relationship with it. She also creates deeply beautiful work, as does Piret Hirv – another Estonian artist whose work beguiles me. They both belong to *Õhuloss (Castle in the Air)* - a group of jewellers from Estonia who make very inspiring work in terms of their poetic approach to making, their use of materials and their very fine skills as craftspeople, I think also there is something in the way they see themselves and their relationship with their work that I love, they live how they make, and make how they see, at least it seems that way to me.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

The sort of transformations that can occur in us when we stand on thresholds – in environments where

we balance on the edge of one thing becoming another – can teach us a lot about our own humanity and the deeper reaches of our own minds and being. I would love to spend an immersive period of time in the centre of Australia with an astronomer and a poet, perhaps because I consider the desert a sort of a threshold between the earth and what lies beyond it, and I find the experience of immersing yourself in it brings each into some kind of closer clarity.

I am very interested in the parallels and synergies between art, poetics and science and bringing them together to explore how experience can be perceived through these various lenses would be so exciting.

Another project idea I would love to realise is a collaboration with a sound designer to consider the idea of sound as an object and object as a sound, I think it would be a fascinating endeavour to look at both materialising a sound and precipitating the acoustic resonance of an object and then creating performative spaces for each.

RACHAEL SIKLIC
BIO

STATEMENT

Rachael Siklic
RUSS Sideboard, 2016,
solid rock maple,
76 x 38 x 140cm

Rachael graduated as an Industrial Designer from Swinburne University in 2013 and continued her studies, specialising with an Associate Degree in Furniture Design from RMIT University. Inspired by all things Melbourne, Rachael hopes to continue to grow as a designer/maker. Future plans include opening her own studio, manufacturing small batches of original designs and offering a 'custom made' premium service.

Rachael is dedicated to creating beautiful products for the home, with an emphasis on quality materials, finishes and design integrity. Each piece is uniquely hand made with care and precision, and comes with a commitment to last a lifetime.

Taking inspiration from the very popular Scandinavian design, the RUSS Sideboard is a finely crafted statement piece. Constructed from solid rock maple timber and birch plywood, the outstanding feature of the Russ Sideboard is its impressive façade. Each door is covered by 'ruffles', individually hand crafted from layers of rock maple veneer and displayed in a radial arrangement. The two-door sideboard features plenty of storage with two inside drawers, in plum coloured film face plywood for a colourful hidden feature. The sideboard boasts slightly splayed wood turned legs and beautiful brass hardware for a chic, retro look. Finished with a clear lacquer applied to highlight the attractive qualities of the timber grain, The RUSS Sideboard is a statement living room and lifetime piece.



Interivew with Rachael Siklic

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study an Associate Degree in Furniture Design at RMIT.

Born and bred in Melbourne I have always been inspired by the city's creative arts and culture scene. I am drawn to interior spaces and product design, which initially lead me to study industrial design. In the final year of my Bachelor's degree, I chose furniture design as an elective and fell in love with the process of designing and making. In wanting to further develop my skills and become more specialised as a designer, I applied to study the Associate Degree in Furniture Design at RMIT. The course helped me to fill gaps in my knowledge, develop my wood working skills and prepared me for becoming an Australian based designer and maker.

Can you talk about the process of creating the ruffle façade on RUSS Sideboard?

Each ruffle on the RUSS Sideboard façade is individually hand crafted from layers of rock maple veneer. The method I developed took many hours of trialling, testing and patience! The biggest challenge was finding a way to create the profiles without the veneer cracking or splitting. Once I had the method resolved, I invested over 80 hours in to making enough ruffles to cover both doors.

Are you hoping to continue creating statement furniture?

Absolutely. It's really important for me as a designer to create pieces in my own signature style and offer something different. It's also about more than just making a statement, the replica furniture industry is huge and growing so it's important to have signature designs that are difficult to reproduce.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

I believe I still have a lot to learn in the process of becoming an established designer/maker. I would love to have the opportunity to learn under the guidance of companies that I believe to be progressive and doing great things for the Australian Furniture industry, including Earl Pinto, Dowl Jones and Redfox and Wilcox. I would love to have the opportunity to work with and learn from any of these labels, a collaboration would be my dream!

