

# On Stillness

12 May – 28 July 2020

National Art School  
Newcastle Art Gallery  
NERAM  
Orange Regional Gallery  
Wollongong Art Gallery  
Tweed Regional Gallery  
Museum of Art and Culture,  
Lake Macquarie yapang



NATIONAL  
ART  
SCHOOL



Newcastle  
Art Gallery

# On Stillness

12 May – 28 July 2020

*On Stillness* is an online exhibition presented across the social media accounts of NSW public art galleries. Initiated by the National Art School and Newcastle Art Gallery, it highlights artwork from the collections of participating institutions that embody the idea of stillness.

For most people, the COVID-19 lockdown brought on a period of rare quiet. A dramatic narrowing of our social and working lives redirected our attention towards modest stimulations: the warmth of the sun or the sound of a treasured voice. As the pace of regular life tentatively resumes, art reminds us to slow down and remain observant. Drawing on a range of genres and mediums, *On Stillness* celebrates the potential of art to pause time and illuminate the passing moment.

*On Stillness* provides new content to audiences during gallery closures, forges partnerships between geographically distant organisations and celebrates public collections. The parameters of the project were kept informal during its online evolution (12 May – 28 July 2020), so it could develop slowly: galleries were encouraged to make one post on the same day each week but could join or leave at any point. Instagram users followed the hashtag #onstillnessexhibition to see the growing number of works and gallery collaborators.

This catalogue draws together more than 70 works posted by seven institutions over 12 weeks.

National Art School

@nas\_au

Newcastle Art Gallery

@newcastleartgalleryaustralia

NERAM

@neramuseum

Orange Regional Gallery

@orangeregionalgallery

Wollongong Art Gallery

@wollongongartgallery

Tweed Regional Gallery

@tweedregionalgallery

Museum of Art and Culture,  
Lake Macquarie yapang

@themacmuseum

#onstillnessexhibition

Previous page: Les Blakebrough AM, *Three tilted bowls* (detail), 2016, southern ice porcelain, 12.5 x 17 cm (each), National Art School Collection, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2018

## PETER RUSHFORTH

*Blossom jar* c.1980s

salt-glazed stoneware

22 x 22 cm

*Vase* c.1980s

stoneware, chun glaze

24 x 25 cm

National Art School Collection

Gift of Georg, Keay and

Anders Lindstrom 2015

Peter Rushforth (1920–2015) was a master potter largely responsible for introducing ancient Japanese ceramic traditions to Australia. After early studies in Melbourne, he was appointed as the first full-time ceramics teacher at NAS in 1951.

*Blossom jar* and *Vase* in the NAS Collection are examples of his manipulation of abstract form and surface to reflect ineffable human qualities. One such quality he admired in Japanese ceramics was *jaku*, meaning 'to be quiet' or 'mellow'. The calm poise of his vessels is in harmony with the vitality of their variegated surfaces.

The textured *Blossom jar* shows his groundbreaking use of stoneware techniques in an Australian context, which often incorporated granulated rocks from his local environment. This work was based on the mist in the valley outside his studio window.

His renowned chun glaze, evident in the second image of *Vase*, evokes limpid azure skies. Rushforth's pots suggest the silent transformations of atmospheric phenomena and the slow time of geological change. Like a view of the earth from space, they are still but invisibly turning worlds.



## KIRRILY HAMMOND

*Swoon I* 2009

graphite and charcoal on paper

70.6 x 50.1 cm

Purchased through the Gil Docking

Drawing Fund 2019

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

To compliment the Peter Rushforth works from the @nas\_au collection we have selected this skyscape by Newcastle born, Copenhagen based Kirrily Hammond. The gradient of greys in the sky mirroring those on Rushforth's chun glazed vase. Hammond's works capture 'small moments of the sublime in the everyday – moments to pause and to appreciate.'

On her practice, the artist writes: 'My compositions are usually focused on a small part of a landscape, making it hard to recognise the overall location. Rather than striving to depict a specific place, I'm interested in the moments when light catches a cloud, or when streets become indistinct at dusk.'

While our worlds have temporarily become a lot smaller, *Swoon I* (2009) reminds us to use the stillness to find the sublime all around us.



## KIRSTEN COELHO

*Alluvial Fields* 2016

porcelain, matte white glaze, banded  
iron oxide

28 x 70 x 30 cm

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

Purchased 2016

Our first contribution from our collection is a work by Kirsten Coelho. It was chosen by Louise Brand, Exhibition Officer.

This work references Zen philosophies and concepts around mindfulness, slowing down, while focusing to bring unity and peace. We also think white porcelain transmits simplicity, transcendence and yet conveys fragility.

Kirsten Coelho writes about her work: '*Alluvial Fields* investigates social and cultural histories and intersections plus the possible personal narratives drawn from 19th century migration into the gold fields of Australia. Many pieces are made in white porcelain with an added iron rim – suggesting an every day metal object whilst being made in a material like porcelain which has such a rich history of desire and commodity. This can create a juxtaposition between the precious and the commonplace. The iron also creates a potential abstraction on the white surface – and of course also references Chinese and Japanese porcelain traditions.'



## FIONA LOWRY

*Gliding over all* 2012

acrylic on canvas

183 x 123 cm

National Art School Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alex Orellana, 2018

For our second work to be presented in the evolving online exhibition *On Stillness*, we have chosen NAS alumna Fiona Lowry's *Gliding over all*. Lowry is known for her sensual and dreamy renderings of people and place, and for her contemporary approach to life-sized figure painting.

The title of Lowry's work is taken from Walt Whitman's poem 'Gliding O'er All', from *Leaves of Grass* (1855). A naked figure is either floating or falling in water or space. Lowry references the Pre-Raphaelite figure of 'Ophelia' but instead of placing her horizontally, she subverts Ophelia's sense of repose by placing her on a vertical axis, thus creating a sense of an awakening. We are also reminded of Christ on the cross – with arms held up and with a body hanging stiff and straight with closed eyes. This has a disquieting effect – the painting is full of vulnerability, suspense, gothic haze and romance. 'Gliding o'er all, through all, through Nature, Time, and Space'. The figure is perfectly still, she rests in silence, suspended in a brief moment of time.



**CARL PLATE**

*PMC 5* 1974–75

magazine paper collage on paper

17.2 x 22.2 cm

Purchased 2010

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

While it feels like we are presently drifting through the unknown, in times of uncertainty, being in or near the water is an act of solace.

Artist Carl Plate's ethereal and evocative collages are reminiscent of blurred surfaces of the water – be they puddles, rivers or oceans – with ripples having a soothing effect on the mind and soul.

Plate produced this series of works on paper in the mid-1970s, during an artist residency in Paris. Created while on slow ferries crossing Europe's waterways, these elegant yet thrifty works on paper were constructed from found objects such as magazines, brochures and newspapers.

*PMC 5* shows that while art can be made from everyday materials, they also channel an artist's connection to the world through their exploration of the realms of time and space.



**CHARLES BLACKMAN OBE**

*A sleeping man* 1966

oil on ink on composition board

49.8 x 75.8 cm

The Chandler Coventry Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

In response to the Fiona Lowry's evocative painting *Gliding over all* from the @nas\_au collection, we have selected this unsettling work by the late Australia artist Charles Blackman. A besuited man is suspended in front of a linear cityscape. It is titled *A sleeping man* however look closely, this man is floating mid-air, his neck, legs and feet are twisted unnaturally, suggesting something more sinister at play. Is this man sleeping, or falling?



## INDIA MARK

*Still Life with Tangerine* 2018

oil on panel

24 x 25 cm

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

The placement of one white gold rimmed tea cup juxtaposed with a single tangerine, perfectly captures the humility and power present in the small things and in every day objects. This work also brings into question how we see the world around us.

India Mark's current practice predominantly concentrates on still life and is informed by the historical implications of the genre. For Mark, still life underlines the many tensions that arise from observation based painting. With the use of linear composition, monochromatic backgrounds and the rendering of light and shadow, Mark's paintings examine the spatial relationships between perspective and flatness. Shadow not only aids depth and form, but is a means to explore tone and luminosity.



## FIONA HALL AO

*East Sydney Tech Photo Albums* 1973

handmade album, 35 x 45 cm

*Window and stairs* 1974

*Front entrance, fashion school building* 1974

*Self Portrait, ladies toilets* 1974

silver gelatin prints

31 x 31 cm (each)

National Art School Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2018

As well as being seduced by the medium of photography, Fiona Hall developed her innate sense of composition during her years as a student at the National Art School. Although she graduated in painting, she spent much of her time documenting her fellow students, the protest marches and the eccentric bands which sprang up at art school. She also explored the empty and dilapidated parts of the former gaol site – areas which had been allowed to fall into disrepair but still displayed a lyrical and enigmatic quality. In the photographs she took in the former governor's quarters in the 1970s, she captures the reflections on the walls from adjacent windows. Using natural light and black and white photos, Hall creates a dream-like, almost spectral effect. Likewise her self-portrait is back-lit, using reflections and a mirror so that she becomes an outline, hardly there at all.



## GEOFFREY DE GROEN

*Untitled* 1982

pencil on paper

14.4 x 22.5 cm

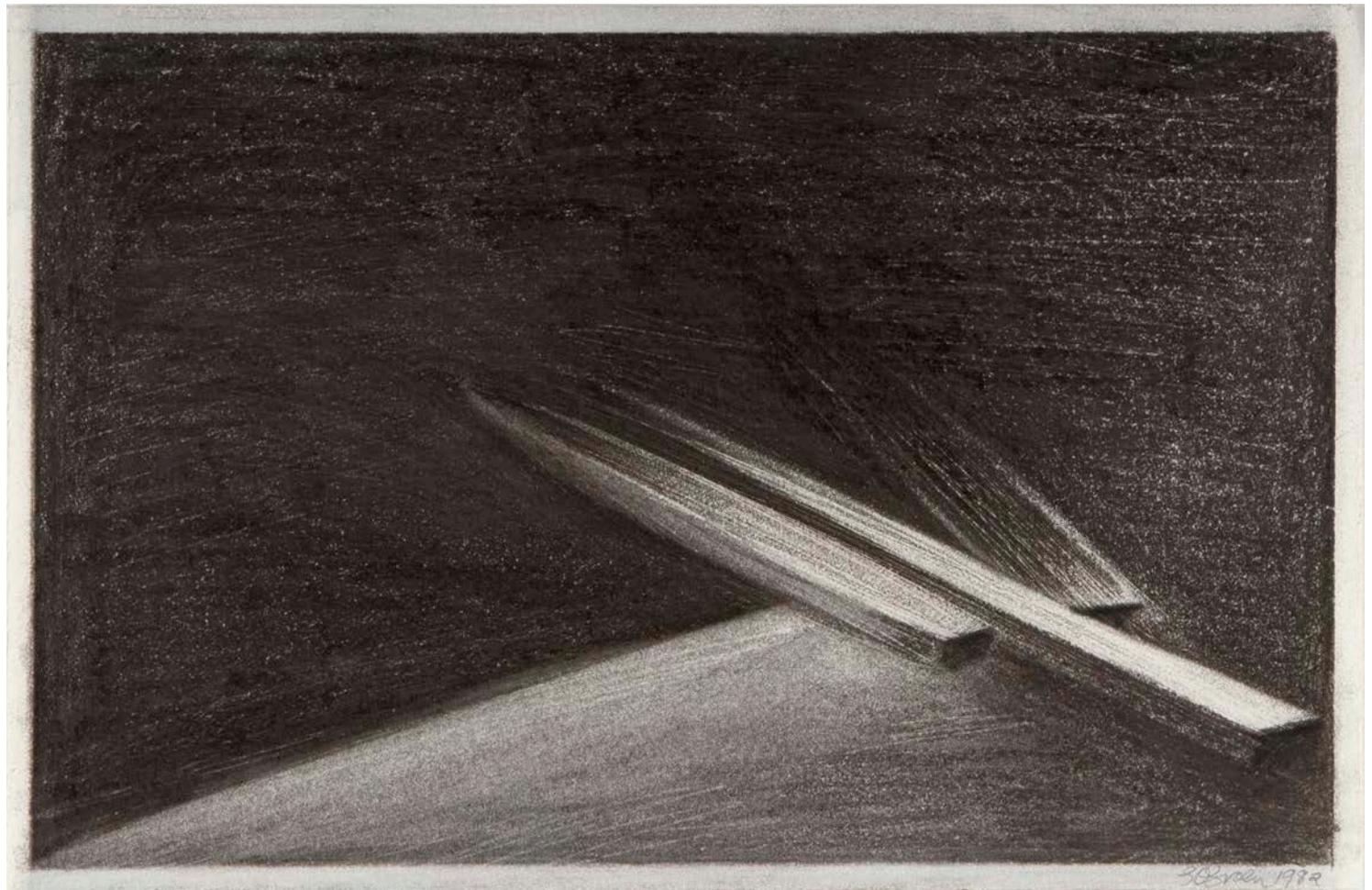
Gift of Stephen and Yuana Hesketh, 1997

NERAM Collection,

New England Regional Art Museum

This quiet piece by Geoffrey de Groen was selected as part of the #onstillnessexhibition as its soft monochrome palette and structural forms complement Fiona Hall's photographic details of East Sydney Technical College in the National Art School collection.

De Groen was born in Brisbane but grew up in Sydney and began his art education at the Julian Ashton Art School and North Sydney Technical College before completing his art studies at the East Sydney Technical College (now the National Art School) in 1965. De Groen taught at East Sydney Tech until 1985 making it highly possible he walked upon the staircase and along the corridor that Hall so dreamily captured in 1973.



**MARION BORGELT**

*Weaving the labyrinth: Design I, Design II, Design III* 1997–99

pigment and oil on jute

195 x 114 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2002  
Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

To complement the Fiona Hall works from the @nas\_au collection we have selected this enigmatic painting by Australian artist Marion Borgelt (born 1954 Nhill VIC).

The subject of Marion Borgelt's work is often ambiguous but conjures up associations relating to patterns in the natural environment such as lunar cycles, the movement of stars and planets, the seasons, electrical currents and chaos theory.

This work *Weaving the Labyrinth: Design I, Design II, Design III* 1997–99 encourages us to take time to pause and deeply reflect. With the intent to pay attention to our environment and the patterns and cycles of the natural world in which we live.



**BILL MOSELEY & JOANNA LOGUE**

*Vol de Nuit* 2014

tin type collage on aluminium

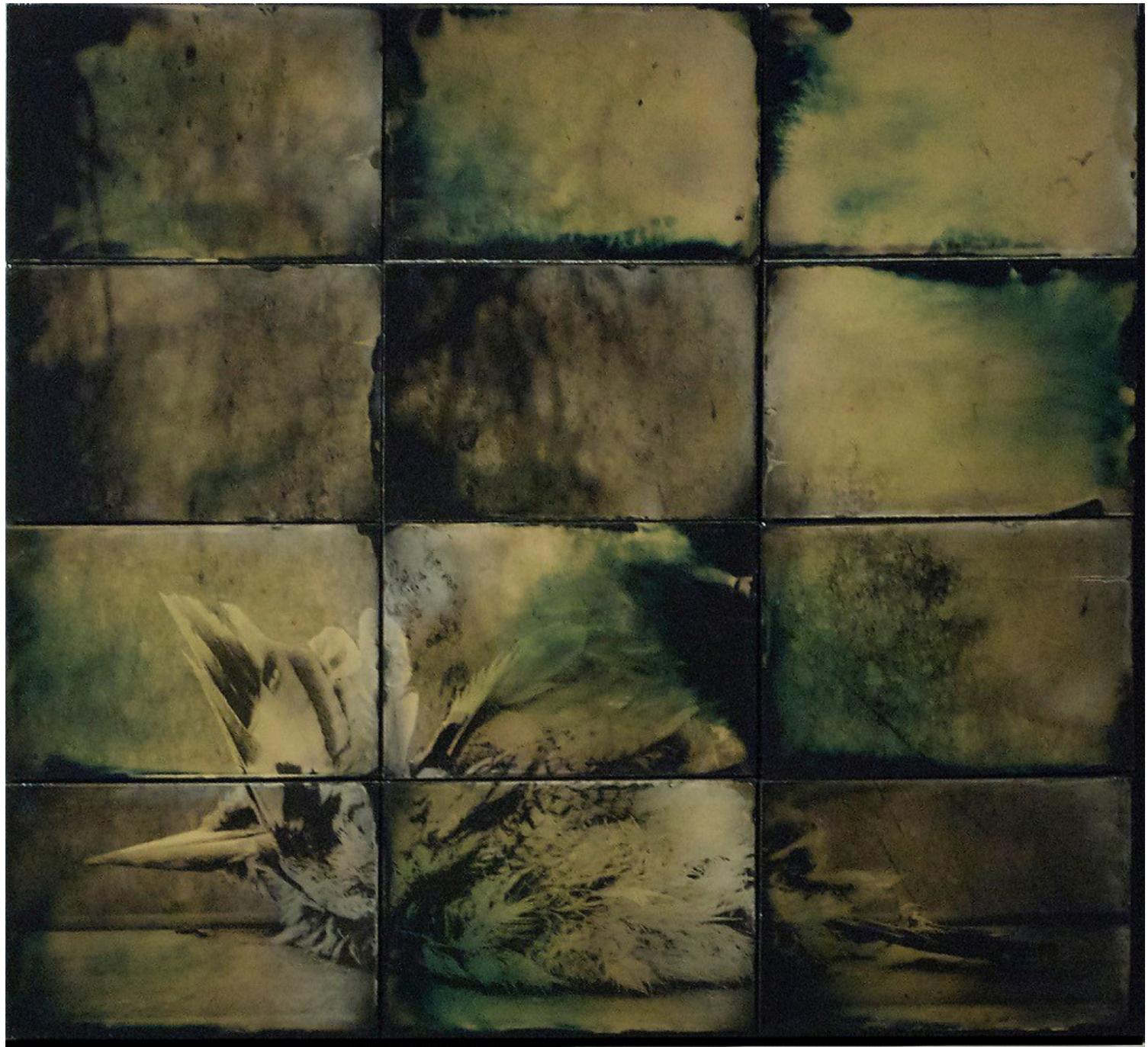
95 x 85 cm

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's

Cultural Gifts Program by the artists, 2018

Responding to Fiona Hall's photo series posted by @nas\_au, *Vol de Nuit* translating to 'night flight', is a tintype by Bill Moseley and Joanna Logue that explores the concept of presence and absence in photography. The still life or 'Natura Morte' of the dead Kookaburra evokes the idea of mortality and passing, calling for pause as we witness a spirit in immortal flight. As in Fiona Hall's ephemeral self-portrait, we are witnessing a trace of something that was once there.



**JOHN HONEYWILL**

*Bowl and cakebox* 2018

oil on linen

36 x 36 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2019

Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

John Honeywill's *Bowl and cakebox* (2018) is a superb meditation on stillness. The aged cardboard cakebox and the spiral-fluted ceramic bowl are objects from Margaret Olley's home studio re-creation at the Margaret Olley Art Centre. For nearly 50 years this home studio was both site and subject for her painting, each room filled with objects she collected as subject matter.

Honeywill selected these objects from the collection of 21,000 items acquired for the re-creation and made this painting in response. The result is breathtaking. Time stands still as Honeywill's composition and attention to detail – colour, tone, light, reflection, shape and form – allow us to contemplate the quiet beauty of these humble everyday objects.



## ROBERT HUNTER

*untitled* (detail) 1976

synthetic polymer paint, coloured cotton  
on canvas

184 x 275 cm

Gift of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia  
Council, 1984

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

This work was picked by Vivian Vidulich,  
Gallery Professional Officer, from The  
Wollongong Art Collection. Robert Hunter's  
paintings test the very limits of visual  
perception, revealing clean, crisp geometries  
and subtle hints of colour upon close  
inspection. Hunter states cryptically that  
'They're absolutely about flatness and yet  
they've become dimensional.'

'With its regular patterns and rhythms, this  
parade of shapes slows and calms the eye  
before immersing it in the encompassing and  
almost hallucinogenic whiteness of the centre.  
Experiencing the flatness and tranquillity of  
Hunter's paintings is like a pit stop in life,  
though in terms of Hunter's severe aesthetic,  
this is a baroque moment.'  
(excerpt from Art Gallery of NSW website)



**ALLAN WAITE**

*Seated Woman* 1948

oil on canvas

33 x 47 cm

National Art School Collection

Gift of Allan Waite, 2007

*Seated Woman* is deep in reflection. Cigarette in hand and sunlight on her cheek, she gazes over her shoulder at a distant scene. This charming portrait was painted by Allan Waite when he was a student at the National Art School in 1948. The figure is a life model posing at the art school and Waite's portrait encapsulates the stillness and considered pose of the art students' muse. The composition, clothes and chair are evocative of the late 1940s, a period in which society was coming to terms with the aftermath of Second World War. Waite himself was a WWII Veteran who was only able to study art at NAS as a result of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, an initiative of the Curtin Labor Government. He studied art full-time for free for two and a half years under greats such as Frank Hinder, Herbert Badham and John Godson and went on to have a successful career as an engraver, painter and watercolourist and was co-founder of Australian Artist magazine.



**FIONA MCMONAGLE**

*I am so vulnerable suddenly* 2007

watercolour on paper

73.8 x 102 cm

Purchased 2007

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

To complement the Allan Waite's work from the @nas\_au Collection we have chosen this beautifully sensitive watercolour painting by Melbourne based artist Fiona McMonagle.

McMonagle says that her work often describes what it was like to grow up in the western suburbs of Melbourne where she reveals 'sometimes there's not too much to smile about'.

*I am so vulnerable suddenly* 2007 invites the viewer to refocus on their inner self and withdraw from external sensory perceptions, providing a contemplative mindfulness experience.

McMonagle's watery washes of colour often run or blur reminding us of what it is like to look at the world through tear filled eyes, adding melancholy to her work.



**JOSHUA SMITH**  
*Peeling vegetables* 1939  
oil on canvas  
98 x 39.3cm

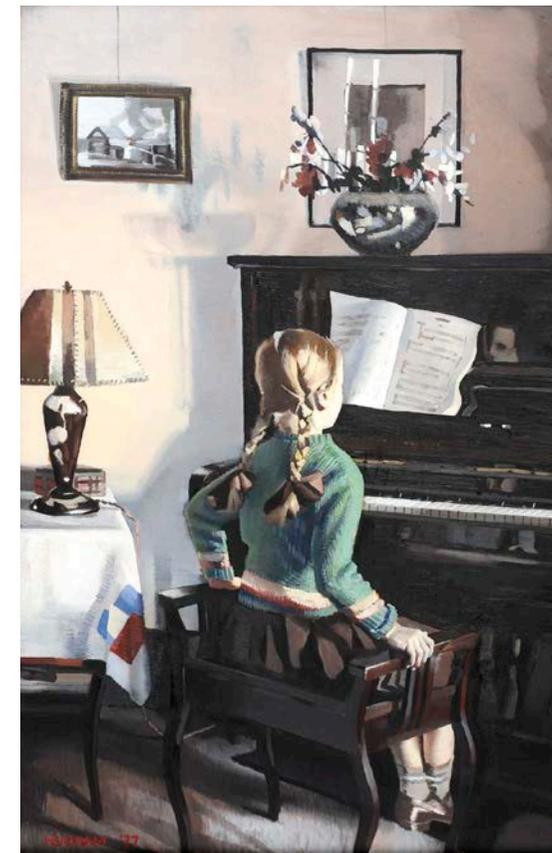
**HAROLD ABBOTT**  
*My Grandmother* 1934  
oil on canvas on board  
50.4 x 40.3cm

**HERBERT BADHAM**  
*Interior (also known as Girl at the Piano)* 1937  
oil on board  
61.3 x 39.2cm

**ERNEST BUCKMASTER**  
*Portrait of the artist's mother* 1931  
oil on canvas  
96.7 x 76.2cm  
The Howard Hinton Collection  
New England Regional Art Museum



When posing for artists one must sit so still, and for so long. Artist models are often used but perhaps just as frequently family members are enticed to sit. We have many portraits and figure studies in our collection featuring mothers, grandmothers and daughters. Joshua Smith's tender portrait of his mother preparing vegetables in the kitchen; Buckmaster also painted his mother, stern but with a twinkle in her eye; and Abbott's calmly crafting grandmother. But perhaps most charming is Badham's daughter at the piano. The story goes that she desperately wanted to be outside playing but she had to obey her artist father. So she sits still, begrudgingly, with her hands tightly clasping the piano stool in silent protest.



**KEVIN CONNOR**

*Head VI* 2000

bronze

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Paul Connor, 2019

The stillness of the gaze in *Seated Figure* by Allan Waite as posted by @nas\_au is embodied in *Head VI*, a bronze sculpture by Kevin Connor. At first glance the work appears as a shadowy silhouette – still and unmoving – yet the rough surface is alive with energetic mark making that is characteristic of Connor's lively sketches and paintings. *Head VI* hums with expression and rhythmic movement, the light pen sketches have been traded in, cast in bronze, to take shape in a weighty, three-dimensional form. Protruding from the base, the head juts out with purpose into the room, casting a quiet intensity throughout the space.



## ELISABETH CUMMINGS

*Portrait of May Barrie* 2001

oil on canvas

180 x 180 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2013

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

There's a candid familiarity shared between artist and subject in this painting, and it is captured in May Barrie's expression. Although Cummings depicts Barrie in a passive and reflective pose, the figure is placed within the context of her surroundings, bringing to mind a rich tapestry or a gestural patchwork. It speaks of Barrie's environment and the artefacts collected during her travels. This work also evokes the materials used in Barrie's own practice. She carved stone sculptures, acknowledging time and the transient nature of the elements and how they too altered, marked and shaped stone.

This week Julie Danilov, Gallery Professional Officer, explains why she has chosen this work for this week's #onstillnessexhibition from the Wollongong Art Gallery Collection.

Danilov writes:

'Being still does not always mean no movement... it can also mean being in a state of peace and graciousness. I think that Elisabeth Cummings portrait of sculptor friend May Barrie has this type of 'stillness' present in this painting. The delightful pinks and oranges reinforce this feeling for me too.'



2 June

Wollongong Art Gallery

**ROBYN SWEANEY**

*Bungalow of dreams* 2007

gouache with wax varnish on paper  
46 x 66.5 cm

Gift of the Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery  
and Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc., 2008  
Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

There is a comforting stillness to this painting. As the last hint of sunlight fades from the sky, this suburban home glows against the dark silhouettes of its leafy surrounds. The warm interior lights, the car parked under the carport, signal that someone is home in their 'bungalow of dreams' as the stillness of night-time falls across this familiar Australian scene. Based in Mullumbimby, Robyn Sweaney responds to the everyday suburban scenes of her local environment to explore layered explorations of Australian identity and place.



## DANI MCKENZIE

*Visions II* 2018

oil on linen

30.5 x 30.5 cm

National Art School Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2018

While undertaking the National Art School's Onslow Storrier residency in Paris, painter Dani McKenzie (b. 1990) collected old Super-8 film at local flea markets. She based her *Visions* series on stills from this found footage. McKenzie was interested in isolating moments of movement in the film and translating them into painting. For her, 'Painting, in this instance, slows down the act of looking, draws it out in time, and makes it conscious of itself, its own inconclusiveness.' In *Visions II*, time is not stopped but loosely tethered – McKenzie's soft drag of the brush across the picture suggests the pull of time and the imminent dissolution of the



**DESMOND DIGBY**

*The bridge player* circa 1965

oil on board

37.3 x 32.2 cm

Mary Turner Collection

Orange Regional Gallery

Mirroring the memory laden paintings by Dani McKenzie as posted by @nas\_au is *Bridge Player* by Desmond Digby (1933–2015), a distorted, shifting, well-dressed figure who seems a familiar character from another time. Framed by a solid, cool blue background, the contrasting quick brushwork creates a figure who is seemingly there and not there. Unlike McKenzie's paintings that responded to past film footage, Digby was painting in response to the 1960s. Despite the time difference, the distorted brushwork by both artists erases details and adds movement, creating images that reveal themselves slowly. At first glance the player's focus appears to be the game as she consults her cards, yet on second reflection those details are simultaneously fading. Is she looking up? Has she been caught daydreaming too?



**MICKY ALLAN**

*Ferry and motorboat, Sydney Harbour* 1979

photograph with watercolour

24 x 29 cm

Gift of Micky Allan, 1981

NERAM Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

Similar to the way Dani McKenzie uses her photo-paintings to blur the lines between truth and fiction, Micky Allan's handcolouring of photographs denudes the black and white photographic image of its authority and imbues it with an unreal energy and force. Allan pioneered hand-painting photography in the 1970s, a technique popular with women photographers into the 1980s and also harked back to the traditional history of women employed by studios as handcolourists. While McKenzie mines pre-existing photographic imagery for her works, Allan's photographs are her own and often very personal.



ALEXANDER MCKENZIE

*Bonsai nursery* 2013

oil on linen

122 x 167.5 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Alexander

McKenzie, 2016

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

Following Dani McKenzie's work of art from the @nas\_au Collection we have chosen this contemplative landscape by Sydney-based artist Alexander McKenzie.

McKenzie's paintings are deeply personal. His works are less about the place, breaking away from the conventions of landscape painting, and more about the artist's place in the world. The still, motionless lakes, manicured gardens, and haunted islands for which McKenzie is now well renowned, reflect the artist's thoughtfulness and contemplation of the fleeting nature of life and presence of something bigger.



**KATTHY CAVALIERE**

*Nest 2* 2010

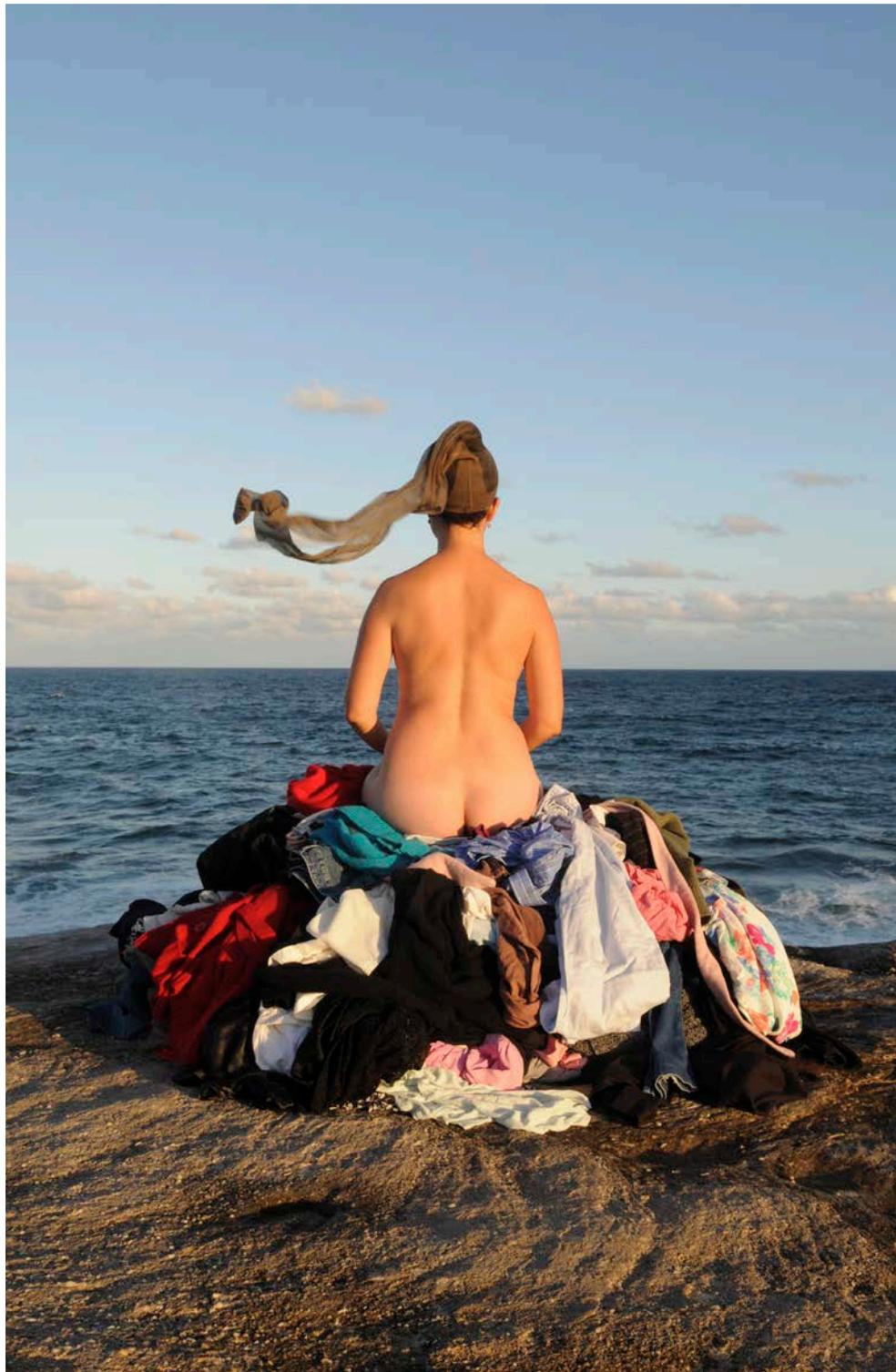
chromogenic colour print on silver paper

120 x 88 cm

Donated by the Estate of Katthy Cavaliere  
Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

Vivian Vidulich, Gallery Professional  
Officer, has chosen this work by Katthy  
Cavaliere from the Wollongong Art Gallery  
Collection for this week's contribution to the  
#onstillnessexhibition.

Cavaliere's works are suspended memories,  
they consider mortality and the stillness  
surrounding grief. An emotion we are all  
ultimately asked to face and in so doing, we  
reflect on where we came from while looking  
towards that which we will become.



## OLIVE COTTON

*Only to taste the warmth, the light, the wind*  
original photograph dated 1939  
limited edition reprinted 2000  
silver gelatin print  
Gift of Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert  
Foundation for the Arts, 2002  
Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

This evocative photograph by Olive Cotton captures the stillness of a moment savoured. *Only to taste the warmth, the light, the wind* (1939) is an excellent example of a modernist image of the time and demonstrates Cotton's remarkable ability to use light to dramatic effect. Although the subject is a beautiful young model on a fashion shoot at which Cotton was probably an assistant, it is much more than a fashion portrait. The serenity and stillness of her pose is reflected in the title which was taken from an 1895 poem 'O summer sun' by English poet Laurence Binyon.



## ELIOTH GRUNER

*Michelago Valley* c.1922

oil on canvas

91 x 136 cm

*Unfinished landscape (detail)* c.1922

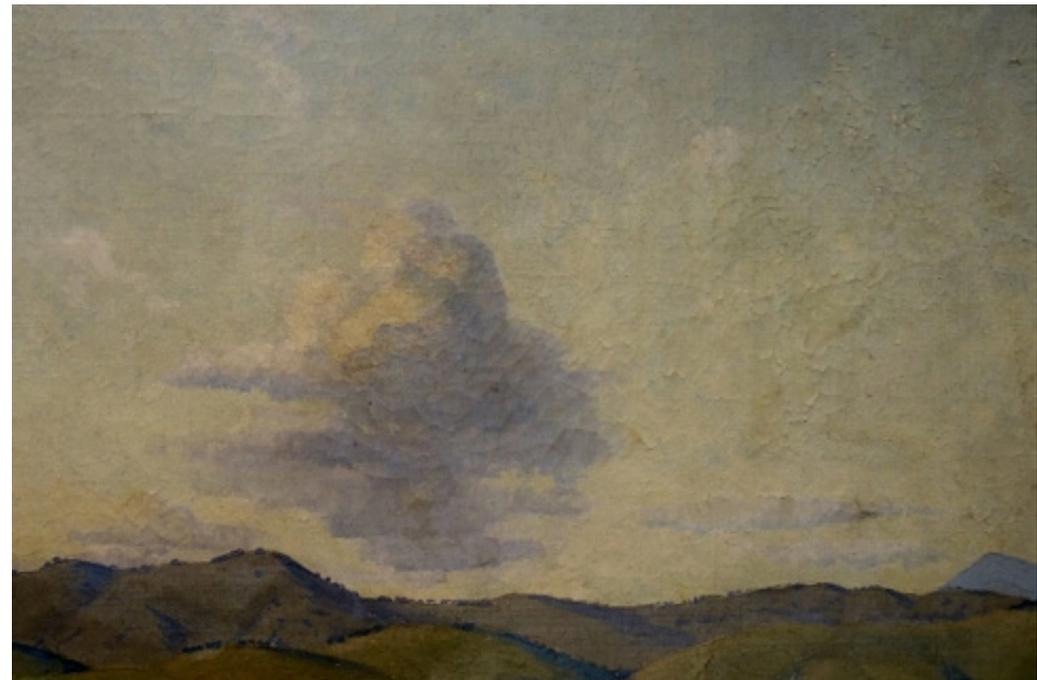
oil on canvas

101 x 120 cm

National Art School Collection

Gift of the Gruner estate, c.1939

Many poets, artists and filmmakers have appreciated the expansive Michelago Valley, situated south of Canberra in the Monaro region of New South Wales. Along with his mentor George Lambert, Elioth Gruner (1882–1939) was captivated by the subtle play of light across the valley. When he died at the age of 57 in 1939, he left two large paintings of Michelago Valley unfinished, and the Gruner Estate donated them to the National Art School as teaching aids for the students. Gruner's approach to painting is fascinating to see, and both works display immaculately finished skies and very raw unfinished foregrounds. Despite this, the works are framed as if completed, and the second painting contains one central soft cloud, hovering over the distant hills, creating a feeling of calm and tranquility.



## ELIOTH GRUNER

*Sunrise, Yass* 1931

oil on wood

42 x 49 cm

*Sunset, Yass* 1931

oil on board

43.5 x 47.5 cm

The Howard Hinton Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

Which part of the day is the most quiet, the most still? Is it sunrise or sunset? In the early morning the world is still slumbering but soon the gentle hum of movement and activity begins, animal and human. But come the gloaming birds are roosting and people down their work tools, be it manual or mental. For a moment stillness comes and we can all bask in its peace.

Elioth Gruner is known for his masterful depiction of the landscape and the ephemeral nature of light. He preferred to rise early and paint en plein air, capturing the long shadows of the morning sun.



## RYAN HOFFMANN

*Murdering Gully, Glenrock State Conservation Area, 6:04am 18/2/18 (RH313) 2018*

moulded oil paint, synthetic polymer, gypsum, CSM, marble dust, wax, timber, stainless steel  
120 x 120 x 16 cm

Purchased with the assistance of the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation, 2018  
Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

This week to complement Elioth Gruner's landscape painting from the @nas\_au Collection we have chosen this three-dimensional meditative work by Sydney-based artist Ryan Hoffmann.

On his practice, the artist writes:

'I use my painting practice as a way of connecting with my surroundings and representing my experiences. I am working on a very simple visual vocabulary and idea – representing time, space, light and life. It is an everyday practice... I am looking at the sky, its shape and atmospheric colour. It is constant and is timeless, however, it can represent time. I bring home documentation, pictures, notes and memories.

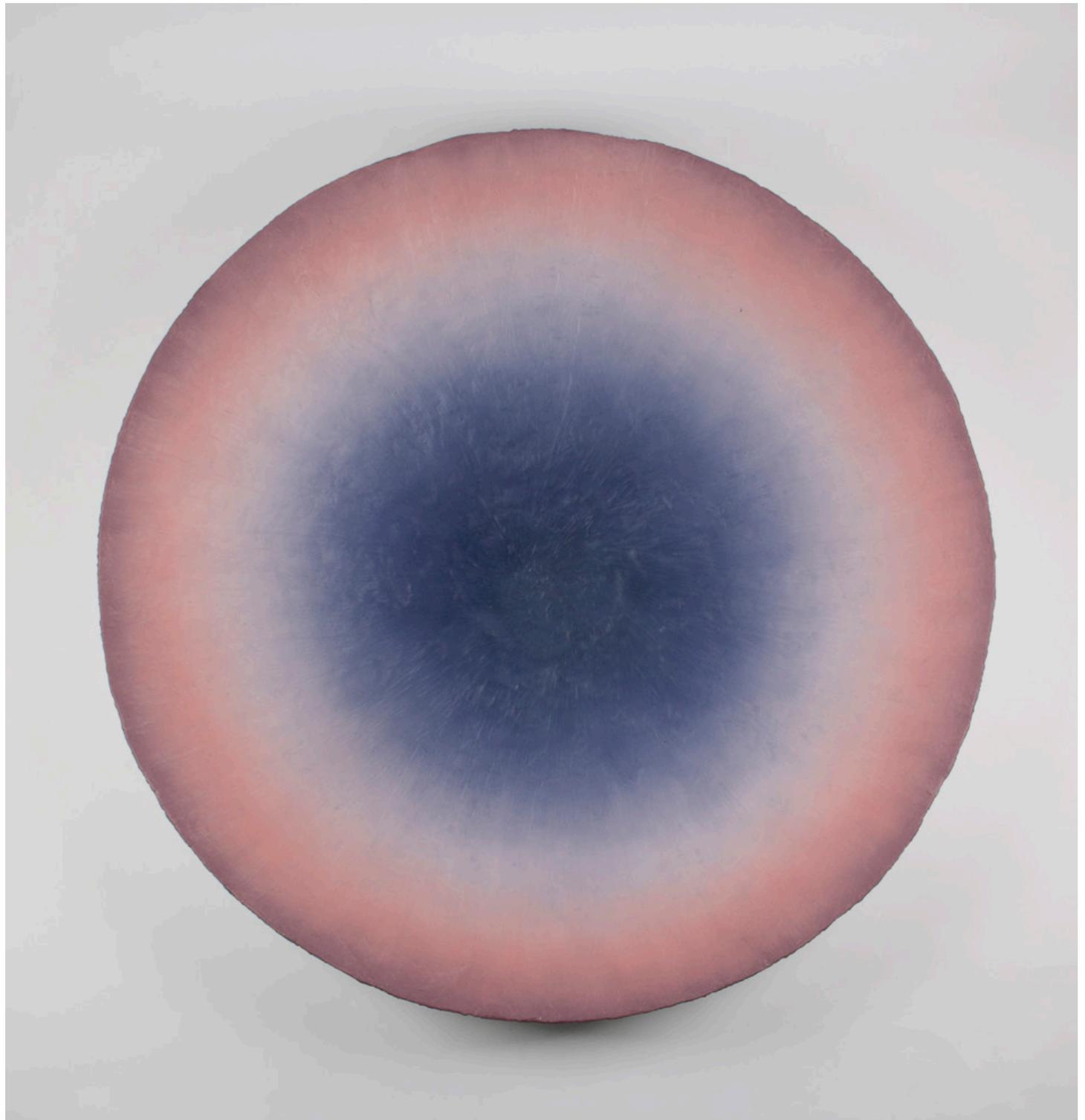
Layers of molded paint form a paraboloidal shape protruding from the wall. Voids, reflections and acoustic reverberations are experienced anew by each individual who interacts with the work. My works become autonomous...'

While our local spaces have begun to reopen back up again, *Murdering Gully, Glenrock State Conservation Area, 6:04am 18/2/18 (RH313) 2018* reminds us to take time to be still, to observe and connect with our surroundings, the space and light within our lives.

16 June

**Newcastle Art Gallery**

30



## JASON BENJAMIN

*Vanishing* 2004

oil on canvas

122 x 183 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Denis Savill  
Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

Responding to this week's selection by  
@nas\_au for #onstillnessexhibition WAG  
decided to hitch a ride on the cloud.

We started thinking about clouds as metaphors. We thought about how we use them in expressions like 'head in the clouds' and 'clouds of change'. Unlike Benjamin's later works there is a figure present in this landscape. Looming, epic but also fleeting. We think about where she has come from and wonder where she is going. Many of us have asked similar questions of ourselves lately. Especially when we are outside and looking towards the sky.

We asked Louise Brand, Professional Gallery Officer to comment on this work:

'This woman may be somewhere vast and expansive, yet the focus is on her face. Being out in a wide open space, observing clouds allows space for the mind to rest, to feel connected to nature and to deeply contemplate. This painting offers us the privilege of observing someone when they are thinking, taking time to pause and reflect... Gazing at the gazer.'



DAVID SERISIER

*Blue* 1997

oil and wax on linen

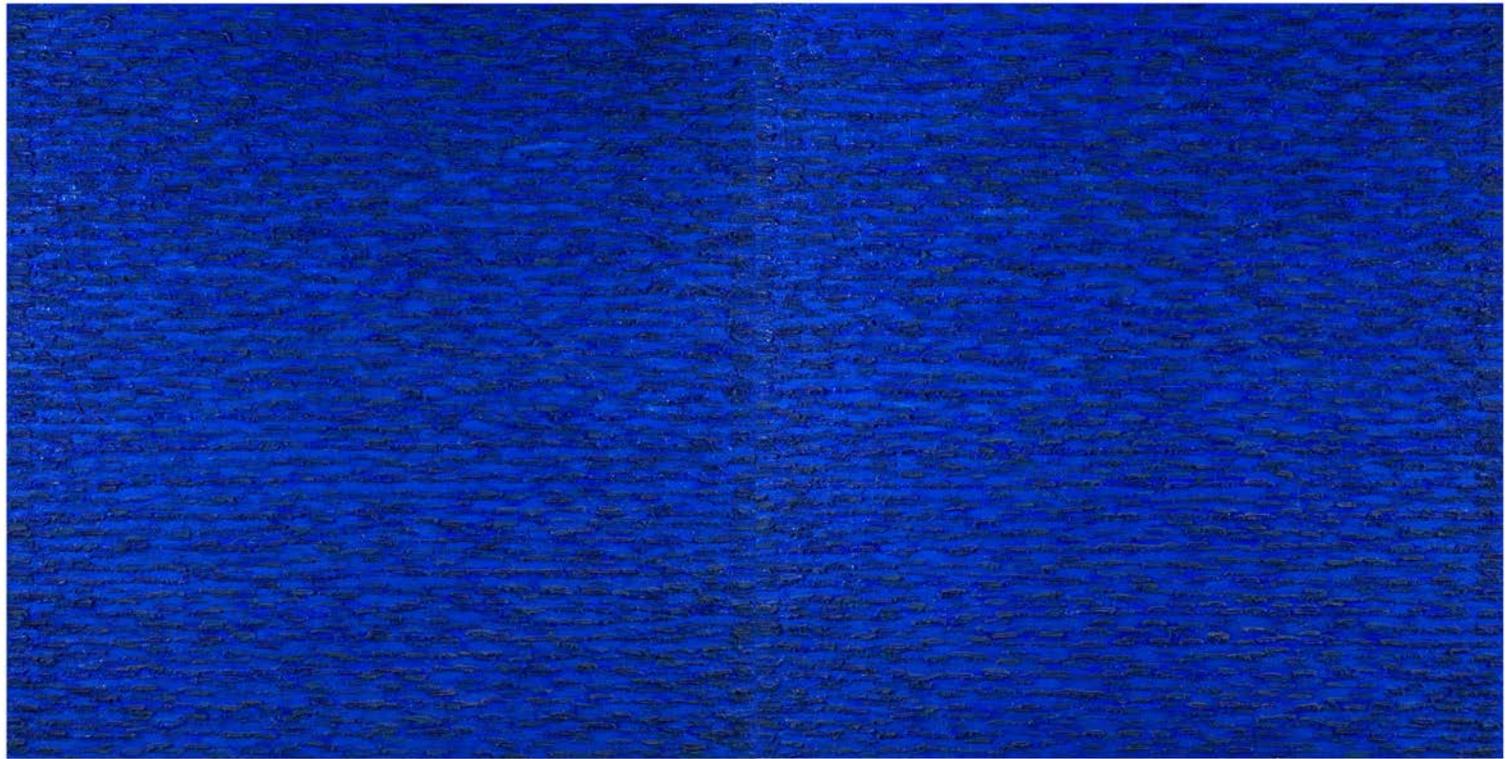
152.5 x 305 cm

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's

Cultural Gifts program by the artist, 2008

The sensation of calm or tranquility that blue can evoke is exemplified in the works by David Serisier here, and by Elioth Gruner as posted by @nas\_au. Since the invention of Egyptian Blue in 2,200 B.C. the colour remains a constant source of inspiration for artists. In *Blue* (1997) Serisier unpacks the sensation of blue across a large diptych 305 centimetres wide. In this amplified setting, the viewer is invited to delve into the shifting tones of light and dark as they move rhythmically across the waxy texture of the canvas. The seemingly simple title *Blue* is just a teaser, as Serisier evokes an experience of vivid blue that is enigmatic in its state of change and undulating movement.



**NICOLA HENSEL**

*Dark Leaves* (detail) 2006

pencil, ink on 25 sheets of Stonehenge paper  
110 x 170cm (overall)

Donated by the Lewis family in memory of  
Narelle Lewis 1934–2016

Cultural Collections, Lake Macquarie

Nicola Hensel's tender drawing of olive leaves emerging from the shadows reflects the artist's quiet conviction that light (and life) will find its way out of dark times.

The title itself, *Dark Leaves*, is a simple sentence of hope. 'I love their silvery leaves,' Hensel has said.

'The alchemy of their bitter fruit, and the way they live long in nothing but rock and blinding sun. As I drew those long slim leaves I could almost see the wings of the mythical dove in their forms.'



**MARIA KONTIS**

*'Oh life is mad and frenetic ... but do look after yourself'* 2018

pastel on velvet paper

76 x 56 cm

Purchased through the Tweed Regional Gallery Donations Fund, 2019

Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

This pastel drawing by Maria Kontis takes its name from its subject – a letter written to Margaret Olley from a friend in 1979. During a residency at Tweed Regional Gallery, Kontis explored the re-creation of Margaret Olley's home studio, looking for items and stories to depict. Rather than responding to objects that we see when we look into these crowded spaces, Kontis revealed the invisible – the letter being hidden away in a pile of postcards, notes and other ephemera. Through her illusionistic realism, Kontis breathes soft new life into this letter between two friends – holding their story still, as time moves on.



**SARAH GOFFMAN**

*White Series* (detail) 2009–13  
acrylic and enamel on PET  
34 pieces, dimensions variable  
National Art School Collection  
Gift of the artist, 2018

Sarah Goffman's *White Series* is a rumination on arrangement. It plays on well-established display techniques in contemporary art and pays tribute to the works of Australian ceramicist Gwynn Hanssen Pigott. Goffman describes herself as a 'trash converter', transforming plastic detritus into pristine, venerable objects. She painstakingly cleans single-use PET bottles and containers before spray-painting the insides with white enamel paint, a process that emphasises the formal properties of the vessels. Goffman's *White Series* invites us to slow down and reflect on the hidden beauty and elegance of the mundane objects in our surrounds.



## HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

*Untitled (palm leaf)* 2002

palm leaf

90 x 380 x 12 cm

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

This week for the #onstillnessexhibition we have selected this poetic work by South Australian based artist Hossein Valamanesh to complement Sarah Goffman's *White Series* 2009–13 from the @nas\_au Collection.

Valamanesh's *Untitled (palm leaf)* quietly reaches out to enfold the viewer in its meditative and deceptively simple presence. The gentle arc of a palm leaf seems to float before the gallery wall, its lower frond teased into a delicate fringe, its upper skilfully woven into the contours of a reclining figure.

The palm leaf engages the imagination, conveying a wealth of exotic symbolism redolent of Valamanesh's homeland. In the Middle Ages the palm was carried by pilgrims as a token of their journey. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the palm was collected as an exotic botanical specimen and cultivated as a curiosity in Europe. Today the frond can be found planted, isolated and separated from its environment, along the drives of suburban Australia. It is an age-old sign of sanctuary, offering rest and shade in a desert oasis, suggested by the sleeping silhouette shaped from the leaf.



## GWYN HANSSEN PIGOTT

*Still life with bowl* 1994

ceramic

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

The quiet intensity of Gwyn Hanssen Pigott's (1935–2013) ceramic still life embodies stillness in the careful balance of form and colour. This week as part of #onstillnessexhibition we are responding to the *White Series* by Sarah Goffman as posted by @nas\_au. Together both artists present the vessel in a still life composition; from Hanssen Pigott's elegant cups, bowls and vases, to Goffman's structural PET commercial bottles. Distilling the colour range of the ceramics and plastic bottles to subtle tones and splashes of colour, the artists have removed any bold distractions. As a result we are left to reconsider the form of the domestic objects, elevating them and their everyday function as something to be celebrated.



**GEOFF LA GERCHE,**  
*Vegemite* 1976–77  
oil on canvas  
76.1 x 50.5 cm  
The Chandler Coventry Collection  
New England Regional Art Museum  
**JONATHON LARSEN**  
*Margaret's Vegemite Jar* 2015  
linoprint  
52 x 38 cm  
Gift of the Packsaddle Fundraisers, 2016  
NERAM Collection  
New England Regional Art Museum

This week in response to Sarah Goffman's sculpture from the @nas\_au Collection, which elevates the humblest of everyday consumable items – plastic containers – we have chosen to highlight an item commonly found in kitchen pantries around the country – the Vegemite jar.

Geoff la Gerche's Vegemite jar serves the simple but important purpose of storing paintbrushes while Jonathon Larsen has depicted a Vegemite jar as a vase in an homage to Margaret Preston.



**JOHN MORRIS**

*Through the night* (detail) 1997

oil on canvas

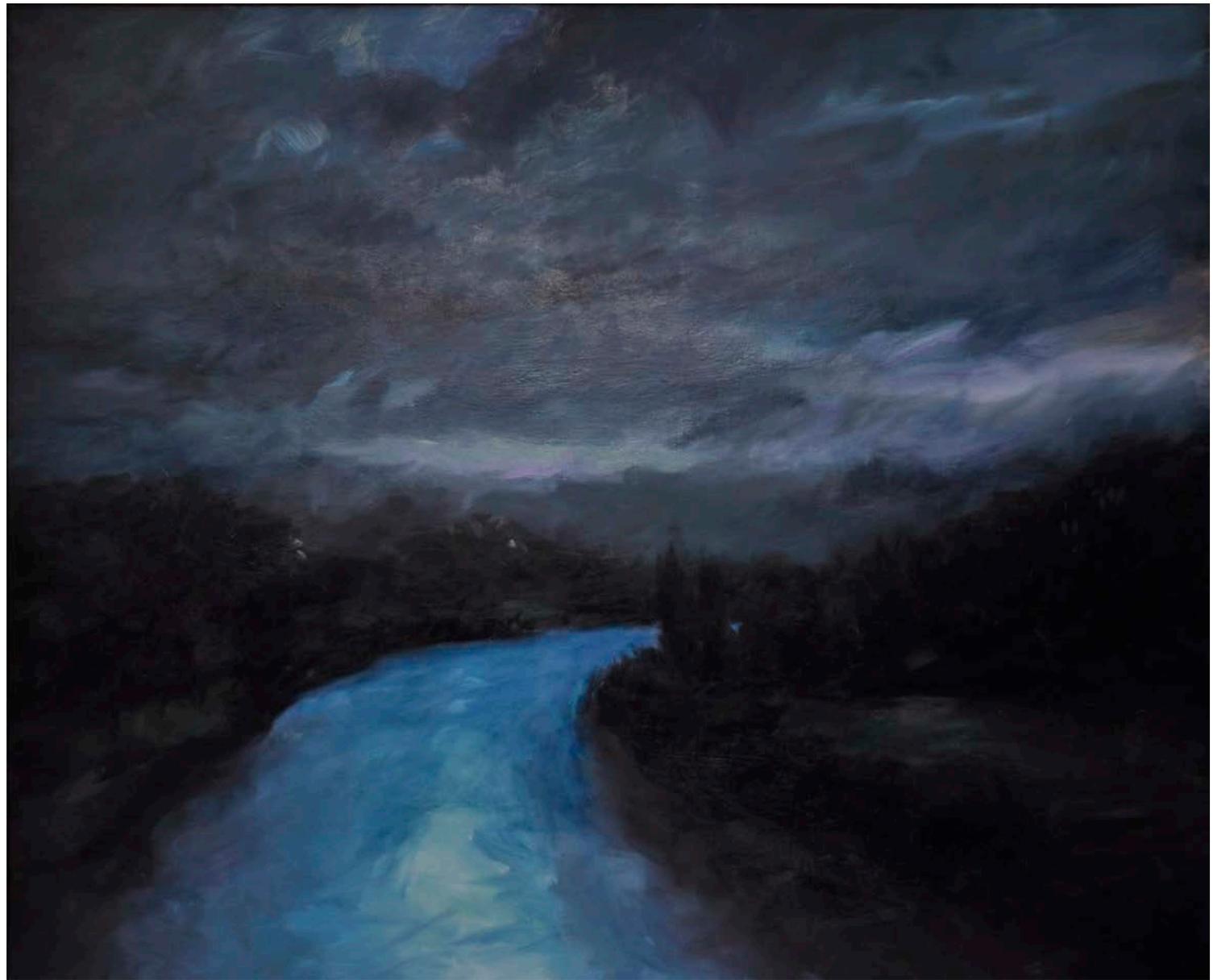
142 x 166 cm

Cultural Collections, Lake Macquarie

Light and landscape conspire to reflect human emotion more than the actual place in the work of established Hunter-based artist John Morris.

'When considering painting landscape,' he has said, 'the characters and elements that make up a landscape are common to many you may witness anywhere in the world.'

'Winding rivers can act as universal metaphors for journey and change. Essential moments, glimpses of fleeting wonder, witnessed and later forgotten, are revived by moving into the space of these paintings. It is there within the painting, that one can find things long forgotten.'



23 June

**Museum of Art and Culture,  
Lake Macquarie yapang**

SIMON BLAU

*Cut Painting With Rail* 2012

enamel on board with rail

97.5 x 80 cm

Purchased 2012

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

Blau's work acknowledges the history of painting and particularly that of abstraction. While his practice is introspective, the process of painting essentially informs the work. He also considers the space between the act of painting and the wider material world. Examining the complexities of our core values and how they inform and change our perception – nothing is definitive in Blau's work. In colour psychology amber is thought to promote short term concentration and conveys confidence and safety. This artwork makes us think of the judgement call required when we suddenly see a yellow traffic light at an intersection – do we stop or do we proceed?



23 June

**Wollongong Art Gallery**

40

**GUY MAESTRI**

*Reflection* 2017

oil on linen

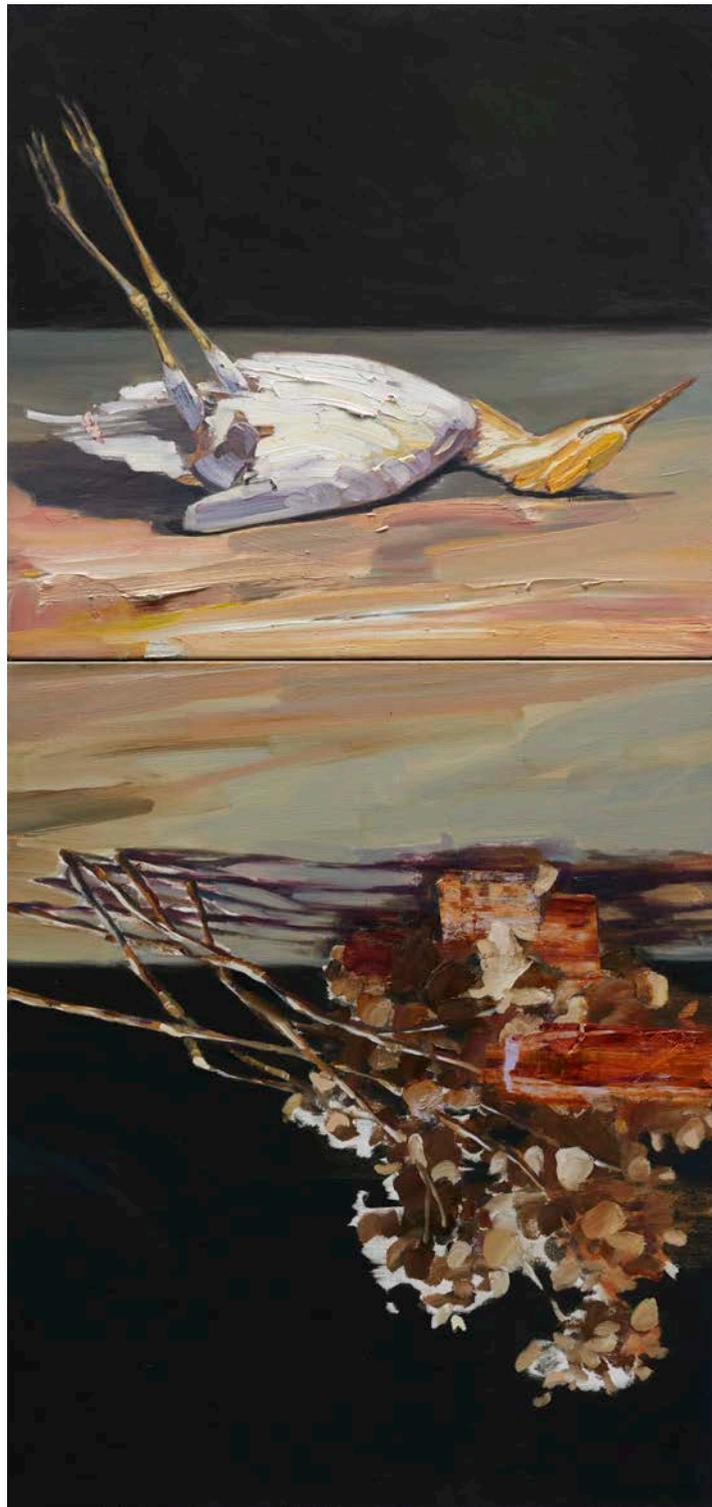
177 x 56 cm

Purchased through the Tweed Regional  
Gallery Donations Fund, 2017

Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

In 2017 Guy Maestri was guest artist in the Nancy Fairfax Artist in Residence Studio at the Margaret Olley Art Centre. Maestri chose to make paintings of Margaret's collection of flowers that became his reflections or echoes of her memory. A found, deceased bird mirrored against the dried bouquet highlights the capacity of still life paintings to hold and preserve memory.

'I was quite affected by my time spent inside Margaret's re-created home and though it may only be an echo of her time in this world, it is filled with her treasured artefacts and ordinary objects, just as she left them.'  
– Guy Maestri



## DOUGLAS DUNDAS

*Self Portrait* c.1925

oil on canvas

43.2 x 35.5 cm

Gift of Matilda Quera, 2012

## ARTHUR MURCH

*Portrait of John Santry* 1940

red conte on paper, mounted

36 x 29 cm

Gift of John and Michelle Murch, 2015

## RAYNER HOFF

*Portrait of Mary Turner* 1926

plaster with applied brown patina

23 x 16 x 17 cm

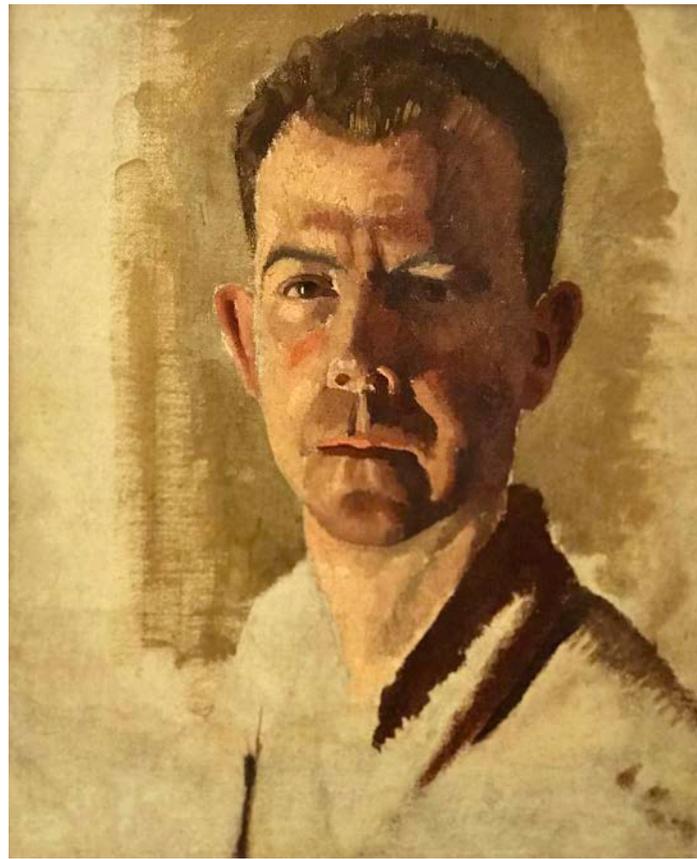
Gift of Stephen Henstock, 2019

National Art School Collection

There is a story of interconnectedness that resonates amongst the three portraits and the artists selected here from the NAS Collection that goes beyond the intimate moment when eyes are locked, and human expression is stilled.

Douglas Dundas (1900–81) taught at the East Sydney Technical College (later called the National Art School) from 1930–65. His modernist style was instrumental in the early days of painting instruction at NAS and through his establishment of a policy of collecting work by students and teachers, the NAS Collection was formed.

Dundas taught alongside Rayner Hoff from 1930–37. Hoff (1894–1937) had arrived from the Isle of Man in 1923 to become a teacher of drawing and sculpture. He created a highly dynamic school of sculpture working with countless students over a 14-year period before his premature death in 1937. One of Hoff's students was Arthur Murch (1902–89) who attended ESTC under Hoff for one day a week in 1923 whilst working as an engineer. Murch returned to teach modelling and sculpture at NAS in 1932 and then again in the 40s and 50s. Murch is said to have considered himself more of a sculptor than a painter – the influence of Renaissance masters and Classicism can be seen in his drawing of his former 1930s student John Santry, who came back to teach at NAS from 1959 onwards.



## GARY GREALY

*Portrait of Mary Turner OAM 2017*

photographic inkjet print

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Purchased in memory of Mary Turner OAM by  
Ted Marr and members of the community

What makes a good portrait? How do you capture and distil the essence of a person in an image? This week as part of #onstillnessexhibition we respond to @nas\_au selection of portraits and their universal appeal for presenting the sitter in a moment of stillness and complete resolution. Gary Grealy's *Portrait of Mary Turner OAM* is a striking example of this, an elegant photograph of a person who greatly shaped Orange Regional Gallery.

Orange Regional Gallery Collection was founded on the Mary Turner Collection, which she presented to the City of Orange in 1982. It is thanks to her foresight and generosity that plans to build a regional gallery were progressed – with the award-winning building opening in 1986.

Playing with light, Grealy washes the subject in a soft, cool light, framed by a dark background. Whilst capturing a moment that has passed, the photograph is alive with the intensity of the moment it was taken. Elegant and resolved, she looks ahead with purpose.



**BRIAN DUNLOP**

*Portrait of a Young Girl* 1980

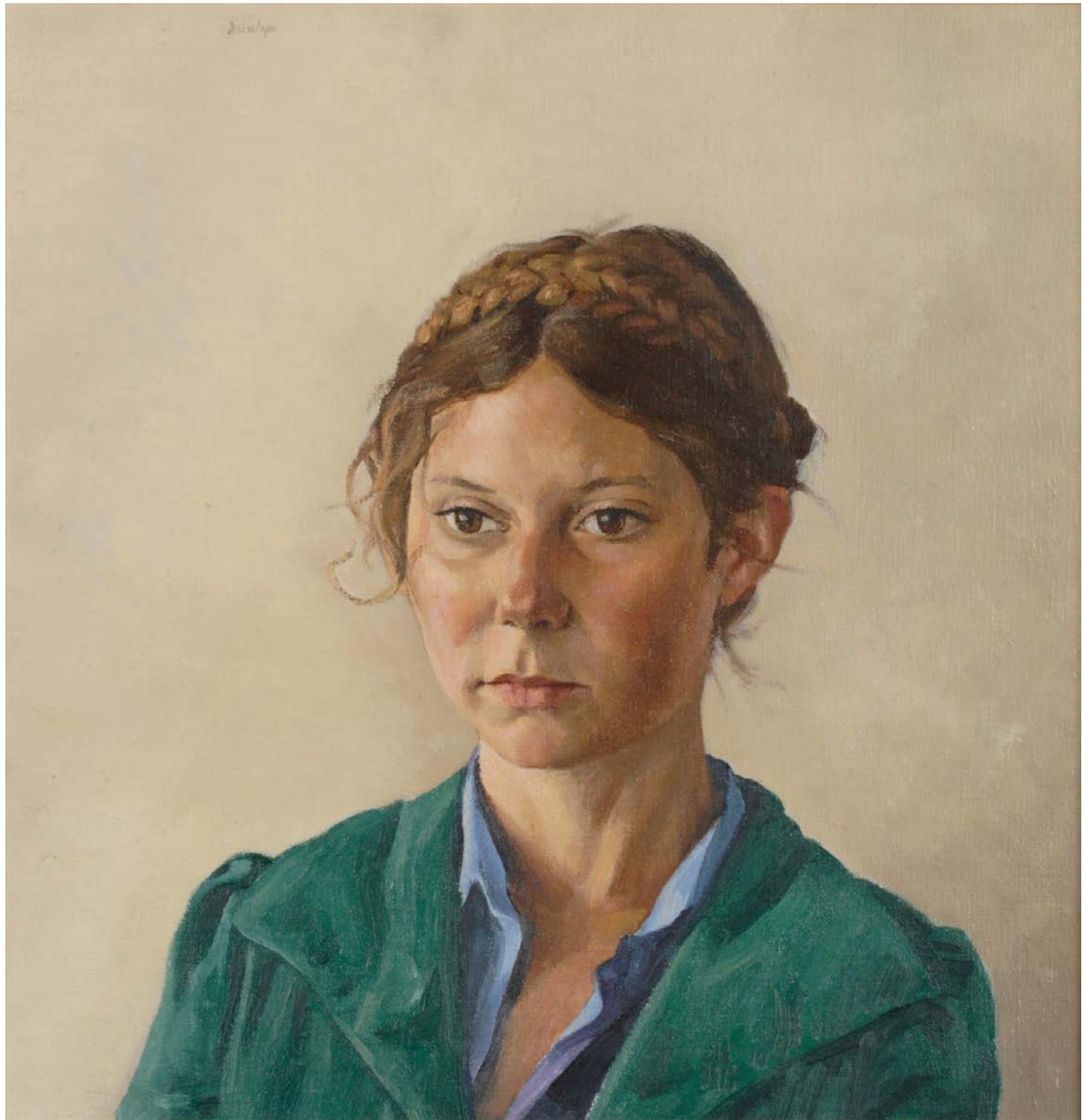
oil on canvas mounted on composition board

45.2 x 44.3 cm

Gift of Boral-BMI

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

This work was chosen from the Wollongong Art Gallery Collection for this week's #onstillnessexhibition because of the calm, dream-like quality in this sensitively painted *Portrait of a Young Girl*. Brian Dunlop had the ability to imbue his figures with a refined awareness and a unequivocal timelessness. Dunlop's superb draughtsmanship is well recognised. In 1980 he won the prestigious Sulman Prize. After training at the National Art School, Sydney for five years he travelled and worked in Europe, England and Mexico. He was greatly influenced by the frescoes of Piero Della Francesca. Even though Della Francesca and Dunlop's practice spanned a difference of 500 years – these artists created work that embodies both spiritual and intellectual focal points.



## DOUGLAS DUNDAS

*En Plein Air* c. 1930

oil on canvas

68.5 x 77.2 cm

Gift of the Society of Artists, 1939

## FRED LEIST

*Australian Girl* n.d.

oil on canvas

81.5 x 71.7 cm

Gift of Howard Hinton, 1946

## HERBERT BADHAM

*Self Portrait* 1935

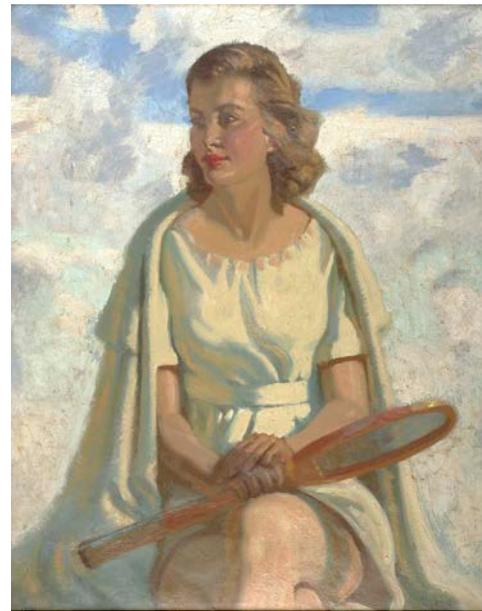
oil on board

73.9 x 55.5 cm

Gift of Howard Hinton, 1935

The Howard Hinton Collection

New England Regional Art Museum



For the 7th instalment of the #onstillnessexhibition we are taking the lead from NAS and highlighting portraits in our collection by artists connected to the National Art School, beginning with Douglas Dundas.

Douglas Dundas has a strong connection to New England, having been born in Inverell. Prior to teaching at East Sydney Technical College (later called the National Art School), Dundas was awarded a Travelling Scholarship which enabled him to visit England and Europe in 1927. His work, *En Plein Air*, was presented to the Society of Artists under the terms of the Scholarship and was subsequently donated to the Armidale Teachers' College. The title is somewhat ironic as the set-up looks like a studio however the setting is outdoors. Add the intense gaze of the artist towards the viewer, and the painting becomes quite a puzzle.

While at NAS Dundas assisted the Head of Painting Fred Leist before taking over the section. Leist's portrait of an *Australian Girl* is brimming with vitality and grace and encapsulates what the ideal of Australian femininity was at that time and from which we have progressed and diversified.

Herbert Badham also taught painting at NAS, from 1938 to 1961. He frequently painted himself and in this 'Self Portrait' his quizzical gaze with raised eyebrow suggests an interaction with the viewer, as though he is waiting for our response.



## JOHN COBURN

*Dark descent* 1966

oil on canvas

168.4 x 112 cm

Purchased 1966

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

Radiant discs in incandescent skies with arresting simplicity and brilliant colour harmonies. These are the highlights of John Coburn's style. Creating formal harmonies of shapes and colours, evoking mood and feeling, his images are charged with associations and memories of places and things he has experienced.

Coburn's works, specifically *Dark descent* captures the joy of life in its limitless expressions, or simply the warmth of the sun.

The artist often makes the colour glow at the edges of the forms by painting slightly darker areas of background colour in between.

About this painting, the artist writes: 'It was painted from a watercolour study done after a trip to Brisbane in 1964. Leaving Brisbane by air in the late afternoon, I observed the setting sun hovering in the western sky. It had an immense radiance, and then it slowly sank below the dark rim of the earth. The painting is an attempt to express my feelings at this moment in time, a mixture of elation, awe, tranquility and transcendence.'



CHARLES COLLIN

*Morning Mist* n.d.

silver gelatin photograph

29 x 36.8 cm

Donated by the Newcastle

Photographic Society, 1990

Cultural Collections, Lake Macquarie

Although BHP and the docks of Newcastle were key subjects for the late Charles Collin, his passionate engagement with the art of photography itself gives his work its character.

Active in Newcastle between the 1930s and 1960s and working exclusively in black and white, Collin's approach to composition, technique and lighting effects was strongly influenced by the ideas of the Pictorialist and early Modernist photographers.

Creating 'interpretations' of nature, as opposed to mere documentary images, the Pictorialist photographers were influenced by the expressive and impressionistic effects typical of painting at the time.



30 June

**Museum of Art and Culture,  
Lake Macquarie yapang**

**MARGARET OLLEY**

*Wildflowers and pears* c.1973

oil on board

65 x 76 cm

Purchased through the bequest of Phoebe  
McNamara and the Tweed Regional Gallery

Donations Fund, 2019

Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

A wonderful burst of wildflowers ruptures the quiet stillness of this composition. The white flannel flowers are like stars glinting and falling across the arrangement. In this simple still life, Margaret Olley celebrates the everyday.

Olley began her career as a landscape artist but later dedicated herself entirely to still life and interiors. She didn't need a separate studio in which to make her work. Instead every room in her home was used as a studio first and foremost, and that which was close at hand was subject matter for her painting.



## LES BLAKEBROUGH AM

*Three tilted bowls* 2016

southern ice porcelain

12.5 x 17 cm (each)

National Art School Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2018

Les Blakebrough (b. 1930) is one of Australia's most respected ceramic artists. He is best known for the type of translucent porcelain he developed called 'Southern Ice' porcelain. Fired at 1300 degrees Celsius, this material has the 'whiteness of snow and a translucence of ice'. It is now used by ceramicists worldwide and features in the practice of another NAS alumni, #JuzKitson. Blakebrough's works in porcelain have an ethereal simplicity and visual purity. In *Three tilted bowls*, a recent work from 2016, he set each bowl on an individual angle of tilt, side by side. Wave-like lines are carved into the unglazed outer wall of each form, poetically articulating the gentle undulations of the sea. The artist says, 'My local environment in Coledale informs what I do; the brooding presence of the sandstone escarpment, the energetic forces of the ocean and the beautiful lines of the waves rising and falling.'



CHRISTOPHER HODGES

*Wiggle* 1997

acrylic on plywood

190.5 x 40.64 x 27.94 cm

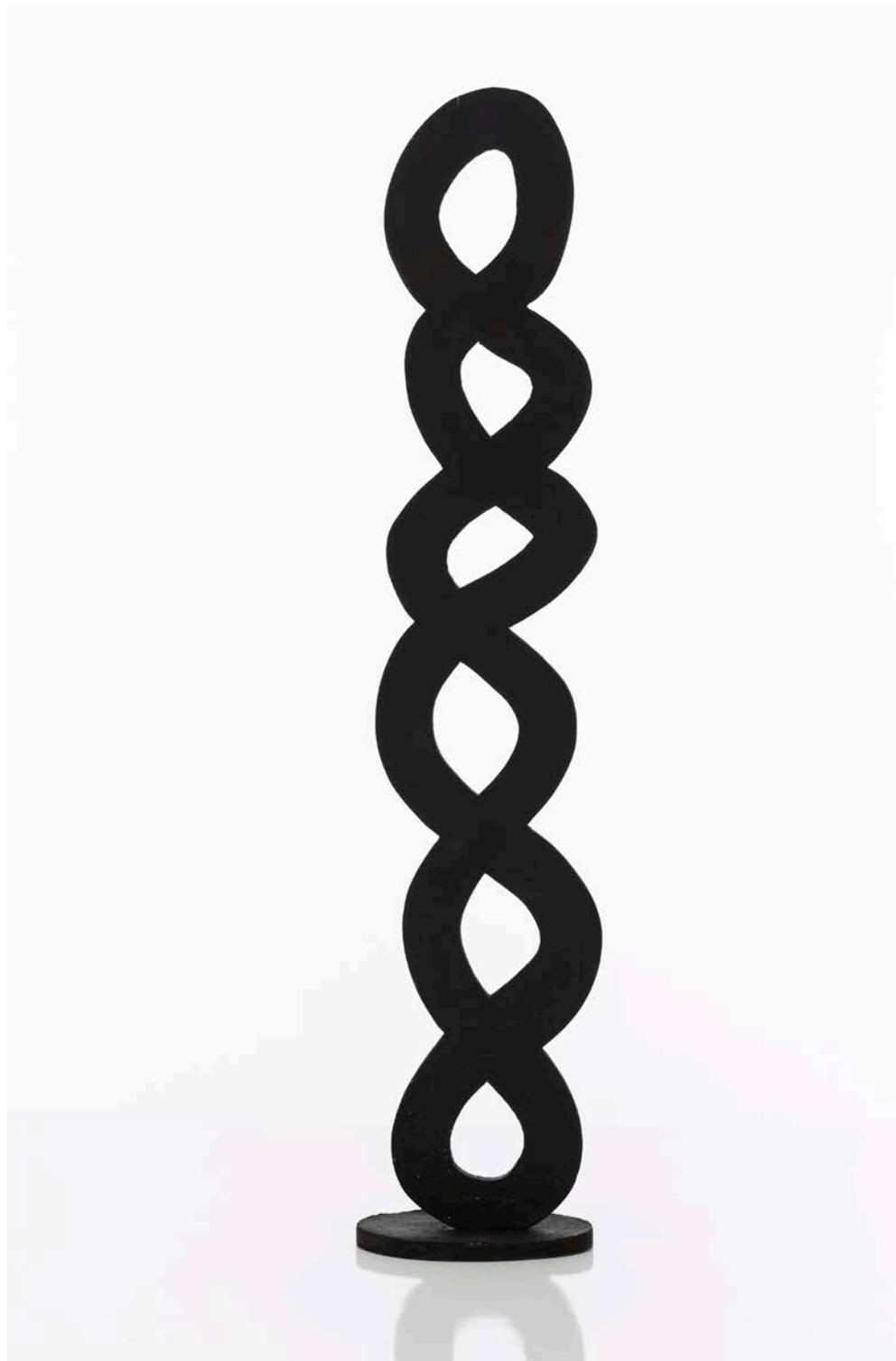
Anonymous donation with the assistance of  
the Agapitos/Wilson Art Foundation, 2001

NERAM Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

This week, in response to Les Blakebrough's  
exquisite *Three tilted bowls* of southern ice  
porcelain from the @nas\_au Collection, we  
have selected *Wiggle* by Christopher Hodges.

Blakebrough carved wave-like lines of the  
exterior of each bowl to reflect the gentle  
undulations of the sea. Hodges's plywood  
sculpture reaches gently upwards with  
organic, luscious curves that embody the  
artist's interest in organic geometry.



## ILDIKO KOVACS

*Jindabyne* 2019

oil paint on board

160 x 244 cm

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Donated through the Australian Government's

Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2020

This week for #onstillnessexhibition we are responding to the movement and balance in Les Blakebrough's tilting bowls as posted by @nas\_au

*Jindabyne* by Ildiko Kovacs evokes a similar meditative movement, with curving, circular lines that roll throughout the painting. Created last year, the painting is a poignant homage to the family gathering at Jindabyne prior to her mother's passing. Applied by a roller, the lines shift in their transparency, resulting in white shimmering tonal layers over dark brown forms. Undulating in light and colour, the addition of calming blue offsets the intensity of the repetition, providing a meditative space for reflection. As the lines constantly roll through the space, there is seemingly no beginning and no end. By embracing the repetitive, cyclical state, we are encouraged to be present, and in the moment.



## GREG DALY

*Lustred Form* 1985

ceramic, bismuth resin lustre

45 x 45 x 45 cm

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

'... I realise that lustre is not something you control, it's something you encourage and entice into being. The complexity of the process is yet another connection to the complex atmospheric systems that produce the stunning and unique natural light shows that have inspired me for years.'

Greg Daly is a well respected Australian ceramicist – a master of the medium and he specialises in rich glaze and lustre effects. His work is inspired by nature and his environment. Having a passion for form, colour and particularly the properties of light – and how it changes from night unto day and from one season to the next. His art practice is a form of alchemy, creating objects and merging ephemeral qualities with seemingly magical and transformative elements. This work embodies presence. It reminds us of looking through a microscope at cellular structures and/or gazing through a powerful telescope pointed towards the stars.



**DANIEL BOYD**

*Yamani* (still) 2018

single channel video, 19:17 minutes, AP1  
Purchased through the Gil Docking Bequest  
2020, Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

For our latest contribution to the evolving #onstillnessexhibition, we present a recent acquisition to the Gallery collection by Kudjira/Gangalu artist Daniel Boyd.

*Yamani* 2018 is a 19-minute video depicting an evolving universe of coloured dots. Boyd describes *Yamani* (or the rainbow serpent) as 'a blanket term given by Europeans to many different aboriginal beliefs relating to creation.'

The video provides a visual metaphor for the unknowable. It is an abstracted journey through time immemorial, which means originating in the distant past; very old. It hints at concepts beyond our present existence and signals to the impermanence of life on this planet. The experience watching the video is both otherworldly and grounded; expansive and atomic.



**MONICA ROHAN**

*Contain* 2015

oil on board

80.1 x 60.1 cm

Gift of the Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery  
and Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc., 2015  
Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

Curled up and contained in voluminous lengths of patterned fabric; its layers and twists appear to simultaneously comfort and constrain her.

The decorative patterns, her milky skin and wispy, trailing hair speak first of something beautiful, but on further contemplation the work reveals a feeling of unease. We start to wonder how long she has been there and when she might emerge from this containment.

Rohan produced *Contain* following a residency at Tweed Regional Gallery. She developed the patterns from studies of textiles in the re-creation of Margaret Olley's home studio.



## JUSTINE ROCHE

*Here / Now* (detail) 2019

tintypes

120 x 190 cm (overall);

10.16 x 12.7 cm (each)

National Art School Collection

Purchased 2019

Justine Roche's work explores early photographic processes such as the wet collodion process or 'tintype' photography. She is drawn to this medium for its unpredictability and timeless aesthetic. *Here / Now* (2019) comprises 65 portraits of female art students who graduated from the National Art School in 2019.

Each image is directly exposed onto a metal plate and Roche's sitters must hold a still expression while the photographic alchemy occurs. The result is 'unique and inimitable' writes Roche, 'there are no negatives, no digital prints, no second chances'.



**KATTHY CAVALIERE**

*Camera Obscura views of Hill End*

photographic negatives

106 x 130; 76 x 131 cm

Orange Regional Gallery Collection

Gift of the Estate of Katthy Cavaliere, 2019

In response to @nas\_au post of Justine Roche's tin-types, this week as part of #onstillnessexhibition we look at the role of stillness in the process of pinhole photography used by Katthy Cavaliere.

Requiring a long exposure, the process is slow, requiring time and an almost meditative pace. In 2008 Cavaliere created these large-scale photographic (camera obscura) negatives during her second @bathurstregionalartgallery @hillendair artist's residency at Murrays Cottage, Hill End. Working from a portable camera obscura attached to the tray of a ute, Cavaliere captured a series of ethereal photographic images of the village. The slow format photography results in black and white images that evoke the sense of history in the landscape of historic Hill End.



TOM DION

*Mother and Child at Dwai Temple* 1995

gelatin silver photograph

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

This week we respond to Justine Roche, *Here/Now* shared by @nas\_au with an entrancing image by local artist Tom Dion. It was part of the exhibition *Tapestry* at Wollongong Art Gallery in 1996 and then toured to Bathurst Regional Gallery. The exhibition was initiated by the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council.

During this period artists from non-english speaking backgrounds focused on changing community perspectives, considering identity and the broader implications of migration to Australia for a 'better life'. They focused on social narratives, acutely aware of their own unique viewpoints – bridging time, cultures, rituals and traditions.

This photograph captures the powerful direct gaze of a child. Although sitting beside her mother, she is an autonomous figure. The subject and viewer are transfixed – interconnected, and we are reminded of the abiding phrase 'The eyes are the window of the soul'.



## OLIVE LONG

*Self Portrait* 1937

pencil on paper

36.3 x 32.9 cm

The Howard Hinton Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

For our latest contribution to the ongoing #onstillnessexhibition we are responding to the stunning tintype portraits of female artists with piercing gazes by #nasalumni Justine Roche. Roche created a series of portraits of graduating female art students using the wet collodion process.

This self-portrait by Olive Long has a similar strong gaze of a woman unafraid to take her place in the art world. Long (1906–75) was born in England and trained as a commercial artist. In 1937 she emigrated to Sydney with her second husband and had her first solo exhibition in 1943 at the Macquarie Galleries. Long frequently exhibited in the Archibald Prize and was a member of the Sydney Society of Artists and Contemporary Artists Society, Melbourne.



**NICOLA HENSEL**

*From the sad morning to now* 2005

pencil on paper

21 x 29.5 cm

Purchased 2005

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

This week for #onstillnessexhibition we have chosen this drawing by Newcastle based artist Nicola Hensel.

Hensel tracks, traces and uncovers the sublime details of her world, both natural and domestic. Firmly rooted in drawing and the act of placing marks on paper, her work is an invitation into a very present and calm eye, that sees the world with care, time and space.

Hensel's work *From the sad morning to now* (2005) is a sensitive and contemplative piece. It's a delicate pencil drawing encompassing 25 sheets of paper. The work was a finalist in the 2005 Dobell Drawing Prize. Hensel explained that her work 'described a time of reflection and sorrow, but also renewal.'



**NATASHA BIENIEK**

*Untitled* 2013

oil on wood

15 x 20 cm

Purchased through the Tweed Regional Gallery Donations Fund with assistance from the Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc., 2013  
Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

Due to its small proportions, the normal physical space between the viewer and the work is forcibly narrowed (in real life). Technological devices such as smart phones miniaturise the way we regularly look at images – but they also permit us to zoom in to examine more closely the gradated background of this scene with its strangely furnished interior, and contemplate both the stillness and awkwardness of the woman's repose. Bieniek's paintings aim to capture contrasting elements of beauty and melancholia, luminosity and dullness, fragility and potency.



## INDIA MARK

*Morte iii (two teacups)* 2015

oil on canvas

25.5 x 30.5 cm

National Art School Collection

Gift of the artist, 2016

India Mark's exquisite still life paintings prove that small can be beautiful, and that paintings of simple domestic items can portray a calm majesty that is not often found in larger works. She describes the work as a response to Morandi's devotion to still life painting, and says it represents the death of small moments of pleasure in our day-to-day lives. A recent graduate of the National Art School, Mark has had considerable recognition for her figurative work, having been chosen as a finalist in the Archibald Prize twice. Despite the sombre title of the work ('Morte', meaning dead), the painterly brushwork on these glowing teacups draws the viewer into a contemplative space which resonates so perfectly with the theme of stillness.



**G.K. TOWNSHEND**

*Crockery Cupboard* 1942

watercolour

27.7 x 36.3 cm

The Howard Hinton Collection

New England Regional Art Museum

For our final instalment of the #onstillnessexhibition we are responding to India Mark's *Morte iii (two teacups)*.

Still life is probably the most apt genre for this evolving exhibition. While Mark's painting is imbued with a dark mood and strong shadows, we have chosen a cheerier composition, but with the shapes of the teacups echoing each other.

G.K. Townshend depicted a sun-filled kitchen cupboard filled to the brim with white and turquoise crockery, perfectly appropriate for this beach-loving artist. Townshend (1888–1939) was born in Auckland and moved to Sydney in 1910. He studied art with Dattilo Rubbo and was a cartoonist for *The Bulletin*. He also painted watercolours and was vice-president of the Australian Watercolour Institute.



ALISON REHFISCH

*Green and blue still life* 1932

oil on jute canvas

50.5 x 41 cm

Mary Turner Collection

Orange Regional Gallery

This week for #onstillnessexhibition we present *Green and blue still life* (1932) by Alison Rehfisch (1900–75) from the Mary Turner Collection, in response to India Mark's quiet still life *Morte iii (two teacups)* (2015) shared by @nas\_au. Unlike Mark, whose quiet work is intensified by the dark sombre palette, Rehfisch achieves a similar stillness with a vibrant embrace of colour. Celebrating blue and green, Rehfisch pulls away from the details, painting the still life with simplified forms and blocks of thinly-applied colour. Light takes centre stage as it bounces and reflects off the transparent objects of glasses and elongated bottle forms. Known for her fascination for the everyday, Rehfisch's balanced composition and distilling of features transforms the still life into a timeless moment.



21 July

Orange Regional Gallery

63

**TAMARA DEAN**

*Untitled #4, Only Human* 2011

archival pigment print on cotton rag

38 x 58 cm

Donated through the Australian Government's

Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2019

Newcastle Art Gallery Collection

Tamara Dean's ethereal works centre on the relationship between humans and the natural world. Dean reflects that, 'for as long as I can remember I have yearned to be in nature. When I enter a forest, I feel as though I have come home. This deep love of nature informs my life and my art practice... I delve into the informal rites of passage and experience that people seek out in nature and create symbolically charged works which aim to bridge the separateness that we as humans create between us and nature.'

*Untitled #4 Only Human* is part of a 2011 series Dean produced exploring human vulnerability and fragility. While we are navigating our current circumstances, Dean's evocative images offer solace in a time of disquiet.



**WILLIAM ROBINSON**

*Sunny morning with room and verandah*  
2012

pastel on paper  
70 x 100 cm

Gift of the Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery  
& Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc., 2014  
Tweed Regional Gallery Collection

While Robinson is known as one of Australia's greatest landscape artists, he began his career as a painter of still life and interiors.

Time stands still in this colourful, cluttered interior; a personal, private view of the artist's world that he has turned his attention to later in life. Robinson's return to still life and interior painting allows him to exercise his skill for composition. In this scene, multiple still life arrangements co-exist with the congestion of furniture, textiles and the glimpse of the garden beyond the verandah.



## JOHN SAMUEL WATKINS

*Untitled portrait* n.d.

oil on canvas

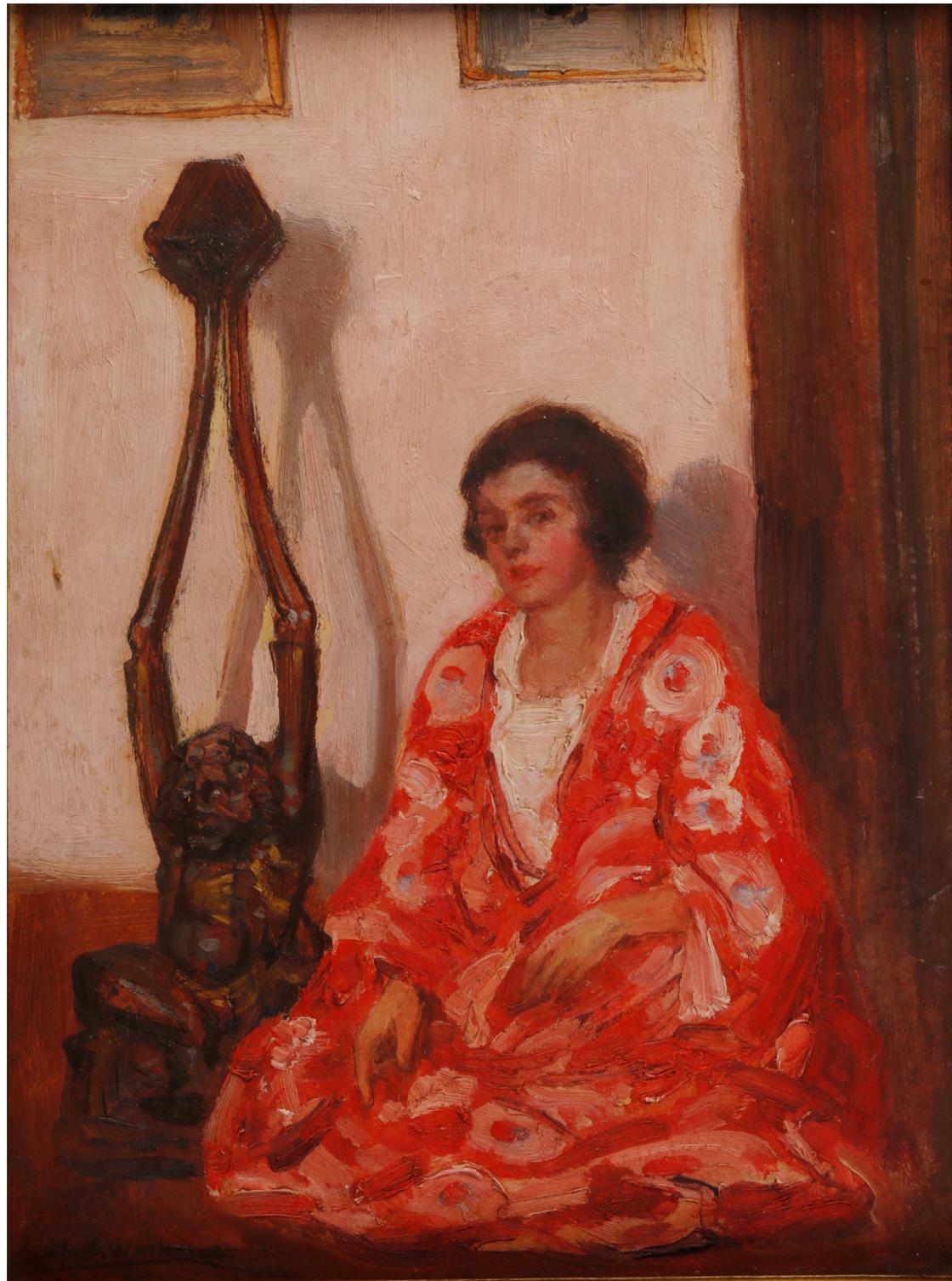
Gift of Dr and Mrs P Elliott, 1979

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

John Samuel Watkins (1866–1942) was born in England and immigrated to Australia as a 16 year old. He was a photographer, professional painter, and an art teacher. He is known for his portraits, genre and landscape painting.

Watkins returned to Europe moving to Paris in 1887 where he studied art at the Académie Colarossi in Paris, later travelling through Europe. Returning to Australia and then studied under Julian R. Ashton, Royal Art Society School (1890–1893).

We don't know who the sitter in this work is, yet there is a resemblance to other known portraits of the artist's wife, Emily Griffin Cave. While impressionistic, this painting is influenced by a style known as 'Japonisme'. Watkins had certainly been exposed to this while spending time in fashionable Paris, considering the Japanese-influenced painter Raphaël Collin taught at the Académie in Paris. Watkins was viewed by his peers as a proficient draughtsman and this is evident in the composition of this work. The triangular form of the female figure, wearing a kimono style garment is seated in a pose evocative of a Buddha, also suggesting a strong foundation and stability with references to beauty, harmony and the spiritual. Additionally the mysterious carving with arms pointed towards the sky (as though making an offering to the gods) further alludes to knowledge of other worlds and the 'exotic' other.



21 July

**Wollongong Art Gallery**

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## JACQUELINE HENNESSY

*How to disappear completely* 2019

oil on linen

122 x 92 cm

National Art School Collection

Acquired through the NAS Collection

Fund, 2019

In her ghostly paintings of female figures, Jacqueline Hennessy explores how to give visual form to her lived experience of being in the world. Her painting process involves staining clear primed Belgian linen with thin washes of raw umber and lead white oil paint. Hennessy builds her images up over time in transparent layers, gradually developing fragile and ghostly feminine figures that seemingly emerge as they dissolve into the linen support.

The significance of Hennessy's work lies in its attempt to create painted self-portraits that surpass the autobiographical and deal instead with phenomenological and conceptual concerns about the mystery of being. By setting up a dialogue between painting and photography, Hennessy questions relationships between the two and explores painting's potential to transcend the descriptive and articulate more complex and enigmatic experiences of being in the world.



**CHRISTIAN THOMPSON**

*He Of The Powered Gaze* 2016

c-type print on metallic paper

Wollongong Art Gallery Collection

Thompson employs diverse media in his practice including video, performance, sculpture, photography and self-portraits. Referencing various cultural elements including fashion, the performance of intimacy, colonisation, boundaries and tensions around aboriginal masculinity, ceremony, ritual and home and country.

The figure in this image is not really hidden, as it is at once a concealment and also a revelation. It both camouflages and calls our attention, evoking the cover of a fashion magazine and the ceremony and display of traditional head dress. The subject's identity however, is disguised behind layers of complex meaning and reminds us of the adornment of a bride and/or a body laid to rest – combining transformative rituals and the metamorphosis of personal and collective memories.

In this artwork, Thompson employs stillness like he is laying in wait – perpetually keeping an eye on us.



## EUAN MACLEOD

*Inside going outside* 2002–03

oil on canvas

Chroma Collection, Orange Regional Gallery  
Donated through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program by Jim Cobb, 2013

To finish this online exhibition we have selected Euan Macleod's painting *Inside Going Outside* in response to Jacqueline Hennessy's still portrait as posted by @nas\_au.

Like Hennessy's shadowy figure, Macleod paints an abstracted, dark silhouette, a figure caught moving between interior and exterior worlds. A recurring motif in Macleod's work, the dark figure is in transition, with one foot firmly placed in the crater and an arm reaching outside. Full of energy and ambiguity, the fluctuation and pull between the inside and outside echoes the tension of isolation and stasis in these strange times. Yet in this uncertain, in-between state, Macleod's soft colours of light blues, ochre and white offset the dark mood. There is an optimistic pragmatism as the figure is framed by the outside light, looking forward to a brighter time.



## PATRICIA PICCININI

*Nature's little helpers – Surrogate (for the northern hairy nosed wombat)* 2004  
silicone, polyurethane, leather, hair, wood  
Purchased by the Newcastle Region Art  
Gallery Foundation, 2006  
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

For our final week of the #onstillnessexhibition we have chosen this sculpture by contemporary artist Patricia Piccinini.

Piccinini's works of art invite inquiry and interrogation. They repel and enthrall. Ultimately, they force us to question our relationships to each other as humans, to technology and the contemporary world.

*Nature's little helpers – Surrogate (for the Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat)* 2004 is part of Piccinini's Nature's little helper' series. These surrogate creatures are intended to help propagate an endangered species. With false pouches on her back gestating wombat young, she wears armadillo like scales as armour to repel any looming threat.

Across Australia the bushfires this year not only devastated communities and ecosystems, they also led to staggering losses of wildlife throughout the country. While our local animals and environment have begun to regenerate once again, this work questions our place in a universe where biology and technology migrate closer together.

