



halfway house

where chaos meets critique

HOME



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ARTISTS:

Mia Boe

Shannon Brett

Joanne Currie Nalingu & Christy McKinless Nalingu

Susan Hawkins

Jennifer Herd & Josh Herd

Visaya HOFFIE

Sara Irannejad

Carol McGregor

Sally Molloy

Laurie Nilsen

David Paulson

Vanghoua Anthony Vue

Elizabeth Woods & Kevin Leong

CURATORS:

Pat HOFFIE & Lily Eather



fireworksgallery

Front cover: *Home* (wall painting) David Paulson Photo Mick Richards | Front cover inside: *Untitled 3 (Recurrence and Emergence)*, Sara Irannejad Photo courtesy of the artist | Back cover: Digital graphic Visaya HOFFIE Photo courtesy of the artist
Graphic design by Vanghoua Anthony Vue.

HALFWAY HOUSE FOR BRISBANE'S BAD

For many visitors travelling up and down the east coast of Australia, Brisbane has performed the role of a kind of 'halfway house' between the deep tropical North and those (more sedate) states south of its border.

The term 'halfway house' suggests a kind of respite a place to take stock of things—to reconsider where you've been and where you might be going.

It's a term that seems suitable to art-making—where images and forms can provide alternative portals from which to view what we assume is 'reality', and where it just might be possible to bring dreams into being.

For many decades now, FireWorks Gallery continues to operate at such points—bringing together Aboriginal artists and non-Indigenous artists to a place where new imaginings are possible.

For Brisbane Art & Design Festival (BAD) 2023, FireWorks proposes a 'halfway house'—half upstairs/half downstairs; half serious/half fun; a mix of cultures and peoples and traditions and generations, and a halfway point between the past and possibilities for Brisbane's rich cultural future.

There is a mix of outputs and surprises—paintings, installation, sculptures, prints and interactions that draw from Brisbane's fever-dream of its past as a refuge for those seeking the different, the surprising, the challenging, the new.

This is a show that challenges fixed points-of-view and that invites in fun and experimentation. Our gallery and associated projects draw from a history of inviting in seemingly impossible divisions and collapsing them to suggest new ways forward for a more inclusive future. This project is continuing that rich and risky tradition.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT:

Halfway House brings together younger and emerging artists with artists that have been involved with the gallery for almost thirty years.

Halfway House showcases work by artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, different genders, demographics, dispositions and unique outlooks on art and life to respond to a number of categories that are commonly used to separate "us" from "them". It's a project that challenges cancel culture's easy slide into oppositionality, and that champions the messy, untidy, risky in-between-zones where new cultural forms and languages take seed.

Drawing from FireWorks Gallery's role as a site that's always invited dialogue and experimentation—a safe-space from which to trial new ways of thinking about 'black and white', traditions and change, and here and there, the exhibition celebrates the very best of what Brisbane has to offer—its traditional and its future role as a cultural and social 'halfway house' that welcomes all into its crazy embrace.



CURATORIAL CONTEXT:

For the 2023 iteration of the Brisbane Art and Design Festival (BAD), *Halfway House* and the opening night event *Out the Back and Up the Creek* are staged at FireWorks Gallery. With works from 16 artists, the exhibition explores Brisbane's role as a place where all kinds of different paths have crossed, all kinds of collaborations have been fostered, all kinds of identities have come together and morphed and adjusted and emerged into something new.

Brisbane may not (yet) be recognised as Australia's cultural capital, but it's a fair thing to argue that it has produced some of the most interesting, risky and far-sighted cultural projects in the country. Often that boldness has been forged in the face of geographic isolation and political conservatism, honed with an infectious exuberance and a contradictory swag born from the sense that all things don't work the same way in all places.

It's fitting that this is taking place at FireWorks Gallery. With a now long history of bringing together Aboriginal artists with those of us from 'elsewhere' who've come to think of this place as our own, FireWorks Gallery continues its commitment to welcoming in travellers, strangers and the unknown to come together in the shared

belief that art is a vital part of forging relationships and community. And in terms of Brisbane's history, it's especially fitting that this particular iteration of FireWorks Gallery is in a building on the banks of Breakfast Creek.

Back in 1824 John Oxley observed that the Breakfast Creek area was home to one of the most significant camps along Maiwar, when he described 'six or seven campsites with between twenty to three hundred residents each'. During the 1830s right through to the 1870s, Aboriginal camps were everyday features in the daily news of Meanjin, and the Breakfast Creek mobs were integral to the growing settlement that depended on the fish provided by the fishermen who'd harvested these waters on the edge of the mighty Maiwar for countless generations.

Back then the site was a cross-roads and meeting place between Aboriginal people and the new arrivals—a boundary line between two worlds—a place where the early settlers of this country and the original custodians met and traded, interacted and learned from each other. A culturally and environmentally rich heartland where paths crossed, it was also a place where other Aboriginal people from afar were welcomed to camp down with the locals

before moving on. It was a place where corroborees and tournaments took place, where stories and relationships were established and elaborated on. It's long been a place where currents merged together, where Country's bounty provided fish and shelter and futures.

By the 1950s, however, the expanding settlement had grown less tolerant of the presence of Aboriginal people. The fight for the take-over of land had corroded any earlier hopes for co-existence, and for local Mob the north shoreline of Breakfast Creek became the battleline of a warzone; a border to retreat back behind when police hunted them from the streets of the settlement by the dusk of every night.

In spirit, this exhibition takes up Breakfast Creek's role as a 'halfway house'—a place where ideas and images can be shared, where the past can be used as a rich source from which to draw seeds for the future. The artists come from a range of places, backgrounds and experiences, and the works of each of them bear traces of these memories.

We invited artists to respond to some of the invisible boundary-lines that criss-cross our contemporary world—those definitions and prognoses and barriers that restrict

identities and impede states-of-being; those invented obstructions that can divide us from others—and from potentially fertile parts of ourselves. The exhibition premise is based on a hunch that 'identity' is best seen as something that's always in a state of becoming. That it's something that's unfolding and often surprising—and that art is a way of stretching our understanding of who others are, what other experiences might be—and ultimately, what we're each capable of becoming.

Curatorial Footnote: Part of the conversation leading to this show revolved around 'extending the FireWorks family'. So that's what we did: we included artists through bloodlines, long friendships and shared histories. Lily and I tried to put some distance in between particular selections, but in the end, they managed to contravene the usual 'conflict of interest' guidelines. We're in it up to our necks.

Co-curators Pat HOFFIE & Lily EATHER, 2023

MIA BOE

Mia Boe's enigmatic, floating personae inhabit simple interiors and minimal, strangely familiar landscapes. Their colourful immediacy draws the viewer in to seek connections with well-known imagery from Australian art history. The figures in Boe's paintings share the same spare, emaciated torsos evident in the protagonist of Russell Drysdale's *Man Feeding His Dogs* (1941); the faces in her work reflect the direct, reduced iconography of Sidney Nolan. The extremities of Boe's attenuated figures often seem on the point of taking root - either in the soil or in the sky above, and at times her scenarios imply narratives of grief, desolation and loneliness.

