

Lauren Berkowitz

Born 1965
Melbourne

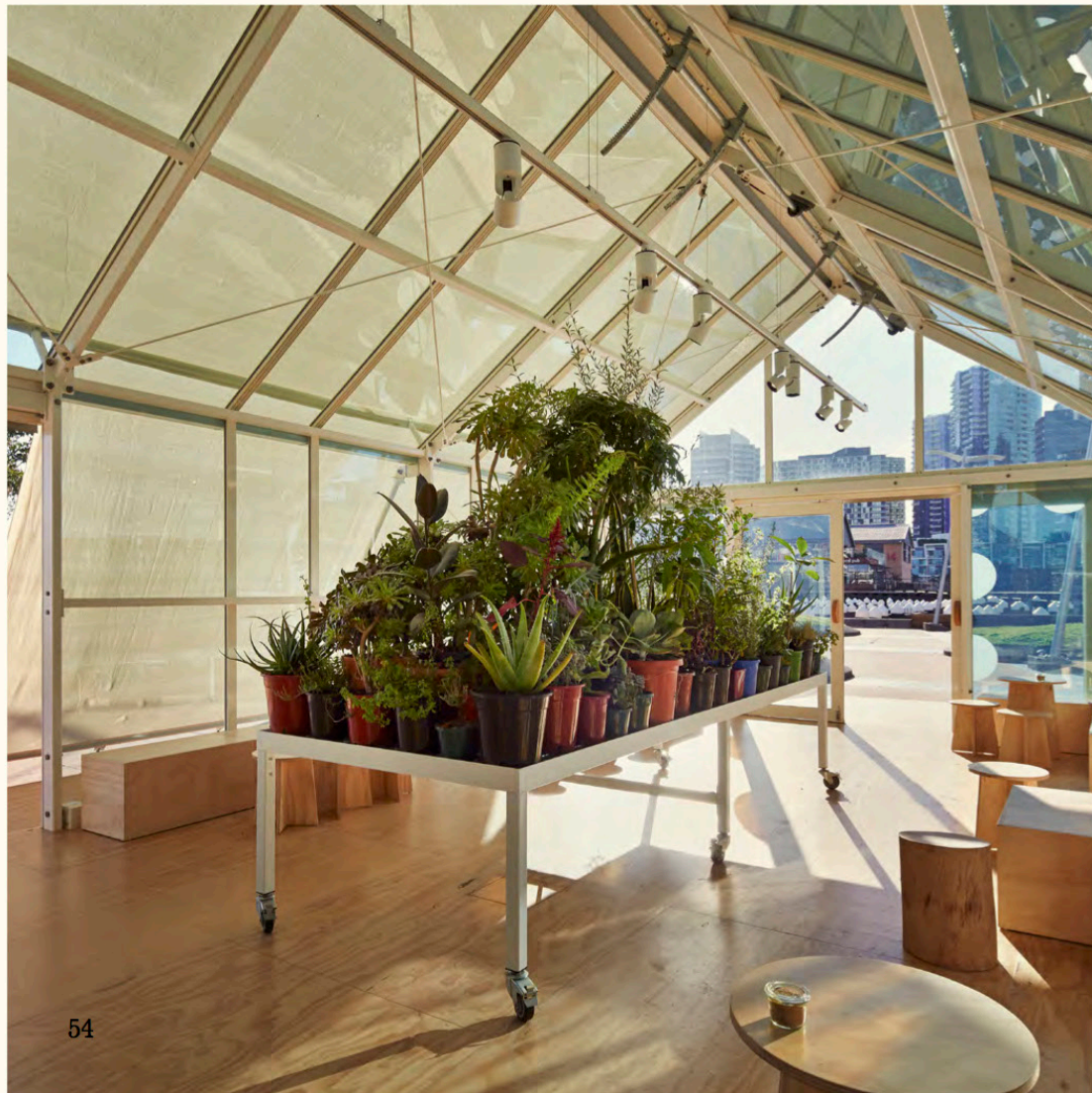
SOLO EXHIBITIONS—*Manna*, La Trobe University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2009; *Demeter's Garden*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2007; *Salt and Honey*, Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne, 2002; *Strata*, McClelland Gallery, Victoria, 1999; *Excess*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 1996.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS—*Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2013–2014; *In the Balance: Art for a Changing World*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2010; *Aichi Triennale*, Nagoya, 2010; *Soft Sculpture*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2009; *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial*, Japan, 2003.

COLLECTIONS—National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne; Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo; Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne.

Lauren Berkowitz works with ephemeral, found and recycled materials to create site-specific installations. These include plants, plastic containers and cricket ball off-cuts. Often minimal in their final appearance, her immersive works are usually suspended or floor-based. They conjure a sense of time passing through their evolution over the course of their display.

Still Life was a large plant installation made up of edible and medicinal plants. Native lemon myrtle sat alongside olive and citrus trees in a work that changed with each season. Inspired by 17th-century Dutch still life painting, the work reflected on the transience of life. It also commented on the layered history of the Australian landscape, with the placing of indigenous plants alongside introduced species representing the waves of Australian immigration since colonisation. These plants ranged from English lavender to Mediterranean herbs and fruits, and Vietnamese mint to African aloe. The inclusion of medicinal and healing plants, aimed to signal a call to action for the regeneration and repair of our damaged environment.



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↑ Lauren Berkowitz, *Still Life*, 2014, indigenous, medical and edible plants, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist. Photograph: Peter Bennetts.

↑ Lauren Berkowitz, *Weeds and Wildflowers*, 2014, wild cabbage, fennel, blackberry, nightshade, Abbotsford Convent site, plastic bottles and water, 120 x 160 x 45 cm. Image courtesy the artist. Photograph: Concettina Inserra.

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Weeds and Wildflowers, another plant installation from Berkowitz, involved a haphazard arrangement of weeds in cut-off plastic soft drink bottles. Located at the abandoned Magdalen Convent Laundries in Melbourne's Abbotsford, the artist collected edible weeds including wild cabbage, blackberry nightshade and fennel from the nearby derelict gardens, river and railway embankments. Berkowitz explains: 'The convent site was integral to the artwork. Fallen women were once forced to work at the laundries, and like weeds they were considered undesirable and unloved.' Flourishing often in neglected environments weeds can have a restorative capacity. For *Weeds and Wildflowers*, Berkowitz asked her viewers to reappraise the beauty and value of the discarded. Berkowitz's practice uncovers the aesthetic and useful qualities of the unexpected. Unwanted and mundane items are given new life. In doing this, she encourages her audience to re-evaluate their own environments and the materials around them.