

Spirit Wave

4 – 28 MAY 2023

ART SPACE ON THE CONCOURSE
+ THE CONCOURSE OUTDOOR AREA





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An exhibition exploring spirituality in a diverse and contemporary world.

ARTISTS

Gary Deirmendjian

Kalanjay Dhir

Jo Ernst

Carla Gottgens

Edwina Green

Beric Henderson

Tom Isaacs

Aaron McGarry

Kathie Najar

Miguel Olmo

Miho Watanabe

Tym Yee

A Willoughby City Council curated group exhibition, presented in partnership with Chatswood Culture Bites.

COVER IMAGE: Aaron McGarry, *A is for Allegory; Part 1: Nature* (detail), 2021, video still. Courtesy of the Artist

OPPOSITE: Miho Watanabe, *Awareness of Between-ness: Memory and Time, Assembly - sounds*, 2022, photo transfer and acrylic paint on silk. Courtesy of the Artist

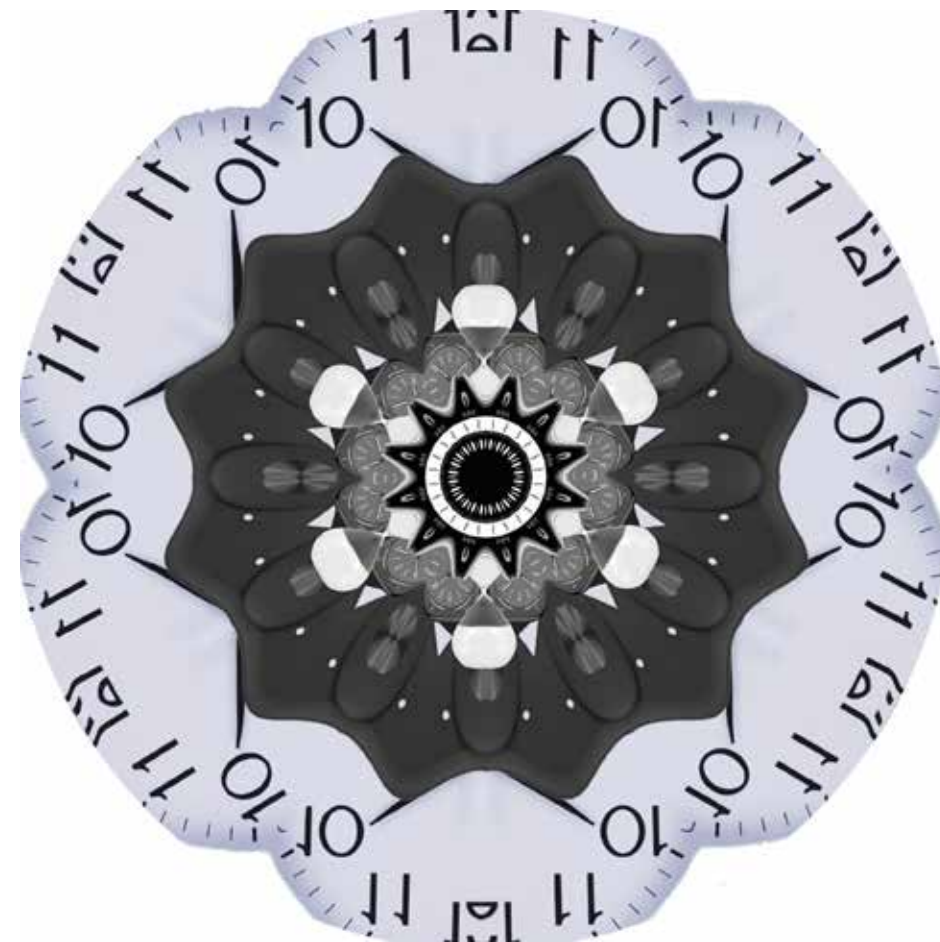
Spirit Wave

An exhibition exploring spirituality in a diverse and contemporary world.

A Willoughby City Council curated group exhibition, *Spirit Wave* explores spirituality in a diverse and complex contemporary world. It looks at how artists interpret ideas around spirituality and create their own hybridised expression of the spiritual. Or how they challenge and redefine the official structures and institutions that represent spirituality. *Spirit Wave* considers the spiritual space as one of creativity and fluidity and how it drives values and yearnings.

The exhibition examines the diversity of spiritual experience within a multi-cultural society and arts sector, as well as the relevance of spiritual expression through an atheist lens. Through the mediums of installation, sculpture, drawing, painting, textile and photography, the artists in *Spirit Wave* present unique and individual notions of how spirituality can be articulated and create new dialogue around the legacy of spiritual traditions.

OPPOSITE: Tym Yee, *Time Peace*, 2021-23,
digital animation still. Courtesy of the Artist



The Spiritual Turn in Contemporary Art

In modern times, art in the Western canon has by and large maintained a cautious distance from spirituality. This can be traced back to Modernism, characterised by a rejection of institutional religion and prevailing moral codes, a groundswell response to the discontent with the European establishment. Systems of belief across the arts, sciences and philosophies were questioned and dismantled. A new reality of possibilities enabled by technology and the power of the machine was ushered in. For art, the locus of creativity shifted from Nature to the City, both as site and theme. Nature, once idealised in the nineteenth century by Romanticism as a conduit to transcendental experiences of the Divine, has been displaced by the Urban.

Yet the City and Futurism were not the only subjects. A key aspect of Modernity was the creative freedom to explore a broad range of forms and ideas, which propagated styles from Primitivism, Dada, Surrealism, to Cubism and Abstraction. While the generic trend from 1900s–1930s had minimal spiritual reference, “the early pioneers of abstract art sought inspiration from spiritualism and theosophy, a synthesis of world religions, sciences, philosophy, and color theory.”¹ It is instructive how art with spiritual intent/content was treated and discussed. Swedish painter Hilma af Klint though an established artist in her time, privately created several paintings

of visionary geometry that conveyed the spiritual world from a channelled connection with a spirit guide. “Anticipating critical hostility, af Klint decreed that her works of visionary geometry were not to be unveiled to the public until 20 years after her death.”² Influential art critic Clement Greenberg reduced Kandinsky’s abstract works to decoration and viewed his paintings as consisting of “disconnected items without any reason or purpose”.³

In 1979, renowned art theorist Professor Rosalind Krauss wrote that “we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention art and spirit in the same sentence.”⁴ More recently, in a 2017 interview, Dr Rina Arya shared that “[t]here is greater reluctance for artists in parts of the West to talk about the spiritual aspects of the work than there is in more religious quarters of the world. This is partly because of the negative connotations that have been attached to ‘religion’ or the ‘spiritual’ which artists may feel malign their work.”⁵

Despite Arya’s observations, there is a perceptible shift in the last decade towards the role of spirituality in contemporary art, evident in the mounting number of artists and exhibitions engaged in this subject. Internationally, there was *On the spiritual matter of art*, MAXXI, National Museum of 21st Century Arts (2019), Rome; and *Group Therapy*, Frye Museum (2018), Washington;

interstate, the exhibitions *Second Sight: Witchcraft, Ritual*, University Queensland Art Museum (2019), *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits*, Monash University Museum of Art, Australia (2015), Melbourne; and in Sydney, *No False Idols* (2022) at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and *Presence of Mind* (2021) at Gallery Lane Cove.

