

PLEASURE & REALITY

Artwork labels

Pleasure & Reality

This exhibition brings together new and recent work by five contemporary Australian artists: Tony Garifalakis, Nathan Gray, Helen Johnson, Marian Tubbs and Justene Williams. Exploring current tendencies and modes of practice in contemporary art, *Pleasure & Reality* presents a diversity of approaches to representation and materials.

Pleasure & Reality reveals the artists' interests in the ways images and objects in everyday life can be used to generate new possibilities and meanings. The exhibition's title is derived from a key line of investigation in the practice of Marian Tubbs and relates to the idea that ordinary objects or images can be repurposed into the unexpected and enticing.

While *Pleasure & Reality* reveals some shared interests between the artists, it also showcases their unique practices. Each has drawn upon personal iconographies and archives of images and objects, revisiting pre-existing works as well as creating new ones especially for this exhibition. *Pleasure & Reality* includes anarchic, repurposed images of members of European royal families by Tony Garifalakis; lo-fi process-based videos by Nathan Gray; studies into the visual language and techniques of painting by Helen Johnson; seductive digital compositions by Marian Tubbs; and a hallucinatory, performative video installation by Justene Williams.

Justene Williams

born Australia 1970

Sydney-based artist Justene Williams's work encompasses video, photography and performance. Williams creates elaborate sets and costumes made from everyday objects that are activated through performances which allude to the histories of various art movements and attempt to reconstruct the essence of lost images. These performances are recorded, edited and re-presented in the gallery space along with props and remnants from the choreographies. For *Pleasure & Reality*, Williams builds upon *No mind*, 2015, a body of work that draws on the aesthetics of Japanese Noh theatre. Accordingly, the gallery becomes a theatre, and the installation includes evidence of previous performances, played back on a series of monitors within the space.

Classical Noh theatre relies on a reductive set in which props are fabricated quickly, often within an hour, then dismantled after the performance. A key prop in Noh is the Dojoji bell, a version of which Williams has created in cane. Lowering the bell over an actor symbolises a moment of transformation, a state further emphasised by Williams's title for the installation, *No mind*, which refers to the condition of *Kokoro* ('heart', 'mind', or both; *no-mind*) – the desirable mental state in which an actor can achieve absolute transportation.

Justene WILLIAMS

born Australia 1970

No mind

2015

No mind (A performance in three parts) part 1

2015

single channel colour high definition video, sound, 8 min
4 sec

engaging an object other than itself

2015

convex mirrors

Lure

2015

adhesive tape on polytarp

Bell trap

2015

varnished cane, metal (nails)

No mind (A performance in three parts) part 2

2015

single channel colour high definition video, sound, 5 min
15 sec

No disco

2015

colour high definition video, sound, 17 min

facing a thing in space

2015

wood (pallets), laminated wood, synthetic polymer paint on cane and bamboo, copper, wire, painted mannequins, plants, Cypress pine, crystals

No mind (A performance in three parts) part 3

2015

3 channel colour high definition video, sound, 4 min 26 sec

look people mind

2015

type C photographs, reinforced aluminium foil tape, polytarp, silver laminate floating floor underlay

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery

Marian Tubbs

born Australia 1983

Sydney-based artist Marian Tubbs uses familiar and found materials to raise philosophical questions about culture and form. She works in assemblage, photography, video and sculpture, and a recurring theme in her practice is how materials found both offline and online can be manipulated to produce art concerned with new and old notions of value, pleasure and reality. Tubbs often combines natural and 'fake' imagery, as evidenced in *Under striates (False semblance)*, 2015, which draws on the visual language of online data flows. This aesthetic is typical of Tubbs's work and reflects her interest in poetically visualising the immateriality of the online experience.

Tubbs's interest in value is often explored through materials. *swan plain*, 2015, is a new installation containing a series of small sculptures composed of simple, everyday objects, including sandwich bags, fake nails, lace gloves and ear plugs. Tubbs elevates the ordinary by utilising these materials to create beautiful and enticing objects. By positioning these things low to the ground on yellowing foam, the artist highlights both their objectness and vulnerability, calling into question what is valued by the viewer and why.

