

Symphonic Encounters

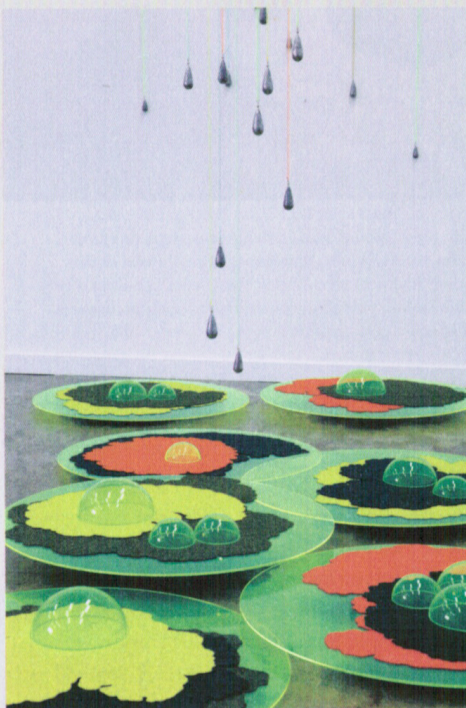
Review by Dan Rule

The notion of the symphonic suggests a state of harmony. In a musical context, the symphony is realised by the orchestra. It is a cohesive sum of countless interconnected parts and movements, a tying together of loose and like strands. It is a vast, immersive whole.

At first glance, *Symphonic Encounters* seemed an odd title for this recent group exhibition of assemblages, sculptural installations, video and sound works. The title may have suggested the tried, tested, refined and realised but this collection of works from six female artists – curated by Melanie Flynn and Rachael Watts – offered something of a different stance. Though intricate and multipartite, the majority of these works wore their tensions and ruptures – spatial, formal or material – on their sleeves.

It was impossible to avoid Britt Salt's work, *Puzzlethèque*, 2012, which overtook the gallery foyer with its arrangement of black and white geometrical patterns plastering the walls and a series of large suspended spheres, also lined with geometric patterns. It was both disorientating and activating, the pendulum-like sway of the spheres giving the space a changeable, dimensional quality.

Soo-Joo Yoo's vast, interconnected tangle of domestic objects, components and vessels –



Helga Groves, *Green Precipitation (Microclimate Series)*, 2012, wool felt, perspex, monofilament fishingline, lead and sound, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

towers of wire drawers, rickety frameworks of aluminium tubes, counterweighing pulleys, ropes, helium-filled balloons and zip-lock bags filled with water – also worked to challenge and deconstruct our understanding of the space and the forces at play within it. As the title suggested, her *MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES*, 2012, also addressed notions of time, the effects of the gradual evaporation of water



Soo-Joo Yoo, *MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES*, 2012, water, air, pipes, mount boards, damp course, picture frame, tiles, bricks, stones, glass, ropes, wires, hooks, chains, vinyl, balloons, white tapes, black tapes, plaster powder, aluminium poles, fluorescent lights, zip-bags, drawers, drawers cases, stretch wrapping and water colour pencils, 307 x 780 x 482 cm.

and deflation of helium balloons altering the posture of her maze-like networked structure. Helga Groves offered more of an allegorical engagement with the idea of interconnectedness. Her floor works – fluorescent Perspex discs covered by layered, moss-like felt blooms and Perspex bubbles – took the form of microscopic ecosystems while fragile, woven rain drops loomed from above. They projected their own concise cycle of nature.

Unlikely materials and even less likely arrangements marked the towering, vertical assemblages from Lauren Berkowitz and Kate Tucker. Berkowitz's fragile, cocoon-like *Cell Structures*, 2012, comprised a meticulously stitched and sewn web of leather cricket ball off-cuts, essentially questioning the cues by which we define materials and objects. Tucker's *As Remembered*, 2012, meanwhile, operated on the plane of memory and perception, repurposing her torn, tattered and scrunched old paintings, drawings and experiments to fashion an immense sculptural stalactite of forgotten fragments.

Upstairs, Mia Salsjo's three-part audiovisual work operated in a kind of immersive psychological space, offsetting a disorientating scene picturing a woman speaking Japanese in an empty fairground in Eastern Europe with a visceral, stuttered reconfiguration of a rapper's performance, before dissipating into a haunting, droning piano coda. Rather than forming a resolved composition, Salsjo's works seemed a meditation on slippage – psychological, perceptive and formal.

It was a neat summation for the wider exhibition. These *Symphonic Encounters* enshrouded and engaged but avoided the trope and the archetype. If a symphony is the epitome of accepted wisdom and form, these works picked those concepts apart at the seams. Accumulative and immersive though they may have been these were experimental gestures towards new states of perception.

Symphonic Encounters was exhibited at Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne from 12 May to 24 June.