This new spirit wave takes the form of reinterpretations of spirituality using specific visual language to effect deep reflection, contemplation or to evoke a sense of the sublime, often associated with spiritual experience. The concept of spirituality itself is amorphous and contested given its institutional origins. With the increasing secularisation of societies, spirituality today is best summarised by Phillip Sheldrake as “referr[ing] to the deepest values and meanings by which people seek to live.”⁶ It is a yearning for meaning beyond the materialistic paradigm of everyday life and belonging to a greater purpose than the self. The resurgence of spirituality in contemporary art occurred in a complex milieu of local and global social change. However, some contributing factors can be identified as shaping the spiritual turn.

Art and spirituality are more intertwined than formalists would acknowledge and the separation between the two entities can only be temporary as their convergence, hastened by social dynamics, is inevitable.

As Rosalind Kraus observed, “in the increasingly de-sacralized space of the nineteenth century, art had become the refuge for religious emotion; it became, as it has remained, a secular form of belief.”⁷ In other words, art is for some, a secular religion. While a large part of the twentieth century resisted admission, an encounter with an object and space of art can evoke intense emotions of transcendence. Contemporary art when well executed can induce an experience akin to a spiritual awakening, characterised by the aesthetic sublime, an emotion which is “a ‘complex feeling’ resulting from the tension between two conflicting sensations or impulses, which are held at once in our awareness, but are eventually resolved producing a sense of relief: pain and pleasure, awe and terror, attraction and rejection.”⁸

Contemporary art with its diversity of medium, material and genre, places an increasing emphasis on experience, specifically lived and embodied experiences of artists and viewers. The immersive formats of installation and performance art can activate the senses beyond the visual to elicit a more in-depth emotive response. Spirituality shares the engagement mode of experience with contemporary art, hence the greater ease of art’s reintegration with the spiritual. From a social perspective, we are at a tipping point of disenchantment with late capitalism, and climate change’s

environmental impact. Such weariness, coupled with collective and private trauma brought about by terrorism, natural disasters and pandemics coalesce into a desire to transcend the corporeal and seek solace in the spiritual. In the wake of a deep distrust of organised religion, contemporary spirituality represents a myriad of alternative possibilities—Eastern spiritual traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism), New Age practices, animism, shamanism, witchcraft, occulture, technopagnism and secular mindfulness. Much contemporary art reflects on contemporaneous social conditions, hence artists invariably respond with works that address the neo-spiritual movement. There is also a renewed focus on nature and the roles of human and non-human agents in eco-systems. In the Australian context, Aboriginal Art in the contemporary landscape is significant in legitimising the presentation and discussion of art and spirituality. For First Nations people, art is one of the ways to communicate and maintain oneness with the spirits of their Dreaming ancestors, to maintain sacred sites and to connect to country.

An artist wielding the wand of spirituality in contemporary art practice can be seen as a two-pronged strategy of resistance against a capitalist logic, data-driven world. First, engaging in the spiritual through the vehicle of art articulates and disseminates

possible alternate realities, one that prioritises self and environmental care. Secondly, the language and framework of the spiritual have the potential to critically resist the commodification of spirituality.⁹ By employing personal rituals interweaved with symbols, materiality and the animation of space for introspection or to elicit sublime awakenings, artists can reclaim the metaphysical for authentic affirmations of conscious becoming.

Rachael Kiang
Researcher and Independent Curator
2023

¹Claudia Cheng, “9 Women Artists Celebrating the Spirituality and Legacy of Hilma af Klint,” *Artsy*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-9-women-artists-celebrating-spirituality-legacy-hilma-af-klint>.
²Eleanor Heartney, “Spirituality Has Long Been Erased From Art History. Here’s Why It’s Having a Resurgence Today,” *Artnet News*, January 6, 2020, <https://news.artnet.com/artworld/spirituality-and-art-resurgence-1737117>.
³Kenneth Berry, “A Personal View on Greenberg and Kandinsky,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 95–103.
⁴Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9, (Summer 1979): 50–64.
⁵Dr Rina Arya, “On Contemporary Art and Spirituality,” interview by Richard Bright, *Interlalia Magazine*, December 2017, <https://www.interlaliomag.org/interviews/rina-arya/>.
⁶Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).
⁷Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9, (Summer 1979): 50–64.
⁸Silvia Arca, “Spirituality and Contemporary Art” (MA Research Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2019).
⁹Artist Min Wong’s MFA dissertation discusses the commodification of spirituality and the strategies that some artists use to counter that at length.
Min Wong, “Woo Woo Workout: The Commodification of Spirituality in Expanded Sculptural Practices” (MFA Thesis, University of New South Wales, Art and Design, 2021).

Incomplete Completeness; the multiplicity and endurance of spirituality in a Western artistic sphere

The maxim 'people need people' is something we have come to accept as a society. It is this interconnectedness that propels us to understand each other—and by extension—ourselves. However, it is not what encourages personal transformation. Connection does not act on us, but rather, is enabled through us. It is also not as complex as one might assume. Because it is primarily dependent on our actions or behaviours, it switches from being something mutually beneficial—something that acts for all parties involved—to something solitary. This is not to say that multiple parties cannot benefit from connection, just that the source for this benefit is formed in the individual. If we take this train of thought and run with it, we have an opportunity to explore something that is usually communitarian minded from an individualistic perspective.

Spirituality is much the same. On initial thought, it seems that the more we endeavour to learn and experience being spiritual, the more personal pushback we

receive. This is not a revolutionary thought—Sir Isaac Newton developed this idea in the 1600s with his laws of motion (albeit in a separate discipline), where it continues to be pivotal in our understanding of the physical world. Concerned with natural symmetry, he concluded that forces present themselves in pairs, that one body cannot exert a force without experiencing one itself.

If we take this analogy and apply it to an understanding of spirituality, we automatically warrant an authority to it. It moves from being something we interact with because we want to, to being something we interact with because we were destined to.