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

I hope to do both. I have plans to open a small studio with two friends that also completed the furniture design associate degree at RMIT. We believe that women are generally underrepresented in our industry, so we are definitely aiming to gain some exposure by having a presence at Australian furniture exhibitions.

BEC SMITH
BIO

Bec is a Melbourne based artist specialising in Ceramics. She uses hand-pinching techniques to create sculptural forms and functional objects.

Bec graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art at RMIT in 2016. Throughout her studies, she exhibited her work both within the University and independently. In 2016, Bec produced work for a collaborative exhibition entitled Sentō at Enough Space. Within RMIT, Bec created work for Body: Fresh, Intimacy, Memory (2016) and Around the Table Exhibition at First Sight. Bec's work for Body was an installation relating the senses, incorporating ceramic forms, paintings and edible materials.

Bec's accolades include the Northcote Pottery Excellence Award (2015) and the Clayworks Australia Ceramics Award (2016).

STATEMENT

Spring is a collection of porcelain and enamelled sculptures accompanied by fragrance and edible materials. Bec's installation represents the feeling of immersing oneself in the ethereal qualities of gardens. The palette of colour and texture is inspired by her love for sweet snacks and the smells and flavours of flowers in bloom. The artist is driven by the tactile nature of porcelain and how it preserves the memory of touch.



Bec Smith
Meringue, 2016, Porcelain,
35 x 25cm

Magnolia, 2016, Porcelain,
28 x 30cm

Interview with Bec Smith

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at RMIT.

I am primarily interested in the investigation of materials within my work and am driven by the making of the work itself. I chose to study so I could develop my skills as an artist. I began my tertiary studies with a diploma of Visual Art and had the opportunity to experiment with a range of materials and techniques. I was so inspired within these two years and was having the best time, so I decided to continue my studies in Fine Art.

When I rediscovered ceramics in the first year of my degree, I was captivated by the intricacy and chemistry of the glazing process and this led me to make ceramics my focus.

Your practice involves bringing together sight, touch, smell and taste, how does this come to fruition in Spring?

I would like the viewer to engage with my work as a sensory experience. Spring is a collection of sculptural forms, edible objects and fragrance. Taste is incorporated with the edible sugared flower petals placed within a pink enameled vessel.

The sense of touch is explored within the making process of hand building each object and raising the copper enameled sculptures. One of the ceramic forms is placed on a mound of jasmine infused sugar, contributing fragrance to Spring.

Together, each of these elements aims to create a feeling of spring. For me this feeling is like waking up and looking at the world through a new lens, as each of my senses come to life. Ultimately, I aim to inspire a romantic appreciation of place through sensory experience.

How do you find the balance between creating production ware and works for exhibition – does your production work share the conceptual values of the exhibition work?

At each stage of my ceramics practice, I have upheld my conceptual values, as they are my inspiration and reason for making. My more functional objects reflect the beginning stages of my ceramics practice; whereas my more sculptural forms have evolved with my skills. Sculpture and installation have been the focus of my latest work as it gives me more freedom to work on a larger scale, explore texture and combine other materials.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

My dream project would be to collaborate with Grant Achatz, Head Chef at the restaurant Alinea in Chicago. I would love to create an immersive feast featuring food about my favourite flowers and fragrances. The food would be served on and in my ceramic and enamelled forms.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

My focus for the next few years will be on creating work for exhibition and returning to study Honours in Fine Art.

SITENG WEI
BIO

STATEMENT

Siteng Wei
Mountains and Rivers I,
2016, epoxy resin, sterling
silver, transparency film,
57x30x3.5 cm

In 2016 Siteng Wei completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) degree in RMIT, and is pursuing a Master of Fine Art in 2017. Throughout the study of fine art, he majored in objects and jewellery making. Jewellery and crafted objects in contemporary art context always fascinated Wei, he is interested in the way they can be looked at as an artifact of a certain culture, field, idea or site. Contemporary jewellery and object art has the ability to contain and communicate complex ideas and concepts with its object property.