Boe draws from her Butchulla and Burmese ancestry to allude to both the past and ongoing violence of colonialism in Australia and Burma, but in the painting *I see you in my dreams* (2023) for this exhibition, the artist has shifted her focus to mourning of a deeply personal nature. The intimacy and engulfing tragedy of this particular narrative only serves to sharpen our awareness of the impact of trauma and cultural violence on family lives in this country. Imaged through a process of imagination, recall, memory, vivid dreams, and reality, Boe's work bears evidence of the capacity of visual languages' to draw us back into shared pasts as a way of moving forward into positive futures.

SHANNON BRETT

Shannon Brett's practice spans several media – their imagery and ideas roam effortlessly across territories defined by art, design, fashion and collaborative community practices. They state, "I spend time with my models who tell these stories through their bodies in my performative scenes...it's all about collaboration for me." Brett's subjects become the most important aspect in regards to their role as a photographer.

Their critically informed responses consider the crossovers and connections between identities and affiliations and their beguiling and deceptively simple black-and-white images address tropes of Australian identity in challenging and often unsettling ways.

Brett uses 'black, white and grey' imagery to allude to the assimilation processes of race in Australia. They write, "as First Nations people I/we are almost suffocating in the expanse that is whiteness - the colonisation of these lands and the rules placed upon Aboriginal people is a feeling of enormity, something that's enduring". This series of six photographs explores these black/white relations and negotiations that are always necessary in imbalances of power. They further explore how identity can be weaponised, with the names of each photograph encapsulating word-play that expand on a political agenda as well as being an ode to childhood memories of - interracial relationships, mining, domestic violence, beach culture to an ongoing chant of 'Aussie Aussie Aussie'.

Brett adopts an artistic persona that transcends the role of the isolated creative-genius. Instead, they take up the role of a collaborator, conspirator, teacher and correspondent with Aboriginal communities from Far North Queensland to Brisbane. 'Lore' lies at the core of all Brett's creative practice – an ineffable searching towards what might be a substrate for contemporary Aboriginal cultural practices. Brett has also written elsewhere about the centrality of love to the creative process –they understand the ways in which Aboriginal cultural practices are capable of conjoining and connecting as well as challenging and transforming. Brett's approach offers a means of bringing together divisions between skin and identity and offers us all challenges for confronting the future.

JOANNE CURRIE NALINGU & CHRISTY MCKINLESS NALINGU

For this project, responses to Joanne Currie Nalingu's Maranoa stories are continued and reflected in the work of her daughter, Christy McKinless Nalingu. Separated by an earlier three-dimensional work *The ex* created by Joanne in 2002, Joanne and Christy's paintings either side evidence the generational continuum of shared history and contemporary concerns. Joanne has passed on to her children her understanding of shield-forms and stories of her beloved Maranoa River where she lived in the *Yumba*, the dwellings on the banks that were themselves veritable halfway houses. *The ex* sculpture is a large intersecting X framework with 24 shelves to balance a 'carton' of hand-painted stubby bottles, but some bearing a baby teats. For the uninformed, it seems like a subtle indictment of alcoholism in Aboriginal communities, but those who have a deeper understanding of Joanne's family and those communities around the *Yumba* know that the stubby bottle was the perfect size for a baby teat; a vessel that could be repurposed in places where infant provisions were in short supply. The imposing "X" marks any number of crossings – former relationships, crossed pathways, points of reference, the banned 'X' of behavioral and cultural prohibition, it's also a reference to the state's beer – XXXX. It's a confronting and confounding icon that, like the shield design, wryly defines another diamond pattern within it. Currie's work is breathtakingly elegant and minimal – lines of detail follow river-currents that occasionally open in eye-like shapes to invite the viewer to consider the infinite structures and patterns of meaning underneath the watery veil. Christy takes up a similar approach, applying clusters of individual marks to form a beautiful skein of concealment that hints at deeper realities below.

Both artists draw from the details of Maranoa regional shield designs as seen in The Queensland Museum, as substrates of ancient information from which their works hint to the ongoing tensions that are still part of everyday life for those in regional Aboriginal communities. Both spiritual and political, the impact of these works seep in slowly, held taught by a filigree of white, mesmerizing beauty.

SUSAN HAWKINS

Susan Hawkins grew up in rural New South Wales, moving to north to set up home in Brisbane for their growing family. As the mother of four sons, Hawkins well understands the need to 'make do' with objects and ideas that are capable of being brought together to suggest better options. As an artist, she brings skills of practicality together with a drive to create poetic enchantment from the residue of day-to-day life.

In Hawkins' assemblages and sculptural work, the salvaged pieces from which she creates her forms are transformed into constructions that simultaneously speak of 'use value' and imaginative potential. More recently, the artist's love of and interest in the history of musical instruments has taken her on forays to find original instrument makers. Her return to Australia with this knowledge gleaned in the Northern Hemisphere has prompted the creation of recomposed instruments capable of new potential; instruments that are visually re-attuned to their new Southern Hemisphere roles as art objects that are, more often than not, part-performative/part-interactive.

For Hawkins, art is a 'halfway house' where practicality and skill are permitted to slide into the more slippery realms of the poetic. With humour and an infectious interest in the irreverent, her practice makes sure that the viewer is an integral part of the outcome. For this exhibition, her three personages take the form of interlopers 'from south of the border' – individuals who move to Queensland but who can tend to be teased by Queensland-born as still having to prove their dues. The work is as rich with a knowing nod to local humour as it is to a major icon of art history. While Picasso's 1921 *Three Musicians* is now considered an historical masterpiece, Hawkins' *Three Amigos* is an acknowledgement that even the most reified aspects of culture must undergo processes of localisation and adaptation in order to survive the demands of new contexts.

JENNIFER HERD & JOSH HERD

Jennifer Herd's work invariably harks back to her Mother's Country in Far North Queensland. Her imagery, which frequently features the graphic power of abstract shields from that region, offers a means to establish her own connectedness to her late Mother, to Country and to her people who were forced from their homeland. Herd is well known for what is commonly referred to as her 'pin-hole work' – a process of intricately stabbing through the surface of her images so that the face of the image is perforated by woundings from the past. She quotes the words of historians and her Aboriginal forebears who noted that the rainforest shields were no match for the bullets of the intruders.

And yet in Herd's work, the fragility of these shields regains a new strength – one forged from her understanding of the value of cultural continuity and refined through the artist's awe-inspiring dedication to remembering and honouring the vitality and richness and resilience of Aboriginal culture.

Like her forebears, Herd is a 'warrior woman' – a leader and spokesperson, a mother and maker, an artist and advocate who has spearheaded some of Australia's singular and most influential Aboriginal cultural communities, organisations and cultural institutions. As an artist, her work offers a 'halfway house' from which to reconsider adversity and opportunity; her shields are provisional and perforated skins through which to hear the whispers of the Other on the other side. They are a 'Homage' to her people and provide vehicles for resistance and for attack - constructed from the processes of destruction and re-building. And as such they are challenges to each of us for reconsiderations for futures that might offer succour for all.

For this project, Jennifer is exhibiting her work for the first time alongside that of her son, Josh Herd. Trained as a multimedia designer, Josh has often worked alongside his mother in helping her works reach larger scales through a range of digital technologies. In this exhibition, his work *Affrontier*, is driven and shaped by his own creative responses to frontier conflicts. Here, a naive image of the infamous 'black cowboy' is wryly posed in his country. The land has been systematically carved up like children's building blocks with token brands and symbols of dislocation. The wistful lone cowboy is lost and bewildered, now seemingly in a no man's land, as the earth changes under his feet. Herd deeply empathises with such historical injustices which as he states: "are littered through the colonial landscape" and invites the viewer "to consider the root causes that all too often condemn his people to the 'halfway house' of society."

VISAYA HOFFIE

Visaya Hoffie's recent series of works combine her familiar cross-references from 'high art' to the overlooked and banal aspects of everyday media culture. In these works, traditional applications of paint are extended by the artists through processes where the 'skin' of the paintings are pierced, tagged and inked. The artist often drills through these painterly skins to insert pin-points of illumination through the addition of cheap DIY lighting. At other times, she encrusts her images by adding Swarovski diamantes or burns in lines and edges and statements. Her adaptation of traditional media into a form of materially augmented 'extended painting' reflects the contradictions and complexities of contemporary milieux where the experiences of the lived world and the mediated worlds overlap.

Her approach is akin to a kind of 'aesthetic shoplifting'; pilfered references from riff-raff and 'high culture' are recomposed into strange, often funny and ultimately illuminating juxtapositions. The overlooked, banal and abject corners of everyday life provide the habitats where the artist dredges for subject-matter to bring it up against the venerated and valued.

For this project, Hoffie has focused on Cannon Hill Plaza (a suburban shopping mall) to produce small works of chaotic beauty. She describes her response to the themes of *Halfway House* as 'landscape paintings' that have been ironically augmented by our everyday experiences spent in the online world. As such they are territories of habitation situated halfway between experiences and the imaginary; between the abject and the visionary.

SARA IRANNEJAD

Arriving in Australia with her husband Mo as a refugee from Iran, Sara Irannejad continued her art practice as a kind of 'halfway house' from which to establish provisional connections between there and here, then and now, and between what-is and what-might-become. Sara's earlier practice drew from ancient Persia's *Tales of the Shahnameh*, a long epic poem composed by Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 CE; one widely recognised as a masterpiece that evokes a broad time-span starting with the creation of the world and stretching through until the seventh century Muslim conquest of Persia. She used references and excerpts from this mythical past as a means to extend these legends to a contemporary present. Here, the scattered Persian diaspora continue to grapple with the possibilities of cultural continuity and connectedness while simultaneously coming to terms with the issues of 'belonging' in places far from their geographic, spiritual and personal homelands. The result of this focus were works that drew in the artist's love for the fauna and flora of her new homeland, realised in forms that were inscribed, burned and bruised by the texts of the ancient Persian past. In these works, the territories of an adopted home in Australia echo back the yearning and mourning for a past and place now lost.

Her recent mandala works extend the spiritual and cultural syncretism of her work, as the artist's search for cohesion and meaning at times escalates to fever-pitch as a result of almost overwhelming personal tribulations. Sara's 'halfway house' has become a quasi-spiritual, trans-cultural, cross-disciplinary search for a way of making sense in a personal world that has been turned upside down and inside out. And the sheer magnitude of her current personal crisis and challenges are simultaneously darkly shadowed in the recent atrocities undergone by her Persian sisters in Iran. Sara's mandala forms incorporate details from medical science, cosmology, Australian biological specimens, Persian flora, body parts and personal symbols, into a form that appears simultaneously cosmic and personal. The works are a 'halfway house' between a prayer and a hope, between art and a personal struggle to make sense in a fragile world.

CAROL MCGREGOR

Carol McGregor is recognised as an artist with a sensitive understanding of the capacity of materials to transcend the limitations of their immediate meaning. The forms she produces suggest layers of possible interpretation and imaginative resonance. McGregor's experience growing up in New Zealand creates complexities and augments her experience as an Aboriginal woman, while informing her search for the contradictions and continuities of identity that are persistent through her richly nuanced creative practice.

McGregor's possum skin forms are produced in conversation with collaborators; they are made manifest through processes that draw from timeless traditions stitched together to form contemporary iterations. McGregor pierces and pricks, paints, burns and burnishes these substrates with elegant details that are part cartographic/ part dream.

Although her work invites with the promise of comfort and protection, it is a promise that comes at a cost, for the objects and images McGregor creates are often artefacts hewn from understanding of painful pasts. McGregor's art practice is fashioned from her awareness that materials have the capacity to act as conduits for repressed memories. As an artist she coaxes them into speaking forgotten stories, and weaves spells that connect the details of these quotidian objects into the dreams of the past.

SALLY MOLLOY

Sally Molloy's commitment to 'stay with the trouble' has motivated her self-critical explorations into how the incidental details of everyday domestic life are also part-and-parcel of ongoing processes of colonial practices. In these works, Molloy represents her own domestic space – her home, her backyard, the accrued details of family life – as evidence of her personal role in bearing witness to the ongoing lack of recognition of unceded Aboriginal Country.

The charming and whimsical character of Molloy's works acts as a kind of decoy – a charming sweetness becomes a screen for a deep criticality. Beneath recognisable fragments from kids' storybooks and domestic paraphernalia, the artist includes details from the history of Australian painting into a compositional format that foregrounds absences, silences, wilful omissions, and rifts.

In Molloy's works, her domestic space is represented as a 'halfway house' where familiarity and homeliness is fraught through and underscored by subliminal traces of contestation and denial. She uses her life as a staging-space from which to bear witness to the fact that that all non-indigenous Australians occupy unceded Country; that even the most personal corners of our private worlds are inflected and infected by the spirits of transgressions past.

LAURIE NILSEN

Throughout his productive life, Laurie Nilsen's relentless advocacy for Aboriginal people was always tempered by a wry humour, honed by years of experiences beyond and within the 'art world'. The artist met with any and all encounters of class, race and cultural obstinacy exhibited by those holding power and control with an off-hand irreverence that is remembered fondly by his fellow proppaNOW members as pure swag.

Laurie's role as an artist was woven through by his commitment to community and social justice – his sense of the value of Aboriginal culture to all Australians was as generous as it was informative and creative. The emu and barbed wire emerge as key 'icons' throughout Laurie's artistic career; the emu's bright, beady, all-knowing eye carries us closer into the heart of the matter, to a place where the anthropomorphised indigenous creature seems more than simply a species of wildlife. And the barbed wire strand is equally capable of being useful or hurtful; protective of areas of Country or a cruel barrier to keep people out. The artist favoured materials and subject matter that offered rich ambiguities – his rabbit-trap and fish-lure constructions were equally capable of tricking and capturing the unwary viewer.

For this exhibition works, two works are brought together in a surprising proximity: the paintings of Bungil Creek were completed in 1999, early in his career. These

simple, elegant works are an elegy to his childhood home of Roma in rural Western Queensland. The sinuous lines can be read as a pathway between Urban and Country, while a more literal reading reveals the more familial waterway that Nilsen had inscribed in his heart. Even so, the humour was never far away – the titles *S-Bend* and *The Pump Hole* are direct references to toilet plumbing, but more personally refer to specific locations in the creek's flow, near to the *Yumba* (camps on the edges of the creek) where he grew up. *Just another Black C* is a large scale barbed wire sculpture that faces racial slurs head-on. Made in 2011, the work emerged from the growing tension in Australian sports at the time. Brought together in this way, the sculpture becomes a fulcrum between the minimal 'origin' work and its ongoing role as a reference to a range of poignant concerns.

DAVID PAULSON

David Paulson's portraits betray indelible traces of the sitter's personality as much they are accurate records of appearance. Paulson's work is characterised by a skilful visual confidence – his linear acuity and painted fields of gestural energy are indicative of restless intelligence. His images are often unsettling and provocative, yet Paulson's landscapes belie a frame-of-reference that's a world away from this edginess. In works observed in his former home at Maleny, the minutiae of creek beds, reflections, ripples and almost-invisible currents were recorded with a patience that bordered on reverence.

In this recent body of work, Paulson's considerable skills as a designer combine with a wicked sense of visual play to produce a cast of Queensland characters. While none of them are identifiable as particular individuals, they each possess an almost uncanny familiarity. Caught in emotional half-states of being between jubilation and revulsion, envy and pride, recognition and confusion, they are bit-players in a pantheon of personalities born from the artist's prodigious imagination. Additionally, his 'halfway houses' become personality traps – domestic diagrams of containment and incarceration threatened by the wild-dogs of passion and the explosive detonations of domestic warfare. Imaginary or real, Paulson's mindscapes suggest the wrestle of heaven and hell in the ordinary incidentals of everyday life.

VANGHOUA ANTHONY VUE

Vanghoua Anthony Vue's family came to Australia from Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand in 1988. Of Hmong heritage, Vue is part of a group of an international cultural community who have no one geographical 'homeland'. The Hmong have their own language, customs and identity, and over the centuries have found ingenious ways of putting down provisional roots of belonging wherever fate has taken them. After the Second Indochina wars in 1964-1965, the Vue family were among those who sought refuge in a place of which they had no prior knowledge. They arrived in Sydney, then quickly sought the warmer climate of Far North Queensland that was closer to the tropics from which they'd come. Vanghoua's move to Brisbane in 2007 to study art involved lots of travelling back and forward to keep alive ties with his family while continuing his studies. Since his graduation, he's continued his art practice here, in various locations in Southeast Asia and in the United States, but Brisbane continues to perform the role as a kind of 'halfway house' where the artist can juggle the needs of family, job, career and plans for futures.

Anthony's installation for *Halfway House* examines that in-between zone of seeking national identity. It is an exploration of a space of 'inbetweenness' that runs between the offices of officialdom to the lives lead between the 'there' of the homeland and the 'here' of Australia. Comprised of photographs, artworks, design work, other documentation and recorded collections, this installation is an amalgamation of both unofficial imaginary and real life refugee camps, and as such it invites consideration of the divisions between the legal and the illegal, real and fake history, imagined and lived narratives, past and present, and shelter and escape.

ELIZABETH WOODS & KEVIN LEONG

Elizabeth Woods and Kevin Leong work together as 'in-situ', a collaborative duo that moves contemporary art practice into liminal and transformative zones beyond the safe white walls of contemporary art galleries. Trained as visual artists, they combined their visual skills and critical acuity to re-focus on where and how art might be better situated to deliver performances in transformational and challenging ways.

They use art as a verb, rather than as a noun. That is, they see the everyday practice of art's capacity to connect, to challenge, to reposition, and to reach out as a means of creatively responding to the world through practices that are critically and creatively attuned to the needs and responsibilities we can all *share*.

These artists are givers – of time, of talent, of imagination and of a strong capacity to generate shared vision. They are adept at harnessing the practices of 'radical hospitality' to feed their co-conspirators literally as well as imaginatively.

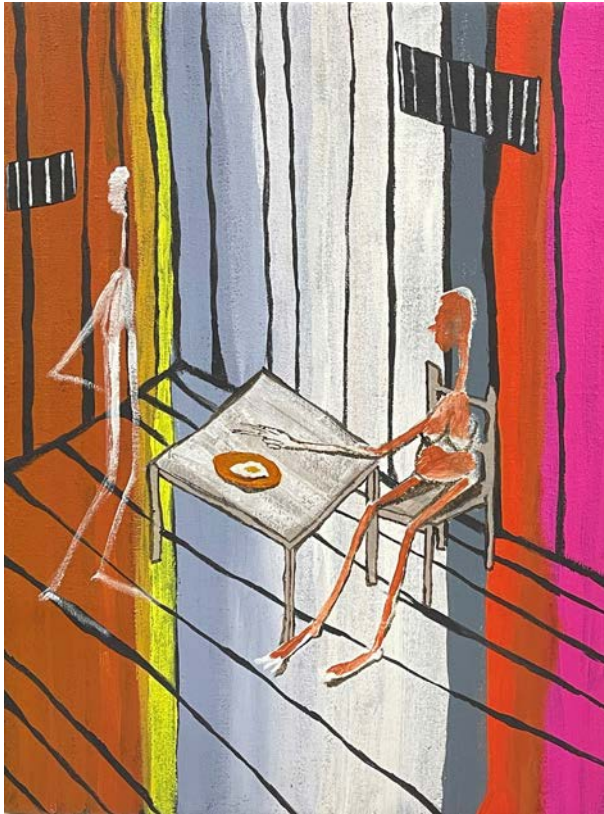
Their *Project Cafe* in Annerley unfolded from the preparation and sharing of free meals; an initiative that grew and morphed in surprising ways. Sustenance extended to the collection and sharing of clothes and everyday essentials as well as ideas. Their borrowed (some might say appropriated) Brisbane City Council site was transformed into a zone where new communities were formed and old ones strengthened; where organic gardens were planted, flourished, and harvested; where a range of community groups met, discussed, sang and argued; and where communal washing machines and driers were co-opted for those in need. During COVID, new, safe-distancing seating looked as much like modernist sculptural forms as they did practical conversational options.

Woods and Leong's *Café Project* is a quintessential 'halfway house' – a place from which to dream new dreams, resurrect old ones, to come together to think and eat and share stories, and also, importantly, to pass on knowledge and responsibilities. Woods and Leong's success as artists is reflected in the capacity of their project to have become the responsibility of all those entwined by its richly entangled tendrils. The *Café Project* continues to grow through the grace and commitment of over fifty volunteers who have taken up the challenges of supporting the cornerstones of the project over a sometimes fraught and personally challenging three-year-plus period. Like an organic pumpkin vine, it is as dazzlingly beautiful as it is sustaining.



ARTISTS & ARTWORKS





Mia Boe

I see you in my dreams 2023, acrylic on linen, 40 x 30cm

Mia Boe is a painter from Brisbane with Butchulla and Burmese ancestry. The inheritance and disinheritance of both cultures is the focus of her practice. Boe's paintings respond, sometimes obliquely, to historical and contemporary acts of violence perpetrated on the people and lands of Burma and Australia.

Boe received a Bachelor of Art, majoring in Art History from the University of Queensland in 2020. In 2021, she was a recipient of the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship and is a current Gertrude Contemporary Studio artist.



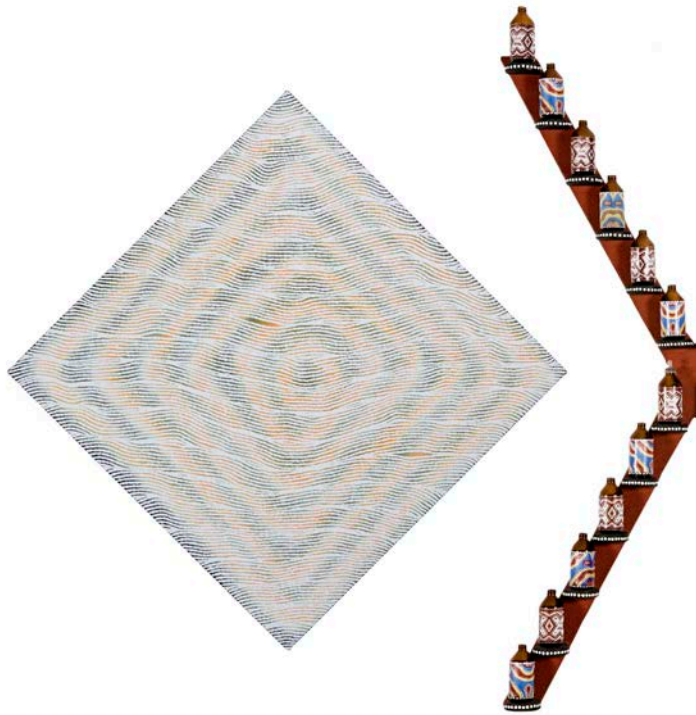
Shannon Brett

I Love A Son Burnt Country A/P 2015/23, digital photographic print on paper, 39 x 27cm

Shannon Brett is a Wakka Wakka/ Butchulla/Gooreng Gooreng artist and experienced researcher/writer/educator who is skilled in various areas of research, arts management, curatorial (museums and galleries), arts writing, fashion design, graphic design, public speaking, photography and arts mentorship.

They are currently a PhD candidate at the Queensland University of Technology—interrogating the construction of racial whiteness in Australia and responding

to systemic racism and patriarchy from de-colonial and black feminist perspectives. Shannon holds a Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art; Photography and Fine Art via the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, and has exhibited internationally while working in numerous arts institutions throughout Australia, maintaining their position as a curator and educator.



Joanne Currie Nalingu

Diamond River 2023 acrylic on canvas 140x140cm

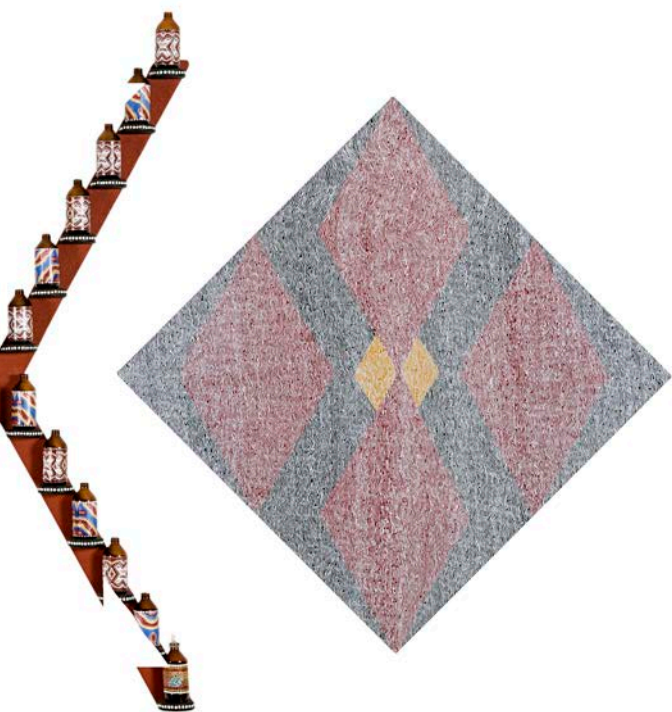
The ex 2002, mixed media, glass, timber, teats, acrylic, 180 x 90 x 9cm

Joanne has realised a highly charged individual style that, although instantly recognisable as Aboriginal, speaks of her journey as an artist moving within cultures.

Joanne comments: *I grew up on the 'Yumba', out west by the banks of the Maranoa River in the 1960s. Now I live closer to Brisbane where we raised our kids and now our grandkids. I've always painted about the Maranoa area, the traditional designs found on shields and artefacts, the lines and colours of the river...I try to keep it simple...clean and sharp!*

But Joanne also realises that these meditative interpretations of the Maranoa River are not geographically specific and they refer to a broader analogy, "... *that river is really a symbol for all rivers, for all people*". Her paintings depict water as a universal life source via a powerful yet peaceful linear treatment.

In 2008, she won *The Wynne Prize* at AGNSW and has been a finalist numerous times in the *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Award*. Joanne's work is held in numerous private and public collections including Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art and the Museum of Brisbane.



Christy McKinless Nalingu

Diamond Shield 2023, acrylic on canvas, 140 x 140cm

Christy began painting when she was around 10 years old and has developed her practice extensively over the past 18 years in between raising a family. She is a mother of five children. Over her career, she has worked as an assisting 'apprentice' with her mother, painter Joanne Currie Nalingu (as well as senior artists such as Michael Nelson

Jagamara and others visiting artists through Campfire Group projects). Her stories relate to the Maranoa region near Mitchell (her Mother's Country), including Maranoa shield designs and river lines patterning. Christy continues to develop her own styles and formats and grow as a professional artist.



Susan Hawkins

The Three Amigos 2023, found object installation,
230 x 500 x 300cm

Susan Hawkins was born in Gunnedah, New South Wales and currently works in Brisbane. Hawkins completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Queensland College of Art in 2014 with a double major in Sculpture, Jewellery and Small Objects. She has presented five major solo exhibitions: *Make of Me*, Blindsight (Melbourne, 2016); *The Remainder*, Metro Arts Residency Program (Brisbane, 2017); *The Speaker*, Outer Space Artist Run Initiative (Brisbane, 2019); *Considering Space*, Milani Gallery (Brisbane, 2019), and *The Perceiving of Sound*, Firstdraft (Sydney 2021). Hawkins' interactive sculptural and object-based practice has generated a

number of public outcomes: Brisbane's People+Artist+Place at Howard Smith Wharfs (2019) and Brisbane City Council's Temporary Public Art program (2019).

In 2020, she received funding from Arts Queensland and was awarded the New South Wales Art Gallery's two-month residency at the Moya Dyring Studio at Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris. 2023 commitments will see a solo show at Kuiper Projects, Brisbane and a three-person exhibition at Sunshine Coast University Gallery with artists Mandy Quadrio and Jan Oliver curated by Hamish Sawyer.



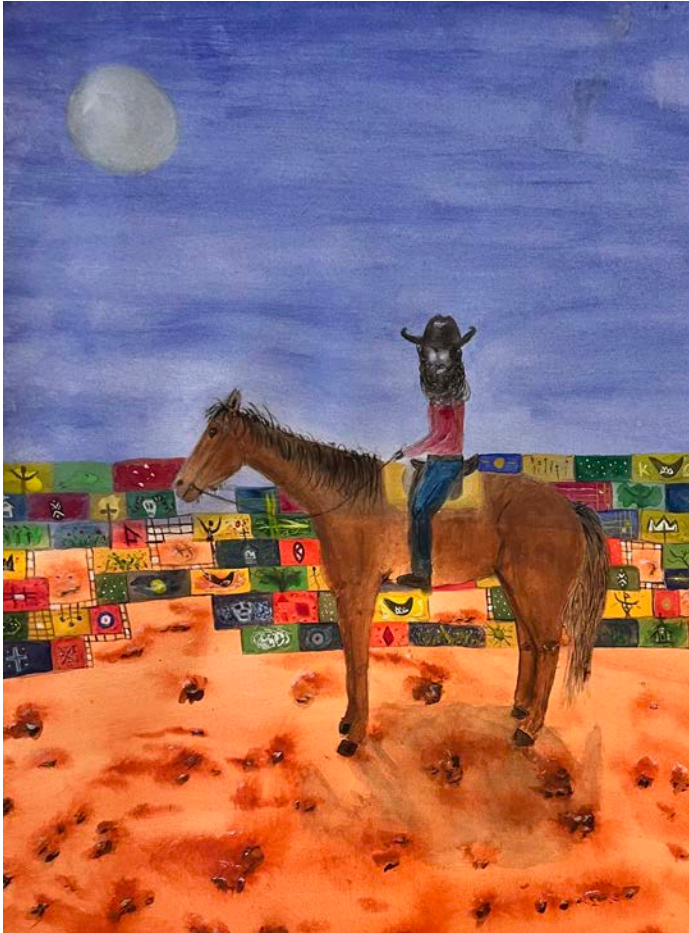
Jennifer Herd

Homage to Home 2023, archival ink & pinholes on 320gsm Sihl paper 100 x 100cm

Jennifer is an Aboriginal woman with maternal connections to North Queensland and is a current and founding member of the Aboriginal collective proppaNOW.

She studied a Certificate in Fashion Design at Queensland College of Art, at Seven Hills and has worked extensively in theatre and fashion. She then went to complete a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) from Queensland University of Technology.

From there she began a creative practice in installation, painting and sculpture and took up the first leadership position as convenor for Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art at the Queensland College of Art. In 2003, she won the Queensland College of Art Graduate Students prize, and the *Theiss Art Prize* for her Masters of Visual Arts.



Josh Herd

Affrontier (Black Policeman) 2023, watercolour on paper, 76 x 56cm

Trained as a multimedia designer, Joshua works across a range of mediums including digital print design, photography and more recently mixed media painting. Over the past 20 years Josh has contributed his expertise to several public and institution-based art projects, collaborating with FireWorks Gallery and

his mother Jennifer Herd's own private art practice.

Joshua studied Landscape Architecture at Queensland University of Technology and has a Bachelor of Multimedia Design from the University of Southern Queensland.



Visaya HOFFIE

Plaza Dine & Dash 2023, mixed media on board, timber & chewing gum, 41x31x6cm

Broke the mould when they made me 2020, ceramic, paint & timber, 31x17x14cm

Kmart 2023, mixed media on board, timber & chewing gum 44x31x6cm

Visaya HOFFIE is a Queensland based artist who graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art at Queensland College of Art in 2017. Trained as a painter, her work engages a range of different media including sculpture, painting, printmaking, embroidery and assemblage. Blurring the boundaries traditionally used to define and separate cultural production, her work challenges hierarchies and the authority of 'taste'. Visaya's work merges high art references to those of popular culture—her imagery grabs advertising clickbait and shoves it together with naive drawing

styles, or stitches together craftwork skills with often unsettlingly cute imagery.

Visaya's artistic practice seamlessly extends her collaborative small business ventures with the more familiar roles of a visual artist. Her imagery brings together the observations made during her extensive experiences in Australia and overseas, and her love of the incidental, the everyday, the local, the overlooked, the rejected, the dejected, and the downright stupid.



Sara Nejad

Untitled 1 (Recurrence and Emergence) 2023

gouache and archival inkjet print on cotton rag paper, 120 x 120cm

Sara Irannejad is a multi-disciplinary artist working across media including painting, pyrography, installation and video. She often draws from her personal experiences of living in transition and weaves them into images that reflect emotional and social conflicts. She holds a Doctor of Visual Arts from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. Sara left her home country of Iran in 2010 and moved to the USA. In 2012, she moved to Australia as a permanent resident. Her previous research-based projects primarily explored notions of home and

belonging, inspired by Persian myths and Australian flora and fauna.

In 2019, a tragic event forced her to live in limbo, in an unknown space of waiting, suspension and constant heartache. Consequently, her current works explore notions of grief, loss, and ongoing battles between hope and frustration. Yet her practice investigates beyond the yearning and mourning for a past now gone. Instead, it attempts to shed light on grief as a transitional space for self-awareness and rebirth.



Carol McGregor

*House Play 2023, ethically sourced possum skins
& bentwood chairs, 100 x 60cm*

Carol McGregor is of Wadawurrung (Kulin Nation) and Scottish descent and is a possum skin cloak maker, painter, printmaker and sculptor. McGregor engages with cultural practitioners, archives, and material collections to visually activate memories and sustain intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems.

McGregor has exhibited widely and her work features in national and international collections, including the National Gallery of Australia and QAGOMA. She is currently Senior Lecturer and Program Director of the Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art unit at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.



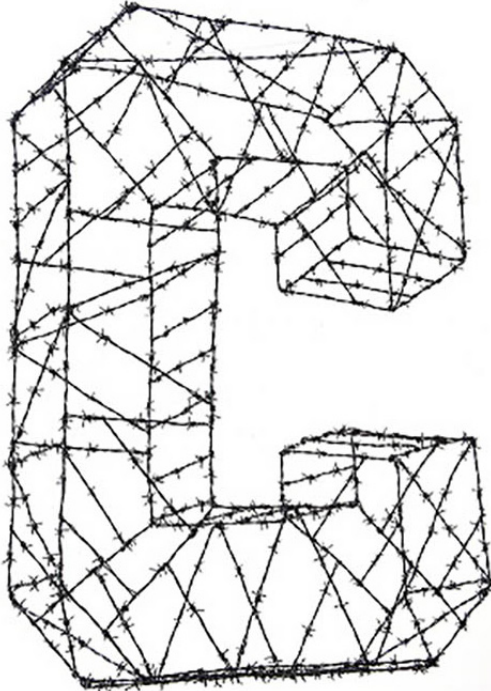
Sally Molloy

Costumes & Circusry 2020, acrylic, gouache, pencil, and vinyl emulsion on canvas, 102 x 153cm

Sally is a Meanjin/Brisbane based artist. Her paintings and other creative outputs utilise visual cues and clues from her white suburban everyday life to explore ongoing contexts of colonisation. Often awkwardly humorous and infused with uneasy reverence, her work attempts to deliver what she currently conceptualises as a “backyard critique” that uses humour,

crummy techniques, and the detritus of everyday life to undermine postures and processes of distanced criticality.

Sally is a recent PhD graduate from the Queensland College of Art where she currently teaches in the painting department. Her work has been exhibited widely in South East Queensland, as well as in Melbourne and Tokyo.

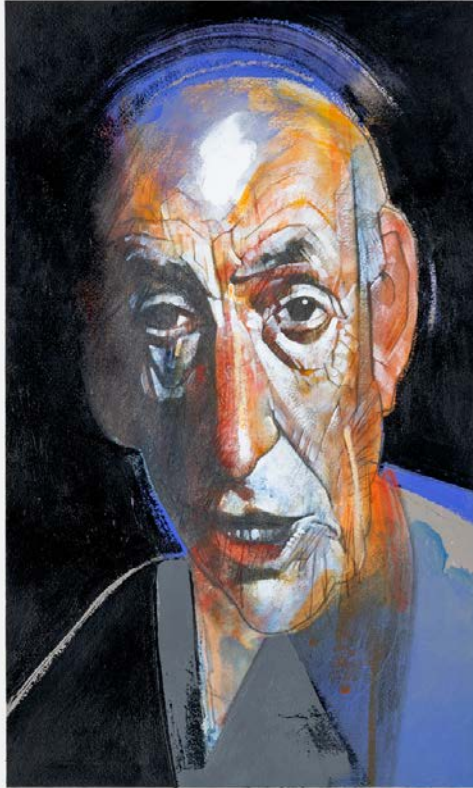


Laurie Nilsen

Just another Black C 2011, powder coated
barbed wire, 120 x 100 x 30cm

Laurie trained in sculpture and the graphic arts, with drawing, painting and mixed-media mediums all forming part of his practice. The artist often featured works raising questions about cultural, political and environmental concerns. Although most of Laurie's work tackled issues that concern Aboriginal people, he recognised that these concerns also affect non-Aboriginal people. Humour and satire were prevalent throughout the artist's repertoire. Laurie was a foundation member of the Campfire

Group Artists in the early 1990s and an early member of proppaNOW established in 2004. The artist was the recipient of numerous art awards including the 2007 *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* for the 3D installation titled *Goolburis on the Bungil Creek*. Laurie's work is held in numerous private, corporate and public collections. In 1988, he was one of the first 'Urban' Aboriginal artists to have work acquired by the National Gallery of Australia.



David Paulson

Everyman 5 2023, acrylic & mixed media on Arches paper, 57 x 38cm

Having received formal art training in Sydney and Tasmania, David has established himself as a master draughtsman with a longstanding reputation as a teacher of life drawing. Although David works predominantly in oil painting, his classical understanding and contemporary reading of both the figure

and the landscape remains the foundation for his art and ideology. David has been a finalist three times in the *Archibald Prize* at the AGNSW and his works are held in numerous private, corporate and public collections, most notably the Queensland Art Gallery.



Vanghoua Anthony Vue

Chaw So (Resting Place) 2023, tarp, bamboo, rubber, rocks, tape, banners, fishing line, hanging light, photographic prints, prints on paper, table, chairs, artificial flowers, and vase, 300 x 400 x 400cm (detail)

Vanghoua Anthony Vue harnesses the frictions and tensions of cultural difference from his transcultural Hmong-Australian experience to develop works that offer more inclusive, diverse, and hybrid tropes of belonging. These works often include everyday materials, objects, and processes that are based on his upbringing in Cairns, the resourcefulness of family members, and the influence of Hmong artistic traditions. Such works are playful, recognizable, and excessively ornamental, and often incorporate humour and satire to blur the lines and definitions that reinforce Othering.

Vanghoua's work also embraces the potential of repurposing private and historical archives, together with Hmong oral stories and collective memories to reinterpret and retell past narratives of Hmong experiences of war and migration.

Vue completed his PhD in 2019 at the Queensland College of Art and has exhibited in Australia and overseas, including as an artist-in-residence at the Museum of Brisbane, *Embodied Knowledge: Queensland Contemporary Art* at QAGOMA, and at the 6th *Singapore Biennale: EveryStep in the Right Direction*.



Elizabeth Woods & Kevin Leong

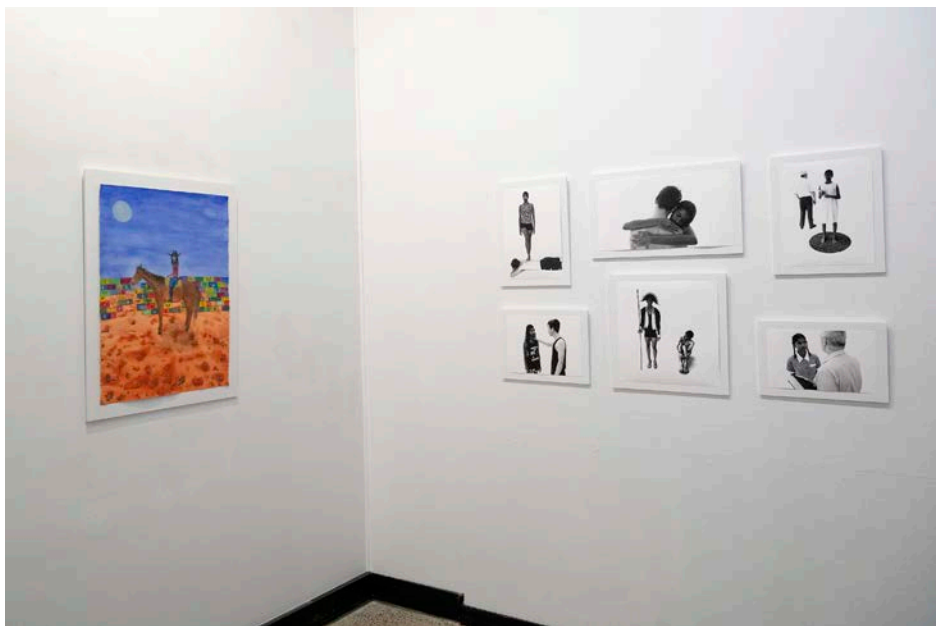
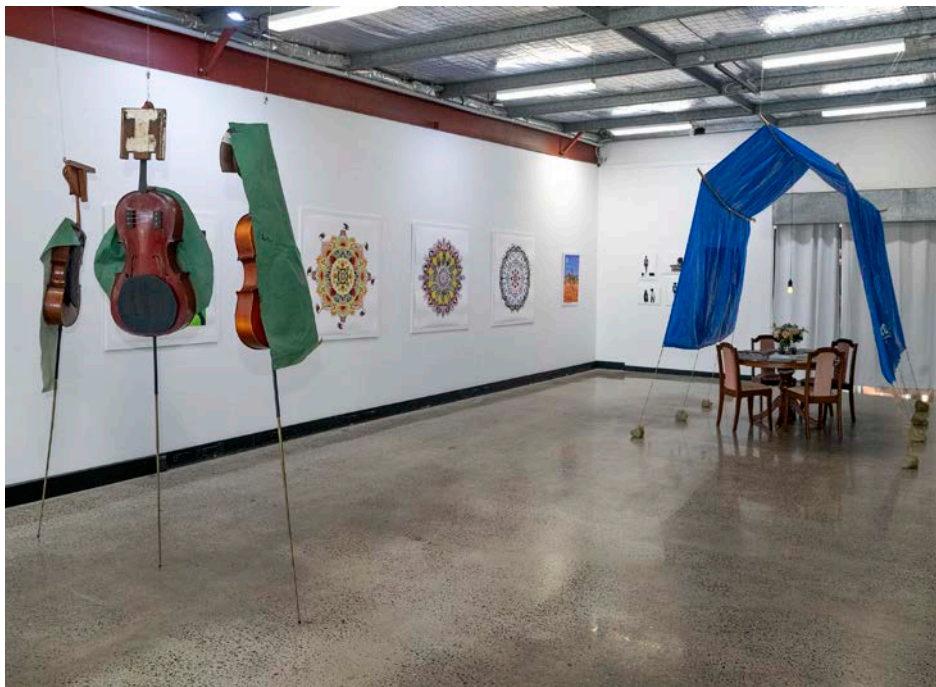
The Space 2023 Single Channel Video & invitations (video still)

Designers: Minqi Gu and John Coleman.

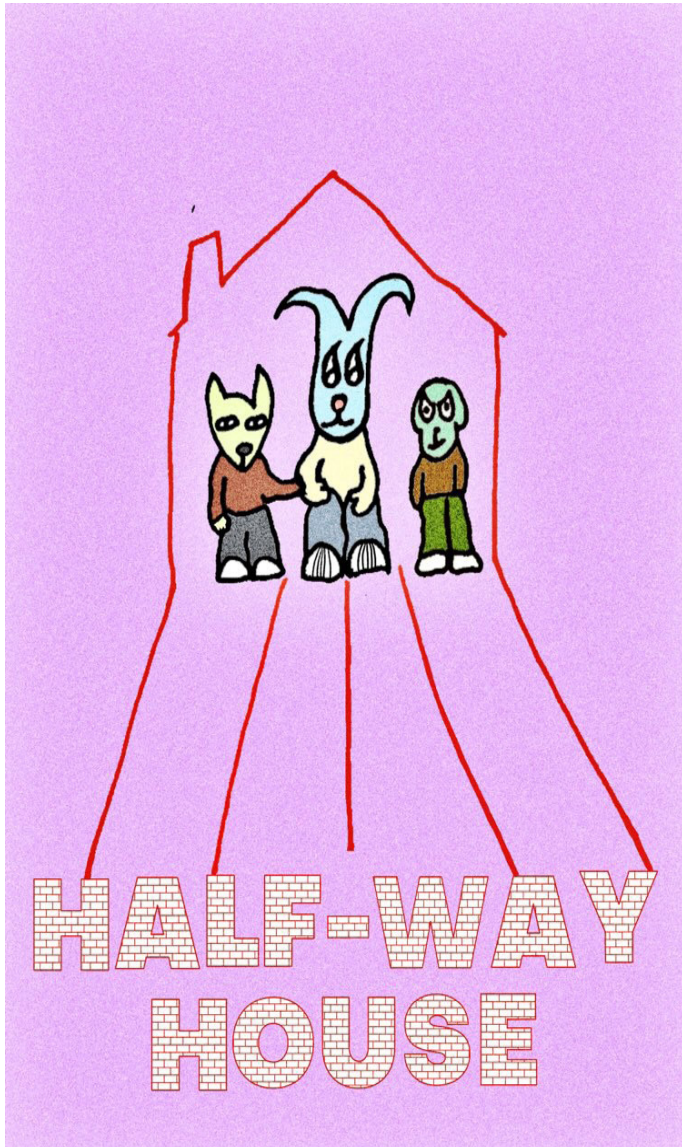
Collaborating contributors: Indy Medeiros, Cal Townson, Victoria Harbus, Kevin Leong, Isabel Haqqani, Melanie Simpson. Elizabeth Woods, Ariya Parsi, Ruela Rusch, Elijah Manis, Cedryck Vaquette

Elizabeth Woods and Kevin Leong are socially-engaged artists who develop large-scale projects around compelling ideas that invite and structure creative responses—ideas which allow intentional communities to grow from the new relationships formed between artists, writers, designers, activists, community groups, organisations, institutions and government. Developed across Australia

and Europe over 20 years, their practice builds sympathetic, collaborative relationships with hosting environments while producing content that is socially-active, challenging and engaging to non-participating audiences.



Installation views. Photos by Mick Richards



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May 2023