This presents us with an odd account of personal freedom. However, while our Newton-esque analogy does raise certain points of contention, I don't think it paints quite the accurate picture of spirituality we'd hoped for. There's not much jurisdiction on how the Western world would look today if Christianity hadn't acted as this funnel

for people to practise their spirituality. So, it's fair to say a perfect and complete understanding of our own spirituality might never be attainable, especially if we don't identify with the core religious teachings of Christianity to begin with.

This doesn't mean that it's not worth investigating though. Throughout Western history, we've seen religion, and therefore spirituality, be the cause of both destruction and celebration, sometimes simultaneously. Take Beeldenstorm, The Great Iconoclasm of 1566. The destruction of religious imagery on the grounds that it was idolatrous served as social commentary on political, religious, and economic issues. While it shed light on things that probably should have been addressed prior, it also granted validity to the destruction of spirituality through creative expression.

We understand now that spirituality can present itself within, or be found through, anything. In the artistic sense, it is something that can be a muse—the stimulant that an

artist needs, or perhaps more than anything, desires.

Time and time again we've seen creatives lean on their own experiences of spirituality to strengthen their artistic pursuits. In this sense, their spiritual existence is fuel for their expression. It's a fair assumption to make that everyone has thought of their existence at least once—whether that be spiritually or physically—so perhaps it is exactly this, the universally ubiquitous experience of existence, that allows us to connect with a work.

When we find an artwork we really love, we open up a dialogue between us, the artist, and the work itself. If the artist's muse was spirituality, then we can add that to the equation too. Though not directly, our own experience of spirituality, in that precise moment, is derivative of theirs. So perhaps the boundaries between individualist and communitarian spirituality aren't as clean cut as originally thought. It could be

considered dangerous to pigeonhole our experience of the spiritual like this—perhaps we should let it live in the realm of the liminal, avoidant of human categorisation.

In ***Spirit Wave*** this idea of being inherently uncategorisable is fore-fronted. Twelve artists explore the multifacetedness of spirituality, where their diverse approach of response embodies the openness of subjective interpretation. From physical mark-making to digital rendering, the idea of spirituality and its nebulousness is the thematic link that audiences, in our rationalising mindset, search for. The artists' commentary on their understanding of spiritual hybridised expressions encourages audiences to engage with their own perceptions, and perhaps, could act as the flagship encounter in discovering their own spirituality. ***Spirit Wave*** could be the ripple-causing rock someone needs.

Spirituality has become an integral part of our lives and is core in our engagement

with everything. Atheists call it placebo, spiritualists call it manifestation, Christians call it prayer, physicists call it quantum mechanics, and adrenaline junkies call it dumb luck—no one is denying that there could be something to grapple with, no one is denying that personal conviction could be worth investigating. As a whole, humanity just can't seem to settle on the name of whatever it is that presents itself to us in these elusive forms.

To deny its impact, however you identify it, would be to veer against the fundamentally human desire to understand the world and the very real possibility that the way we can do this is through an exploration of the spiritual.

Imogen Mason
Ramsay Scholar at Australian Catholic University
2023

Gary Deirmendjian

sensorium, 2023, polyurethane coated steel, polystyrene, brick, cord, paint and rubber

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

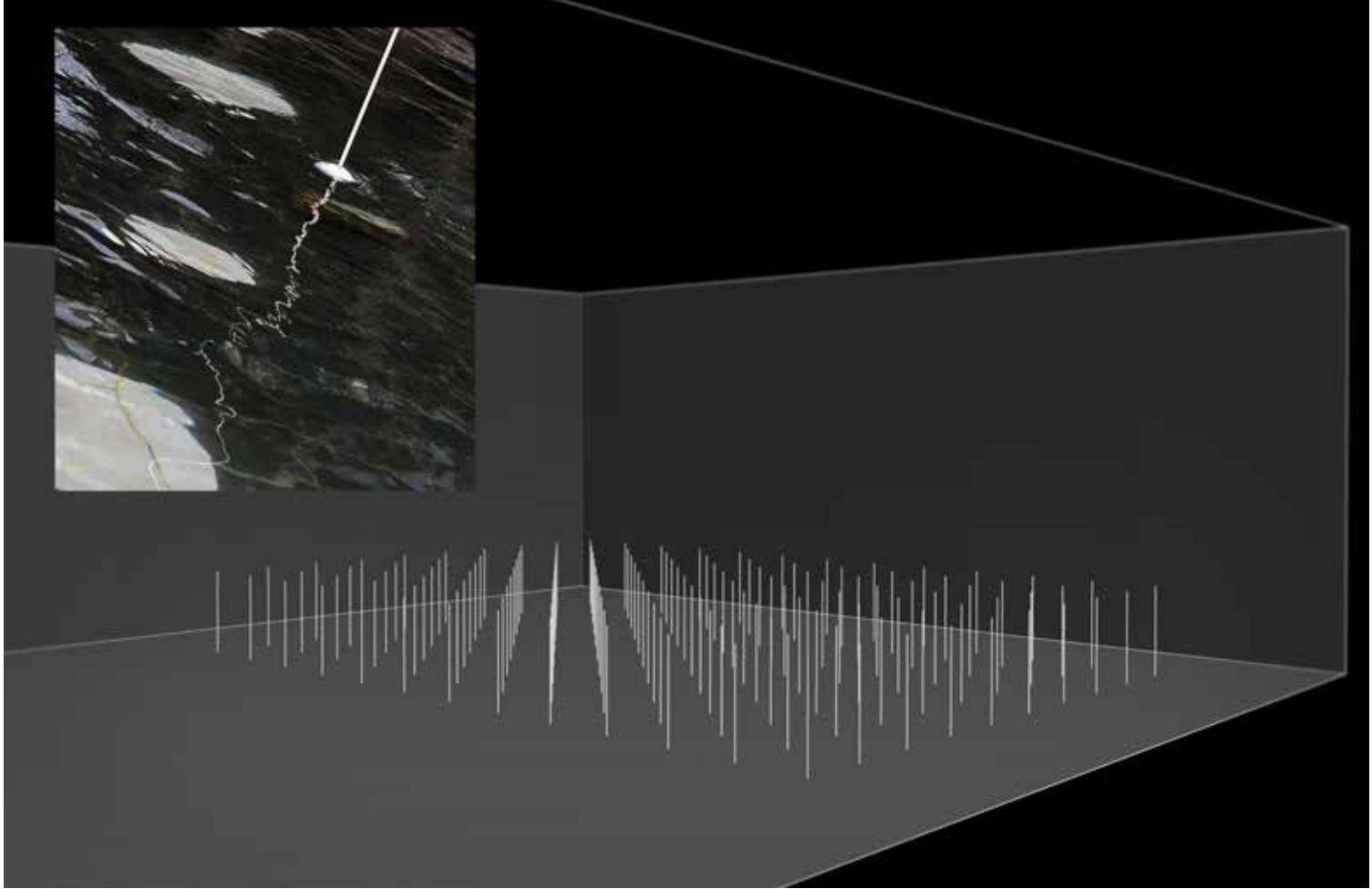
Situated at the Reflection Pool at The Concourse, Chatswood, *sensorium* is a site and moment specific kinetic installation agitated by the movements of air and water. The first by circulation of natural breeze, and the latter by ripples and currents generated by the Pool's filtration system.