This series of work is my investigation into traditional East Asian arts, the aim of these works is to revisit the traditional arts in contemporary jewellery approach. The research behind this project involves East Asian art history, traditional ink painting and its formats. The materials and approaches of the works explore the aesthetic and concepts of East Asian arts with the use of color, transparency, collage, appropriating and object format. These work pieces are my exploration on innovations within the traditional theme.



Interview with Siteng Wei

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at RMIT.

I study object based art for about 3 years in Sydney, after working for about 2 years in Melbourne, I decided to continue the study of object art and jewellery. I went to study the Honours program in RMIT for further mastery of how jewellery and objects works in fine art context. The Honours degree also prepare me to undertake a research degree in the future.

Tell us about the process and materials in your graduate work.

The process of my graduate work started with experimenting with epoxy resin. The choice of this material is inspired by the traditional ink and water painting. The ink water painting utilize the liquid property of ink and water, its process is very mercurial, every thing is undergoing constant changes, the drying at the end freeze up everything but the traces of how ink and water, move, bleed, fuse is still visible. I found this kind of aesthetic is fascinating and I decided to simulate it with resin and pigments. The making process is done by pouring clear and coloured resin together on to a textured silicone surface, the idea of this process is to let the material does its own works and letting go of some control. At the later stage of the process I introduce printed images into the work, I imbedded transparency film into the resin with cut-outs from the 20 century ink water painting. The appropriating elements of the works is to enhance the idea and concept of revisiting the tradition. The jewellery approaches of the works are brooch and neck piece, and I think these approach compromise the both the image and object quality of the works well, on the wall or on the body, it

looks like an image and an object at the same time. By studying the ancient ink painting done on objects such as hand held fans, I believe that the image elements and object quality of a work enhanced each other if done in the correct format.

What are the concepts behind your work?

The concepts of my project and works are revisiting traditional East Asian arts, and by reusing its images, material and aesthetic with contemporary jewellery approach, innovations could be create within the genre of traditional arts. In art context, jewellery can be viewed as a artefact of a certain culture or idea, it contains the information, ideas, aspirations, messages of what the maker want to communicate. And for that reason, I believed that contemporary jewellery could realise the aim and goal of my project.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

If I would collaborate with a artist, I would love to work with Wang Jin. Wang Jin is a contemporary Chinese artist, his made a series of works are A Chinese Dream (1997-2000). In this series of works he recreate different traditional Chinese opera dresses in translucent PVC, the production of the works involved numbers works and factories, the aesthetic and display of the works emphasis the sense of tradition and history in a poetic way. I love Wang's work because he depict the theme of questioning the tradition and history in a critical but poetic way, and it would be a valuable lesson for me if I could participate in a large scale production of contemporary art work.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

The next step of my practice would be focusing of my post graduate study in art, I am currently applying to the Master program in RMIT. For my works, I do want to keep developing my graduate project, I think there is more for me to experiment and develop in this theme and materials. But overall I would keep jewellery and object as my major art form.

LAURALAI WILSON
BIO

STATEMENT
TOUCHSTONE

POTION CUPS

TROGLOBITE

Lauralai is a jewellery and object maker living and working in Melbourne. After moving from the Byron Bay hinterlands to study Gold and Silversmithing at RMIT, she had the honour of being a McCraith Scholarship in Fine Art recipient and graduated in 2016 with distinction. Her practice currently focuses on contemporary jewellery, led by considered explorations of stone, sand, silicone and silver along with adaptations of raw minerals, and alterations of surface and form through chemical synthesis. Her practice aims to dispel the lacklustre nature of routine, to provide the viewer or wearer with a temporary escapism and a connection to the otherworld present in their psyche, imagination or memory. In essence her work is a scavenging of the fictitious debris of imaginary landscapes.

Based on the Touchstone, a siliceous rock that in times past was used to test the purity of gold and silver and now a term relating to quantifying the nature of a thing. These neckpieces intend to serve as talismans, anchoring and protecting the wearer from environmental influences and connecting them with an unwavering sense of self. Materiality is a unifying factor in these works - silicone, a synthesized material derived from silica, is stained and textured with sand and minerals, and serve to carry heavy pieces of the raw mineral. Weight and balance are engaged with as symbolism and in functionality, providing equilibrium with the body and grounding the wearer to their physicality. These Touchstones seek to provide a point from which to calibrate, navigate and find truth.

The potion cups are a series of vessels that are based upon a childhood game of making elixirs from petals and plants in my grandmothers garden. They speak of the boundless potential of a child's mind to imagine worlds and possibilities beyond the scope of reality. These objects are intended to spark a sense of curiosity and wonderment that is often lost in adulthood.

The Troglobite series explores the theme of the underworld. The Troglobite, an organism that lives its entire life in deep caves without the presence of light often evolves strange and wonderful features like translucent skin and a lack of eyes. This series lightheartedly draws parallels between these cave dwelling creatures and the artist working day and night in their studio, often appearing peculiar to the outside world.

Interview with Lauralai Wilson

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at RMIT.

I've always been making little things, since I was really young. Contemporary jewellery and craft based art became the natural progression for me. Before I started studying at RMIT I was living in a really beautiful but small town inland of Byron Bay and there just wasn't the opportunity to study Fine Art, specifically the discipline that I was interested in – Gold and Silversmithing. So I moved to Melbourne hoping to follow that dream. My favourite thing about studying at RMIT was the fluidity between departments in the School of Art. I got to do lots of subjects in the ceramics department and that was a great opportunity to learn a new set of skills. Material exploration is massively encouraged in the Gold and Silversmithing department too, and I love that!

Sand, minerals and silicone are not materials necessarily associated with jewellery, can you talk about your connection to the materials and the concepts they are portraying?

I'm really interested in the relationships between materials through their chemical composition. Lots of the minerals I work with are silicates, and have a relationship to the sands and silicone. Mica is my recent obsession, it's a phyllosilicate mineral that forms in translucent, metallic sheets. Ilmenite is a titanium sand I've been using in my work since I discovered it in the ceramic glaze lab. It looked awful in my glazes but was so beautiful in its raw form that I started using it in my jewellery work, predominately to coat objects and stain liquid silicone, along with a synthesised mica based pigment. I like my neckpieces to be composites that relate within themselves, so I

make the silicone straps myself and stain it while it's in liquid form with minerals. I'm drawn to these materials because of their visual link to the traditional appearance of metals. In recent works I've focused on the idea of the lacklustre, and in a small, subtle way aiming to dispel it through the use of metallic textures and iridescent textures as a visual reminder.

Do you see the three series of works Touchstone, Potion Cup and Troglobites in your graduate show informing or independent of each other?

All these works were made at different points driven by different concepts but they still inform each other. The potion cups were a result of our third year research project, where I investigated the use of a number of chemicals and reactions to create the growth of crystals on an object to alter its surface and form. The rest of the works came afterwards as I was focusing on making work for the body and trying to translate the fragility of the chemical crystals into sturdy things that could be worn and interacted with.

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

At the moment I am focusing on expanding my practice with an emphasis on producing new work. I want to make functional objects and wearable jewellery that is beautiful but accessible! I'd also love to make elaborate pieces for fashion, stage and film. So far I have a few group shows coming up in 2017, including one on currently for VAMFF and later in the year for Radiant Pavilion. I'd love to take part in some artist residencies here in Australia, and my dream is to eventually make it to Iceland!



Lauralai Wilson
Various objects,
2016, copper, enamel,
potassium dichromate
crystals, shell, mica
powder, silicone, antique
pearls, beach tooth,
ilmenite sand, resin,
aquamarine, silver, steel
cotton, silver, steel,
dimensions variable