

MEL O'CALLAGHAN

ENSEMBLE

ARTWORK LABELS

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Mel O'Callaghan: Ensemble

Paris-based Australian contemporary artist Mel O'Callaghan works across film, performance, painting and installation. In her diverse works, O'Callaghan reflects upon human behaviours and psychologies. Her practice often focuses on repetitive articulations of the human body engaging with its surrounding environment.

Ensemble, 2013, depicts an epic feat of physical strength and silent protest. In this video set in a verdant landscape, three firemen move into frame and turn on a water hose. We watch as they lean into and against the elemental force of the water. After a period of time, a lone man appears and struggles against the water's extreme force. Against all odds, he pushes forward and the other men begin to retreat. We witness an act of struggle, triumph and retreat that requires resolve and resilience, both from the performer and from viewers as they observe the footage. Pushed to his physical limit, the subject holds his ground and prevails. His silent protest invites us to reflect on individual freedom.

Ensemble was recently acquired for the NGV Collection, and this is first time the work has been exhibited in Australia.

Artist interview available at ngv.melbourne/essay

Mel O'Callaghan

Australian born 1975, lived Paris 2007–

Ensemble

2013

2 channel HD colour video without sound 32:9, 7 minutes

13 seconds

Purchased Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2017

New acquisition