Just as our hair stands on end at moments of heightened awareness ... as a physical manifestation enlivened by our core's resonant response to experiences of the unexplainable, *sensorium* too may be appreciated metaphorically as a gridded sensory field. A monumental device that 'feels' the unseen. Perhaps it is the resonance of a spiritual realm that it senses, the residue vibrations of our universe's birth that binds all things great and small, and us in between ...

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Gary Deirmendjian is an established Sydney-based artist whose practice encompasses sculpture, photography, video, installation and site-specific intervention. Working predominantly in public space, he is broadly recognised for creating thought-provoking and socially concerned works that challenge with scale and immersive qualities. He has exhibited extensively in Australia and internationally. Commissions that he has produced include; *presence* (2017), a monumental site-specific moving image commission for Wynscreen at Wynyard Railway Station; and *pulse* (2020), a major site-specific moving image commission for Federation Square, Melbourne. The book, *A PREVAILING SENSE OF DISQUIET* (Hardie Grant Books)—a multi-voiced monograph on Gary Deirmendjian's work—was published in

2020. He holds an MFA in Sculpture from the National Art School (2006), where since 2012 he has taught as a Sessional Lecturer in the Bachelor of Arts Sculpture program and more broadly as a Postgraduate Supervisor. In 2022, Gary Deirmendjian produced two large scale installations for the *Human in the Wire* exhibition at The Concourse and Art Space on The Concourse.



Kalanjay Dhir

the best i can do is redirect energy, 2021-22, single channel HD video with sound
Aggro and Onkgray (Demon study: model pit bull), 2022, 3D printed ABS, faux designer collars, chain, hardware and artist’s rat tail
In collaboration with Mike Bwadi - 3D Artist and ZBrush monster

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

the best i can do is redirect energy is about consciousness and the conditions on earth that may have encouraged living entities to think of themselves. The character Petalli is an avatar for the artist and acts as a personification of ‘light’. Petalli draws sweeping connections between light from the sun, mirrors used in space telescopes, and the ‘specular effect’ used in CGI, to argue that light itself is necessary for consciousness and ‘reality’. The video is stylised as a game to explore a new medium to communicate information.

Aggro and Onkgray (Demon study: model pit bull) are avatars of local masculinity. This work was a study of making demon avatars, and tries to understand why as humans we create demons in different myths and stories. Their design was inspired by Dvarapala, seen across South and Southeast Asia as ‘door guardians’. Dvarapala and other door guardians are seen as justified in their use of violence and physical force when defending values. The dogs are pit bulls which have their own interesting history as dogs bred to fight by humans.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kalanjay Dhir is an artist based in Western Sydney on unceded Dharug land. His work draws on popular culture, sci-fi and myth. Working through video and sculpture, Kalanjay enjoys thinking about the limits of consciousness and how this could change in the near future. In the past three years, Kalanjay has used the language and techniques behind computer games to develop speculative storytelling methods. During this time, he has been interested in the power of fictions, and the parallels between the history of computer-generated imagery (CGI) and human evolution.

In 2021, Kalanjay was commissioned to produce original video works by ACMI and Sydney Opera House. From 2017-2020, he worked from Parramatta Artists’ Studios and in 2019 this led to co-founding Pari, an independent artist-run space, co-directed with local peers. Alongside Kilimi and DJ Atro, he hosted Wednesday Sunset on FBi Radio for three years, spotlighting emerging musical acts from west and south west Sydney. Recently Kalanjay has been included in the exhibitions *Over the Fence* at Granville Centre Art Gallery, *Cities Foretold* at Art Space on The Concourse and *Undercurrents* at Penrith Regional Gallery.



Jo Ernst

Orb, 2023, pencil on paper

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

I would usually describe my work as 'expressive'. This work felt different. The energetic experience while working *Orb* was intense yet open. It was a feeling of receiving.

My background as a figurative artist has led me here. The corporeal refined and redefined. The physical structure is shaped by its life force; it is the essence I am concerned with. *Orb* is built up of a chaos of zillions of tiny pencil marks that surround an inner circle. The chaos, a mass of erratic electrical impulses or frequencies, move and vibrate and they are attracted to and create through mass, the visible presence of the *Orb*. This process defines a search for something tangible in the infinity of what is not. *Orb* creates its own inner shadow,

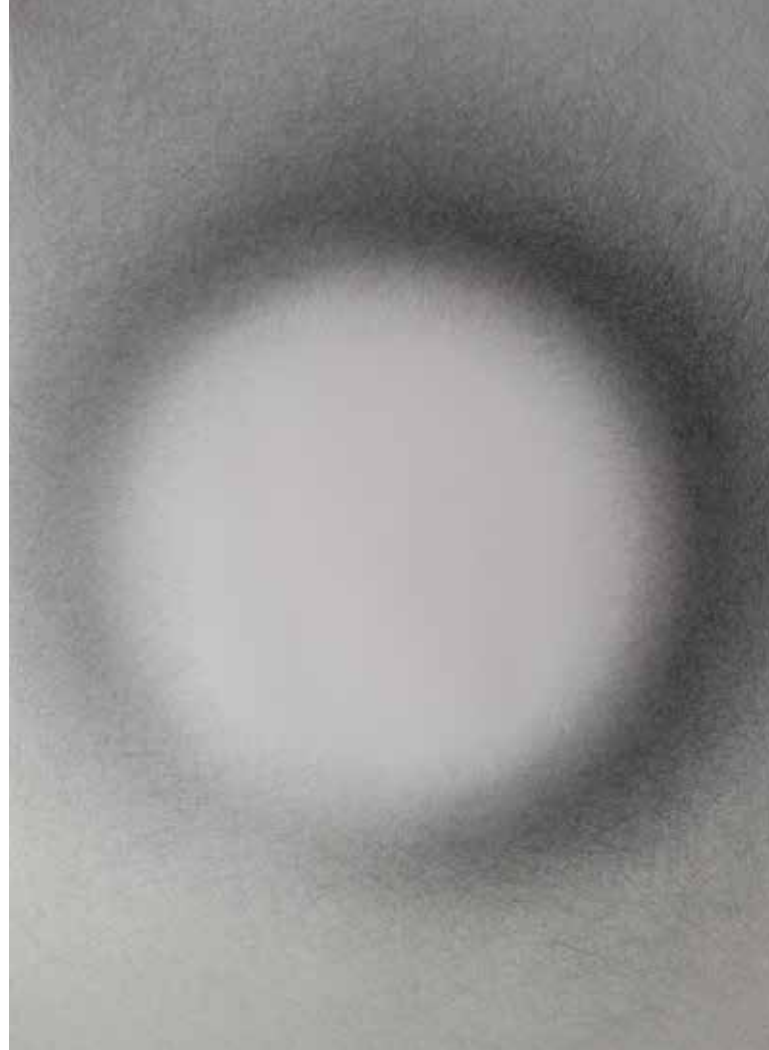
Orb is a refinement of essence, consciousness, and it is meant to be felt and internalised rather than intellectualised. This is the closest I have come to defining a sense of spirit in an artwork without a view to the representational. A paring back to pure simplicity. Light and shadow have long had associations with transcendence and the unknown and feature consistently throughout my work. I use this natural phenomenon in my work as an entry into the subconscious, suggestive of life's ever present mystery. As I worked up *Orb* this seems to happen of itself, and without a conscious plan for drama or effect, the image grew.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jo Ernst lives and works from her home in a small community in the hinterland of the Manning Valley. She has been involved in the arts all of her working life, firstly as a couturier designer based in the Strand Arcade, Sydney and for the last 30 years a professional Artist and Teacher. She studied at the National Art School, in France with Ted Seth Jacobs and at Paddington Art School, which she directed for one year. She has won many awards and has been a finalist in the Kilgour Prize, the Manning Art Prize, Naked & Nude Art Prize and the Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing.

Jo's work revolves around connection with feeling and spirit. When presented with this concept during her early studies, a cord of recognition resounded and has been paramount in her work ever since.

Jo Ernst is represented by Lost Bear Gallery, Katoomba



Carla Gottgens

Voyage of the Lost Children, 2014, digital prints on hand spun olefin fibre

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Voyage of the Lost Children plays on the multiple ways the word 'lost' can be interpreted. The use of children captures humans at one of the most vulnerable times in our lives when we consider who we are, what we are, where we are going. As a non-religious artist, spirituality to me refers to my conscience. Where am I in the world, how do I relate to others and the effect they have on my journey through life. How do I affect others? Is there a way to change the path you take if the voyage does not sit well with you? The children in this artwork are at the cusp of realising their actions and how their presence affects others. Their spiritual presence or conscience is beginning a journey, for some this will have a defined path and for others it may float directionless for many years. The boat is a metaphor for our lives in general, a boat gets tossed around on seas, it sails calmly, and is sometimes becalmed. And like our lives it can also float away, become lost or sink.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carla Gottgens wears two hats in her creative professional life. The first being a professional photographer and the second being a practising public artist. Carla graduated from the College of Fine Arts (UNSW) in the late 1990s before moving to Melbourne to continue her studies at RMIT where she completed an Honours year and then a Masters Degree in Photography. Photography is the starting point for all of her artworks. In many cases the finished result will appear to have no photographic link at all, taking on a more simplified design style.

Her artworks have been included in Sculpture by the Sea (Bondi), Strand Ephemera (Townsville), Sculpture on the Greens (Wyong), Lorne Sculpture Biennale (Lorne), Yering Station (Yarra Valley) and Swell Sculpture (Currumbin).

Carla has created many permanent artworks, including commissions by Bayside Council (VIC), Leeton Shire Council (NSW), Shellharbour Council (NSW) and Canada Bay (NSW).



Edwina Green

I'll Carry My Own Water, 2020–23, ochre, natural twine, cotton rag, bull kelp, eucalyptus and burnt oyster shell with single channel video projection

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

I'll Carry My Own Water is an ongoing body of work that utilises bull kelp, harvested on Country, processed and woven together in my hometown on the West Coast of Tasmania. Connection to Country is and has always been an ancestral, spiritual, interwoven bond that speaks to our lineage, and when we connect to our cultural practices we are able to speak inter-generationally. It is a form of communication, to let our ancestors know we are honouring them, while honouring ourselves, and those who will come from us.

Bull kelp has been used for generations by my ancestors to create functional water carriers; this cultural object has been referenced, respected and adapted throughout my practice where I form new pieces of culture as a descendant and an ancestor at the same time. Where First Peoples dialogue is not the dominant narrative, my community and First Nations people internationally have been championing the protecting, continuance and revitalisation of sovereign rights to access and engage with our cultural practices and knowledge.

ART SPACE ON THE CONCOURSE

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Edwina Green is a proud Trawlwoolway First Nations artist, whose dynamic research informed practice works within sculpture, installation, film, and painting to explore the complex narratives of perception, historical reframing, and the post-colonial paradigm and its effects on people and place. Born in Narrm (Melbourne) while spending significant time on the West Coast of Lutruwita (Tasmania), her practice is strongly influenced by her experiences as an Indigenous woman navigating suburbia and small town politics. Witnessing harrowing ecological destruction, Green's work often reminds viewers that without decolonisation, we do not have Country. She further investigates connection to language, land, kin, and culture, and the importance of breaking intergenerational disconnection. She has continued discourse disrupting what 'Aboriginal Art' is supposed to be, ideas of Indigeneity and how her existence is inherently political.

Her video work *Eco Binded* recently was highly commended as part of the Gertrude Street Projection Festival, and community engaged short film *It's Your Job to Decolonise Too* hit international audience in New York, in 2018. She has been nationally recognised for her ongoing body of sculptural works titled *I'll Carry My Own Water*. Green has exhibited extensively in galleries and festivals inclusive, but not limited to, Firstdraft, Pari Ari, Granville Arts Centre, TCB, SEVENTH Gallery, Blindside, and Brunswick Music Festival. Throughout her career, Edwina Green has created space for complex narratives of perception to evolve, and to connect us to perception of colonisation, and its impact on people and place.



LEFT: Edwina Green, *I'll Carry My Own Water* (detail), 2020–23, ochre, natural twine, cotton rag, bull kelp, eucalyptus and burnt oyster shell. Courtesy of Zan Wimberley and the Artist

Beric Henderson

Tree of Life, 2021, acrylic on wood

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Tree of Life draws on a dark gothic aesthetic and—with an almost medieval otherworldliness—aims to illuminate the spiritual and transcendent spark of nature. Inspired by the 'spirit of nature', Henderson draws on the dichotomy of science and spirituality to create works that explore the mystery of life. Using dramatic highlights and shadow, the branching *Tree of Life* with its subtle and partly hidden fruit reflects on themes of creation, transformation and renewal. Such cyclic processes of change and synthesis apply not only to biology but to many physical and esoteric phenomena such as ideas, perception, culture and memory. Henderson has a strong interest in the fluid interconnectedness of all things, and his art strives to interrogate and understand different and progressive states of being and consciousness as we evolve and grow.

ART SPACE ON THE CONCOURSE

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Beric Henderson was born in Sydney and has remained passionate about art and science since childhood. He previously trained and worked as a research scientist (PhD in Biology, 1990, University of Sydney and CSIRO). In 2016 he left science and transitioned into full-time art practice to explore more deeply his intuitive insights into the more esoteric nature of life. His home and studio are now based near a rainforest on the NSW mid-north coast.

Henderson has exhibited his art in 14 solo shows in Australia and more than 60 group shows throughout Australia, South Korea, Venice and Switzerland since 2003. His art is increasingly multimedia in approach, employing painting, drawing, 3D painting on layered Perspex or resin, and video animation. His work draws on science, spirituality and philosophy to explore the fragility of the natural world with emphasis on themes relating to evolution, creation, the process of transformation, and symbiosis.

In the last few years Henderson has held two solo shows at the Glasshouse Regional Gallery (Port Macquarie) and was shortlisted for many national art prizes including the Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing. His art has been acquired for several collections including by the New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery (WA) and more recently for the Figure1A Science-Art collection in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 2019 he contributed five paintings to the art-science exhibition *Equilibrium* at Palazzo Albrizzi during the Venice Biennale (June-July 2019). In 2021 his 3D-resin paintings on exhibit at the Royal Botanic Gardens (Sydney) were highlighted on *The Science Show* with Robyn Williams (ABC Radio National). More recently in 2022 his 3D painting *Emergent #2* and video *Transcendence* won an Audience Favourite award at a Science-Art exhibition in Lausanne (Switzerland).



LEFT: Beric Henderson, *Tree of Life*, 2021, acrylic on wood. Courtesy of the Artist

Tom Isaacs

Pietà, 2018-2023, single channel video with sound

From the Deep Waters of Sleep, 2023, felt

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Pietà is an exploration of spiritual longing and its possible roots in early childhood experiences of the mother. The title of this work references the traditional religious scene in which the Virgin Mary is depicted cradling the body of Jesus after his death. In traditional Christian art, Mary is typically clothed in blue, a colour which has spiritual significance for many different religions, representing the vast expanse of sky and the unfathomable depths of the ocean. In a letter to Sigmund Freud, French writer and mystic Romain Rolland coined the phrase 'oceanic feeling' to describe a spiritual experience of timeless unity with the cosmos. Freud was sceptical of religious sentiments and argued that the 'oceanic feeling', if it exists, is a remnant of the primordial relationship between the preverbal infant and the all-encompassing figure of the mother.

Videography: Danica Knezevic

From the Deep Waters of Sleep builds on my previous works *Pietà* and *Tehom [the Deep]* exploring the links between modernist abstract art and spirituality as well as the connection between water, the mother, and spirituality. The dimensions of this work evoke the liturgical hangings (*paraments*) that adorn the altar and its surroundings in many Roman Catholic churches. The title is taken from a poem written in 1975 by Reverend Johanna Adriana Ader-Appels after she experienced a premonition of her son's death. Johanna's son, Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader, was attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean alone as part of a performance titled *In Search of the Miraculous*. As she had foreseen, Bas Jan did not complete his journey and is presumed lost at sea. Johanna wrote, "What are we in the infinity of oceans and sky? A small baby at the breast of eternity".

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tom Isaacs is a Sydney-based artist, working in the fields of performance and textile art. His practice draws from psychoanalytic theory, philosophy, religious and ritual practices, and art history to explore themes of mental illness, mortality, and the human condition. Tom graduated from Sydney College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (with Honours) in 2008 and a PhD in 2022. His PhD research concerned the relationship between ritual, psychoanalysis and body art, and how these different streams of thought address the problem of alienation. His work has been included in *Carnivale Catastrophe* at Cementa22, *Live Dreams: Threshold* at Carriageworks and *New Contemporaries* at SCA Gallery. In 2022, he was a finalist in the *Seed Stitch Contemporary Textiles Award*, held at the Australian Design Centre and as part of ADC On Tour at Tamworth Regional Gallery. Tom is a Sessional Academic at the University of Sydney.



Aaron McGarry

A is for Allegory; Part 1: Nature/Poverty/Melancholia, 2021, single channel videos with sound
sumbállō, 2022-2023, digital print decals from paper collage

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

A is for Allegory; Part 1: Nature/Poverty/Melancholia explores the concept of allegory in a contemporary context, juxtaposed against allegorical paintings and etchings from the late Renaissance to the Romantic era predominantly investigating inspiration from Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* published in 1555. These tableau’s use performance, soft sculptural forms, and digital video compositions as methodology for drawing. McGarry takes the philosophical, moral, and spiritual concepts of Nature, Poverty, and Melancholy, and presents them through the lens of contemporary themes. For example, Dürer’s *Melancholia I* is reimagined as an office worker wearing a mask to evade AI algorithmic face detection being waterboarded with crude oil. These contemporary allegorical representations explore a quest for meaning, connection to soul, and an understanding of the contemporary world.

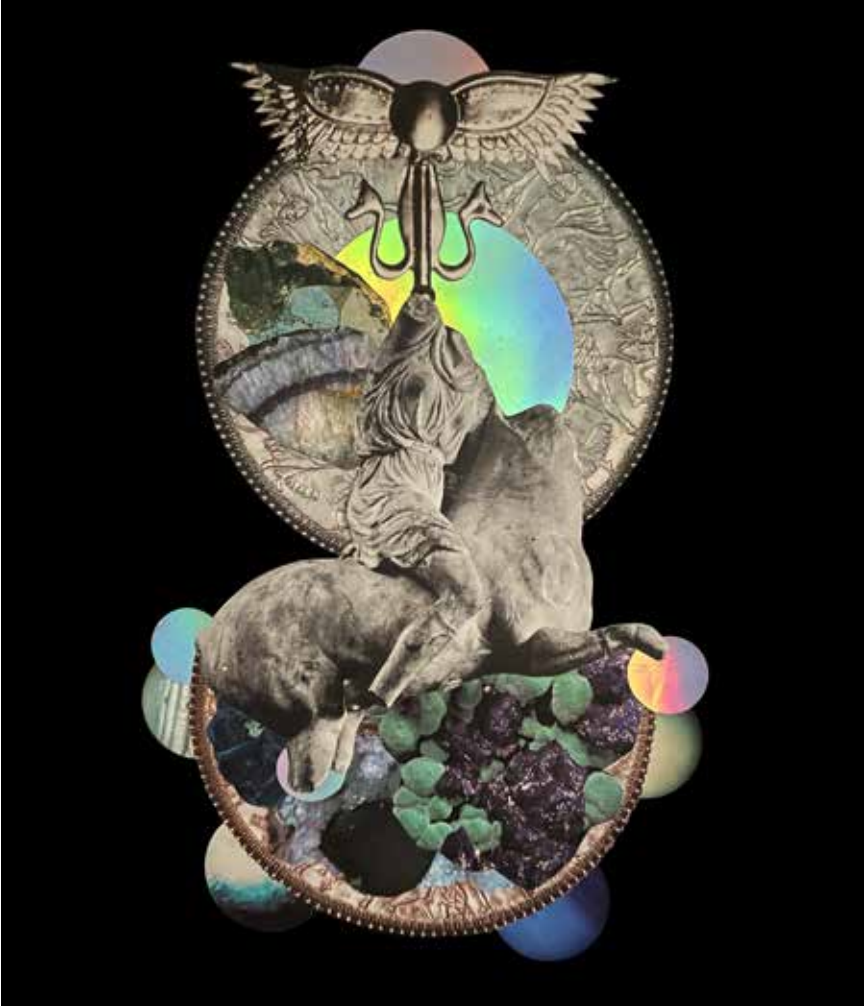
Camera Operators: Brian Wynn, Yulia Gotts and Benjamin Smith

ART SPACE ON THE CONCOURSE + THE CONCOURSE FOYER + THE CONCOURSE OUTDOOR AREA

Through investigating visual histories in art, human society and spirituality, *sumbállō* the Ancient Greek meaning for symbol (“I throw together”) is expressed and represented in collage as a methodology. The collage process, much like the ancient Greek word, uses a frenetic combination of selected ideas of scientific, sculptural and the mystic forms to throw together and generate a new series of symbols. Seeking inclusions from early homosapien to bronze age humans, into the renaissance man and science of today. McGarry’s collages include these links to the past in a present metaphysical space. By generating imagery of spiritual states beyond Newtonian science and psychology, these works made in meditative states beckon this past/presence into a quantum age.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

McGarry recently completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts (majoring in sculpture) at the National Art School, Sydney receiving two major awards in both Sculpture and Drawing. McGarry’s work has been exhibited at various galleries around Australia including The National Portrait Gallery in Canberra and Blacktown Arts Centre. He has been commissioned to create public art installations for Inner West Council NSW, George’s River City Council NSW and Moreland City Council VIC.



LEFT: Aaron McGarry, *sumbállō* (detail), 2022-2023, paper collage
ABOVE: Aaron McGarry, *A is for Allegory; Part 1: Nature*, 2021, video still. Courtesy of the Artist

Kathie Najar

Red Gum Infinity Pool, 2023, wallpaper, mirror and printed tiles

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

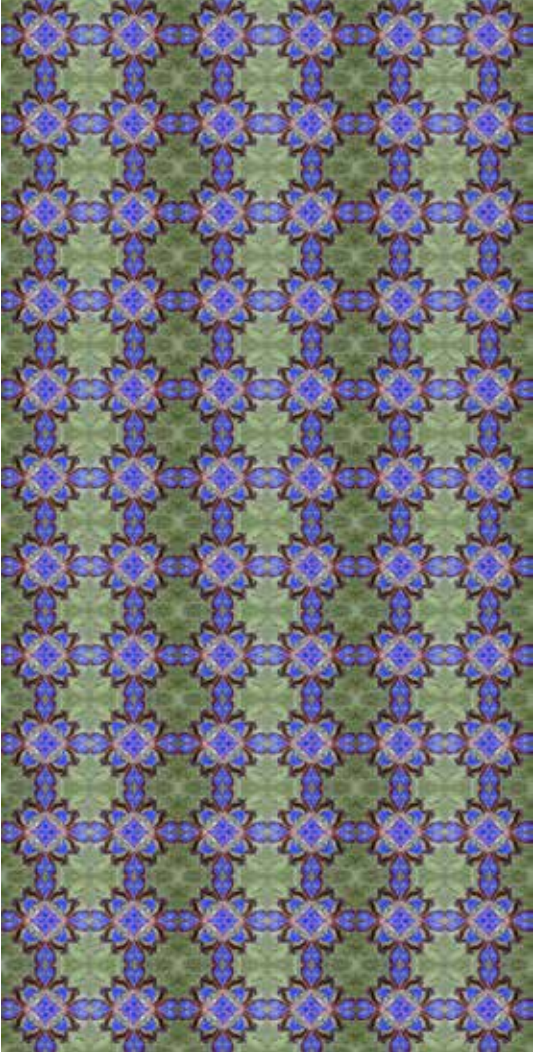
“Islamic art favors geometry because of its intelligible aspect. Geometry possesses abstraction and the capacity to express and reveal objectively immutable and spiritual truths. Geometry involves proportions and prime roots that are considered the most beautiful proportions (the proportions of beauty).” *Geometric proportions: The underlying structure of design process for Islamic geometric patterns* by Loai M. Dabbour

I have created the wallpaper from my watercolour artwork of a river red gum. Due to the stylisation and repetition, our mind does not recognise the object but does respond to the vibration and energy of the pattern and colour that repeats eternally in the floor. My intention is to disrupt the now, focus and internalise the mind, creating a deeply meditative space, as a prompt to slow down and listen. Every material and surface has its place in creating order out of chaos.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

I am an artist and visual arts facilitator who creates immersive site-specific visual experiences. Referencing histories, patterns in nature and in particular Islamic geometry, my visual language can attract, provoke and challenge spatial and relational perceptions.

I have attained a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Masters of Art Administration, both at College of Fine Arts, University of NSW. I have won art awards and residencies nationally for my collage, hand painted tile, sculptural and watercolour artworks. Most recently I was selected to exhibit in *Sculptures at Scenic World* Katoomba, *Hazelhust Art on Paper Award* GyMEA, *Glamfest Residency and Laneway Festival* in Broken Hill NSW, *Hidden* at Rookwood, and *Eden Unearthed* North Ryde.



Miguel Olmo

meaninglesswithoutfinality, 2023, digital video on iPad, digital sound, wood and speaker

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Audiences have often remarked that they find my work spiritual or engaging in a spiritual way, which previously surprised me since I don't consider myself a spiritual person. Since the age of 16, I have identified as an atheist and humanist, and this belief, along with a strong sense of pragmatism, shapes my approach to art-making. I describe my practice as process-led, which involves setting up an inquiry process to arrive at a medium rather than categorising myself as a specific type of artist. This approach aligns with beliefs in scientific and logical rationalism.

So, when I was asked to be part of this exhibition, even though I was equally surprised, I approached it the same way I have tackled other works, by trusting in the process, a process that always starts with a question.

At the centre of my inquiry as this work developed has been the question: what is spirituality? And for me, the answer became evident. Spirituality lies in the unseen. It could also be said that spirituality lies in the 'unmeasurable'. Perhaps in that which we can sense, but cannot logically categorise. Typically, we use our bodies as the benchmark for everything. However, the world is infinitely larger than ourselves, and our measuring instruments can only detect a restricted range of experiences in the physical world. Therefore, anything beyond that range could be deemed unnatural or supernatural.

As a humanist, it is not my intent to trivialise other people's beliefs. Humanism, as a broader philosophical and ethical perspective, values human agency, critical thinking, and ethical principles, with this in mind, *meaninglesswithoutfinality* became an exercise in reductionism.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Miguel is a Spanish-Australian contemporary artist working across diverse media including sculpture, photography, video, sound and other two dimensional formats. Miguel often draws from his Spanish heritage and experience living in the diaspora to explore memory, time and ephemerality.

He holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the College of Fine Arts (CoFA - University of NSW) and Bachelor of Visual Arts from Western Sydney University. His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions in Australia and abroad and selected for a number of awards including Rookwood Sculpture Walk, Sculpture in the Vineyards, Hazelhurst Art on Paper Award and Fisher's Ghost Art Award.

His work appears in private and public collections including the Cultural Centre Ramon Alonso Luzzy, Cartagena, Spain. Miguel's multi-modal practice often leads him to work on diverse projects and roles including education, arts management, and curating.



Miho Watanabe

Awareness of Between-ness: Memory in my mind... therefrom..., 2022-23, photo transfer and acrylic paint on silk with wood, Perspex and LED

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

"Between-ness is a reciprocal energy, which I believe flows in between a subject and myself." Miho Watanabe

Miho's art making focuses on 'Awareness of Between-ness', the name of a concept she uses to reference the invisible space between a subject, a camera and the artist. 'Between-ness' in her practice is also philosophical and spiritual. As a Japanese-Australian artist, through photography, drawing and painting, 'Between-ness' explores the real and non-real, reconnecting her heritage and culture, as well as Japanese aesthetics, spirituality and philosophy.

Memory in my mind... therefrom... explores the area between the visual memories of the artist's childhood and the time that has passed since, as an invisible space. The focus of this project is considering places as spaces, where Miho can visualise her memories using 'Between-ness' as an attempt to discover what is in between

these memories and the time that has passed. Upon returning to her primary school decades after her attendance, Miho remembered her childhood belief that spirits existed in everything, even inanimate objects. Her memories of the places she lived are frozen in her mind's eye. In this work, Miho explores the gap between her vivid childhood memories and the time that has passed. *Memory in my mind...therefrom...* is created in the Japanese Emaki form that tells the story of her personal 'Between-ness' journey. She asks viewers to use the blank wall behind the artwork to explore their own 'Between-ness'.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Miho Watanabe is a Sydney-based intercultural artist with a background in commercial photography in Japan and Australia. Despite her commercial work, her artwork destroys photography, using mixed media and painting to explore her concept of 'Between-ness'. She studied painting/drawing and further researched photography, painting and mixed media at UNSW. Currently she is finalising her practice-led PhD research at Australian National University. She has exhibited her 'Between-ness' artworks in Australia and overseas, she also presented her research at AHRC international interdisciplinary conference at the Cambridge University. Creating artwork for Miho means creating 'Awareness of Between-ness', which is the doorway to the concealed realm. She uses photography, painting, and mixed media to explore the concept of 'Between-ness' and attempts to make the 'invisible' subject 'visible'.



Tym Yee

Huey, Dewey & Louie, 2023, oil on canvas with acrylic panels

Time Peace, 2021-23, digital animation with sound

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Huey, Dewey & Louie is a triptych of impasto oil paintings framed behind by three patterned acrylic surfaces. The subject of the paintings are three small statues common in traditional Chinese folklore, known as the Sanxing. The three figures are named Fú Lù Shòu (or Fūk Luhk Sauh in Cantonese) and each represent a pillar of good life: good fortune, prosperity and longevity.

The translucent acrylic surfaces prevent the viewer from clearly seeing the deities in detail. This experience gives physical form to the artist's own spiritual experience as a second generation Chinese Australian, growing up with these idols on the family mantel yet not really understanding their meaning or associating with them closely. The title of the work is taken from a family colloquialism in which Fú Lù Shòu are nicknamed after the popular (and more familiar) Disney characters Huey, Dewey & Louie, Donald Duck's mischievous nephews.

In *Time Peace*, nine digital mandalas morph into one another on an endless video loop to the sound of Tibetan singing bowls being gently struck. As the abstract forms move in fluid motion the participant is eased into a meditative state of calm and relaxation. Each mandala initially appears as a symmetrical abstract shape, yet on closer inspection it is possible to decipher familiar forms. An Apple Watch, a metronome, a stop watch, an egg timer, an hour glass, a kitchen timer and a wall clock reveal themselves. These images of timekeeping devices have been rendered into a wellness trope, commonly believed to help transcend or slow time.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tym Yee is an emerging artist living and working in Sydney, Australia, on the lands of the Darug and Guringai people. He has exhibited paintings with Michael Reid Studio Direct and Michael Reid Northern Beaches Gallery, directed by best-selling author and curator Amber Crewswell-Bell and also shown with Weswal Gallery, Uralla Gallery, and aMBUSH Gallery. Tym held a solo exhibition in February 2022 at CSC Gallery on the Mornington Peninsula, and is currently holding a solo exhibition at Woolhara Gallery.

In 2020 he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to join metaLAB @ Harvard, a multidisciplinary arts-based research group, where he previously developed a conceptual creative practice methodology that formed a crucial part of his PhD research. Tym's work was included in *Inner Edge Drifting* at Art Space on The Concourse in 2023.



LEFT: Tym Yee, *Huey, Dewey & Louie* (detail), 2023, oil on canvas.
Courtesy of the Artist



Spirit Wave

4 – 28 MAY 2023

Spirit Wave is a Willoughby City Council curated exhibition, presented in partnership with Chatswood Culture Bites.

FREE

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THE CONCOURSE OUTDOOR AREA
409 Victoria Avenue, Chatswood

Opening Hours:

Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday: 11am-5pm
Friday and Saturday: 11am-8pm

 Chatswood NSW

 Chatswood_NSW

#Chatswood #Artspace

LEFT: Kathie Najjar, *Red Gum Infinity Pool* (detail), 2023, watercolour wallpaper

