

*The Museum of Dissensus*

Erasure and Memory



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Curator/editor: David Corbet

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David Corbet

## *The unquiet museum: thinking dissensus*

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This is a book about art and politics. It is a doctoral research project, developed in response to an invitation to mount an exhibition at the University of Sydney's Fisher Library, one of Australia's largest and oldest repositories of research material, and part of a series (*Ex Libris Fisherarium*) curated by Dr Michael Goldberg, which explores and interrogates the nexus between visual art and literature – the imaginaries of 'the book', and the imaginaries of plastic facture, if you like. The project is supported from the *Art & the Document* research cluster at Sydney College of the Arts, and the college's Research Committee.

There is a long tradition of artists books which fuse these artforms, and the occurrence of written language is commonplace in many works of art, from paintings to digital environments. Long before Gutenberg, tablets, scrolls and books transmitted a simulacrum of the real, through hieroglyphics, illumination and two-dimensional representations of many kinds. As a young child living in a remote rural area, it was in books and journals that I first encountered the great art of the world. In the age of digital publishing and image economies, books still constitute a major channel for the transmission of art – an infinitely expanding museum without walls.

### On silencing

Libraries of books, and museums of art and artifacts, may speak across generations, or they may fall silent, residing quietly in glass cases or digital repositories, undiscovered, unread, unseen. Removed from the living world in which they were made, they can become mute. And this is only to speak of accidental silencing. There are more deliberate silencings too – from the ceremonial burning of books, to the re-writing of history by its victors. And there is also the willful silence of witnesses and of scholars, a turning away from unspeakable truths, a retreat into the trivial and the ironic, or an assumption that it is not the place of the creative arts to engage with the pain and loss of others, or even our own. There is an eternal tension within the museum between the curatorial and the adversarial. The urge to preserve and categorize is strong – the isolation of the white cube, space to contemplate – we take these as a self-evident goods, a sign of civilisation. At the same time we know that the museum may strip the works of living agency.

My aim is to challenge such silencings, and to explore works which dare to speak of terrible things. If asked why, my response is simply that they matter to me, to my own humanity, and that of others. It is not that I wish to dwell on violence and brutality, rather the opposite, for many of these works have a redemptive, even transcendent quality – there is joy to be found here, as well as pain. The creative arts cannot be a substitute for mass political action and progressive international leadership, but perhaps they can help to heal humanity's distress. Or are they condemned to the role of merely consoling us in the face of injustice and horror? These are the stakes now, and they are high.

*Gorky and his mother, Van City, Turkish Armenia* 1912.  
Courtesy Dr. Bruce Berberian.

Arshile Gorky, *The Artist and His Mother*, 1926-36, oil on canvas.  
Courtesy estate of Arshile Gorky /Artists Rights Society, New York.





Top right: **Pablo Ruiz Picasso**, *Guernica*. Oil on canvas, 350 x 777 cm. Courtesy Museo Reina Sophia, Madrid.

Top left: **Francisco de Goya y Lucientes**, *Plate 15 from Los Desastres de la Guerra: Y no hay remedio*, 1810, etching, 14 x 16.7 cm. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



### On genocide and epistemicide

The project's gestation began in 2015 at the Istanbul Biennale, where I saw many works that evoked the Armenian Genocide of 1915, still euphemistically referred to in Turkish official histories as 'the events of 1915'. These included works by Armenian artist Arshille Gorky (1904–1948), Turkish artists such as Aslı Çavuşoğlu, and global practitioners like Anna Boghiguian, Pierre Huyghe, Francis Alÿs and Michael Rakowitz. In this context, Australian Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee's paintings from his *Brutalities* series (2015–16) made me think of the many ways in which artists in Australia and elsewhere have responded to colonial violence. There is of course a long history of exhibitions and works which deal with such events, both historical and contemporary. In Australia, the powerful *Aboriginal Memorial* (1987–8), comprising 200 hollow-log bone coffins created by Ramingining artists (Northern Territory), working with Bundjalung curator Djon Mundine, stands as one of the most important, and Mundine has organised numerous important exhibitions since, inspiring many other curators, including myself. In late 2015 the Art Gallery of NSW opened an exhibition titled *When Silence Falls*, curated by Cara Pinchbeck, in which Vernon Ah Kee's work was again featured, alongside several Australian and international artists responding to "the inherent violence of often unacknowledged events – massacres, ethnic cleansing, cultural displacement, political force".<sup>2</sup> In early 2016 the exhibition *With Secrecy and Despatch* opened at Campbelltown Arts Centre near Sydney, co-curated by Tess Allas and David Garneau, featuring works by several Australian and Canadian First Nations artists. This moving exhibition took place on the bicentenary of the little-known Appin Massacre of April 17 1816, in which men, women and children of the local Dharawal people were slaughtered by troops acting on the orders of colonial Governor Lachlan Macquarie.

Worldwide there are countless museums and monuments dedicated to the memorialisation of wars, disasters, acts of heroism and revolution, and this is not new to our time. Francisco Goya, Pablo Picasso, the Mexican muralists and numerous lesser-known artists and photographers have depicted the atrocities of war, dispossession and social upheaval. The Atlantic slave trade, the European Holocaust, the killing fields of Cambodia, *Apartheid* South Africa, the refugee camps across the planet's fracture zones – each is a tragedy unto itself, each a well of pain and remembrance – including for artists, writers and musicians.

However to document this visual history is not the purpose of this book. It aims instead to explore the work of artists who expose and memorialise less well-known events,



the silenced histories and cultural erasures that might otherwise be forgotten – including feminist, queer and self-taught artists – excluded from a master narrative collectively inscribed by an alliance of government, academia and the ‘exhibitionary complex’.<sup>1</sup>

*The Museum of Dissensus* expands on themes explored by earlier exhibitions, both politically and philosophically, exploring not just artistic responses to genocide, trauma and the threat of cultural erasure, but art which protests, disrupts and transgresses. This takes many forms, from work which loudly contests the taxonomies of the museum, to work which sits reticently within the citadels of culture, quietly emanating a subversive influence; from work which explodes colourfully into the streets, to documents and archives; from actions and skirmishes in the real world, to intellectual provocations and contaminations of the canon. All of these works, if not overtly figurative, probe the imaginaries of the human condition, whether individual mythologies, cultural identity, societal relationships, or the timeless themes of love, death, survival and belonging. If they have anything in common, it is their humanity, and an affective power that transcends context and place.

While sometimes alluding to traumatic events, the works shown here exert their power not through overtly political polemics, but through their potent visual aura. Intersecting with literature and performance, but unique in its affective range, art is experiential and phenomenological, communicating in registers that defy empirical analysis. It is this ability which unleashes its political, or perhaps dissensual power, and it is this confluence of factors that is the focus of this book.

### Artists and works

*The Museum of Dissensus* collects together key works by over forty artists worldwide, of diverse artistic practice and cultural heritage, as well as writings by varied thinkers in the field of curation. Most of these artists have exhibited widely, sometimes alongside each other, in biennials and art museums the world over, and the images shown are drawn from these exhibitions, artists’ own archives, and from personal research by the author.

The assembly of these artists in this publication can be seen variously as an exhibition proposal, as an imaginary museum, or alternatively as a ‘curator’s book’ – much like an artist’s book, the key difference being that this book features work by others. In juxtaposing these artists, whether in an exhibition or in a publication, there is an ever-present risk of a ‘the leveling effect’ – an implied equivalence in the works and their meanings. This is perhaps inevitable whenever a group of works or artists are linked together by a curatorial rubric, but I hope by virtue of the theme itself – *dissensus* – to dispel any such perception. Instead, my intention is to facilitate a rowdy and unpredictable conversation, with many voices talking at once, each in its own argot and local accent, allowing audiences to discover for themselves new worlds, and new ways of being in the world.

The image chosen to represent each of these artists could be seen as emblematic of their own practice, and of many other practitioners the world over – it would be easy to double the selection if space allowed. Indigenous America, North and West

Top right: **Hank Willis Thomas**, *Raise Up*, 2013, bronze, 285 x 25 cm, edition of 3. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Top left: **Richard Bell, Emory Douglas**, *We Can Be Heroes*, 2014, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 180.0 x 240.0 cm. Courtesy the artists and Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Above: **Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña**, *Year of the White Bear & Two Undiscovered Americans visit the West*, 1992-94, performance documentation. Courtesy the artists and Walker Art Center, 1992. Photo: Glenn Halvorson.



Africa, North and South Asia are notably under-represented, as is the Middle East. From China, Ai Wei Wei, and from the USA Coco Fusco, Hank Willis Thomas, David Hammons, Theaster Gates and a host of younger artists cry out for inclusion. From Great Britain John Akomfrah, Yinka Shonibare and the late Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1955-1989) are among many whose work resonates strongly with these themes. Among Australian artists Judy Watson, Tracey Moffatt, Brenda L. Croft, Daniel Boyd, Richard Bell, Brook Andrew and the late Gordon Bennett (1955-2014) are notable omissions, however their work is widely-known, and has made way for works by others. Even so, Australians whose work directly references coloniality, such as Christian Thompson, Megan Cope, Ryan Presley, Yhonnie Scarce, Archie Moore, Tom Nicholson, Ruark Lewis and Joan Ross are regrettably omitted, as are regional artists whose work challenges the docility of the museum in other ways, for example Keg de Souza, Justene Williams, Agatha Goethe-Snape, Latai Taumoepeau, Deborah Kelly, The Kingpins, Greg Semu, Khadim Ali, Heath Franco, Eric Bridgeman and Paul Yore.

Many of these artists are celebrated, some are revered senior figures, some in their early or mid-careers. If experience as a practitioner has value, it manifests as a high degree of conceptual resolution – the marrying of material and meaning, stripped back, economic, resolved down to that which is essential – form and meaning indivisible and embodied in the work. Dare I use the word beauty? If so, it is sometimes a terrible beauty, imbued with unbearable truths, and speaking truth to power. If I speak of humour and irony, it is a gut-wrenching humour, an ironic fist in the velvet glove of its facture.

Top left: **Daniel Boyd**, *Untitled (FS)*, 2016, oil, acrylic and polymer medium on canvas, 215 × 343cm. Courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Top right: **Gordon Bennett** (1955 – 2014) *Possession Island*, 1991, oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 162.0 × 260.0 cm. Courtesy the estate of the artist and National Gallery of Victoria.

Above left: **Oluworotimi Adebiji Wahab Fani-Kayode** (1955 – 1989) *Nothing to Lose VII*, 1989, c-type print. Courtesy the estate of the artist and Walther Collection, New York.

### On art and politics

The seemingly simple proposition that opens this introduction – art and politics – is of course a highly complex one, the subject of immense literature, debate and contestation, with a long history. Among the diverse discourses it is possible to discern a persistent tendency towards an either/or binary. I hope this book will serve to undermine, complicate and refute such a picturing, however it may be useful to understand these historical polarisations. In the dualistic worldview, the forces of the affective/aesthetic school hold that art (and creative production more generally) stands apart from the cut and thrust of lifeworld (social activism, politics, and self determination) occupying its own autonomous sphere of existence. The activist/teleological school, on the other hand, insists that to have value, art must serve a purpose, the most important of which is to create a better society by fighting social injustice, and by building communities and networks both material and immaterial.





Top: **Judy Watson**, *a preponderance of aboriginal blood* (detail) 2005, artist book consisting of sixteen etchings with chine collé Each 420 × 305, edition of 5.  
 Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Above: **Deborah Kelly**, from the *Venus Variations*, 2015, collage from books and magazines on Garza cotton rag. Collection AGNSW.  
 Courtesy the artist.

Such adversarial attitudes are ingrained in the culture of most Western societies, and by extension much of their philosophical thought. This is notably less so in Eastern cultures, along with many societies of the global South, and especially those regions with strong and living Indigenous cultures. Perhaps a more helpful picturing is that of the Greek *agora* – characterised by the Nigerian American curator Okwui Enwezor as “a parliament of voices, a parliament of perspectives”.<sup>3</sup> Acknowledging the influence of Enwezor, Australian writer Terry Smith and others,<sup>4</sup> I find it useful to think not in terms of dualities, but of multitudinous, agonistic currents, or perhaps antinomies – not reducible or synthesizable, instead sustained in constant tension with one another, these tensions being one of the characteristics of our contemporaneous cultural condition.

The title of this book, and imaginary museum, is drawn from the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. His theories are many and complex, however editor Steve Corcoran’s introduction to *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics*,<sup>5</sup> provides a useful précis:

*In characterizing politics and aesthetics as forms of dissensus, Rancière’s [...] most general thesis is that what these activities do, each in their own way, is to effect a redistribution of the sensible, that is of the ways in which human communities are ‘spontaneously’ counted as wholes divisible into their constitutive parts and functions. For Rancière, genuine political or artistic activities always involve forms of innovation that tear bodies from their assigned places and free speech and expression from all reduction to functionality. They are forms of creation that are irreducible to the spatio-temporal horizons of a given factual community. In other words, the disruption that they effect is not simply a reordering of the relations of power between existing groups; dissensus is not an institutional overturning. It is an activity that cuts across forms of cultural and identity belonging and hierarchies between discourses and genres, working to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception. And as both activities, according to Rancière, have to do with reorienting general perceptual space and disrupting forms of belonging, their interrelation is not a question that needs asking. It can be shown that politics has an inherently aesthetic dimension and aesthetics an inherently political one.*

Whatever you make of Rancière’s thought, and I for one am still reading and processing, I posit *dissensus* here not as a binary opposite of *consensus*, (Rancière’s “idea of ‘the proper’”) but as a contamination of it – an impulse, common to both art and politics, which creates slippage, and disrupts societal complacencies. Speaking as a curator, this means privileging less-heard voices and deviant practices, challenging hegemonic epistemes and aesthetic regimes, and creating decolonising and dissenting spaces, from which new narratives and perspectives can emerge.

Among these perspectives are the writings of a number of thinkers, all of them experienced exhibition-makers, who examine these issues with great nuance and insight, in turn citing the work of many other artists and writers. They do not have a unified position or represent a totalizing narrative, rather they unpack different aspects of the intersections between art and politics. Susan Best writes on reparative aesthetics, Ivan Muñiz Reed on decolonial aesthetics, and Matt Poll on challenges to ethnographic museology. These texts are not intended as direct commentaries on the artists and works selected, rather as additional strands in the “parliament of voices”.

### Decolonising the museum

These diverse writers and artists question normative notions of museum practice and exhibition-making. In this they share many perspectives with the Australian curators cited



Top: Cover of *Revista de Antropofagia* (1929), where the *Manifesto Antropófago* (Cannibalist Manifesto) was first published by the Brazilian poet and polemicist Oswald de Andrade.



Above: various artists, installation view, 'The Brain', Museum Fredericianum, Kassel. Courtesy *DOCUMENTA 13*. Photo: Roman März

earlier, and others such as Hetti Perkins, Aaron Seeto, and Stephen Gilchrist. Alongside international figures such as Lilian Lanes Godoy, Gerardo Mosquera, Okwui Enwezor, Cuauhtémoc Medina, Thelma Golden, Hou Hanrou and Stephanie Rosenthal, they have accelerated the decolonisation of the exhibitionary complex, actively disrupting the hegemonic narrative of North Atlantic Modernism as a template for global exhibition-making.

This research project owes thanks to many of these exhibition-makers, and also to Paulo Herkenhoff, Adriano Pedrosa and their curatorial team for the 24th Bienal de São Paulo in 1998, titled *Antropofagia Cultural* (Cultural Anthropophagy), inspired by Brazilian poet and philosopher Oscar de Andrade's 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago* (*Anthropophagic Manifesto*).<sup>6</sup> As referenced earlier, I was also inspired by the 14th Istanbul Biennale (2015) and *Documenta 13* (Kassel, Germany, 2012), both directed by the indefatigable Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. For each of these sprawling shows, Christov-Bakargiev assembled a conceptual core of visual and textual references, drawing on the work of poets, mathematicians, neuroscientists, physicists, botanists and many other fields. At *Documenta* 'The Brain', and at IB14 'The Channel' provided a rich repository of 'thought forms' which echoed outward, informing, but never restricting, the works of numerous artists who responded to these ideas. In Istanbul their work was often deeply personal, sometimes overtly political, and all of it engaged strongly with place, with situated knowledges, and with the rich human imaginaries of the ancient city on the Bosphorus.

I would like this publication to be considered in that light – as a core of inspirational thought forms, each emerging from a very individual place, each made by an artist or collective that is responding to their own his/herstories, sites and knowledge systems, each developing their own language and narrative, not always accessible to those who do not share in that world. Yet among them we may find a surprising universality, an ability to speak across cultural divides, and a shared humanity that makes these artists and works truly 'worldly'.

Welcome to the ongoing research project *#TheMuseumOfDissensus*. It has many rooms and many platforms, and more will be added.

## Endnotes

- 1 This term was introduced by the Australian art historian Tony Bennett, see: Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations* (0950-2378) 4, Spring 1998.
- 2 Art Gallery of NSW: *When Silence Falls* [Online]. [www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/when-silence-falls/](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/when-silence-falls/) [Accessed 10 November 2016].
- 3 Enwezor, Okwui. 2012. *Meeting Points 6 in Berlin – Interview with artistic director Okwui Enwezor about the focus of the event in these times of change*. [Online]. Berlin: Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (IFA) in cooperation with Universes in Universe. [Accessed 10 November 2016].
- 4 Smith, Terry, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee. 2008. *Antinomies of art and culture: modernity, postmodernity, contemporaneity*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- 5 Rancière, Jacques, and Steve Corcoran. 2010. *Dissensus: on politics and aesthetics*, London ; New York, Continuum.
- 6 Oswald de Andrade and Benedito Nunes, *A Utopia Antropofágica, Obras Completas De Oswald De Andrade* (São Paulo: Globo, 1990). The "Manifesto Antropófago" was first published in *Revista de Antropofagia (Anthropophagy Review)*, 1928, São Paulo.

# Susan Best

## *Reparative Aesthetics*

This is an extract from Dr Susan Best's introduction to her book *Reparative Aesthetics: Witnessing and Contemporary Art Photography*, published by Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

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Shame, writes psychoanalyst Leon Wurmser, has three main meanings: shame as anticipatory anxiety about potential humiliation; shame as preventative (a dispositional orientation to the world that seeks to avoid disgrace); and then finally the actual experience of shame - the real or imagined feeling of being exposed or looked at with disapprobation by others.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Wurmser lists not one but two meanings of shame whose sole function is to avoid actually being ashamed speaks to how little we want to experience it directly.

The experience of shame, as psychologists and cultural theorists repeatedly remind us, is deeply disturbing and disorganizing. For example, American psychologist Silvan Tomkins avows that, of all the negative affects, 'shame strikes deepest into the heart of man'.<sup>2</sup> According to him, it is 'felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul'.<sup>3</sup> While, for queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, pain and volatility are the leitmotifs of shame: it causes a double movement 'toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality'.<sup>4</sup> Thrown back on the self in torment. Yet exposed to the disapproving gaze of potentially limitless others, in her view, shame is both 'contagious' and 'potentially paralysing'.<sup>5</sup> The strange reliance on metaphors of disease and infirmity - sickness, contagion - to describe what both Tomkins and Sedgwick regard as an innate affect, underscores the magnitude of the aversion to shame. Given these descriptions, the existence of hypervigilant defences against feeling shame are more than understandable.

How, then, do we confront shameful events in national histories without stirring up the many defences that this potentially toxic affect can marshal? My book examines the work of four women photographers from the southern hemisphere who achieve exactly that. The artists are: Anne Ferran (Australia), Fiona Pardington (New Zealand), Rosangela Renno (Brazil) and Milagros de la Torre (Peru). Collectively, they are pioneering what I am calling a reparative approach to the representation of shameful histories. In other words, their work attenuates shame while also bringing to light difficult and disturbing issues such as: the harsh and unjust treatment of indigenous peoples; the cruel institutionalization of vulnerable groups; the disappearance of dissidents; and the carnage of civil war.

The success of these artists' work can be partly attributed to the way in which they make a radical break with the dominant anti-aesthetic approaches to political art.<sup>6</sup> The anti-aesthetic tradition privileges critique over aesthetic engagement and rejects the importance of traditional aesthetic concerns such as beauty, feeling, expression and judgement. In contrast, these artists use a range of complex aesthetic strategies to engage audiences with these histories and to temper, and at times transform, the feelings of shame that would normally accompany them. These strategies are analysed in detail in my book.

The book as a whole is situated at the juncture of four emerging areas of scholarship: contemporary art practice concerned with traumatic, disturbing and shameful events; the recasting of the viewer as a witness in response to this art of real events; debates about the cultural significance of affect. Guilt and shame; and the reconsideration of the importance of aesthetics for political art. Taking the last area first, the need to rethink the rejection of aesthetics has been broached by philosophers as diverse as Arthur Danto, Jacques Rancière, Elaine Scarry, Robert Pippin and Michael Kelly.<sup>7</sup> Despite the now substantial body of scholarship, the anti-aesthetic tradition still dominates modern art history and theory. This book aims to connect the art historical study of political art with the rethinking of aesthetics, and in particular with affect theory, which has revived the traditional aesthetic category of feeling.

Political art, and analyses of it, have now assumed centre stage in writings on contemporary art. Indeed, the upsurge of art about shameful histories, which begins in the 1990s, takes place within the context of an important return in international contemporary art towards picturing or addressing worldly affairs. Increasingly artists are working with documentary and ethnographic protocols and examining major historical and contemporary events such as 9/11, the genocide in Rwanda and the Lebanese Civil War.<sup>8</sup> There are a number of different strands of art practice that comprise this art of real events. For example, leading art historian Hal Foster has identified an 'ethnographic turn' and an 'archival turn'. He characterizes these shifts in contemporary practice as an engagement with the under-represented position of marginalized people in the case of the ethnographic turn, and neglected historical events in the case of the archival turn.<sup>9</sup>

The archival turn is most pertinent to this book. In his article of 2004, 'An Archival Impulse', Foster identifies the emergence of art focusing on archives, which demonstrates the pursuit of a kind of 'counter-memory'; that is, artistic practices that seek to retrieve and represent what he terms 'alternative knowledge'.<sup>10</sup> The archival art that he highlights in this essay, like art that exemplifies the ethnographic turn, continues the critical enterprise of documenting and recovering neglected or marginalized knowledge, but this time with an emphasis on history and historical records. As these examples should indicate, Foster's work on contemporary art is acutely attuned to the shifting ways in which political art is refigured; he continually extends the critical tradition of the western avant-garde through into the present in order to diagnose the current state of 'advanced art on the left'.<sup>11</sup> Yet this critical lineage has its drawbacks, it tends not to be reparative.

As the astute reader may have already guessed, my interest in a reparative approach to political art is deeply indebted to Sedgwick's early theorization of reparative reading practices. Sedgwick, in turn, borrows the idea of a reparative position or orientation from psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein, for whom the term signifies a capacity to deal with ambivalence, and to incorporate both positive and negative feelings. The reparative position is not, then, simply about undoing or reversing damage; ambivalence precludes that wholly positive orientation. For Sedgwick, a reparative motive seeks pleasure rather than the avoidance of shame, but it also signals the capacity to assimilate the consequences of destruction and violence. Sedgwick advocates reparative interpretations of cultural material in place of the much more common 'paranoid' interpretations (another key Kleinian term). She explains that paranoid interpretations routinely adopt a posture of suspicion and operate as a kind of 'exposure' of traces of oppression or injustice.<sup>12</sup> Crucially, she argues paranoid suspicion is central to critical practice in the humanities and that it is propelled by the desire on the part of theorists and critics to avoid surprise, shame and humiliation.

In contemporary art, this approach is typical of the anti-aesthetic tradition and identity politics art, which also favour critique and the exposure of wrongdoing. The anti-aesthetic tradition, as I mentioned earlier, is one of the dominant approaches to political art. Generally seen as the legacy of Marcel Duchamp, anti-aesthetic tendencies can also be discerned in much earlier art.<sup>13</sup> Identity politics art has a clearer provenance; it came to prominence in the 1970s with feminist-inspired practices, and continues to the present as a mode of self-representation by subaltern groups and individuals. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, these frequently overlapping strands or traditions of art making are often associated with conceptual art and conceptualism, institutional critique, feminist and critical postmodern practices. Artists like Allan Sekula, Adrian Piper, Martha Rosier, Victor Burgin, Hans Haacke, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Jenny Holzer, Andrea Fraser, Lorna Simpson and Barbara Kruger are representative of this type of art.

Rosier is a particularly good example to consider here as she combines conceptual anti-aesthetic allegiances with feminist politics. For instance, her video, *Vital Statistics of Citizen, Simply Obtained* (1977), is presented in the deadpan mode favoured by conceptual art, with the typical low-tech DIY look indicative of an anti-aesthetic orientation. In short, there is nothing visually interesting or perplexing to distract from the fairly straightforward didactic message. The video shows a team of white-coated scientists measuring Rosier's body, pronouncing parts of it standard, above standard, and below standard via various keyed sounds, such as a whistle and a claxon. In other words, she 'exposes' the oppressive classification of women's bodies by these white-coated men. Yet, it's hard to imagine that any woman watching this film then or now was actually surprised by this revelation. What exactly is the function, then, of 'exposure' when the issue is already known? In this instance, the role of paranoid suspicion for both the artist and the female audience is perhaps to avoid any kind of surprise whether aesthetic, affective, political or ideological. If the oppressive patriarchal categorization of women's bodies is truly surprising, and implicates the viewer (a man, perhaps), it will most likely trigger shame, or one of its defences: denial, evasion, anger. In other words, such works preach to the converted, while potentially alienating perpetrators.

More recently the work of Fred Wilson, Coco Fusco, Kara Walker, Taryn Simon, Renee Green, Emily Jacir, James Luna, Regina Jose Galindo, Tanja Ostojic, Santiago Sierra, Boris Mikailov, Catherine Opie, Fiona Tan, Alfredo Jaar, along with many, many others, can also be understood in these terms. I don't want to suggest here that these artists are making bad art because they adopt an emphatically political stance; these artists are extremely well known internationally for precisely that reason. Rather my point is that paranoid art has become almost synonymous with political art. As Sedgwick explains for cultural criticism, 'it seems to me a great loss when paranoid inquiry comes to seem entirely co-extensive with critical theoretical inquiry rather than being viewed as one kind of cognitive/affective practice among other, alternative kinds'.<sup>14</sup> In this spirit, I suggest that alongside the longstanding tradition of making paranoid political art there is also an alternative - the reparative kind I analyse here.

Sedgwick's interpretation of Klein's reparative position has been widely taken up in queer theory, but has had limited purchase in discussions of contemporary art.<sup>15</sup> A central aim of this book is to consider how Sedgwick's insights can illuminate the achievements of the four women artists discussed. However, one important transposition should be noted; my concern is principally with how artists present historical material reparatively, rather than how critics or viewers interpret that material. Although, the methods artist adopt, of course, crucially determine what positions are available to the viewer.

Curiously, a substantial change in the viewer's position is already signalled in the scholarly

literature but it is not connected back to significant changes in artists' modes of production. When the position of the viewer of political, memorial or testimonial art, literature and media is discussed, very frequently it is theorized as a form of witnessing. Here, however, the issue of shame is not broached; instead, trauma is more usually in the ascendancy as the pertinent psychological rubric. In the visual arts, the term witnessing is frequently applied to the so-called indexical arts such as photography, film and video.<sup>16</sup> My decision to focus on photographic practices in this book was guided by photography's traditional role of bearing witnessing to events, as well as an interest in the transformation of that documentary project in contemporary practice. The work of these four photographers can be understood to continue the documentary 'traditions of dissent and resistance' that John Roberts argues have all but disappeared in contemporary practice.<sup>17</sup>

In the broader domain of contemporary art practice, witnessing signals: a link to documentary and testimonial protocols; artists' efforts to present a truthful representation of events; and a juridical or therapeutic role for art. To understand the reparative role of witnessing, however, the feelings of guilt and shame evoked by histories of injustice and inequality need to be considered. To date this has not occurred.

The first book-length study of witnessing in the visual arts by Jane Blocker is typical of the paranoid approach described by Sedgwick.<sup>18</sup> For Blocker, witnessing refers to the personal testimony of the artist. Instead of considering 'how' to bear witness to trauma -which she argues preoccupies the scholarly field - she stresses 'who' has the right or moral authority to represent such events.<sup>19</sup> In this way, the art of witnessing seamlessly joins with the project of identity politics, and testimony is the mode of art practice favoured. Given that the artist is either traumatized or directly affected by traumatic events, such art is difficult to criticize. Thus, the beholder has a relatively passive role of receiving that testimony; debate, discussion and disagreement tend to be precluded. Instead, the therapeutic or the pedagogical role of art is emphasized. For example, E. Ann Kaplan emphasizes the role of witnessing in developing an ethical consciousness and a sense of responsibility for injustice.<sup>20</sup>

In the case of art dealing with historical events, the viewer's position is described by Ulrich Baer as 'secondary witnessing'.<sup>21</sup> He uses this expression, which is already well established in the Holocaust literature, in a highly novel way to describe the kind of belated relation to events that characterizes the artists in this book. Referring specifically to recent photographs of Holocaust sites, Baer argues that when contemporary viewers are made aware of seeing things that, as he puts it, 'no one ever wanted to know about', they are positioned as secondary witnesses.<sup>22</sup> Such images, he continues, make us 'as much spectators as seekers of knowledge'.<sup>23</sup> Baer does not discuss secondary witnessing in any detail, however it is an enormously suggestive idea that signals a shift in modes of beholding. Baer is a recurring figure in this book. At times, I lean on his analysis of the will to ignorance that witnessing attempts to redress; at others, I am more critical. The principal shortcoming of Baer's argument is his failure to consider the aesthetic qualities of images, without which viewers are unlikely to seek further knowledge.

The empty photographs he considers are banal, deadpan, un compelling images, despite the considerable gravity of the topic. The images he discusses by Mikael Levin are from Levin's book, *War Story* (1997).<sup>24</sup> In this book, they were presented alongside original reports and images of the Holocaust where their affectless quotidian quality served as a counterpoint to these deeply disturbing historical photographs. When taken out of that context, they lack the necessary aesthetic strength and complexity to generate interest.

The lack of engaging visual qualities undercuts the provocation to inquire further that Baer suggests is the appropriate response. The artists in this book, on the other hand, demonstrate precisely the kind of visual strength and appeal necessary to give memorable form to the events and issues they address.

Significantly, feeling is not mentioned frequently in the accounts of witnessing in the visual arts: the therapeutic aim of witnessing is sought through the pursuit of knowledge, following the dictates of the anti-aesthetic tradition. While the work of Jill Bennett has emphasized the importance of affect for a consideration of trauma art, and Erika Doss has examined the role of feeling in relation to public memorials, these are still the exceptions in art history rather than the rule.<sup>25</sup> In the narrower field of photographic theory, the importance of feeling has been broached by Margaret Olin, Sharon Sliwinski and Barbie Zelizer in relation to photo-journalism, documentary and vernacular photography, but largely this has not occurred in discussions of art photography.<sup>26</sup> The 'affective turn', which has swept through other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, still has limited purchase in art history.<sup>27</sup>

In one of the most important recent texts on photography that addresses the problem of witnessing, feeling is, in fact, very deliberately excised. Ariella Azoulay seeks to shed terms like shame, empathy and compassion in her account of our civic duty to attend to photographic images of disaster and catastrophe.<sup>28</sup> She argues that audiences should 'watch' such photographs rather than merely looking at them, thereby enacting what she calls the civil contract of photography.<sup>29</sup> Azoulay is another key figure in my analysis; her idea of watching, and the stress on duration and attention it implies, are crucial for the reception and digestion of shameful histories.

However, in her account of the obligation to 'watch' photography, Azoulay does not consider how an emphasis on wrongdoing may serve to shame the viewer and thereby discourages interest in the broader social and political issues at stake. While the viewer's indifference and compassion fatigue are the difficulties repeatedly addressed in the photo-theory literature, little has been said about the elicitation of shame in response to contentious, troubling or upsetting issues in art photography.

The affect of shame usually terminates interest and thereby forecloses on attention and any possibility of prolonged viewing. In Silvan Tomkins' account of shame, the incomplete reduction of interest precipitates shame.<sup>30</sup> A shamed listener is self-conscious rather than being able to properly hear or respond to injustice. Artists dealing with shameful histories thus need to contend with indifference, compassion fatigue and shame. Shame needs to be attenuated in order to make viewers into secondary witnesses who can 'watch' depictions of disturbing or difficult histories. In short, shame is a crucial (if unacknowledged) aspect of that art's reception.

With this in mind, in my book the analysis of each artist's work carefully considers how the viewer is positioned. Considering spectatorship will be intertwined with the analysis of affect. In my previous book, I developed an art historical method for analysing affect, which I draw upon here. Briefly, I conceive of affect as a component of the work of art rather than an expression of the artist's feelings. More specifically, affect is one aspect or part of the expressive dimension of art; it provides the tone of the work, which is an important source of orientation for the viewer, shaping and comprising aspects of the work's psychological address.

To analyse the affective dimension of art in all its complexity, I contend, requires recourse to a broad range of psychological theories, including but not limited to psychoanalytic theory, psychology and affect theory. In this book, I draw on a variety of theorists to analyse the

reparative, affective and psychological dimension of art: Freud, of course, Sandoz Ferenczi, Melanie Klein, Heinrich Racker, Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche, Silvan Tomkins, Lauren Berlant, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ignacio Matte-Blanco, Elisabeth Roudinesco, Sianne Ngai and Ruth Leys.

## Endnotes

- 1 Leon Wurmser, 'Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism', *The Many Faces of Shame*, ed. Donald L. Nathanson (New York: Guilford Press, 1987) 67-68.
- 2 Silvan Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, Vol. 11 *The Negative Affects* (New York: Springer, 1963) 118.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*', *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 37.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 64, 44.
- 6 Proponents of the anti-aesthetic tradition include most of the writers associated with the first generation of the American art journal *October* as well as subsequent generations. See, for example, specific advocates of this position: James Meyer, 'Nomads', *Site-specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, ed. A. Coles (London: Black Dog, 2000) 10-29; and Alexander Alberro, 'Beauty Knows No Pain', *Art Journal* 63.2 (Summer 2004): 36-43. Michael Kelly provides an overview of the dominance of the anti-aesthetic stance; see *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) xiii-xx, 1-2. See also James Elkins and Harper Montgomery's somewhat optimistically titled anthology, James Elkins and Harper Montgomery, eds, *Beyond the Aesthetic and the Anti-Aesthetic* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2013).
- 7 See Arthur Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003); Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (London: Duckworth, 2006); Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. S. Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics*; and Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014). See also my *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-garde* (London: I B Tauris, 2011).
- 8 Julian Stallabrass argues the return to documentary is a feature of the first decade of the twenty-first century. See Stallabrass, 'Introduction/Contentious Relations: Art and Documentary', *Documentary: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Julian Stal la brass (London: Whitechapel and Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013) 12.
- 9 Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer', *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1996) 17 1-203; Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October* 110 (2004): 3-22. In 'The Artist as Ethnographer' he proposed that in the early 1990s, the artist's newly assumed role as ethnographer represented the contemporary position for advanced art on the left.
- 10 Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', 4.
- 11 Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer', 172.
- 12 Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You', *Touching Feeling*, 139.
- 13 See my discussion of the anti-aesthetic tradition in Best, *Visualizing Feeling*, 29-46.
- 14 Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading', 126.
- 15 See, for example, Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007) 23.
- 16 See for example, Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, eds, *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London: Wallflower, 2007).
- 17 John Roberts, *Photography and its Violations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) 83.
- 18 Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2009).
- 19 *Ibid.*, xix.
- 20 E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005) 23. The pedagogical model of art is criticized by Jacques Rancière: it establishes an unequal relationship of artist as pedagogue and spectator as ignorant recipient of knowledge. See Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009) 11-15.
- 21 Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002) 83.
- 22 *Ibid.* xix.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 24 Mikael Levin, *War Story*, exh. cat. (Munich: Gina Kehayoff, 1997).
- 25 Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005); Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010).
- 26 See Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012); Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011); Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Additionally, see Roberts, *Photography and its Violations*, 4-5. He argues that the 'emotional "hold"' of the photograph is linked to the truth claims of photography. The recent anthology, *Feeling Photography*, considers some art photography alongside other genres of photography: Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, eds, *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
- 27 See for example, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2005); Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley eds, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 28 Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone, 2008) 17.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 30 Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, 123.



# Ivan Muñiz Reed

## *Thoughts on curatorial practices in the decolonial turn*

This is an edited version of an essay which first appeared in *Broadsheet Journal* 45.2, reprinted by kind permission of its publisher, the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia.

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Coloniality is ever-present. Even decades after the period of formal colonisation has ended, it has persisted through structural forms of privilege and bias. Beyond their more obvious economic and social manifestations (such as the racial stratification of labour and the proliferation of inequality and racism), these oppressive hierarchies also pervade the realm of culture; but so much of the modern world we know and experience has been constructed out of western imperial categories that the coloniality of knowledge is perhaps harder to discern and much more insidious to overcome.

Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano has described coloniality as a 'matrix of power that produces racial and gender hierarchies on the global and local level, functioning alongside capital to maintain a modern regime of exploitation and domination.'<sup>1</sup> He argues that if knowledge is colonised, then one of the tasks ahead is to de-colonise knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

What are the implications for contemporary curators and museums, who are responsible for interpreting contested histories and whose prime matter is knowledge? How are curators and art institutions positioned within the colonial matrix and is it possible for them to restructure knowledge and power – to return agency to those who have lost it?

In order to imagine a decolonial curatorial practice it's important to define the context and parameters from which decoloniality emerges. While decolonisation refers to the completed socio-historical process of independence from colonial powers, decoloniality is an ongoing ethico-political and epistemic project, which seeks to de-link from colonial structures that have persisted throughout modernity and which underpin Eurocentrism and systems of discrimination.

The concept can be traced back centuries, but a brief genealogy elicits the work of Quijano as a central starting point, followed by a number of scholars and thinkers from across Latin America, who generate critical theory from an alternative perspective: the perspective of the colonised and the oppressed. Most of this literature either emerges from – or is framed within – the third world and is considered the most valuable contribution from Latin American scholars to the fields of critical theory, philosophy and ethnic studies. As such, it has gained international attention, attracting many contributions from around the world, and constituting what has been identified as a decolonial movement or decolonial turn in the domain of knowledge.

The aim of decolonial theory is to re-inscribe histories and perspectives, which have been devalued through 'radical exercises of un-thinking, de- disciplining, and re-educating'<sup>3</sup> that reformulate fundamental questions in the realms of philosophy, theory, and critical thought.

In the field of art theory, the main contribution is the term decolonial aesthesis/ aesthetics, which has recently gained currency primarily through the work of Argentinian semiotician Walter D. Mignolo (and his collaborators). Mignolo argues that aesthesis, an ancient Greek concept, which broadly describes the senses – ‘an unelaborated elementary awareness of stimulation, a sensation of touch’ – was absorbed in the seventeenth century into Immanuel Kant’s concept of aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> Mignolo suggests that Kant’s theorisation of aesthetics was the cognitive operation that marked the colonisation of aesthesis, a process that led to the devaluing of any sensory experience conceptualised outside of European aesthetic categories. Kant’s aesthetics emphasise sensing the beautiful and the sublime. According to Mignolo, Kant’s work established European standards, which were then projected universally. Mignolo’s counter- concept, decolonial aesthesis, therefore becomes a ‘confrontation with modern aesthetics, and its aftermath (postmodern and altermodern aesthetics) to decolonize the regulation of sensing all the sensations to which our bodies respond, from culture as well as from nature.’<sup>5</sup>

Although Mignolo doesn’t apply his theory specifically to curatorial practice, his criticism of Kantian aesthetics could be easily extended to the authoritative role curators and art institutions exercise as gatekeepers of the beautiful and sublime. Curators, who have become central figures in cultural production within the art canon, have the power to decide which (and how) histories are told. Perhaps Mignolo’s biggest criticism of western art institutions (and the work of curators/critics such as Nicolas Bourriaud) is that in their articulation of a post-modern or altermodern aesthetic they often omit the violence perpetrated throughout modernity in the name of ‘progress’, ‘freedom’ and ‘peace’, and thereby propagate the silencing of suppressed histories.

A decolonial critique of postmodern and postcolonial discourses is that although they both focus on understanding the aftermath of colonialism, this is all effected within the framework of European philosophy with little regard for the exploration of problems arising outside of Europe. Although postcolonial theory is considered very valuable for analysing and critiquing imperial structures, decolonialists argue that ultimately, by operating within the academy and through European-generated categories, they construct a ‘Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism.’<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Mignolo regards Bourriaud’s attempt to proclaim an altermodern aesthetic (his 2009 exhibition at London’s Tate Gallery), as comparable to Webber or Habermas’ formulation of modernity, whose philosophical frame is still ‘drinking in the fountains of European Renaissance and their Enlightenment “secular” imperative.’<sup>7</sup>

But in order to imagine a decolonial curatorial practice it’s important to define the context and parameters from which decoloniality emerges.

Decolonial thought, on the other hand, is not constructed from or in opposition to European grand narratives, but rather from the philosophical, artistic, and theoretical contributions, which originate from the global south. Many important decolonial concepts are articulated within Transmodernism – a philosophical and cultural movement founded by Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussell – in addition to the work of Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals, such as Martinique-born, Afro-Caribbean writer Franz Fanon and Martinican Aime Césaire, who are its historical backbone. With this in mind and using Mignolo as a framing device, a decolonial curatorial practice would advocate for an epistemic disobedience, replacing or complementing Eurocentric discourses and categories with alternative perspectives.

It’s hard to avoid mentioning Jean-Hubert Martin’s seminal 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* in this context. Beyond assigning pride of place to art scenes developed beyond the

west, it bore the decolonial stamp, not only through its inclusion of a wide range of silenced histories and indigenous cosmologies, but in the way it challenged the notion of globalised artistic parameters, which have cast the shadows of primitivism and ethnography onto cultural production from non-western culture. It illustrated the decolonial principle that there is no single universal aesthetic, but rather a pluriversity of aesthesi.<sup>8</sup>

Although many curators around the world have since assumed comparable politics of inclusion, there are colonial structures that persist at an institutional level. Systematically including oppressed histories into the museum has proven to be insufficient, and in fact, when not carefully enacted, has led to an institutional tokenism, which has only served to reinforce imperial power hierarchies. These institutional conditions, together with the unhelpful use of separatist categories, such as folk or outsider art, are a product of the colonisation of aesthesi and inexorably affect and restrain curatorial practices.

An example within Australia is the obstinate dominance of white, male artists in state galleries and their collections, and the segregation of non-western artistic production into different exhibition spaces. As curator Chandra Frank notes, it is a responsibility of institutions and curators to create 'policies that guide towards the dismantling of normative paradigms that privilege certain ways of knowing, seeing and curating over others.'<sup>9</sup> This principle should extend well beyond the more overt binaries of coloniser/colonised, western/non-western and into all other spheres with implicit inequality. On the issue of gender, for example, feminist discourses exist within a decolonial framework, since many of the normative principles of male dominance have been propagated by the same matrix of power. Viewed under this logic, the day the Art Gallery of New South Wales reaches an even gender representation in a collection hang will mark a significant decolonial triumph – a step forward for the institution, its curators, artists and audiences.

Exposing these institutional biases, however, is not an easy task for curators, since they are working from inside the marble pillars. It has often been artists working with collections

– who are better positioned to criticise the institution – that have perpetrated some of the most interesting examples of epistemic disobedience. As discussed by Mignolo, Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992-93) is a quintessential example of decolonial artistic praxis. For the exhibition, Wilson incorporated objects from the museum's collection (the Maryland Historical Society) and rearranged them in ways, which exposed the biases of museums to under-represent the uncomfortable histories of the oppressed. His intervention offered a new viewpoint of colonisation, which forced viewers to confront a muted perspective of their colonial past.

Another example mentioned by Mignolo is *Black Mirror*, an ongoing series by Mexican artist Pedro Lasch. For the 2008 iteration of the series – commissioned by the Nasher Museum of Art to accompany its blockbuster exhibition *El Greco to Velázquez* – Lasch selected sixteen pre-hispanic figures from the museum's permanent collection, which he then positioned on plinths with their backs turned to the audience. In front of each of the pieces, large sheets of reflective black glass acted as mirrors, as though the indigenous figures were silently contemplating their own existence. On closer inspection, behind the reflective surfaces a different set of images – European colonial era paintings – could also be seen. Thus in a single plane, indigeneity, coloniality and the self collide,

Pedro Lasch, *Coatllicue and las Meninas*, 2007, *Black Mirror* series, 2007-present. Courtesy the artist.



implicating the audience through their moving reflections.

The work of both Lasch and Wilson involves the selection of items from pre-existing collections (comparable to the approach of an institutional curator) to further a decolonial agenda. In an Australian context, artist Brook Andrew has created a series of projects, which have similarly relied on the collections. Andrew is himself an avid collector and in many of his recent projects he has combined his own archive with objects sourced from collaborating institutions. In each of his collaborations he breathes new meaning into these items, either through suggesting alternative readings of the past or challenging the supposed neutrality of the archive. Having collaborated with a number of institutions locally and internationally – such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Powerhouse Museum, and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia – Andrew's work is testament that re-framing or re-contextualising objects can be a powerful curatorial decolonial tool. In a similar vein, Tony Albert's series *Rearranging Our History* (2002-11), derives its power from re-contextualising a different kind of archive: kitsch souvenirs and items from popular culture representation of Indigenous culture in Australia, which the artist has gathered over years. Although in isolation these objects could appear naïve or harmless to some, their toxicity comes to the fore when brought together.

Returning to Mignolo and the Latin American decolonial movement, there have been a few curatorial attempts at representing decolonial aesthetics, but in my view they have fallen short. An exhibition of decolonial aesthetics at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá was followed by a second exhibition and workshop – presented in 2011 at Duke University in Durham, USA – which expanded on the earlier exhibition by incorporating participants from East Asia into the dialogue. Although these exhibitions have been successful in defining a theoretical and historical framework, they failed to identify the way in which artistic practices might fit into such a framework beyond a very obvious connection to coloniality.

From a curatorial perspective there is no apparent epistemic shift in the curatorial process. The exhibitions do not seem to do justice to the ambitions of the critical theory,

or at least they fail to illustrate its breadth and complexity. The majority of the artists included are men, for example, and the entire premise seems to be reduced to works that directly reference colonialism. The format skews toward the didactic and illustrative, and seems oblivious to the difficulties of 'absorbing' non-western art and global south discourses into the museum context. Maybe it has to do with the fact that Mignolo begins by admitting that he is not a specialist in art history or criticism, and hence his analysis of the strategies used by the artists and curatorial approach is narrow.

In my view, the most interesting example of a decolonial curatorial strategy, and far more radical and illustrative of the decolonial ethos, is Cuauhtémoc Medina's Biennial program *Dominó Caníbal* (*Cannibal Dominoes*, 2010)

Brook Andrew, *Splinters of Monuments*, 2014-2015, (installation view) Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain. Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.



at PAC Murcia in Spain. For this year-long series of overlapping solo exhibitions, Medina broke with curatorial convention by using a counter-model as the central framing device: each artist was asked to start from his or her predecessor's work; adding, removing or modifying something from the previous exhibition, thereby 'cannibalising' the previous efforts. Historically, Medina positions his biennial within a transmodern context, which acknowledges the geo-political complexity of memory making in the postcolonial:

*My starting point is the operation of the game of domino, which is a very widespread transcultural point of production. Based on games of Chinese dice, it was then taken to Italy, from where it spread to the new world with the Spanish and Portuguese colonisations, becoming very popular in Latin America. From a historical viewpoint, it reflects the migratory route of the game from Cathay to the Caribbean, passing through the European routes of early capitalism; it is a map of the historical process that led to the modern world. Furthermore, the domino effect refers to the chain of historical and argumental moments that define the links between colonisation, post-colonialism and capitalist globalisation.*

*Dominó Canibal* is an epistemic rebellion that disregards the traditional biennale model and shifts the power from the institution and the curator towards the artists. In addition, the equal gender balance and diverse geographical origin in the selection of artists is in accord with the decolonial agenda.<sup>10</sup> As Medina notes: 'It's not based on any autonomy or individual identity, but rather on a continuous negotiation of languages, materials and aesthetics.'<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there is the allusion to the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's 1928 'Manifesto Antropófago' (Cannibal Manifesto), wherein he describes Brazil's conflation of foreign influences as a sort of cultural cannibalism, which gives rise to something new and unique. By using antropofagia as the core principle and frame of reference, Medina favours an alternative, non-European viewpoint and at the same time nods to a cultural condition experienced by the colonised world in its "itinerant search for origins".<sup>12</sup>

Although all of these instances are crucial steps towards healing the colonial wound, decoloniality is not limited to academics and curators. Decoloniality is a cultural call for arms, an invitation to rearticulate our collective past experience, questioning its weight and biases, in the hope that with every step forward, we might make increasing sense of our condition and contribute to the possibility of a world without coloniality: the world otherwise.

## Endnotes

- 1 Aníbal Quijano, 'Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina,' Anuario Mariateguano 1997; Aníbal Quijano, 'Colonialidad y modernidad/ racionalidad,' Aníbal Quijano, 'Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina,' Anuario Mariateguano 1997; Aníbal Quijano, 'Colonialidad y modernidad/ racionalidad.'
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, (2014), interview for Ku Leuven [[https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/centr\\_bevrijding\\_newsletter/view/145/](https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/centr_bevrijding_newsletter/view/145/)].
- 4 Walter D'Amico, 'Aesthesis decolonial,' *Calle 14: Revista De Investigación En El Campo Del Arte*, 4(4), 2011:10-25.
- 5 Walter D'Amico, 'Decolonial Aesthesis: Colonial Wounds/ Decolonial Healings,' *Social Text: Periscope*, 2013.
- 6 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, (2014), interview for Ku Leuven [[https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/centr\\_bevrijding\\_newsletter/view/145/](https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/centr_bevrijding_newsletter/view/145/)].
- 7 Alanna Lockward, 'Marooning the White Cube as Epistemic Disobedience: BE.BOP. BLACK EUROPE BODY POLITICS 2012-2016.'
- 8 Pluriversality is a concept used by Mignolo that can also be traced back to Enrique Dussel's writing on Transmodernity.
- 9 Chandra Frank, (2015), Policy Briefing: towards a decolonial curatorial practice [<http://discoversociety.org/2015/06/03/policy-briefing-towards-a-decolonial-curatorial-practice/>].
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- 11 Cuahtémoc Medina, *Domino Canibal* curatorial statement, Sala Verónicas, Murcia, Spain, Proyecto de Arte Contemporáneo Murcia, Spain, 2010.
- 12 Sam Thorne, *Domino Canibal*, (2010), Frieze.com [<https://frieze.com/article/domino-canibal>].

# Matt Poll

## *Presence through absence*

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One of the most proactive assertions of Indigenous dissent into the fabric of museology is the dialogue of repatriation. The collection of both sacred objects and human bodies today represents a long history of an unethical imbalance of power between museums and Indigenous peoples. Significant numbers of Indigenous items currently held in museums exist in a grey area – they cannot be legally owned by the museum and they cannot be returned to community members without repatriating the problem of what needs to be done to rectify this theft. Some items were never meant to be moved in the first place, and can't just be put back where they came from – they exist in a limbo – and these situations give rise to the question: how is it possible or acceptable to attempt to represent this presence of absence?

Repatriation is not only about the absence of these items from museum collections, it is about the absence that the removal of these items created, the void that many artist seek to fill through reconstructing historical assemblages of information. The history of some objects, when viewed through modern ethical frameworks, examines the authority of an anthropological construction of culture or its art-historical classification. Some 'objects' become legal precedents – they are evidence of past injustice, their presence in historical records empowering modern Indigenous people to add a new chapter. This was the case with Truganini, the first woman repatriated back to Australia. The collector of her remains had published accounts of her telling him that she did not want her body collected, which was all the evidence that the Tasmanian Aboriginal community needed to legally challenge their ownership by a museum.

This strategy is also deployed by many Indigenous artists today, grounded not only in basic cultural protocols, but in methodologies for decolonising histories of Indigenous cultures that were authored through non-Indigenous agency. Colonial museums, archives and libraries all developed their own methods of classifying Aboriginal culture. When contemporary Indigenous artists create work, they establish the presence of a crucial aspect of a far-reaching history that is still misunderstood in many sections of the modern Australian community. Even when they use Indigenous language to title a work, they are subverting a system of classification where they were both present and absent – their absence being beyond their control.

Problems still arise, however, when historical information which documents language, or cultural practice, is produced by non-indigenous agency entangled with hidden colonial agendas, and it is the job of contemporary artists in particular to show where this has occurred, what needs to be done to subvert dominant stereotypes, and to bring to the fore Indigenous-centred priorities. As opposed to the clear-cut legal case for repatriation, there are many more degrees of ownership relating to intangible aspects of cultural practice that need to be further explored. This involves privileging an objects' meaning for living cultures, rather than previous systems which were imposed from non-Indigenous

perspectives. The role of the artist in changing art history is not about rectifying the mistakes of the past, but in repurposing historical information into tools that shape the present, accurately representing communities' views about themselves and their history. More Indigenous artists are now using the museum as a site of resistance rather than as a repository of 'silenced' objects.

This narrative of community authority provides a far more accurate depiction of what is necessary to facilitate decolonisation of Australian museums; it is a template that is more inclusive of many diverse histories, knowledges and experiences for all artists in general. There is a great deal of literature on the dispossession of Aboriginal Australia that is centred on the over-writing of the Australian landscape by the imposition of European agricultural, pastoral and urban narratives. Little work has been done to counter the over-writing of non-tangible Aboriginal knowledge systems – the languages, aesthetics and symbolic agency which had sustained numerous generations – or their potential 'repatriation' back into the community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, when seen as a means for capturing a community's feeling of widespread dissent, has been shown time and again to change the way the Australian nation sees itself, but more importantly change how a nation 'becomes' itself. The idea that an autonomous and separate 'Aboriginal Australia' which exists (whether historically or in the present) as a distinct, homogeneous entity is thought-provoking for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

Artworks have the power to become the hinges between one historical period and another, but they do not need to always rigidly enforce these barriers. The responsibility of being 'the voice that speaks out' is felt by many First Nations artists. The responsibility of speaking out on behalf of your community, or just for oneself, already raises all sorts of complex issues, without the additional barrier created by museographic representations. Aboriginal 'history' is a multiplicity of histories which provide entry points to pasts that do not belong to everyone. There is still so much more of this pre-contact world which is yet to be known and re-presented through art. Aboriginal museology is still in a process of defining itself and creating new methods and strategies of how it will record the history of its peoples, and present this on their own terms. The multiplicity of art forms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use to represent themselves speaks volumes as to why a truly authentic depiction of the lived experience of contemporary Indigenous Australia needs to be inclusive of dissent in all its forms.

Ironically, the more successful an artwork is in its resistance, or dissent, from established opinions, the more likely it is that it will eventually be accessioned into one form of museum or another, representing the turning point between one worldview and another. The creation of new narratives and perspectives, which privilege aspects of Indigenous history that are largely unexplainable and even sometimes unknowable within a Eurocentric framework, is where the real challenge lies – that of authentically representing culture. Perhaps the absence of a national museum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultural artefacts is a good thing? Its absence has created a presence that sparked a revolution among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island artists, who used visual art to create a different history that has resisted colonial frameworks of representation.

## *Artists*

Abdul Abdullah	Laura Lima
Jumana Emil Abboud	Teresa Margolles
Vernon Ah Kee	Shaghayegh Mazloom
Tony Albert	Queenie Nakarra McKenzie
Francis Alÿs	Kent Monkman
Kader Attia	Zanele Muholi
Tania Bruguera	Clinton Nain
Nick Cave	Paulo Nazareth
Aslı Çavuşoğlu	Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran
Chimurenga	Fiona Pardington
Dadang Christanto	Mike Parr
Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser	Ben Quilty
Karla Dickens	Imran Qureshi
Fiona Foley	Rosanna Raymond's <i>SaVAge K'lub</i>
Félix González-Torres	Marwan Rechmaoui
Guerrilla Girls	Lisa Reihana
Julie Gough	Doris Salcedo
Dale Harding	Alex Seton
Edgar Heap of Birds	Hito Steyerl
Pierre Huyghe	James Tylor
Guo Jian	Adriana Verejão
Jonathan Jones	Kemang Wa Lehulere
Jumaadi	Kara Walker
Yuki Kihara	Jason Wing
Glenn Ligon	



# Abdul Abdullah

AUSTRALIA

## **Born in Perth, Western Australia, 1986**

Abdul Abdullah is an artist from Perth, currently based in Sydney, who works across painting, photography, video, installation and performance. As a self described 'outsider amongst outsiders', his practice is primarily concerned with the experience of the 'other' in society. Abdullah's projects have engaged with different marginalized minority groups and he is particularly interested in the experience of young Muslims in the contemporary multicultural Australian context. Through these processes and explorations Abdullah extrapolates this outlook to an examination of universal aspects of human nature.

– Abdul Abdullah / [abdulabdullah.com](http://abdulabdullah.com)

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***We Watch*** (2014), Giclee print, 150cm x 140cm  
Courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne.

Abdul Abdullah was 14 when the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred. He came of age at a time of hostility and suspicion towards Muslims in Australia, when, as he has noted, 'you couldn't open a newspaper, turn on the television or listen to the radio without being reminded you were the bad guy and that you were frankly unwelcome. The war on terror felt like a war on you.'

The politicisation of his identity as the 'bad guy' has led Abdullah to create works – mostly portraits and self-portraits – critiquing Islamophobic depictions of Muslim youth in Australia. His work has challenged viewers' expectations and assumptions through confronting images of masked people – some in Muslim clothing wearing chimpanzee masks, others in racially vilifying t-shirts and balaclavas decorated with the Australian flag. In both, Abdullah dissects the idea of the faceless mob who defend or disrupt the idea of the Australian nation on the basis of their own biases and prejudices.

– Museum of Contemporary Art Australia / [mca.com.au](http://mca.com.au)



# Jumana Emil Abboud

PALESTINE

## Born Shefa-Amr, Galilee, 1971

Jumana Emil Abboud works with drawing, installation, video and performance, exploring personal and collective memory, loss, longing and belonging, Palestinian folklore, myths and oral histories. Abboud has participated in numerous exhibitions and venues, including the Venice, Sharjah and Istanbul Biennales; the Bahrain National Museum; the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; and most recently in a solo exhibition at BALTIC, Gateshead, UK. Based in Jerusalem, she teaches at the International Academy of Art, Palestine.

– Qalandiya International /  
qalandiyainternational.org

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Top: from the series *Ballad of the Lady Who Lives Behind the Trees* (2005-14)

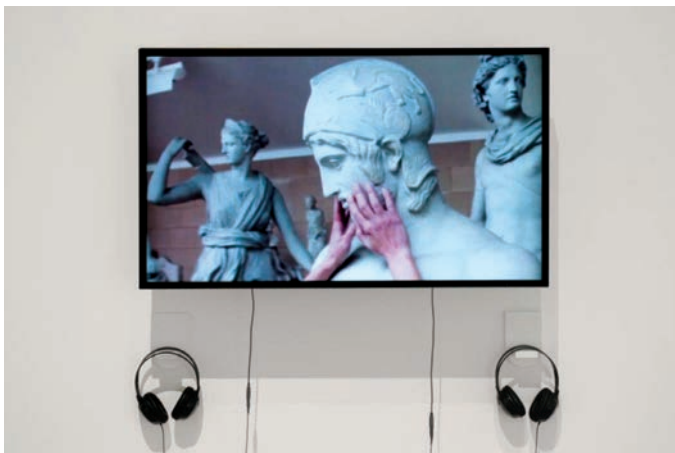
Below: *I Feel Nothing*, 2012-13, video still.

Courtesy the artist and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK.

Exhibition notes: *Jumana Emil Abboud*  
6 May - 2 October 2016

This exhibition brings together a body of recent work, including the series of drawings *The Ballad of the Lady Who Lives Behind Trees* 2005-14 and the film *I Feel Nothing* 2013, alongside a new video installation. Abboud's delicate drawings depict monsters and magical beings with the landscapes and sites they inhabit including grottos, wells and trees. Presented as a constellation, we are encouraged to weave these elements together and create our own narratives. *I Feel Nothing* is a video-poem inspired by a Palestinian folktale *The Handless Maiden* and Titian's painting *Noli me Tangere* c. 1514. Filmed at the Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, the Freud Museum, London and locations throughout Palestine, the work explores notions of touch and territories of the body.

– Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art /  
balticmill.com



# Vernon Ah Kee

AUSTRALIA

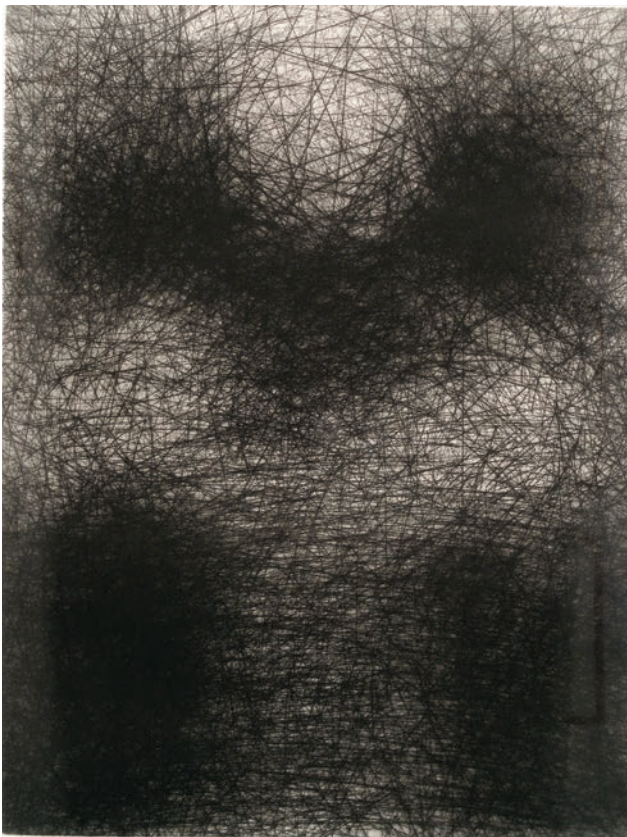
**Born 1967 in Innisfail, Queensland, Australia.**

Vernon Ah Kee's conceptual text pieces, videos, photographs and drawings form a critique of Australian culture from the perspective of the Aboriginal experience of contemporary life. Ah Kee's works respond to the history of the romantic and exoticised portraiture of 'primitives', and effectively reposition the Aboriginal in Australia from an 'othered thing', anchored in museum and scientific records to a contemporary people inhabiting real and current spaces and time.

Ah Kee's work has been exhibited many significant national and international exhibitions, including the 16th Biennale of Sydney (2008); *Once Removed*, Australian Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2009); *Ideas of Barack*, National Gallery of Victoria (2011); *Tall Man*, Gertrude Contemporary (2011); *Everything Falls Apart*, Artspace Sydney (2012); *unDisclosed: 2nd National Indigenous Art Triennial*, National Gallery of Australia (2012); *My Country: I Still Call Australia Home*, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art (2013); and *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada (2013).

In 2015, Ah Kee was invited by curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev to present a new body of work as part of the 14th Istanbul Biennial, and he participated in a series of significant public programs as part of the opening weekend of the exhibition. Other recent exhibitions include *Imaginary Accord*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2015); *GOMA Q*, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2015); *When Silence Falls*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2015-16); *Encounters*, National Museum of Australia (2015-16); *Brutal Truths*, Griffith University Art Gallery (2015-16); and *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia*, Harvard Art Museums (2016).

– Milani Gallery / [milanigallery.com.au](http://milanigallery.com.au)



**Lynching**, 2012, etching and aquatint on Velin Arches paper, 60 X 80 cm, artist's proof, private collection.

Courtesy the artist; Milani Gallery, Brisbane; and Cicada Press, UNSWAD, Sydney.

# Tony Albert

AUSTRALIA



**Born 1981, Townsville, Queensland, Australia.**

Tony Albert's art practice interrogates contemporary legacies of colonialism in a way that prompts the audience to contemplate elemental aspects of the human condition. Mining imagery and source material from across the globe and drawing upon personal and collective histories, Albert questions how we understand, imagine and construct difference. Certain political themes and visual motifs resurface across his oeuvre, including thematic representations of the 'outsider' and the target motif of concentric circles.

His technique is distinctly contemporary, displacing traditional Australian Aboriginal aesthetics with a kind of urban conceptuality. Weaving together text appropriated from popular music, film, fiction, and art history, along with clichéd images of extraterrestrials, photographs of his family in *Lucha Libre*, and an immense collection of "Aboriginalia" (a term the artist coined to describe kitschy

objects and images that feature naive portrayals of Aboriginality), the artist presents a tapestry of ideas that makes us question the flimsy line that inscribes and ascribes 'difference.'

Albert has exhibited his work at many international venues, and is represented in many public and private collections. In 2014 he won both the Basil Sellers Art Prize and the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award. In 2013 he was commissioned to create an artwork for the Hyde Park War Memorial, which was inaugurated in Hyde Park South on Anzac Day 2015 to commemorate indigenous soldiers. – Sullivan & Strumpf / sullivanstrumpf.com

Installation view: *With Secrecy and Despatch*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2016.

Left: *Hidden History*, 2016, vintage children's school desk, black paper, white pastel crayons, dimensions variable.

Right: *Blood water*, 2016  
Vintage woolen tapestries, cord, 23 x 28cm, cords variable.

Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney. Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre.

*Hidden History*: This work refers to hidden, erased and denied histories, histories that are not taught in schools, learned in the public domain, or acknowledged in the cultural landscape of Australia. Laser-etched into the top of a vintage school desk is a list of ten massacres from around Australia. Whilst there are hundreds of individual sites, I have chosen ten as a starting point for conversation/ education. The second desktop reads: "women and children first." Not to be mistaken for the polite terminology associated with manners; it was a term used to suggest that the fastest way to eradicate any culture was to kill the women and children first. Visitors to the gallery are encouraged to take a piece of paper and use a crayon and sheet of black paper to create a rubbing of the etched text. The idea is to expose the hidden histories denied by the education system.

*Blood Water*: Four vintage tapestries are lined up side by side. Each has an idyllic image of Aboriginal people in the landscape. I chose this medium to reference a craft in use at the time of massacres. The bottom of each tapestry is embellished with red cords that signify rivers of blood. The cords cascade down the wall to create small pools of blood on the gallery floor. Red evokes the Aboriginal flag and the colour of the earth. Aboriginal people also associate red with bloodshed upon the land.

– Tony Albert, artist's statement, *With Secrecy and Despatch*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2016

# Francis Alijs

BELGIUM / MEXICO



## Born 1959, Antwerp, Belgium.

Francis Alijs consistently directs his distinct poetic and imaginative sensibility toward anthropological and geopolitical concerns centered around observations of, and engagements with, everyday life, which the artist himself has described as “a sort of discursive argument composed of episodes, metaphors, or parables.” His multifaceted projects including public actions, installations, video, paintings, and drawings have involved traveling the longest possible route between locations in Mexico and the United States; pushing a melting block of ice through city streets; commissioning sign painters to copy his paintings; filming his efforts to enter the center of a tornado; carrying a leaking can of paint along the contested Israel/Palestine border; and equipping hundreds of volunteers to move a colossal sand dune ten centimeters.

Alijs originally trained as an architect.

He moved to Mexico City in 1986, where he continues to live and work, and it was the confrontation with issues of urbanization and social unrest in his new country of adoption that inspired his decision to become a visual artist.

— David Zwirner / davidzwirner.com

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*The Silence of Ani (Ani'nin Sessizlii)* 2015, video stills, Turkish/Armenian border, 2015. In collaboration with Antonio Fernández Ros, Julien Devaux, Félix Blume and the teens of Kars. ©Francis Alijs, courtesy the artist.

Francis Alijs' *Silence of Ani* comprises a display of Armenian duduks (ancient double-reed woodwind flutes) and videos. The story takes place in Ani, an ancient Armenian city near the border with Turkey, a fitting setting, not least in this biennial, which takes place during the centenary of the Armenian Genocide. The video shows the breathtaking and uncanny scenery of the valley of Ani, while the wind whistles through like a birdcall. Then children playing duduks in a game of hide and seek, slowly turn into a ballad about the future and an elegy of the past. But as the children approach one another the mood can induce an emotional discharge, exposing some viewers'



traumas. But Redemption is not easily given, as the children tire and fall asleep on what is left of Ani, as though it's a call for us to wake them up, wake ourselves up, and rejoice in the spirit of togetherness and peace.

— Félix Blume, Sound Editor & Mixer / felixblume.com / francisalijs.com/the-silence-of-ani

# Kader Attia

ALGERIA / FRANCE



## Born 1970, France.

Kader Attia grew up in both Algeria and the suburbs of Paris, and uses this experience of living as a part of two cultures as a starting point to develop a dynamic practice that reflects on aesthetics and ethics of different cultures. He takes a poetic and symbolic approach to exploring the wide-ranging repercussions of Western modern cultural hegemony and colonialism on non-Western cultures, investigating identity politics of historical and colonial eras, from Tradition to Modernity, in the light of our globalised world, of which he creates a genealogy.

For several years, his research focuses on the concept of Repair, as a constant in Human Nature, of which the modern

Western Mind and the traditional extra-Occidental Thought have always had an opposite vision. From Culture to Nature, from gender to architecture, from science to philosophy, any system of life is an infinite process of repair.

Recent exhibitions include *Sacrifice and Harmony*, a solo show at Museum Für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, *The Injuries are Here* a solo show at the Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts de Lausanne, *Culture, Another Nature Repaired*, a solo show at the Middelheim Museum, Antwerp, *Contre Nature*, a solo show at the Beirut Art Center, *Continuum of Repair: The Light of Jacob's Ladder*, a solo show at Whitechapel Gallery, London, *Repair. 5 Acts*, a solo show at KW Institute for Contemporary

Art, Berlin, *Construire, Déconstruire, Reconstruire: Le Corps Utopique*, a solo show at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Biennale of Dakar, *DOCUMENTA(13)* in Kassel, *Performing Histories (1)* at MoMA, New York, and *Contested Terrains*, Tate Modern, London.

– Kader Attia / kaderattia.de

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*The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures*, 2012, installation view at *DOCUMENTA(13)*, Kassel, 2012, commissioned and produced by *DOCUMENTA (13)* with the support and courtesy of the artist, Galleria Continua, Galerie Nagel Draxler, Galerie Krinzinger. Further support by *Fondation nationale des arts graphiques et plastiques*, France. Photo: Kader Attia.

# Tania Bruguera

CUBA

## Born 1968, Havana, Cuba.

Tania Bruguera has had a significant influence on art as performance, social engagement and activism, both in and out of Latin America. Born in Havana in 1968, she has focused on issues of power and control from the beginning of her artistic career, and has long been an advocate for freedom of expression — a position that has often put her at odds with the Cuban government.

An example of this tension is pictured in the following portfolio. In 2009, Bruguera presented a work at the Havana Biennial titled *Tatlin's Whisper*, in which she provided an open microphone for members of the audience to freely speak their minds. During an attempted re-staging of the piece in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución in December 2014, Bruguera was detained by government officials, and upon her release she became the target of a state-sponsored campaign to discredit her as an artist.

Currently based in the USA, Bruguera's most recent endeavor is a direct response to those events. In 2015, she founded the Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (INSTAR), which describes itself as "an institute in Cuba and an online platform that hosts international artists and activists to foster civic literacy and policy change." INSTAR is currently being planned as a think-tank and center for civic and activist literacy in Cuba.

The concept of constructing an art project with a political dimension is not unfamiliar for Bruguera. In 1998, she founded the Cátedra de Arte Conducta (Behavior Art School) in Havana, which introduced political consciousness into performance art and served as an alternative to existing forms of teaching art in Cuba



at the time. She has also frequently taken the conceptual/activist approach to creating institutions, think tanks and organizations that advocate or advance a social agenda. For example, in 2012, with support from public arts organization Creative Time and, later, from the Queens Museum of Art in New York, she launched Immigrant Movement International, a non-profit immigrant rights organization.

One of Bruguera's contributions to the field of socially engaged art was to coin the term "arte útil" ("useful art"), reflecting a kind of art practice that has a verifiable impact and application in the world.

– Pablo Helguera. Text courtesy: [taniabruquera.com / americasquarterly.org](http://taniabruquera.com/americasquarterly.org)

**Displacement**, 1998 - 1999, performance documentation. Medium: Embodying a Nkisi Nkonde icon, Behavior Art. Materials: Cuban earth, glue, wood, nails / textile. Dimensions: Variable NOTE: Each time the piece is shown it may incorporate new symbolic materials (2005 bullets, 2003 pencils). Courtesy Studio Bruguera. Photo: Manuel Pina and Jose A. Figueroa. © Tania Bruguera  
*Destierro (Displacement)* creates a relationship

between religious faith and the people's trust in the effectiveness of its rulers. The object the work refers to is a Nkisi Nkonde, a religious fetish mainly native to Congo. Those who practice this animistic religion ask the fetish to grant them their wishes. The Nkisi Nkonde is "loaded" or activated with relics or body parts of a deceased person. Each nail in it is a wish that has been complied with. According to this belief, these objects of power are highly effective, but the person who asks must make a promise in appreciation of the wish come true. If this promise is not fulfilled, the spirit in the Nkisi "wakes up" and looks for the person who did not comply to discharge all its power against him. These objects are so much respected and feared that at times they are used as witnesses in transactions or contracts between two people.

*Destierro (Displacement)* is an allegorical way to approach Cuban reality and the social promises that were made and never kept. Because of the intimate relationship of the Cuban people with African Cuban religions, this action can be understood by the general public. As a consequence, when in 1998 a performance was held in the streets in Havana on Fidel Castro's birthday, a popular peregrination walked behind the icon, which was followed, adored, feared, and on whom hopes, wishes and efforts have been invested to claim and retribute the social promises the Cuban Government had made to its people.

– Tania Bruguera / [taniabruquera.com](http://taniabruquera.com)

# Nick Cave

USA

## Born in 1959, Missouri, USA.

Nick Cave is an artist, educator and foremost a messenger, working between the visual and performing arts through a wide range of mediums including sculpture, installation, video, sound and performance. He says of himself, "I have found my middle and now am working toward what I am leaving behind." Cave is well known for his Soundsuits, sculptural forms based on the scale of his body. Soundsuits camouflage the body, masking and creating a second skin that conceals race, gender, and class, forcing the viewer to look without judgment.

In a 2013 feature in Interview Magazine, Cave said of his project *HEARD•NY*, a large scale performance in Grand Central Terminal organized by Creative Time, "I was really thinking of getting us back to this dream state, this place where we imagine and think about now and how we exist and function in the world. With the state of affairs on the world, I think we tend not to take the time out to create that dream space in our heads." This is relevant to his practice as a whole.

Cave recently opened a massive immersive installation *Until* at MASS MoCA (October 15, 2016 - April 2017), which will travel to Carriageworks arts centre in Sydney Australia during 2018.

His work is represented in many public and private collections worldwide, and he is the recipient of many awards. Cave is Professor and Chairman of the Fashion Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

— Jack Shainman Gallery / jackshainman.com

Above: *Soundsuit #1*, 2012, mixed media, Approximately 95 x 32 x 41 inches. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Right: *Until*, 2016, Installation detail, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA. Photo: Douglas Mason. Courtesy the artist and MASS MoCA.

Cave's first Soundsuit, made out of twigs, was a direct response to the Rodney King beating, a visual image about social justice that was both brutal and empowering. Just as the violence around the Rodney King beating was the impetus to Cave's early work, the death of men such as Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, and Michael Brown drives his new imagery. For Cave's MASS MoCA installation, *Until* — a play on the phrase "innocent until proven guilty," or in this case "guilty until proven innocent" — he addresses issues of gun violence, gun control policy, race relations, and gender politics in America today.

*Until* begins with a dense sculptural field of metallic lawn ornaments leading to a crystal cloud topped by a private garden populated with birds, flowers, and black-face lawn jockeys, finally coming to rest before a cliff wall hand-woven with shoelaces and hundreds of thousands of colorful pony beads. This is an active space where alluring kinetics and a sumptuous, overwhelming materiality give way to stark images of guns, bullets, and targets, positioning us all as culpable, vulnerable, and potentially under attack. The aim of this is pointed, questioning us to spark discussion about important issues in a space that is at once dazzling, provocative, and — ultimately — optimistic. Cave believes in humanity, celebrating possibility while also creating a forum for critical discussion that eventually provokes the question, "Is there racism in heaven?"

Cave has come to see himself as a messenger, endeavoring to coalesce communities, discuss important issues, and ultimately heal through art. "I view this work as an elaborate community forum, as much as a work of sculpture," notes Cave. As such, the gallery will double as a stage for internationally known dancers, singer-songwriters, pop artists, poets, and composers, together with panel discussions, community forums, and other forms of creative public debate and engagement.

— massmoca.org





# Aslı Çavuşoğlu

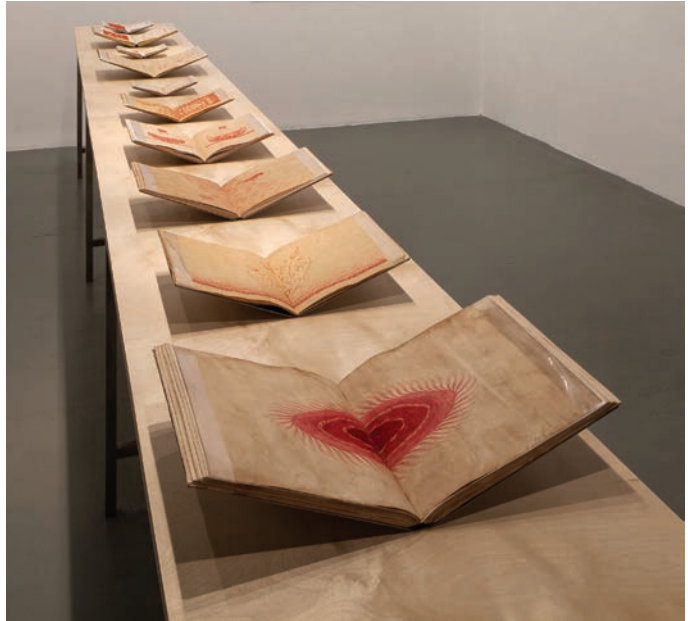
TURKEY

## Born 1982, Istanbul, Turkey.

Aslı Çavuşoğlu lives and works in Istanbul. She received her BA in Cinema-TV at the Marmara University, Istanbul, TR. Recent solo shows include *Red / Red*, MATHAF Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar (2016); *The Stones Talk*, ARTER, Istanbul, (2013); *Murder in Three Acts*, Delfina Foundation, London (2013). Recent group shows include Manifesta11, *What Do People Do For Money*, Zurich (2016); Saltwater, 14th Istanbul Biennial; *Surround Audience*, New Museum, NYC (2015); *The Crime Was Almost Perfect*, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2014); *Signs Taken in Wonder* at MAK Museum in Vienna (2013); Performa 11, NYC (2011).

Aslı Çavuşoğlu utilizes different media to investigate silenced histories. These investigations (articulated through various media forms) revisit key moments in an effort to locate the relationship between rupture and continuity as consciousness and how related identities are constructed, and reconstructed. She has composed rap songs using words censored in the Turkish media and made a video of residents from a Turkish town re-enacting key events from a local socialist struggle that was crushed by the 1980 military coup. In recent work *The Stones Talk* (2013) she delves into history to grant archaeological finds unearthed in excavations throughout Turkey a new voice; applying various forms of enhancement to remnants deemed too small or insignificant for museum display in order to lend them a new, decidedly more significant identity.

– The Moving Museum /  
themovingmuseum.com



*Red / Red* 2015, Armenian Cochineal ink and Turkish Red pigment on worn-out papers and worn-out handmade notebooks. Dimensions variable. Produced with the support of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and SAHA. Photo by Sahir Ugur Eren. Courtesy the artist.

*Red / Red* narrates the story of and through one color—red. The red used in the project is a specific pigment traditionally made from an insect known as “Ararat” or “Armenian Cochineal” [Porphyrphora Hamelii], indigenous to the Ararat Plain. *Red / Red* proposes a model of co-existence for inhabitants of this contested geographic region through an ecosystem that fosters the production of this special color. Armenian cochineal is an insect that lives in the roots of the *Aeluropus littoralis* plant that grows on the banks of the Aras River, which marks the natural border between Turkey and Armenia. The carminic acid found in the Armenian cochineal enables the production of a special red that has been known back to the 7th century BC. This red was used in textiles,

frescoes and manuscripts and produced mostly by Armenians.

*Aeluropus littoralis* and Armenian cochineal have been categorized as endangered species since the industrialization in 1970s’ USSR Armenia. On the Turkish side, there is no threat to the growing areas of the plant and the insect, but the knowledge of producing the red color is lacking since 1915.

Armen Sahakyan, PH.D., a phytotherapist and senior researcher at the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan is probably the only person who can still extract this red based on the recipes from the 14th century Armenian manuscripts. The drawings have been created with the 12 gr of Armenian cochineal ink given to the artist by Sahakyan. In *Red / Red* the story of the evolution that the color went through on both sides unfold: Armenian cochineal red is being replaced by the red of the Turkish “flag” on the side of Turkey and on the Armenian side rapidly diminishing.

– Aslı Çavuşoğlu / aslicavusoglu.info

# Chimurenga

PAN AFRICA

Collective founded 2002, Cape Town, South Africa. Ntone Edjabe (founder) born 1970, Douala, Cameroun.

*Chimurenga*, a pan African platform of writing, art and politics founded by Ntone Edjabe in 2002. Drawing together a myriad voices from across Africa and the diaspora, Chimurenga takes many forms operating as an innovative platform for free ideas and political reflection about Africa by Africans. Outputs include a journal of culture, art and politics of the same name (*Chimurenga Magazine*); a quarterly broadsheet called *The Chronic*; *The Chimurenga Library* – an online resource of collected independent pan-African periodicals and personal books; the *African Cities Reader* – a biennial publication of urban life, Africa-style; and the *Pan African Space Station* (PASS) – an online radio station and pop-up studio.

The aim of these projects is not just to produce new knowledge, but rather to express the intensities of our world, to capture those forces and to take action. This has required a stretching of the boundaries, for unless we push form and content beyond what exists, then we merely reproduce the original form – the colonized form, if you will. It requires not only a new set of questions, but its own set of tools; new practices and methodologies that allow us to engage the lines of flight, of fragility, the precariousness, as well as joy, creativity and beauty that defines contemporary African life.

As Fela puts it, simply: who no know go know.

– Chimurenga / chimurenga.co.za



Left: *The Chronic* (2016)  
Right: *The Chronic* (July 2015: Sharjah Biennale issue).

Consult the artists and Chimurenga.

An incomplete roll call: Ramps, Scratch, Fransch, Frantz, Zimology, Wright, Roy, Tosh, Roach, Shahrzad, Armah, Nortje, Meshell, Lee, Ali, Hani, Busi, Buchi, Kippie, (the cry of) Winnie, Mongezi (“You ain’t gonna know me”), (King) Tubby, (Ken) Bugul, BigYouth, Badu-ism, Baldwin, Bili, Brathwaite, (Bra) Willie, (Bra) Wally, Kwani?, Kwaninis, Nina, Kalonji, Dyani, D-Money, Jimi, Djibril, Nkoli, LKi, PBS, BNB (vol1), BOP, POC, TP OK Jazz, PE, Miles (sometimes), MAW, Matthews, Mazrui, Matigari, Metronome, Mapfumo, Mwalimu, Mongo, Zao, Shado, Ukooflani Maumau, Seithlamo, Chico, Ko-Shun, Okot p’, Gil-Scott, Ra, Akomfrah’s BAFC, Galeano, (General’s) Politburo, (Real) Rozano, Yambo, Yes & No, Neo, Dumile, Dudu, Douleur, Zeke, Zoe, Achille, Mashile, Micere, Okigbo, Biko, Betty D, Bessie H, Bessie S, Olu, Anikulapo, Sobukwe, The Leninist Czar, Wole, Were-Were, Desiree, Sangare, Ray, Lorde, Letta, Vera, Wenge Musica (4x4 bcbg), Mingus, Mos, Fani-Kayode, Onsulade, Seun, Sandile, Neg’Marrons, G-Force Reagon, Tuff Gong, Banton, Kiemute, Liyenkula, Kouakou, Fong Kong Bantu Soundsystem,



Skeem, Labou-Tansi, Zackie, Tsitsi, Pakhati and the other 50, The other Dumisane – “If am the other who are you?”, (The) Artist, Tate, Taban, Govan, Ousmane, Tabane, (Neogy’s) Transition-ers, (Botsotsotso) Jesters, Staffriders, Glendora, Walker, (the other) Trevor, Themba at the House of Truth, Brenda, Bonga, Donga, Amandla, Almicar, Sedar, Spivak, Lady Saw, Samora, Tchicaya, Fodeba, Makeba, Marechera, Malangatana, Binyavanga, Chimamanda, (the hand of) Maradona, Sankara, Rakim, Rose, Manfila, Nah-ee-lah, Mafika, Fiel dos Santos, Marcos, hooks, Abdullah (no, Dollar), Mboya, Chinua, Gza, Tuma, Lumumba’s speech, La Guma, Tutuola, Midnight Children, Midnight Marauders, Said, Taiwa, Thandiswa, Appiah, Basquiat, Boukaka, A luta, Kalakuta, Union & Lutte, Ujamaa, Amandla (redux), Intifada, Chimurenga...in no particular order...

# Dadang Christanto

INDONESIA / AUSTRALIA



## **Born 1957, central Java, Indonesia.**

Dadang Christanto is an internationally acclaimed artist who has been curated into major art events worldwide including the Sydney Biennale (2010), the Venice Biennale (2003), Yogyakarta Biennial, Indonesia (2003), Kwangju Biennale, South Korea (2000), the Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1998) and the first and third Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art, Brisbane (1993 & 1999). His work is held in major public and private collections around the globe.

Born in central Java in 1957, Christanto has spent his career honouring the countless victims of political violence and crimes against humanity. His work expresses the suffering of victims and lays bare the anguish and grief that is endured in silence by those left behind. Despite the raw socio-political nature of his work, Christanto continues to produce art which pleads for compassion, regardless of differing faiths and political beliefs.

– Gallery Smith / [gallerysmith.com.au](http://gallerysmith.com.au)

## ***They give evidence (Mereka Memeri Kesaksian)***

1996-1997. 16 standing figures holding clothes; terracotta powder mixed with resin/fibreglass, cloth and resin; ht 200 cm (male). Collection: Art Gallery of NSW, purchased 2003.

Courtesy the artist, AGNSW and Gallery Smith, Melbourne.

These 16 male and female figures were created by Dadang in Yogyakarta at the time he still lived in Indonesia (he has since moved to Australia), as a tribute to the millions of innocent people killed in times of war and political instability. While the message is universal, the specific incidents that moved Dadang were the anti-communist purges of 1965-66 when hundreds of thousands of innocent people were massacred as the Indonesian army and civilian militia groups sought to rid the country of all who might be Communist sympathisers. Dadang witnessed these tragedies and is determined they are remembered in time-resistant memorials that will still stand long after the haunted memories of witnesses have faded.

Dadang focuses not on the heroes, but the innocent victims. His men and women, touchingly vulnerable in their nakedness, carry in their outstretched arms the brittle shells of clothing once worn by women and children so inhumanely killed. The figures mutely protest the horrors inflicted on innocent people and plea for justice. The message resonates profoundly in its universal validity, evoking grief and compassion in viewers, and standing as a compelling plea to respect the rights of all innocent people.

– Art Gallery of NSW

# Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser

AUSTRALIA



**Destiny Deacon, born 1957, Maryborough, Queensland; Virginia Fraser, born Melbourne, Victoria.**

The work of Destiny Deacon, of the K'ua K'ua and Erub/Mer peoples, has been featured in *Documenta 11*, Kassel, Germany, 2002, and the 10th Bienal de La Habana, Cuba, 2010. The survey exhibition *Destiny Deacon: Walk and Don't Look Blak*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2004, toured to Melbourne, Noumea, Wellington and Tokyo. Virginia Fraser is an artist, writer, editor and curator. Her art practice consists mainly of video and installation works, often made in collaboration with Deacon. Fraser edited *A Book About*

*Australian Women* (1974); *Screw Loose: An Uncalled for Memoir* by Peter Blazey (1997); and *Central Business Dreaming* (2008). Their work is held in private and public collections worldwide.

– National Gallery of Victoria / [ngv.vic.gov.au](http://ngv.vic.gov.au)

*Home Security*, 2007-14 (installation detail), lightjet prints, DVDs, carpet, textiles, cast silicon, artificial hair, found objects, dimensions variable.

Courtesy the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

The friendship and artistic collaboration between Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser has produced works across a range of media including figures, objects, videos, installations

and photographs. Portraits form a reference point in their work and they draw inspiration from both the realities of contemporary culture and their own lives. In particular, Deacon and Fraser's work reflects their engagement with Indigenous and feminist politics. In *Home Security*, Deacon and Fraser play with stereotypes to approach serious themes such as Australian nationalism and child welfare. The artists refer to the casual and aggressive public racism expressed in a not so distant past through 'blackface' performances, and the stolen generations of mixed-race children. Taken from their parents by successive Australian governments, these children were placed in Christian missions or with white families who were expected to 'civilise' them and remove all trace of Aboriginal culture and language.

– Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser

# Karla Dickens

AUSTRALIA

## Born 1967, Sydney.

Karla Dickens artworks are the result of a continuing dialogue between past and the present; conversations grounded in her Aboriginality and sexuality, social, political and spiritual life informing her practice and the materials used. To attempt to categorise Dickens as an artist would be reductionist. Her impressive array of work makes use of many mediums to convey a strong, resilient story of contemporary Aboriginality in Australia. Dickens uses fabric, leather, paper, paint, feathers, photographs, plastic and 'all things discarded and fossed from rubbish tips' such as old baseball masks, fish hooks and reel, twine and bone to create two and three-dimensional pieces.

Dickens' transforms colonial waste and surplus into Aboriginal creations and statements; and her representations of black women. Reworking such materials into three-dimensional sculptures and interwoven into canvases symbolise both traditional and contemporary aspects of Aboriginality. In this way her work calls into questions culturally specific notions the disposability and permanence.

– Jeanie Leane

*"The older I grow, the more stories I have to tell, the wider my artistic practice becomes. Just in personal relationship I need more than one person to communicate with, so with my art I embrace different conversations with different mediums. The found objects I use have excited by interdisciplinary and hybrid art experiences art is my healer and my voice."*

– Karla Dickens



**Work horse II**, 2015 (detail), found objects, text, 86 × 60 × 38cm.  
Courtesy the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane.

Artist statement accompanying work:

1 horse  
2 gins  
3 cows  
Moved  
Removed  
& Eaten

My Black History  
Broken  
In the day of Mary Anderson  
Loving her memory  
I can not polish her story  
I will hold her scars  
In the light  
Bathe them in my tears  
Honour her pain in art

With my own knowing  
Pieces

Voices of true warriors  
Stories bleed together  
Assimilated  
Beaten and abused  
Culture torn away  
Left with threads soaking  
In fragmented welfare blood  
Knowledge denied  
Not shared, given or told  
An offensive  
A ward  
Careless Protection  
Unjust memories

Left & Kept

No Country to sit on  
To feel  
Reserved for experts  
Anthropologists included  
I wander  
A heart wide open  
I search for place  
Community  
Holding solid moments  
where my spirit finds  
knowing  
knowing those songs  
listening deeply  
I sing with Mary

In-between worlds  
Cultures and time  
Stations  
Cross cultural holes  
I fall down  
I trip  
Weaving my path  
Longing for a wholeness,  
The wholeness is acceptance  
Accepting damage, loss  
Trauma

Mary was removed  
Ripped away  
worked hard  
all day and most night

Under the skies of  
The Crown  
Lawful Acts

Rusty hooks  
Rip  
Bush cocky's  
on & on

1 horse  
2 gins  
3 cows  
Moved  
Removed  
& Eaten

# Fiona Foley

AUSTRALIA



**Born 1964, Maryborough, Queensland, Australia.**

Fiona Foley is a Badtjala woman and an influential curator, writer and academic as well as an internationally recognised artist. Foley pursues a diverse artistic practice encompassing painting, printmaking, photography, sculpture, mixed-media work, found objects and installation. Foley examines and dismantles historical stereotypes and her works explore a broad range of themes that relate to politics, culture, ownership, language and identity.

From proudly asserting her Badtjala womanhood in 1994 (*Badtjala Woman and Native Blood*), Foley went on to assume the mantles of peoples from other nations: *American Seminole dress in Wild Times Call* (1994), a radical inversion of Ku Klux Klan robes in the *Hedonistic Honky Haters* series

(2004), and an Islamic woman's burqa in *Nulla 4 Eva* (2009). Her manoeuvres are not only intended to sidestep stereotypes and unsettle expectations of the Aboriginal artist, but also to signal affiliations with international First Nation peoples and their shared concerns.

Foley has been exhibiting since the mid-1980s, and was one of the founding members of the Boomalli Aboriginal Arts Co-operative in 1987. She is represented in numerous national and international collections, as well as major public artworks worldwide.

– Museum of Contemporary Art Australia / [mca.com.au](http://mca.com.au)

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***Black Opium***, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane (2009). 777 cast aluminium poppies, configured in an infinity symbol. Courtesy the artist and SLQ.

*Black Opium* was commissioned as part of the State Library's 2006 redevelopment and was designed to draw visitors along the *Knowledge Walk* and to act as a prelude to the John Oxley Library on level 4.

Suspended poppy heads arranged in the shape of the infinity symbol connect to a series of seven small rooms representing different ambiances and cultures, exploring themes of history, memory and politics through sculptural installations and photographs. Foley's artistic concept was inspired by the book, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs - The Untold Story* (1997) by Rosalind Kidd, and the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*. Foley, an Adjunct Professor with the Queensland College of Art at Griffith University said "This piece of legislation passed in 1897 and the subsequent amendments in 1901 affected so many Chinese and Aboriginal people's lives in Queensland. The story that unfolds through the reading rooms and *Black Opium* sculpture is a hint of this history".

– State Library of Queensland

# Félix González-Torres

CUBA / USA



## 1957 – 1996, born Guáimaro, Cuba.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (November 26, 1957 – January 9, 1996) was an American, Cuban-born, gay visual artist. Gonzalez-Torres was known for his minimal installations and sculptures in which he used materials such as strings of lightbulbs, clocks, stacks of paper, or packaged hard candies. In 1987, he joined Group Material, a New York-based group of artists whose intention was to work collaboratively, adhering to principles of cultural activism and community education.

– Museum of Modern Art, New York.

*Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991, wall clocks, 34 x 68 x 3 cm.

Courtesy the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation and the Dallas Museum of Art.

This work, like many by Gonzalez-Torres, memorializes his relationship with his partner Ross Laycock, who had died from AIDS the year before. Two identical battery-operated wall clocks sit side by side, gently touching; one will inevitably stop before the other, before being reset and started again. Using form and allusion, rather than directly representing the couple, the work echoes the queer theory of its time, which sought to trouble definitions or fixed identities, whilst privileging ambiguity. Resonances of this queer formalism can be seen today in the work of artists such as Carol Bove, Prem Sahib and Danh Vo. The late Gonzalez-Torres was, this year, the subject of concurrent shows in London, Milan and New York (which are reviewed in this issue).

– *Frieze*, '25 Artworks: 1991–95', 16 August 2016. Text courtesy Paul Clinton.

# Julie Gough

AUSTRALIA

**Born 1965, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.**

Julie Gough is an artist, writer and curator who lives in Hobart, Tasmania. Julie's research and art practice involves uncovering and re-presenting subsumed and often conflicting histories, many referring to her own and her family's experiences as Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Current work in installation, sound and video provides the means to explore ephemerality, absence and recurrence.

Her work is held in private and public collections worldwide.



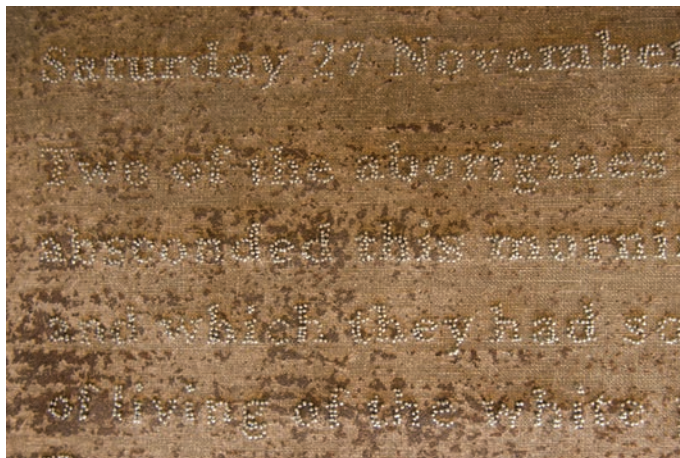
**The Chase** 2008, found chaise longue, tea tree (*Melaleuca* spp.), steel pins, 97 x 182 x 52 cm, installation view above and detail, right. Collection of the National Gallery of Australia. Courtesy the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart.

*"My process is to gather, collate, then reconsider the almost-lost. I test the visual potential to express and engage with historic events by re-uniting people and objects with place. This is part of an ongoing project that questions and re-evaluates the impact of the past on our present lives. A key intention is to invite a viewer to a closer understanding of our continuing roles in, and proximity to unresolved National stories; narratives of memory, time, absence, location and representation.*

*My works combine found objects with those I construct from or based on diverse sources including my island and heritage, museums and archives, tips and gardens. Much inspiration comes from the people, stories, places, skills of and connections to my maternal Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.*

*I work with existent materials including sound and video (of relevant places), and by establishing new relationships between 'natural' and found objects. Sometimes I reconfigure wood, stone, kelp, bark, shell into narratives that relate their original environment and my own and ancestors' encounters, actions and traces in these places with these same types of materials."*

– Julie Gough / juliegough.net





# Guerrilla Girls

USA



## Established 1985, New York, USA.

We're feminist masked avengers in the tradition of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Wonder Woman and Batman. How do we expose sexism, racism and corruption in politics, art, film and pop culture? With facts, humor and outrageous visuals. We reveal the understory, the subtext, the overlooked, and the downright unfair. Our work has been passed around the world by our tireless supporters. Just in the last several years, we've appeared at over 90 universities and museums, as well as *The New York Times*, *Interview*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *Bitch*, and *Artforum*; on NPR, the BBC and CBC; and in many art and feminist texts. We are authors of stickers, billboards, many, many posters and street projects, and several books including *The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art* and

*Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls' Guide to Female Stereotypes*. We're part of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women Campaign in the UK; we're brainstorming with Greenpeace. We've unveiled anti-film industry billboards in Hollywood just in time for the Oscars, and created a large scale installation for the Venice Biennale, and street projects for Krakow, Istanbul, Mexico City and Montreal. We dissed the Museum of Modern Art at its own Feminist Futures Symposium, examined the museums of Washington DC in a full page in the *Washington Post*, and exhibited large-scale posters and banners in London, Athens, Bilbao, Montreal, Rotterdam, Sarajevo and Shanghai.

—Guerrilla Girls / [guerrillagirls.com](http://guerrillagirls.com)

Image courtesy the artists / [ggtakeover.com](http://ggtakeover.com) and *The Guardian*, photo: George Lange

# Dale Harding

AUSTRALIA



**Born 1982, Moranbah, Queensland, Australia.**

Dale Harding is a descendant of the Bidjara, Garingbal and Ghungalu people, and also acknowledges the Gungari people of Central Queensland.

Inspired by unwritten histories and unknown Aboriginal perspectives, Harding aims to depose convention in order to write these realities into the books. "These histories and these pieces of inherited knowledge often don't extend beyond the family unit, or the wider Aboriginal community."<sup>1</sup>

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Above and detail, left: ***bright eyed little dormitory girls***, 2013, Hessian sack, mohair wool, 190 x 35 x 3 cm (approx.)

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

*Bright Eyed Little Dormitory Girls* (2013) consists of a series of hessian sacks, referring to the crude dresses that Aboriginal children on the mission were forced to wear as punishment for 'misbehaviour'. This work recalls the penalty inflicted on Harding's grandmother when she dared try to defend herself against the unwanted advances of her employer. The sacks were coarse and abrasive and often left the children's delicate skin mottled with sores. In an attempt to retrospectively alleviate the pain Harding has tenderly added a soft, opulent mohair neckline.<sup>2</sup>

— Texts courtesy Design and Art Australia Online / Kimberley Bulliman, [duggim / daao.org.au](http://daao.org.au)



1. Harding, Dale (2013) Dale Harding | Artist Interview [video recording], QAGOMA TV, June 1st 2013 [tv.qagoma.qld.gov.au/2013/05/29/dale-harding-artist-interview/](http://tv.qagoma.qld.gov.au/2013/05/29/dale-harding-artist-interview/)

2. Allas, Tess (2013) 'A Stitch in Time', string theory: focus on contemporary Australian art [exhibition catalogue], pp.42-45. Museum of Contemporary Art: Sydney.

# Edgar Heap of Birds

USA



**Born 1954, Wichita, Kansas, USA.**

For over three decades, contemporary Native American (Cheyenne) artist Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds has pursued a disciplined practice in multiple media, having shown his paintings, drawings, prints, and text-based conceptual art throughout numerous national and international galleries and public spaces. In the first book-length study of this important artist, Bill Anthes analyzes Heap of Birds's art and politics in relation to the international contemporary art scene, Native American history, and settler colonialism. Foregrounding how Heap of Birds roots his practice in Cheyenne spirituality and an indigenous way of seeing and being in the world, Anthes

describes how Heap of Birds likens his art to “sharp rocks”—weapons delivering trenchant critiques of the loss of land, life, and autonomy endured by Native Americans. Whether appearing as interventions in public spaces or in a gallery, Heap of Birds's carefully honed artworks pose questions about time, modernity, identity, power, and the meaning and value of contemporary art in a global culture.

— Duke University Press

From the series *Genocide and Democracy*, 2016, 15 x 22 in each, ink on rag paper. Courtesy the artist and Fourth Dimension Fine Art Studio.

Likening his art to “sharp rocks,” or the arrowheads traditionally used as tools of defence, Heap of Birds has stated that “the survival of our people is based upon our use of expressive forms of modern communication. The insurgent messages within these forms must serve as our present day combative tactics.” This strategy is at play in the two series of text works in the exhibition—*Secrets in Life and Death* (2012) and *Genocide and Democracy* (2016)—where Heap of Birds combines seemingly incongruous words into complex statements that are fraught with meaning.

— Introduction: *Edgar Heap of Birds: Genocide and Democracy, Secrets of Life and Death*. Charles H. Scott Gallery at Emily Carr University, Vancouver, Canada / [ecuad.ca](http://ecuad.ca)

# Pierre Huyghe

FRANCE

## Born 1962, Paris, France.

Pierre Huyghe attended the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (1982–85). His work has been exhibited in numerous solo exhibitions at leading institutions across the world including LACMA (2014); Centre Pompidou (2013); Tate Modern and ARC, Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2006); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2003); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2000). He lives and works in Paris and New York.



*Abyssal Plain*, 2015–ongoing. Concrete, marine life, rocks, mixed media, Sivriada. Installation view, 14th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey. View of Sivriada Island, above, details from limited edition book, right.

Courtesy the artist.

Artist Pierre Huyghe chose to sink his artwork, *Abyssal Plain* (2015–ongoing), out of sight, twenty meters beneath the Marmara Sea. Upon this submerged pedestal, found objects and “production left over from the history of the Mediterranean region” will be set near the abandoned Sivriada (or Dog Island).<sup>1</sup> An artwork only fish are likely to see may seem frivolous. It is. Yet suggestive associations reside in this unseen artwork, starting with the so-called Dog Island, a place where thousands of stray dogs from nearby Istanbul were sent to starve and perish over one hundred years ago. Some consider the banishing of the dogs a presage to the rounding up of ethnic minorities, especially Armenians, in a similar fashion a few years after Dog Island gained notoriety. Thus the otherwise insignificant island is time-stamped by grave and formative events that coincided with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the details of which remain shrouded in the murk of denial and obfuscation that both of the World Wars created in every theater.<sup>2</sup>

– Matthew Schum: ‘Salt of the Earth: Locating the 14th Istanbul Biennial’ in *X-Tra Contemporary Art Quarterly*, Spring 2016, Volume 18 Number 3. / [x-traonline.org](http://x-traonline.org)

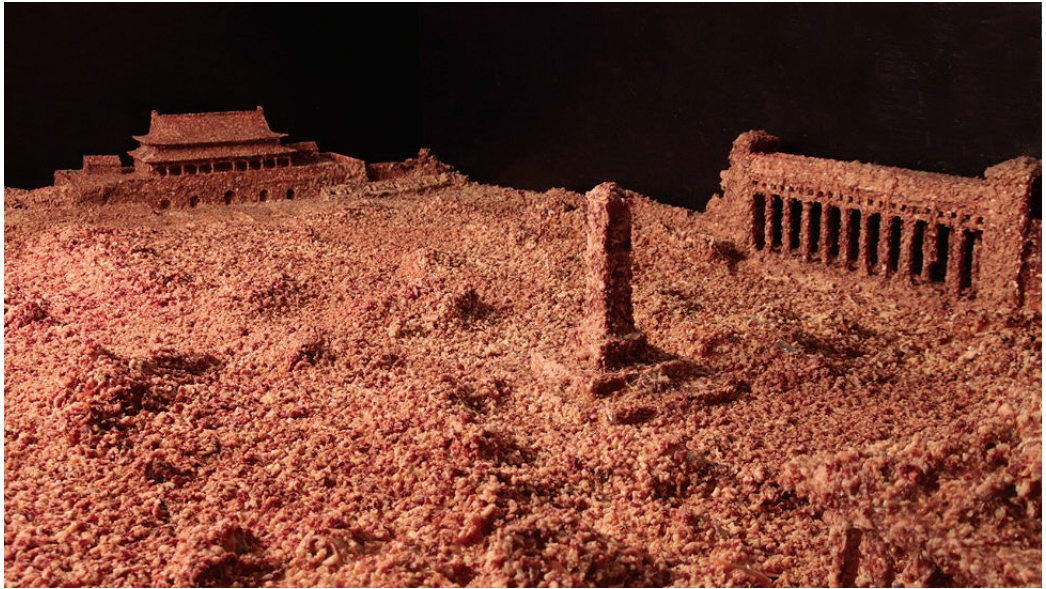
1. Email from Pierre Huyghe to the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, July 30, 2015. Quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “Introduction,” *SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms* (Istanbul, Turkey: IKSU, 2015), xv



2. Christov-Bakargiev notes the dogs were sent to Sivriada in 1910. The Armenian Genocide occurred in 1915. The last Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed VI, left the country in 1922, as the Turkish War of Independence came to a close. “Theater” here relates to the military terminology of a strategic location or key battlefield of likely consequence.

# Guo Jian

CHINA



## **Born 1982, Gizhou, China.**

Guo Jian and his art, are products of the last fifty years of violence and tumultuousness in China, from the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's and 70s, to the Sino-Vietnam war at the beginning of the 80's, and through to the horrors of the Tiananmen Square incident.

At the end of the 1970's at age seventeen, he enlisted in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during a recruitment drive to support the Sino-Vietnamese war, initiated by the country's then leader Deng Xiaoping. As with many of his peers, his military experiences left him both cynical and with a new found critical perspective. After leaving the army he returned to his hometown and was the propagandist officer in a transport company.

After leaving the army, Guo Jian

enrolled in the National Minorities "Minzu" University and studied art in Beijing during China's "85 New Wave" art movement period.

His perspective turned a full 180 degrees as a result of the horrors that he and his classmates witnessed on the streets of Beijing in June 1989.

Guo Jian's art is not about preaching or converting others but rather a reflection of his observations from both sides of propaganda and art. As a result of his firsthand perspective both from within the propaganda function, as well as from the outside looking in, he also sees abundant commonalities in the Chinese and Western approaches to persuasion. He delves into the sexualisation of propaganda, heroism, patriotism and persuasion. What first appears as humour is actually a lament at the use of sex to seduce men to war.

Guo Jian's works not only relates to his own tribulations but to themes, experiences and things left unsaid that are perhaps universal to soldiers in any army. His subjects wrestle with the inherent contradictions: high ideals verses blighted reality, heroism verses villainy, patriotism and valour verses betrayal and loathing. He speaks of the lines easily blurred between terror, euphoria, aggression and lust. He also nods to the commonality and empathy of soldiers across borders. Soldiers don't start wars, governments do; but it is the soldiers who serve and suffer the horrors.

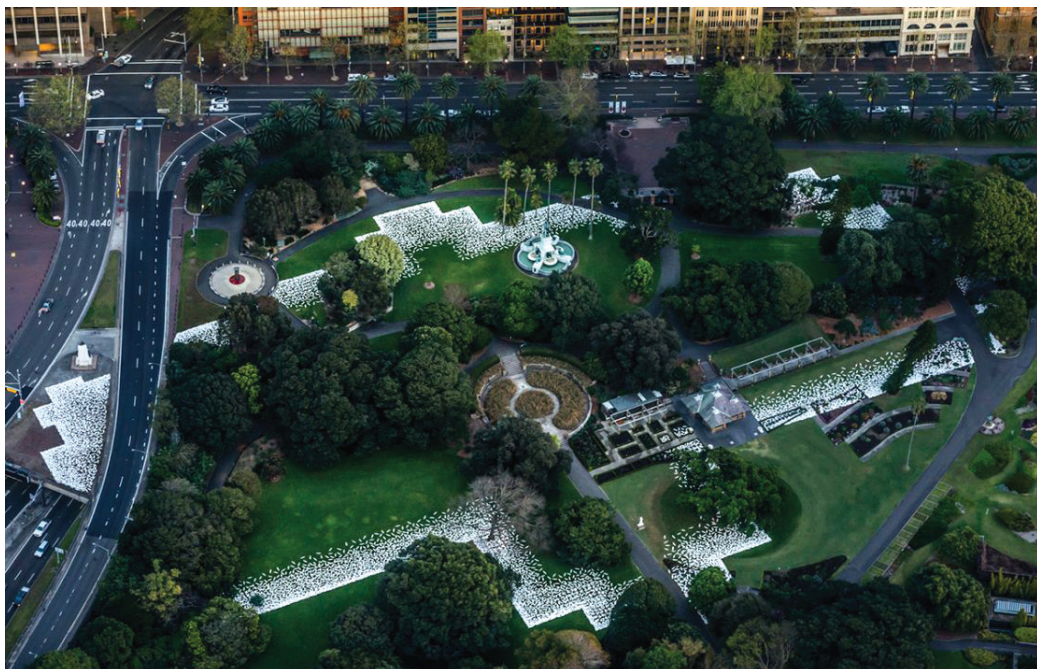
— Guo Jian / [guojianart.com](http://guojianart.com)

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*The Square*, 2014, diorama with minced pork, variable dimensions.  
Courtesy the artist.

# Jonathan Jones

AUSTRALIA



## Born 1978, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Jonathan Jones, a member of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations of south-east Australia, works across a range of mediums, from printmaking and drawing to sculpture and film. He creates site-specific installations and interventions into space that use light, subtle shadow and the repetition of shape and materiality to explore Indigenous practices, relationships and ideas. Jones often works with everyday materials, and he has sought to represent both the traditional and contemporary by working with the particular site's historical usage and current vision. Often perceived as oppositional, these two frameworks are in fact linked, sharing commonalities and connections; Jones' artworks



serve to honour both contexts. At the heart of Jones' practice is the act of collaborating, and many projects have seen him work in conjunction with other artists and communities to develop outcomes that acknowledge local knowledge systems to connect the site with local concerns.

Jones has exhibited both nationally and internationally: in Australia at Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, and the National Gallery of Australia,

Canberra, and overseas at the Palazzo delle Papesse Contemporary Art Centre, Siena, Italy, and Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, Canada, among others.

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**barrangal dyara (skin and bones)**, installation views/details, Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, 17 September – 3 October 2016. Courtesy the artist and Kaldor Public Art Projects. For the 32nd Kaldor Public Art Project Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones presents *barrangal dyara (skin and bones)*, a vast sculptural installation stretching across 20,000 square metres of the Royal Botanic Garden, recalling the 19th century Garden Palace building where it originally stood in Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden, before it devastatingly burnt to the ground along with countless Aboriginal objects collected along the colonial frontier. — Kaldor Public Art Projects / [kaldorartprojects.org.au/jonathanjones.com.au](http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/jonathanjones.com.au)

# Jumaadi

INDONESIA / AUSTRALIA



**Born 1973, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia.**

Jumaadi has lived in Australia for the past 17 years. His connections to Indonesia remain significant – he maintains a studio in Yogyakarta and his work has been shown at the Jakarta Biennale (2011) and the National Gallery of Indonesia. Jumaadi represented Australia in the Moscow Biennale (2013) with his shadow performance. In 2014 a series of his drawings on old maps were shown at the David Roberts Art Foundation in London and the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston (USA) hosted a solo exhibition of his performance, installation and drawings.

– CEMENTA Festival, Australia / [cementa.com.au](http://cementa.com.au)

***Halfway to the light, halfway through the night* 2010-14**

Courtesy the artist, AGNSW, Felicity Jenkins

Jumaadi's *Halfway to the light, halfway through the night* (2010-14) consists of a sequence of fantastic drawings spread out across 58 sheets of mulberry paper. There are dark ogres with angel's wings, multiple eyes or nails hammered around their heads. There is an ox with so many humps he resembles a mountain range on legs, and a cow with long pig tails and multiple udders.

These works depict a world of perfect mutability where human beings, animals and landscapes have become combined into new entities. It is the world of the folk tale, a familiar feature of so-called primal cultures, from the Australian desert to the pantheistic religions of Africa and Asia. Jumaadi doesn't play the shaman in the manner of artists such as Joseph Beuys or Cang Xin. His motifs have grown out of memories of his own childhood, spent in a small village in East Java, and they retain a childlike sense of wonder. The entire installation reads like a story told in hieroglyphics, but as there is no master key most viewers will have to get their thrills from the Gothic overtones of images that are the visual equivalent of a mysterious noise in a darkened forest.

– John McDonald: *Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial 2016*, September 6, 2016. [johnmcdonald.net.au](http://johnmcdonald.net.au)

# Yuki Kihara

SAMOA / AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



## **Born 1975, Apia, Samoa.**

Yuki Kihara is a multimedia and performance artist who uses photography to explore themes of Pacific culture, identity, indigenous spirituality, colonialism, stereotypes, gender roles, and consumerism. Kihara was born in Samoa and is of Japanese and Samoan descent. She lives in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Inspiration for Kihara's work comes from a variety of sources, including nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial photographs made by non-indigenous artists who contributed to perceptions – many of them erroneous – about Pacific Islanders and their culture.

## ***Fa'a fafine: In a Manner of a Woman* Triptych 1, 2007, C-print, 60 x 80 cm**

Courtesy the artists and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Evelyn A. J. Hall Charitable Trust and Stephanie H. Bernheim Gifts, 2007.

In the series *Fa'a fafine: In a Manner of a Woman*, Kihara makes powerful statements about the depiction of Samoan people, shared memory, societal roles, and sexuality. The Samoan word *fa'a fafine* is best described in Western terms as a third gender. The artist, herself a *fa'a fafine*, re-creates studio tableaux similar to the scenes staged by nineteenth-century non-Samoan photographers such as Thomas Andrew and Alfred John Tattersall, where women and men were posed alone and as couples partially clothed and often with tropical foliage. In the triptych Kihara is seen on a couch in a provocative, reclining pose that evokes numerous historical photographs of the

'dusky maiden' trope — each photo revealing her in various stages of undress. Presented as both male and female, Kihara boldly engages the gaze of the viewer while challenging common assumptions about gender identity. The series is a powerful commentary directed at Western perceptions of Pacific Islanders and the sexual stereotypes that were generated by early images and which, in many ways, remain intact to this day.

– Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York / [metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org)



# Glenn Ligon

USA

## Born 1960, The Bronx, NY, USA.

Throughout his career, Glenn Ligon has pursued an incisive exploration of American history, literature, and society across a body of work that builds critically on the legacies of modern painting and more recent conceptual art. He is best known for his landmark series of highly textured text-based paintings, which draw on the writings and speech of diverse figures such as Jean Genet, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman and Richard Pryor. In addition to paintings, Ligon's practice also encompasses neon, photography, sculptures, print, installation, and video. Both politically provocative and formally rigorous, his work explores issues of history, language and identity.

A mid-career retrospective of Ligon's work, *Glenn Ligon: America*, organized by Scott Rothkopf, opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in March 2011 and traveled nationally. Ligon has also been the subject of solo museum exhibitions at Camden Arts Center in London, the Power Plant in Toronto, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, and the Kunstverein Munich. He has also participated in major group exhibitions such as the Berlin Biennial (2014), Istanbul Biennial (2011), Documenta XI (2002), Gwangju Biennale (2000), and Venice Biennale (1997) and the Whitney Biennial (1991 and 1993). Important recent shows include *Glenn Ligon: Encounters and Collisions*, a curatorial project organized with Nottingham Contemporary and Tate Liverpool, and the 2015 Venice Biennale.

– Luhring Augustine / luhringaugustine.com



**Warm Broad Glow II, 2011**, neon, paint and metal support, 29 x 242 x 4 5/8 inches, edition of 3 and 2 Aps

Courtesy the artist, The Modern, and Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York.

*“Rose Johnson was a real black negress. Rose laughed when she was happy but she had not the wide abandoned laughter that makes the warm broad glow of negro sunshine. Rose was never joyous with the earth-born, boundless joy of negroes. Hers was just ordinary, any sort of woman laughter.”*

– Gertrude Stein: *Melanctha in Three Lives*, 1909.

Ligon used words from Gertrude Stein's 1909 novella *Melanctha* for a series of drawings that he later turned into his first neon piece, *Warm Broad Glow* (2005). The black paint customarily applied to the back of neon instead covers its front, diverting the light into an intense halo that emanates from behind, and elegantly touching on the issues of opacity, repression and invisibility that occupy his practice as a whole. Even then, Ligon produced other versions of *Warm Broad Glow*, including one for his 2007 exhibition at Regen Projects, in Los Angeles, which was painted entirely black. “If phrases are resonant enough”, he observes, “they cannot be exhausted. Other meanings can be teased out of them, partly by a change in medium or approach.”

– Tyler Coburn: ‘I am...’, in *ArtReview*, January/February 2009.

# Laura Lima

BRAZIL



## Born 1971, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Laura Lima's works are conceptual setups that explore the boundaries between the quotidian and the absurd.

Since the early 1990's, Lima has been using living things as a medium. There is a certain distance to the term Performance. In her actions or sculptures it is essential that the piece go uninterrupted for long periods. In parallel the artist has been working on diverse groups of works with references ranging from art history to science fiction and techniques that vary from intricate drawings and collages to collaborations with artists and artisans for user activated pieces. In 2014 she won the Bonnefanten Award and in 2013 Lima showed at the Retrospective of the 30 years of the São Paulo Biennial; at MUAC, in Mexico DF, and at the group show *Crossed Circuits: The*

*Pompidou Center meets MAM* at the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art.

In 2015 Laura had a Solo Show *The Naked Magicien*, at the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, and at the MAMBA Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Argentina, and also at the Bonnefanten Museum. Other recent exhibition highlights include: a Solo Show at the Bonniers KonstHall (2014); a Solo Show at Migros Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (2013); Lyon Biennial (2011); *11 Rooms*, Manchester Art Gallery (2011) and has participated twice in the São Paulo Biennial (1998 and 2006). Lima is also a founding-partner and director of A Gentil Carioca gallery together with Marcio Botner and Ernesto Neto. Lima graduated in Philosophy at the UERJ-Rio de Janeiro.

– A gentil carioca / [agentilcarioca.com.br](http://agentilcarioca.com.br)

*Hips (M=f/W=f)*, 1998, performance documentation, 24th Bienal de São Paulo. Also sometimes characterised as 'Untitled', this was a roving work by two performers featured in the section *Arte Contemporânea Brasília: Um e Outro (One and Other)* curated by Adriano Pedrosa.

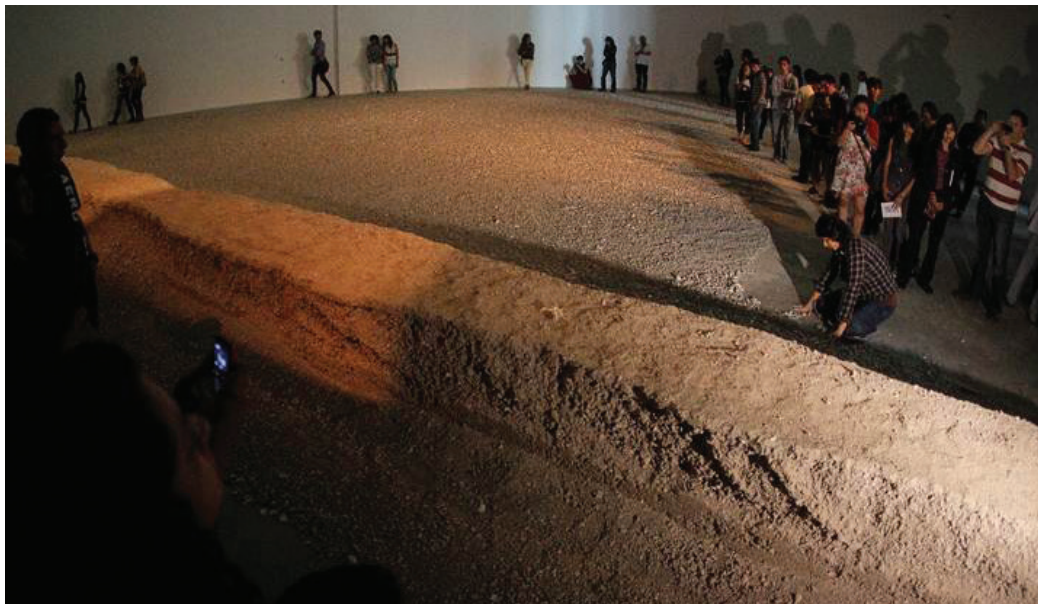
Courtesy: the artist, Bienal Foundation São Paulo, and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

The axis, that of "One and other", more psychoanalytic and subjective, although not exempt of social and political implications, departs from the cannibalistic theme of love fusion. In love fusion, the two passionate lovers desire to incorporate, to melt into each other, to become one. The fear of losing the other may incite in a lover the desire to ingest and consume the other -perhaps that could explain some voracious kisses and bites-, the desire for each other's corporal fluids. Unhappily, the fusion is an utopian desire, faded to frustration, non-accomplishment - penetration is as close to it as lovers arrive.

– Adriano Pedrosa / [24bienal.org.br](http://24bienal.org.br)

# Teresa Margolles

MEXICO



## Born 1963 Culiacan, Mexico.

Since becoming a member of the group SEMEFO, whose name is derived from the forensic medical service, the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles has chosen as her atelier, first the morgue and the dissecting room, and more recently, the violence-ridden streets of Mexico. These are places of death but also places which bear witness to social unrest in what may be the world's biggest metropolis, Mexico City.

Margolles works not so much directly with the remains of bodies but rather with the traces of life, with shrouds, burial and memory, and with the way a violent act shatters human networks and affects them in various levels. The nameless and anonymous victims draw attention to inhuman relationships in modern overcrowded societies.

– Labor, Mexico / labor.org.mx

*La promesa (The promise)* (2012), sculpture installation view at the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, UNAM, Mexico City. An exhibition curated by Alejandra Labastida. Courtesy the artist, MUAC and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich.

As a response to her consistent instrumentalization in the creation of a national image, Margolles created in 2012 an artwork that illustrated that she had left thanatophilia behind, no longer privileging a death aesthetic, but instead privileging the resilience of Mexican civil society in the face of the necropolitics that encumber it. Titled *La promesa (The promise)*, the sculpture installation and social practice work was organized by the University Museum of Contemporary Art at UNAM and was curated by Alejandra Labastida. The project consisted of a sculpture made out of the ground up remains of an entire house from Ciudad Juárez, which were compressed into a minimal sculpture in the museum in Mexico City, which would then be crumbled by the public. Margolles and her team systematically demolished the house in Ciudad Juárez, pulverizing the stone and cement that went into the structure. *La*

*promesa* addresses social deconstruction and reconstruction, issues of forced migration, the marks left behind by violence, and what it means to survive. A family, whose daughter was murdered, and who were then forced to leave Ciudad Juárez and live with family elsewhere in Mexico, once inhabited the demolished house. At the site where the demolished structure once stood, the museum and the artist built a community center where young people could socialize, returning laughter and joy to a site of loss and grief.<sup>1</sup>

– Á.R. Vázquez-Concepción: *From Thanatophilia to Necropolitics: On the work of SEMEFO and Teresa Margolles, 1990–Now*, M.A. thesis, 2015, California College of the Arts in San Francisco, California

1. Labastida, Alejandra in an interview with the author on February 18, 2015.

# Shay (Shaghayegh) Mazloom

IRAN



## Born 1978, Tehran, Iran.

Shay (Shaghayegh) Mazloom is an Iranian based artist working with photography, video, installation and Performance. She holds a Master of Studio Art from Sydney College of the Arts 2011. The experience of living in two different cultures has informed practices that investigate themes of cultural identity, language, geographical displacement and otherness. Her works investigate the affiliation of identity, culture and place, and also the effects of social and cultural discourses on individuals.

Shay Mazloom has exhibited her works nationally and internationally. Recently, She curated *(B)orders, Orders, (Dis)orders* as a traveling exhibition with artists participating from Australia, USA, UK, Finland, Canada and Iran.



Top: *In-Between 3*, 2012 (detail), 70x90 cm, Fine art print on Epson traditional paper.

Above: *Tell Your Wives 1-3*, 2012, 30x20 cm, Lambda prints.

Courtesy the artist and DNA Projects, Sydney.

# Queenie Nakarra McKenzie

AUSTRALIA



## c. 1912–1998, born Texas Downs Station, Northern Territory, Australia.

One of the most prominent painters of the Warmun (Turkey Creek) community, Gija artist Queenie McKenzie was born at Texas Downs Station. The daughter of an Aboriginal woman and a gardiya (white-fella) father, in her youth McKenzie was at the centre of a series of tense encounters between her mother and local government authorities. They sought to take her from her family, following the assimilation policies of the time. On each occasion, McKenzie's mother strongly resisted, even rubbing charcoal on the young girl in an attempt to conceal her lighter skin. As a young woman, McKenzie worked as a goatherd and later as a cook in the cattle mustering camps of Texas Downs. In her later years she moved to Warmun, where she became one of the most senior figures in Gija women's law and ceremony. After witnessing

the success of the male Warmun artists, and with the encouragement of Rover Thomas, in 1987 McKenzie was the first woman to begin painting in her community. In little more than a decade of active painting, Queenie McKenzie emerged as a prominent and compelling commentator on the Aboriginal experience. Participating in numerous solo and group exhibitions, she created works that range in scope from the creation of the world, through the violent encounters of the colonial era, to the present day. Many of McKenzie's paintings are autobiographical: depicting episodes from her life with her own people and with gardiya, on the remote cattle stations of the East Kimberley. McKenzie created a remarkable visual history of a life spent in two worlds: the sacred landscape of the Ngarrangkarni, and her working life on Texas Downs Station.

— Art Gallery of New South Wales / [artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au)

*Horso Creek Massacre* 1998, natural pigments on canvas, 35 7/16 x 64 15/16 inches.

Courtesy the estate of Queenie Nakarra McKenzie or assignees, and Seattle Art Museum. Promised gift of Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan. Photo: icolor, Seattle.

# Kent Monkman

CANADA



## **Born 1965, St Marys, Ontario, Canada.**

Kent Monkman is a Canadian artist of Cree ancestry who works with a variety of mediums, including painting, film/video, performance, and installation. He has had solo exhibitions at numerous Canadian and international museums and his award-winning short film and video works have been screened at various national and international festivals, including the 2007 and 2008 Berlinale, and the 2007 and 2015 Toronto International Film Festival. His work is represented in numerous public and private collections.

— Kent Monkman / [kentmonkman.com](http://kentmonkman.com)

*Expelling the Vices*, 2014  
60" x 84", acrylic on canvas.  
Courtesy the artist.

Monkman mines the conventions of the romantic art of nineteenth century America, but although he makes direct appropriation of historical Canadian landscape and narrative imagery, his art is not an assimilation or development of that earlier tradition. Rather, the artist uses close re-creation of earlier artworks as an opportunity for ironic, often humorous representation of historical attitudes towards First Nations culture, attitudes that persist today. With his art, he assumes a traditional First Nations persona, that of the trickster, to subvert the viewer's expectations, creating visually lush, often mural-sized paintings that present oddly inverted narratives of Aboriginal/white interactions.

Of particular interest for Monkman is the depiction of homosexuality, which he sees as something accepted, even valued, in First Nations culture, but which he believes was pushed into the shadows by white prudery and the oppressive effect of Judeo-Christian beliefs. Depictions of Aboriginal and white males interacting in elaborate tableaux are designed to first shock, and then gently nudge the viewer into an awareness of the humorous irony of white expectations of cultural dominance.

— The Canadian Encyclopedia / [thecanadianencyclopedia.ca](http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca)

# Zanele Muholi

SOUTH AFRICA

**Born 1972, Umlazi, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.**

Zanele Muholi is a visual activist based in Johannesburg. She co-founded the Forum for Empowerment of Women (FEW) in 2002, and in 2009 founded Inkanyiso ([www.inkanyiso.org](http://www.inkanyiso.org)), a forum for queer and visual (activist) media. Muholi's self-proclaimed mission is 'to re-write a black queer and trans visual history of South Africa for the world to know of our resistance and existence at the height of hate crimes in SA and beyond'. She continues to train and co-facilitates photography workshops for young women in the townships. Muholi has won numerous awards including the ICP Infinity Award for Documentary and Photojournalism (2016); Africa'Sout! Courage and Creativity Award (2016); the Outstanding International Alumni Award from Ryerson University (2016); the Fine Prize for an emerging artist at the 2013 Carnegie International; a Prince Claus Award (2013); the Index on Censorship - Freedom of Expression art award (2013); and the Casa Africa award for best female photographer and a Fondation Blachère award at Les Rencontres de Bamako biennial of African photography (2009). Her *Faces and Phases* series has shown at Documenta 13; the South African Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale; and the 29th São Paulo Biennale. She has exhibited at numerous museums worldwide.

***Xana Nyilenda, Newtown Johannesburg. 2011,*** from *Faces and Phases* series (2006–), Lightjet C-print on archival paper, each 30 x 42 cm. Courtesy the artist and Stevenson, Cape Town.

"One of the most challenging things about being a queer visual activist in South Africa is not having access to spaces to exhibit my work here – where it would be most important – even as I gain recognition abroad. The attitude of politicians towards LGBTI people fluctuates a lot. When one of us has been killed – or there are



elections – you find a lot of support, and then when it's over they come up with a different agenda. That's why it's so important to have our own people in politics, in medicine and in the media.

*Faces and Phases* will carry on as long as I live – we are growing up together. I also give workshops to young women and provide them

with cameras to let them document their own lives. Some have even become photographers. That really excites me because I know I'm not fighting alone."

– Zanele Muholi: 'Zanele Muholi's best photograph: out and proud in South Africa'. *The Guardian*, 25 August 2016/

# Clinton Nain

AUSTRALIA

**Born 1971, Carlton, Victoria, Australia.**

Clinton Nain (Meriam Mer, Erub, Ugar and Ku Ku peoples) confronts the continuing injustices suffered by the Indigenous peoples of Australia. His powerful symbolism evokes the wounds of dispossession – of country, culture and language – which lie at the heart of those who once were masters of their own destinies. Recurring images, such as his mother's mission dress and the potholed road leading to her grave, point both to family loss and the ever-painful journey towards reconciliation and healing. In 1999, Nain began his *White King, Blak Queen* series exploring colonisation through a black feminine perspective. Through performance, storytelling and staining fabrics with bleach, the Blak Queen boldly quests for equality. Nain explored these ideas further in his 2001 exhibition, *Whitens, Removes Stains, Kills Germs*.

The artist's brother, writer John Harding, has said: 'The Blak Queen is omnipotent, knows no boundaries and recognises no colonising fences. She has even transformed herself into a bird and flown out a window! She can turn everyday household items into weapons against colonisation and the fading of memory. Her splashes of bleach become evocative images of lingering memories, prodding us to remember the truth' (Melbourne, 2001). Nain's work remains uncompromising. Bitumen, house paint and varnish are now his principal mediums. His exhibitions target the ongoing marginalisation of many Aboriginal people and communities in Australia. Following the national apology to the Stolen Generations, Nain's plea is for us to listen to the voices of the most vulnerable in seeking resolution. 'What we artists create', he says, 'is for everyone in the world.'

– Laura Murray-Cree, Design and Art Australia online / daao.org.au



***Mission brown heart***, 2003, enamel paint and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 21.7 × 91.3 cm. Collection National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, gift of The Hon. Justice David Angel through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009.

Courtesy the artist and NGV Melbourne

What Nain does to the concept of 'Heritage colours' would not please the marketers in paint companies. They prefer to encourage home renovators to think of the past in the

muted tones of a Federation paintbox. He uses their palette to create a stinging critique of the manufactured past. His house is not a neat inner city semi, but a humpy, painted in heritage hues. Clinton Nain's true colours are dominated by Mission Brown. Its muddy hue can give a breaking heart yet another layer of grief.

– Joanna Mendelsohn: *Clinton Nain: Living Under the Bridge*, Sherman Galleries, Sydney 6 - 28 November 2003, in *Artlink* issue 24:1, March 2004.



# Paulo Nazareth

BRAZIL

**Born 1977, Governador Valadares, Brazil.**

Lives and works throughout the world. Based in a favela near Belo Horizonte, Paulo Nazareth engages with the complicated present and past of his native Brazil. "My work is about that mix and meeting of many people in Brazil. Religion is mixed, race is mixed, and even philosophy is mixed," Nazareth has said. "I think it's about the desire of that mixed cultural memory. We Brazilians don't know where we're from." Nazareth, who is of African and indigenous descent, often includes autobiographical elements in his work, drawing on his personal experiences in various parts of Africa and South America. In notebooks, photographs, videos, and objects, Nazareth recounts and illustrates his stories, revealing and dispelling misperceptions and creating counter narratives to commonly held fallacies about these regions.

— Paulo Nazareth, speaking to Artsy.

Above: *Untitled*, from *Mi Imagen de Hombre Exotico* series, 2011, photo printing on cotton paper, 29 × 22 cm

Below: *Untitled* (from the series *Noticias de América* (News from the Americas'), 2011–12, photographic print on cotton paper, 18 × 24 cm. Courtesy the artist; Mendes Wood, São Paulo; Galleria Franco Noero, Turin; Meyer Riegger, Berlin.

Nazareth has been compared to the artists David Hammons and Félix González-Torres, but those comparisons, which seem right, nonetheless relegate his work to the comedies of ethnicity; one might equally plausibly compare him to the broad comedians of ephemera, such as Frances Alys, dragging his ice, or Giovanni Anselmo crushing his lettuce. The work, in the end, is work — after all, it is for sale, even if Nazareth donates the proceeds to indigenous charities — but it never takes itself so anxiously as work that it loses the character of fun. Most performances present themselves as work disguised as play; what Nazareth's does, ingeniously, is present itself as play disguised as work.

— Gideon Lewis-Kraus: "The Walker" in *Frieze*, 19 March 2015



# Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran

SRI LANKA / AUSTRALIA



## **Born 1988, Colombo, Sri Lanka.**

Sri Lankan-born, Sydney-based artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran creates rough-edged, vibrant, new-age idols that are at once enticing and disquieting. He experiments with form and scale in the context of figurative sculpture to explore politics of sex, the monument, gender and organised religion. He capitalises upon the symbolism of clay as fundamental corporeal matter. Formally trained in painting and drawing his practice has a sculptural emphasis which champions the physicality of art making. These works are often stacked to form totems or perched atop customised plinths. While proceeding from a confident atheist perspective, Nithiyendran

draws upon his Hindu and Christian heritage as reference points as well as a large range of sources including the internet, pornography, fashion and art history. Self-portraits make frequent appearances and the dual presence of male and female organs suggest gender fluid realms of new possibilities. Nithiyendran's work is held in various collections, including the Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank and the Shepparton Art Museum.

– Sullivan and Strumpf / [sullivanstrumpf.com](http://sullivanstrumpf.com)

***Mud men***, 2016, installation view, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Courtesy the artist, NGA and Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney. This installation was made possible with the support of the De Lambert Largesse Foundation. The work was produced during an artist-in-residence program at the National Art School, Sydney.

*"I've conceived my installation as an 'Asian collection of the future'. International art discourse is shifting away from Eurocentricity, and the Asia-Pacific region continues to position itself as the key contemporary art region. However, there is often a conception that an Asian collection would be primarily faith-based. My works represent a mash-up of these kinds of representations."*

– Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran / [nga.gov.au](http://nga.gov.au) / [ramesh-nithiyendran.com](http://ramesh-nithiyendran.com)

# Fiona Pardington

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

## Born 1961, Auckland, New Zealand Aotearoa.

At the heart of Fiona Pardington's photographic practice is an abiding concern with emotion and affect. A practitioner with over three decades experience as an exhibiting artist, she has explored the on-going capacities of photography by attending to that which is hidden or unseen in the photograph as much as what it may represent. Early gelatin silver photographs established her reputation as a practitioner of outstanding technical ability, renowned for the exquisite character of her printing and toning. She has continued to bring such qualities of intimacy of the darkroom, refined and explored over a thirty-year period, to a current parallel interest in digital photography and printing.

– Starkwhite / starkwhite.co.nz  
Text by Peter Shand, courtesy of the Arts Foundation, New Zealand.

**Portrait of a life cast of Koe, Timor, 2010**  
from 'Ahuā: A beautiful hesitation' series.  
Archival inks on Epson hot press natural 320gsm paper 146 x 110 cm. Purchased with funds from the Renshaw bequest 2014 University of Sydney Art Collection UA2014.16. Courtesy of the Musée de l'Homme (Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle) Paris, France

This ravishingly beautiful sequence of photographs shows some of the fifty life casts of the people of Oceania taken in the early part of the 19th century on one of the last European so-called voyages of discovery. The casts are now archival objects, held in French ethnographic museums, but they were originally intended to illustrate a hierarchical and deeply racist classification of the peoples of the Pacific. The series has a deeply personal resonance for Pardington, included amongst the images are some of her Māori ancestors from her iwi or tribe, Ngāi Tahu. Given this connection, Pardington adopts what she calls an 'animistic' Māori perspective on these anthropological artefacts that might otherwise be regarded as embarrassing or shameful relics of colonial thinking.<sup>1</sup>

The power of the portraits partly derives from



this underpinning philosophy: Pardington has photographed inanimate objects as if they are alive. She describes her process as looking for "the right time when the image seems to leap into life, the beauty coalesces with the technical plane of the ghost in the machine and the demerger of pixels."<sup>2</sup>

The uncanny vitality of the resulting portraits partly undoes their shameful history, augmenting the other tactics Pardington uses to underscore her reparative approach: the individualisation of each sitter through the emphasis on their names; the tranquillity of their collective demeanour; the use of large

scale and the consequent diminution of the beholder.

– Susan Best, curator: *Back to front: the reparative portraits of Rosângela Rennó and Fiona Pardington*, University Art Gallery, The University of Sydney 4 July – 25 September 2015.

Fiona Pardington, 'I am the Animist,' *Towards a Kaupapa of Ancestral Power and Talk*, Doctor of Fine Arts, Auckland University, 2013, n.p

Pardington cited in Kriselle Baker, 'The Truth of Lineage Time and Te Moko,' *Fiona Pardington: The Pressure of Sunlight Falling*, 27

# Mike Parr

AUSTRALIA



## **Born 1945, Queensland, Australia.**

Mike Parr grew up in rural Queensland before moving to Sydney in the late 1960s. Co-establishing Australia's first artist collective *Inhibidress* in 1970 he was a formative stimulus in the development of conceptual art and performance art in this country. A fierce critic of the Australian art world and a vital link to its international counterpart, Parr has been a divisive and highly influential figure for almost fifty years.

Parr has exhibited extensively both in Australia and internationally, including at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville

de Paris and Museum of Modern Art, New York. His performance practice was the focus of the retrospective *Edelweiss* at Kunsthalle Vienna in 2012, and will be included in the forthcoming Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India in 2016. Parr represented Australia at the Venice Biennale in 1980 and presented the major installation *The Ghost who Talks* at the Palazzo Mora in 2015.

– National Gallery of Australia / [nga.gov.au](http://nga.gov.au)

*BDH (Burning down the house)*, 2016, performance documentation of an action, 17 March 2016, installation view (2016) at Carriageworks for the 20th Biennale of Sydney.

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne. Photograph: Tim da Rin.

In this one-off performance, which the artist described as a protest about inaction on climate change, Parr played the Talking Heads song *Burning Down the House*, then doused \$750,000 worth of his prints with accelerant before setting them on fire. Leaflets distributed before the performance contained key quotes relating to climate change and the impact of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

# Ben Quilty

AUSTRALIA



## **Born 1973, Sydney, Australia.**

Ben Quilty was born in 1973 in Australia and grew up in Kenthurst in Sydney's North West. Quilty was a reckless teenager with his weekends filled with hard drinking and risk taking behaviour. It was this period of his life that inspired most of his work today. After completing high school he went straight into the Sydney College of the Arts where he completed his double degree in fine arts and design. Even through the dark period of his life Quilty continued to paint. Although he has said it seemed like more of a hobby at the time than anything substantial. After completing his degree Quilty was "getting nowhere fast as an artist" and was labouring during the day and working in a kitchen at night. It was around this time that he completed a second degree in design and found himself a job in the Channel 7 news room. He also completed studies in Aboriginal History at Melbourne's Monash University in 1996.

It took him a while, but in time Quilty realised that he wanted to tell the stories of his past when he was a "drug-fuelled, testosterone-charged" young man. This led to a series of paintings which depicted his car, a Holden Torana and was ultimately was the beginning of his career. Images such as skulls, snakes and grotesque Siamese-twin compositions have since been seen in his paintings creating a dark and uncanny genre across the majority of his artworks.

— Ben Quilty / [iartstbenquilty.weebly.com](http://iartstbenquilty.weebly.com)

*Fairy Bower Rorschach*, 2012. Oil on Linen. Collection: Art Gallery of NSW. 120.0 x 130.0 cm each panel; 240.0 x 550.0 cm overall. Courtesy the artist and AGNSW.

*Fairy Bower Rorschach* continues Ben Quilty's practice of oil painted Rorschach works where an original painted image is both damaged and duplicated by pressing one panel at a time onto another similar sized panel while the paint is still wet. Quilty refers to the Swiss psychoanalyst Hermann Rorschach's ink blot tests - widely seen as pioneering contemporary

mental illness therapy and medication at the beginning of the 20th century.

The damaged and mirrored image is of a waterfall at Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales near where Quilty lives and works. Fairy Bower Falls is an idyllic and spectacular destination for tourists and locals. Photographs from the mid 19th century depict the full colonial splendour of women with parasols and men in top hats at the foot of the falls.

Fairy Bower Falls is also reputedly the site of a massacre of scores of aboriginal people in the early 19th century. Although there are no written records there has been a strong oral history of such an event handed down amongst locals.

By Rorschaching this image of such a precarious site Quilty asks the viewer to reconsider their conception of this landscape as a place of idyllic beauty. The duplication and damage of the image echoes the disturbing and violent history this site may have witnessed. This work continues Quilty's exploration of Australian identity and history.

— Art Gallery of NSW / [artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au)

# Imran Qureshi

PAKISTAN



## Born 1972, Hyderabad, Pakistan.

Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan. Imran Qureshi reclaims the regionally rooted discipline of miniature painting that flourished in the Mughal courts of the late sixteenth century, and transports it to the present day. His work constitutes a unique synthesis of traditional motifs and techniques with current issues and the formal language of contemporary abstract painting. Renown for his site-specific installations, he develops an aesthetic that integrates contemporary themes with the motifs and techniques of traditional miniature painting. Leaves and nature represent the idea of life, whilst the colour red (that appears at first glance like real blood) represents death. The red reminds Qureshi of the situation today in his country, Pakistan, and the world, where violence is almost a daily occurrence. “But somehow, people still have hope,” Qureshi says “hence the flowers that emerge from the red paint

in my work represent the hope that—despite everything—the people sustain somehow, their hope for a better future.” He works elegantly across the medium of miniature painting, abstract painting as well as large installations, works on paper, as well as video.

Imran Qureshi, Deutsche Bank Artist of the Year 2013. His is represented in the permanent collections of major institutions worldwide.

– Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, France / ropac.net

## *Blessings Upon the Land of My Love*, 2011

Acrylic and emulsion paint on interlocking brick pavement. Site-specific installation, installation views and details. Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation, photo by Alfredo Rubio.

Courtesy the artist and Sharjah Art Foundation.

*“In the recent series of Red abstract expressionist paintings I have sought to combine the imprints of bodies with splatters of paint, which are reminiscent of blood but on closer inspection are always full of ornamental foliate detail that represents life. There is an almost*

*paradoxical quality between violence and beauty, life and death existing on one surface.*

*“In August last year, a furious crowd of people committed a terribly brutal lynching which resulted in the murder of two young innocent brothers in the small town of Sialkot in Pakistan. It was filmed secretly and was broadcast on national television – leading to shock and outrage.*

*“The impression that people had become quite indifferent was challenged and it bought forth the humanity in people, The reaction to this terrible murder, the sympathy, the protests and the demonstrations against the cover-up of the whole affair, raised the beacon of hope again.*

*“The titles of the Red blood paintings stem from a revolutionary poem by the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984), translated by Shoaib Hashmi. His references to the social and political issues of his time are so similar to my paintings, and I saw so many connections, that I selected my titles from this poem.”*

– Imran Qureshi, in conversation with Sabine B. Vogel, 11 Feb. 2016: Interview for the catalogue of *Political Patterns*, ifa Gallery Berlin, Stuttgart, 2011, curated by Sabine B. Vogel / sabinebvogel.at

# Rosanna Raymond's *SaVAge K'lub*

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



## **Born 1967, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand**

Sistar S'pacific, aka Rosanna Raymond,, an innovator of the contemporary Pasifika art scene as a long-standing member of the art collective the Pacific Sisters, and founding member of the SaVAge K'lub. Raymond has achieved international renown for her Acti.VA.tions, installations, body adornment, and spoken word. A published writer and poet, her works are held by museums and private collectors worldwide.

Raymond's practice works with people, spaces and things to activate a dynamic relationship between them, to realise and reshape the ta-va duality. This is a choreographic process that extends beyond the frames of art, into both domestic routines and ritual protocols. It includes self-adornment and group

enactments, activating space and collapsing time using the body and the genealogical matter.

A dynamic artist, her work is consistent in its celebration of Pasifika and the engagements it invokes and evokes; whether between museum collections and contemporary Pacific art or museums and urban spaces.

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*SaVAge K'lub* project (2010–ongoing). *Poroaki* (farewell) of participants in Rosanna Raymond's Brisbane *SaVAge K'lub* at the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, QAGOMA, Brisbane, 2016: Precious Clark, Taiaaria Mackenzie, Numangatini Mackenzie, Jess Holly Bates, Lisa Fa'alafi, Angela Tiatia, Léului Eshraghi, Horomono Horo, Yuki Kihara, Ani O'Neill, Salvador Brown, Aroha Rawson, Jo Walsh, Katrina Igglesden, Maryann Talia Pau, Charlotte Graham, Reina Sutton, Molana Sutton, Jimmie James Kouratoras, Siliga Setoga, Rameka Tamaki, Niwhai Tupaea, Rosanna Raymond, Suzanne Tamaki.

Courtesy the artists, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

Founded in 2010 by Rosanna Raymond, *The SaVAge K'lub* presents 21st Century South Sea savagery, influencing art and culture through the interfacing of time and space, deploying weavers of words, rare anecdotalists, myth makers, hip shakers, acti.VA.tors, fabricators to institute non cannibalistic cognitive consumption of the other.

— Rosanna Raymond

Participants in the Acti.VA.tion at APT8 official opening: Margaret Aull, Jess Holly Bates, Eric Bridgeman, Salvador Brown, Emine Burke, Precious Clark, Croc Coulter, Lisa Fa'alafi, Charlotte Graham, Mark James Hamilton, Katrina Igglesden, Jimmy Kouratoras, Numangatini MacKenzie, Ani O'Neill, Maryann Talia Pau, Tahiarri Pariente, Aroha Rawson, Rosanna Raymond, Reina and Molana Sutton, David Siliga Setoga, Grace Taylor, Niwhai Tupaea, Suzanne and Rameka Tamaki and Jo Walsh.

This project was realised with the support of Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, Auckland.

# Marwan Rechmaoui

LEBANON



## Born in 1964, Beirut, Lebanon.

Marwan Rechmaoui lives and works in Beirut. Deriving inspiration from the geography and rich cultural history of the city, Rechmaoui's work often reflects themes of urbanization and contemporary social and behavioural demographics. He uses industrial materials such as concrete, rubber, tar and glass to create tactile works on a large scale.

**Pillar** Pillar Series, 2015, concrete, metal, and various materials, installation view, 14th Istanbul Biennale 2015. Photo credit Sahir Uğur Eren Courtesy the artist; Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts; and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg and Beirut.

*"Having lived Lebanon's civil war, I could see beyond the screen. I could smell the image and hear what was happening and imagine the dynamics of the people under that rubble. This work is basically scratching my memory. After it's done, each pillar reminds me of something from my past. They're like memory capsules."*

The Pillar series is a recognizable part of Rechmaoui's oeuvre. Many of his works reference Beirut's urban fabric and its iconic structures. At one point in the development of Pillars, Rechmaoui says he was thinking about the political foundations of this region – T.E. Lawrence's self-aggrandizing autobiography *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and the Sykes-Picot

Agreement that drew the borders of the Middle East as we know them today.

*"What's happening today is the anti-Sykes-Picot, the mission of ISIS to eliminate borders," the artist said. "I ended up making 25 or 30 pillars or more. I had the pillars, without the seven and without the wisdom."*

*"Later I realized that I'm working on the decay of things that the pillar carries ... whether in architecture or society or ethics. All of this is falling apart in the Middle East, specifically the idea of Arab Nationalism, which proceeded from Sykes-Picot."*

– Marwan Rechmaoui speaking to Jim Quilty: 'Memories of a Failed Modernity', 22 Sep 2015, *The Daily Star*, Lebanon.



# Lisa Reihana

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



## Born 1964, Auckland, New Zealand.

Lisa Reihana (Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Hine Ngāi Tu) lives and works in Auckland. At the forefront of lens-based experimentation, Reihana has contributed powerfully to the development of time-based art in Aotearoa New Zealand. She has completed significant commissions, most recently a new single channel video *Tai Whetuki - House of Death* for Auckland Arts Festival 2015. Others include *Rangimarie Last Dance* for Q Theatre, Auckland in 2011; *Mai i te araha, ko te araha* (From love comes love) for the ceremonial female entrance to Te Papa Tongarewa's marae in 2008; and *Native Portraits n.19897* for the opening of Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington in 1998.

Reihana was awarded the Te Tohu Toi Ke, the Te Waka Toi Maori Arts Innovation Award in 2015, and an Arts Laureate by the New Zealand Arts Foundation in 2014. Reihana was shortlisted for The Walters Prize 2016 for *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* and for the Signature Art Prize at Singapore Art Museum in 2014 for *in Pursuit of*

*Venus*; as well as for the Double Take Anne Landa Award, Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2009, and The Walters Prize 2008 at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, both for *Digital Marae*.

Reihana's work is held in numerous private and public collections worldwide.

– Auckland Art Gallery / [aucklandartgallery.com](http://aucklandartgallery.com)

*In Pursuit of Venus [infected]* installation view, 2015, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Patrons of Auckland Art Gallery, 2014

Introducing *in Pursuit of Venus*, the panoramic video by Lisa Reihana, a moving image interpretation of the French scenic wallpaper *Les Sauvages De La Mer Pacifique*.

The final realisation of *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* makes visible some historical narratives absent from the original wallpaper, such as the brisk trade of iron and desirable goods for sexual favours. Differing ideas of ownership and reciprocity resulted in misunderstandings and violent outbursts. This latest version includes famous figures like the privileged and inquisitive botanist Joseph Banks shown terrorising villagers with a Tahitian Chief Mourner; and Tupaiā - the Machiavellian Tahitian who was a gifted navigator, politician and artist, and Captain Cook's invaluable companion. Leading these agents of change is Captain Cook - famous explorer, gifted cartographer and arguably the harbinger of colonisation. As in the wallpaper, Cook's death is portrayed, albeit from a renewed perspective. Challenging historical and contemporary stereotypes, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* returns the gaze of imperialism with a speculative twist that disrupts notions of beauty, authenticity, history and myth. It is thirty-two minutes long and designed for multi-channel projection to create an immersive cinematic experience.

/ [inpursuitofvenus.com](http://inpursuitofvenus.com)

# Doris Salcedo

COLOMBIA



## Born 1958, Bogotá, Colombia.

Doris Salcedo is a Colombian-born sculptor who lives and works in Bogotá. Her work is influenced by her experiences of life in Colombia, and is generally composed of commonplace items such as wooden furniture, clothing, concrete, grass, and rose petals. Salcedo's work gives form to pain, trauma, and loss, while creating space for individual and collective mourning. These themes stem from her own personal history. Members of her own family were among the many people who have disappeared in politically troubled Colombia. Much of her work deals with the fact that, while the death of a loved one can be mourned, their disappearance leaves an unbearable emptiness.

Doris Salcedo is the eighth artist to have been commissioned to produce work for the turbine hall of the Tate Modern gallery in London. Her piece, *Shibboleth* (2007), is a 167-metre-long crack in the hall's floor that Salcedo says "represents borders, the experience of immigrants, the experience of segregation, the experience of racial hatred. It is the experience of a Third World person coming into the heart of Europe".<sup>1</sup>

— Museum of Modern Art, New York

1. [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7033619.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-7033619)

*Acción de Duelo*, July 3, 2007, candles. Approx. 267 × 350 ft. (81.4 × 106.7 m) Site-specific work, Plaza de Bolívar, Bogotá, 2007. Photo: Sergio Clavijo. Courtesy the artist and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

In this 'Action of mourning' 24,000 candles were lit in the Plaza de Bolívar, Bogotá, in response to the death of Colombia's Valle del Cauca Deputies who had been taken hostage in 2002. The Act of Mourning consisted of first placing these candles in a very specific way, a reticular way, and then having people join us, having this installation that lasted six hours. . . is something that for us was very important because in Colombia—because of our political situation and our violence situation—we have become dehumanized and for me, what Doris was trying to do by this Act of Mourning was teach us how to mourn."

— Carlos Granada, Interview with MCA Chicago / [mcachicago.org](http://mcachicago.org)

# Alex Seton

AUSTRALIA



## Born 1977, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Alex Seton's artistic practice incorporates photography, video, sculpture and installation to investigate the complex relationship between form and substance. He is best known for his beguiling marble carving, applying his refined craftsmanship to unexpected forms. Blankets, hoodies, inflatables and national flags are rendered in stone, invoking a somatic paradox. By infusing the rich heritage of Classical statuary with contemporary concerns, Seton gives weight to the issues we face here and now.

In his recent bodies of work, life jackets and poolside toys become potent reminders of Australia's troubling policies pertaining to asylum seekers; inflatable crowns celebrate the ease of contemporary life, too readily taken for

granted. The creative process itself is interrogated in shows such as *Roughing Out* (Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, 2013) and *Replicator* (Tweed River Art Gallery, 2014), in which Seton explored his practice through performance, video and participatory works. Seton has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally.

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Above: *Someone died trying to have a life like mine*, 2013, Wombeyan marble, nylon webbing, dimensions variable.

Right: *As of today...* (detail), 2011-14, 41 sculpted flags in marble with halyard.

Courtesy the artist, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane; Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney; Australian War Memorial, Canberra.



*"The national flag is such a potent symbol. It becomes a projection of our desires, history, traditions, loyalties, and grievances. Weighed down with such expectation and possibility, this symbol is explosive. Politically, the game is to claim authority in its name; on a personal level A flag can represent the values or goals of the individual. Whether draped, folded, or hanging, this emblematic cloth is at times divisive or uniting, and always up for debate. It can be used to both mask and reveal."*

— Alex Seton: artist statement, 'As of Today', Australian War memorial / awm.gov.au

# Hito Steyerl

GERMANY



## **Born 1966, Munich, Germany.**

From writing to producing films and installations, Hito Steyerl addresses issues concerning art, philosophy and politics. The artist makes film essays, a genre that reinforces a practice in which texts, conferences and image production border on theoretical and artistic practices. Steyerl deals with the arena of confrontation between art and politics in a world that is overpopulated with images.

– Bienal de São Paulo / [32bienal.org.br](http://32bienal.org.br)

*Hell Yeah Fuck We Die*, 2016, Installation view, 32 Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil.

Courtesy the artist and Bienal de São Paulo.

The video installation *Hell Yeah Fuck We Die*, commissioned for the 32nd Bienal, resembles a parkour training module – a sport dedicated to overcoming obstacles – and features synchronized videos, whose images were collected from various online sources. In these videos, robots are provoked and scoured in different ways in product quality-testing environments. Based on the five most common words used in English-language song titles from the current decade (hell, yeah, we, fuck and die), Steyerl draws attention to a kind of anthem for our time, accompanied by a soundtrack, composed by German DJ Kassem Mosse using these words. Steyerl's works comment on the constant search for speed and efficiency that governs contemporary life practices, revealing a sense of reality that is absurd, articulated by the tension created in the confrontation between images and texts.

– Bienal de São Paulo

# James Tylor

AUSTRALIA

## **Born Mildura, Victoria, Australia.**

James Tylor (Possum) spent his childhood in far west New South Wales, and his adolescent years in Kununurra and Derby in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, going on to study in Hobart and Adelaide where he currently lives.

Tylor's artistic practice examines the concept of racial and cultural identity in Australian contemporary society and social history. He explores Australian cultural representations through his multi-cultural heritage comprising Nunga (Kaurna), Māori (Te Arawa) and European (English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch and Norwegian) Australian ancestry. His work focuses largely on 19th century history of Australia and its continual affect on present day issues surround racial and cultural identity in Australia.

The artist specialises in experimental and historical photographic processes. He uses a hybrid of analogue and digital photographic techniques to create contemporary artworks that reference Australian society and history. The processes he employs are the physical manipulate of digital photographic printing, such as manually hand colouring of digital prints or applying physical interventions to the surfaces of digital prints. Also he uses the historical 19th century photographic process, Becquerel daguerreotype with the aid of modern technology to create new and contemporary daguerreotypes. His interests in this unique photographic processes is linked to his fascination with Australian history and the use of this medium to document Indigenous Australian and Māori culture in the 19th century.

– Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia:  
*James Tylor – Territorial Encounters*, 2016 /  
[cacs.org.au](http://cacs.org.au)



Top: *The Island* 2016

Bottom: *Hidden in the shadows* 2016

Scratched daguerreotypes, each 10 x 12.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA), Adelaide.

# Adriana Verejão

BRAZIL

**Born 1964, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.**

Adriana Verejão's diverse practice explores themes of colonialism, miscegenation and anthropology through a variety of media including painting, sculpture, works on paper, installation and photography.

Verejão has exhibited extensively internationally, including the São Paulo Bienal (1994 and 1998), Venice Biennale (1995), and Istanbul Biennial (2011), among others. In 2008, the Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim opened a permanent pavilion devoted to her work in Brazil. Among Verejão's concerns is the concept of cultural cannibalism, or anthropophagy, dating back to the 1920s, and Brazilian modernist Oswald De Andrade's *Anthropophagic Manifesto*. This declaration urged artists and intellectuals to "cannibalize" the symbolic and cultural contribution of its colonizers, absorbing and transforming it to create a new Brazilian culture for the 20th century.

— Lehmann Maupin / lehmannmaupin.com

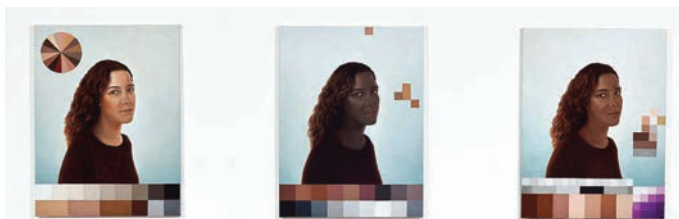
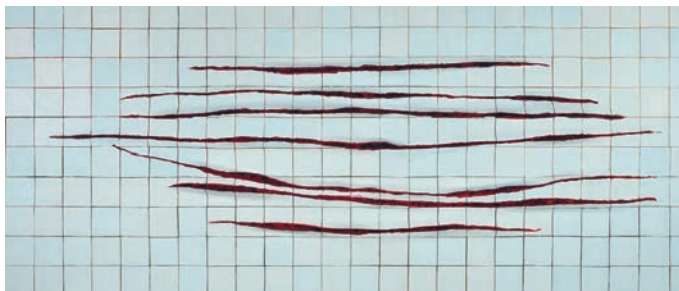
**Top: *Wall With Incisions a la Fontana*, 2000**, oil on canvas and polyurethane on aluminum and wood support, 190 x 300 cm.

Middle and bottom: ***Polvo* Portraits and paint set: *Polvo Oil Colors*, 2013**, mixed media, 31 x 51 x 8 cm Edition of 200.

***Polvo Portraits III* (Seascape Series), 2014** triptych, each: 72 x 54 cm.

Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.

In *Polvo*, Verejão addresses race and miscegenation — fraught topics in highly diverse Brazil, where a 1976 government census asking respondents to describe their own skin color elicited 136 distinct answers. Verejão selected 33 of the most poetic answers, such as *Sapecada* (flirting with freckles), *Café com Leite* (coffee with milk) and *Queimada de Sol* (sun-kissed), and had them made into tubes of oil paint that appear in the exhibition. Verejão then used the shades in series of self-portraits and color wheels that explore the complexities of skin color and mixed-race identity. The title *Polvo* translates to "octopus" in Portuguese, a



reference to the animal's ink, made primarily of melanin, the substance that gives human skin and hair its color. Mining Brazilian culture and colonial history, Verejão's work is rife with references to historical maps, Baroque church interiors, and Portuguese tiles. Her sauna paintings on the other hand, a series of mostly monochromatic renderings of sleek, grid-like

spaces, reveal more modern cubist influences. Like her modernist forbears, Verejão devours the rich and diverse culture of post-colonial, multicultural Brazil, churning it together with a strong art-historical sensibility to create work that is provocative, perceptive, and disarmingly visceral.

— ICA, Boston / icaboston.org

# Kemang Wa Lehulere

SOUTH AFRICA



## **Born 1984, Cape Town, South Africa.**

Kemang Wa Lehulere is perceived as one of the most important representatives of a new generation of South African artists who work in all different kinds of genres and media in order to develop new artistic perspectives and narrative modes, as well as new forms of political action. Wa Lehulere's drawings combine allusions to the apartheid era in his home country South Africa and found pictorial material, personal memories, and texts. His work echoes how traces of racism and injustice are blurred and ignored, revealing the gap between individual biography and official historiography. He realizes his performances, videos, installations, and chalk drawings, which are based on extensive research, as a solo artist whilst continuing with collaborative work. This includes projects with the South African exhibition platform *Center for Historical Reenactments* which was established in 2010. From 2006, he worked with

the Cape Town based artist group *Gugulective*, which he co-founded.

Wa Lehulere's works often have a focus on black South African history, re-looking and re-imagining the archive of narratives relating to black artists, musicians and authors in an attempt to prevent their work and lives from sinking into oblivion. Thus, his exhibition *History Will Break Your Heart*, that is currently touring South Africa, recalls artists such as Gladys Mgudlandlu and Ernest Mancoba. The latter is regarded as the first modern black South African artist who co-founded the artist group CoBra in the 1940s.

Kemang Wa Lehulere has taken part in numerous international group exhibitions, including the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014), the 2nd Triennial of the New Museum in New York (2012), and the 11th Biennale de Lyon (2011). Back in 2013-14, drawings by the artist from the Deutsche Bank Collection were shown at the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle as part of the exhibition project *The*

*Circle Walked Casually*. In 2015, he received the Standard Bank Young Artist award, and is the Deutsche Bank's new 'Artist of the Year' for 2017.

– Deutsche Bank: "Kemang Wa Lehulere is 'Artist of the Year' 2017", April 7, 2016 / [db.com/newsroom](http://db.com/newsroom)

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***History Will Break Your Heart*** (Installation View), 2015. Courtesy the artist and Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg. Photo: Mia van der Merwe

*"There still is the demand for black artists to exoticise themselves. The same struggle that Ernest Mancoba was having is still around and oftentimes one does not have to be told to self-exoticise; the mechanisms in which people are shaped into that kind of direction is very sophisticated, but that's the nature of power itself. I'm very conscious of it. It's also about refusing the spectacle."*

– Kemang Wa Lehulere in conversation with Leila Dee Dougan: 'Kemang Wa Lehulere: History will break your heart', *Africa is a Country*, July 3 2015 / [africasacountry.com](http://africasacountry.com)

# Kara Walker

USA



## Born 1969, Stockton, California, USA.

Kara Walker grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and received a BFA in painting and printmaking from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and an MFA in painting and printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. Beginning with *Gone: An Historical Romance of Civil War as it Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of a Young Negress and Her Heart* (1994), she became known for her panoramic friezes of cut-paper silhouettes, usually black figures against a white wall, which address the history of American slavery and racism through violent and unsettling imagery.

Since *Why I Like White Boys, an Illustrated Novel* by Kara E. Walker (2000), her illustrations have increasingly functioned as environments

for the viewer. In this work and ones to follow, colored light is projected onto the gallery walls to complement the silhouettes, which explore the theme of collective memories of slavery in relation to problems of racism in the present. For *After the Deluge* (2006), Walker blurred the lines between artist and curator when she presented her own works alongside pieces she selected from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to articulate her visual commentary on the displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina.

She is represented in numerous private and museum collections, and currently teaches at Columbia University in New York.

– Guggenheim / [guggenheim.org](http://guggenheim.org)

*Slavery! Slavery! Presenting a GRAND and LIFELIKE Panoramic Journey into Picturesque Southern Slavery or "Life at 'Ol' Virginny's Hole" (sketches from Plantation Life)" See the Peculiar Institution as never before!*

*All cut from black paper by the able hand of Kara Elizabeth Walker, an Emancipated Negress and leader in her Cause, 1997, Cut paper on wall, 144 x 1,020 inches, 365.76 x 2,590.8 cm. Installation detail: Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2008.*

Photo: Joshua White

Courtesy the artist and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles / [hammer.ucla.edu](http://hammer.ucla.edu)



# Jason Wing

AUSTRALIA



## Born 1977, NSW, Australia.

Jason Wing is an Aboriginal artist from the western Sydney suburb of Cabramatta. Wing's father is Chinese (Cantonese) and his mother is an Aboriginal woman from the Biripi people in the Upper Hunter region of New South Wales. Since graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Sydney College of the Arts in 1998, Wing has steadily emerged in the Sydney and national art scene as a versatile artist who explores issues of bi-cultural and Indigenous political identity, environmental awareness and spirituality with a street-wise flair (owing in part to his use of stencil printing) and strong commitment to community engagement. He strongly identifies with his Chinese and Aboriginal heritage. Wing began as a

street artist and has since expanded his practice to incorporate photomedia, installation and painting. Influenced by his bi-cultural upbringing, Wing explores the ongoing challenges that impact his wider community.

— Jason Wing / [jasonwing.net](http://jasonwing.net)

*Longing for December 28th*, 2013, installation view, aluminium, muslin, spray paint, projection, dimensions variable, photo: Silversalt.

*Fossil Fuel*, 2013, installation view, cast resin, Royal Australian Navy pendant lamp, dimensions variable, photo: Adam Hollingworth.

*Captain James Crook*, 2013. Bronze, 60 x 60 x 30cm, photo: Garrie Maguire.

All images courtesy the artist.



# Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and their elders past and present, on whose traditional lands the University of Sydney is situated.

To the artists, I salute your courage and tenacity against all adversity. I thank you for your inspiration, and for making us think deeply about the world in which we live.

For their essays, huge thanks to Professor Susan Best of Griffith University's Queensland College of Art; PhD researcher and curator Ivan Muñiz Reed; and to Matt Poll, Curator Indigenous Heritage and Repatriation Project at the University of Sydney's Macleay Museum. I also thank the publishers Bloomsbury Academic and *Broadsheet Journal*, for permission to reproduce their words.

To my academic supervisor at Sydney College of The Arts (SCA), Associate Professor Michael Goldberg, I am grateful for the opportunity to realise this project, and for his unflagging support.

The project would not have been possible without the support of the SCA's Research Committee, especially Associate Dean Jacqueline Millner; Graduate School Director Justin Trendall; Associate Professor Ann Elias; and Associate Professor Dr John Di Stefano, who leads the *Art and the Document* research cluster. A special mention must go to Mikhaela Rodwell, the SCA's Executive Officer and to Kusum Normoyle, Research Support Officer.

Many other people have provided inspiration, and special thanks are due to Anthony (Ace) Bourke, and Djon Mundine OAM, who started me along this path. I also acknowledge the work of Australian curators Franchesca Cubillo, Tess Allas, Cara Pinchbeck, Stephen Gilchrist, Rachel Kent, Vivian Zihlerl, Alexie Glass-Kantor, Glenn Barkley, Liz Nowell, Daniel Mudie Cunningham, Clothilde Bullen and Felicity Fenner, among many others.

Many writers have influenced my thinking, and I especially wish to acknowledge Emeritus Professor Jacques Rancière of the University of Paris VIII: Vincennes – Saint-Denis, and his USA editor Dr Steven Corcoran. Thanks to Associate Professor Anthony Gardner of Oxford University and Professor Charles Green of Melbourne University for their lucid articles and books; to Dr Lucy Steeds, Dr Pablo Lafuente, Dr Lisette Lagnado and Professor Charles Esche for the invaluable insights gained from *Afterall* Books' exhibition histories; to Adriano Pedrosa, Director of The Museu de Arte de São Paulo, and co-curator Dr Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, for their brilliant exhibition and catalogue *Historias Mestiças* at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, in 2014. Thanks also to the University of Sydney's Dr Oliver Watts, for the crash refresher-course on the postmodern turn.

I am deeply grateful to the artists' galleries and representatives for their assistance in compiling this anthology, and to artists, museums and photographers worldwide for use of their images.

Finally, it is artists who are society's 'seers', and to the many friends and colleagues among that community worldwide, I am indebted for the ways in which you have opened my eyes. You know who you are.

**David Corbet**  
Bundeena, NSW, Australia  
December 2016

# Credits

## ***Ex Libris Fisherarium***

An exhibition series presented by the Sydney College of the Arts at the Fisher Library, The University of Sydney, 1913 – 1916.

**Curator:** Michael Goldberg

**Guest curators:** Leigh Rigozzi, Jane Polkinghorne, Nicholas Tsoutas, David Corbet, Andrew Christie

**Artists:** Colin Rhodes, Simon Yates, Mark Titmarsh, Jelle van den Berg, Alex Gawronski, Gianni Wise, Emily Hunt, Sarah Newall, Anne Kay, Jane Polkinghorne, Trevor Fry, Sally Clarke, Margaret Mayhew, Nicholas Dorey, Shane Haseman, Richard Kean, David Corbet, Katherine Moline, Glenn Wallace, Brad Buckley, Helen Hyatt-Johnston, Sean Lowry, Kyle Jenkins, Alex Gawronski and Jelena Telecki, Andrew Christie, Jack Stahel.

**This project has been generously supported by The University of Sydney Chancellor's Committee.**

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## ***The Museum of Dissensus***

Published to coincide with the exhibition *The Museum of Dissensus* (Guest curator/artist David Corbet), December 2016, as part of the exhibition series *Ex Libris Fisherarium*, curated by Michael Goldberg.

**Editor:** David Corbet

**Contributing writers:** Susan Best, David Corbet, Ivan Muñiz Reed, Matt Poll

**Artists:** Abdul Abdullah, Jumana Emil Abboud, Vernon Ah Kee, Tony Albert, Francis Alÿs, Kader Attia, Tania Bruguera, Nick Cave, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, Chimurenga, Dadang Christanto, Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, Karla Dickens, Fiona Foley, Félix González-Torres, Guerrilla Girls, Julie Gough, Dale Harding, Edgar Heap of Birds, Pierre Huyghe, Guo Jian, Jonathan Jones, Jumaadi, Yuki Kihara, Glenn Ligon, Laura Lima, Teresa Margolles, Shaghayegh Mazloom, Queenie Nakarra McKenzie, Kent Monkman, Zanele Muholi, Clinton Nain, Paulo Nazareth, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, Fiona Pardington, Mike Parr, Ben Quilty, Imran Qureshi, Rosanna Raymond's SaVAge K'lub, Marwan Rechmaoui, Lisa Reihana, Doris Salcedo, Alex Seton, Hito Steyerl, James Tylor, Adriana Verejão, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Kara Walker, Jason Wing

**Graphic designers:** DNA Creative / dnacreative.com.au

**Printed by:** Newstyle Printing, Adelaide

**This project was assisted by Sydney College of the Arts, the Visual Arts Faculty of the University of Sydney.**

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## **ISBN: 978-1-921558-15-3**

Published in Australia in 2016 by Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney

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Cricos Provider Code: 00026A

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## **National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:**

**Title:** *Ex Libris Fisherarium* / editors, David Corbet and Michael Goldberg.

**ISBN:** 9781921558153 (paperback). Notes: Includes bibliographical references.

**Subjects:** University of Sydney. Library--Exhibitions. Books in art--Exhibitions. Art, Modern--Exhibitions.

**Other Creators/Contributors:** Corbet, David W., editor. Goldberg, L. Michael, editor.

ISBN: 978-1-921558-15-3