Marian TUBBS

born Australia 1983

swan plain

2015

glass, (found objects), cotton (towel), foam, steel

Courtesy of the artist and Minerva, Sydney

Marian TUBBS

born Australia 1983

Untitled (The sea)

2014

welded steel, LED monitor, latex, petals, synthetic polymer paint, colour video, sound, 1 min 39 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Minerva, Sydney

Marian TUBBS

born Australia 1983

anthro aperçu

2013

colour inkjet prints, American oak (artist frames)

Courtesy of the artist and Minerva, Sydney

Marian TUBBS

born Australia 1983

under striates (false semblance)

2015

inkjet print on silk (georgette), wood, steel, rubber,
synthetic polymer resin, metal

Courtesy of the artist and Minerva, Sydney

Nathan Gray

born Australia 1974

Melbourne-based artist, experimental musician and performer Nathan Gray is interested in the ways people interact with objects. His practice is process-based and often involves trial and error as the artist learns new processes over the course of his works' creation. Gray often imposes limitations on himself by only utilising what is at hand during the art-making process. The outcomes manifest themselves as sculptures, performances and videos.

Species of spaces, 2014, is a five-channel video installation featuring a series of fragmentary, often percussive actions performed on Cockatoo Island in Sydney. Nails, chains and pipes drop against concrete and tiles; a disembodied hand flicks a series of switches; and a pink balloon is dragged through industrial machinery. Together these small, improvised actions create a symphony of responses to the island and its architecture.

A simple choreography is also enacted in Gray's work *Sharing concurrent time*, 2015, in which the artist performs a series of gestural improvisations that unfold across four screens. In this performance objects are removed completely and the work becomes, according to the artist, 'a performance with no content'. Instead, Gray generates a series of expanding and contracting movements of varying intensity that pass from screen to screen.

Nathan GRAY

born Australia 1974

Species of spaces

2014

5 channel colour high definition video, sound, 5 min 13
sec, edition of 3

Collection of the artist, Melbourne

Nathan GRAY

born Australia 1974

**Sharing concurrent time (Four
improvisations)**

2015

4 channel colour high definition video, sound, 3 min 12
sec, edition of 5

Collection of the artist, Melbourne

Tony Garifalakis

born Australia 1964

Spanning photography, collage, sculpture and installation, Melbourne-based artist Tony Garifalakis's practice questions the authority and truthfulness of political, social, religious and artistic institutions. His work invokes a sense of anarchy by employing dramatically opposing elements, or by modifying existing imagery to make the viewer question how signs and symbols are used to communicate power.

Bloodline, 2014, is a suite of twelve portraits of Europe's royal families, they are largely taken from publications purchased by the artist from opportunity shops. Garifalakis has defaced his subjects by spraying and painting layers of dripping black enamel over their faces, so that only their eyes and indicators of wealth (such as crowns and jewellery) remain. Materially, this intervention recalls graffiti and its use as a tool to convey messages of dissent. This is further enhanced by the works' installation on a mock concrete wall, again recalling the aesthetics of the street and decontextualising the regal sitters' stature.

The seriality of the portraits and erasure of the Royal Family's features denies the subjects of their selfhood, rendering them as one indistinguishable alien mob. In this way, Garifalakis contests portraiture's function as means of documenting the rich and powerful.

Tony GARIFALAKIS

born Australia 1964

Bloodline

2014

enamel paint on C-type prints

Collection of the artist, Melbourne

Helen Johnson

born Australia 1979

Helen Johnson is a Melbourne-based artist whose work explores the traditions and limits of painting; a medium she employs as a critical point of departure to address a range of contemporary issues. Johnson's diverse body of work explores the political and cultural narratives that shape the ways we view and interpret culture. She is also renowned for her explorative use of the painterly medium.

For *Pleasure & Reality*, Johnson contributes the tightly executed *Third island*, 2013, whose complex masking and strictly contained areas of colour and texture provide a contrast to the three looser, unstretched canvases *Passing through as a bee visiting flowers*, *Tripper* and *Watching a romcom after yoga*, all 2015. Together, these works reflect Johnson's constantly evolving painterly vernacular.

Drawing on both personal and official narratives, and using an aesthetic that slips between figuration and abstraction, Johnson's work challenges assumptions that painting accurately or neutrally represents its subject. She says, 'Painting is an interesting vehicle for me because it is loaded, neurotic, problematised, a market force, scattered, essentialised and recomplexified, loathed, able to operate simultaneously within and beyond itself, able to be beautiful and horrible at the same time'.

Helen JOHNSON

born Australia 1979

Tripper

2015

synthetic polymer paint on canvas, leather

Courtesy of the artist and Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles

Helen JOHNSON

born Australia 1979

Watching a romcom after yoga

2015

synthetic polymer paint on canvas, leather

Courtesy of the artist and Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles

Helen JOHNSON

born Australia 1979

**Passing through as a bee visiting
flowers**

2015

synthetic polymer paint on canvas, leather

Courtesy of the artist and Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles

Helen JOHNSON

born Australia 1979

Island (Gale)

2013

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne