AND SWAG

The Samstag Effect



The Samstag Effect

'love of the work is the necessary key to all accomplishment'

Gordon Samstag 1964



The Samstag Effect

Works by selected Samstag scholars

Kristian Burford Nicholas Folland Timothy Horn Deborah Paauwe Nike Savvas Megan Walch Anne Wallace

An exhibition by Ross Wolfe



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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce this exhibition, KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, which is an ambitious collaboration between the University of South Australia Art Museum and the Samstag Program.

Since their establishment in 1992, the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships have grown progressively in stature, their reputation, twelve years on, now a well-recognized hallmark of excellence in Australia's emerging visual arts. To be named a Samstag Scholarship recipient is not only to gain enviable professional opportunity, but also to enjoy the good fortune of distinction and renown.

The University of South Australia is the facilitator of Gordon Samstag's historic, in perpetuity bequest, and it is considered timely that some of the proven artists among the growing list of Samstag alumni be celebrated through occasional exhibitions which examine their achievements. The UniSA Art Museum is honoured to undertake this role, the first such project of its kind: I hope it is a role we will perform again, perhaps many times, in future. Indeed, with the UniSA Art Museum soon to close for redevelopment as South Australia's second public gallery of scale, this is our final exhibition in these premises, and I am proud that it ambitiously celebrates the leadership role of our own institution.

KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, examines seven Samstag alumni with close consideration. Curated by Samstag Program director, Ross Wolfe, with the intimate vantage of one who has seen all the scholarship recipients through their long study programs, the exhibition reveals them as mature artists with powerful imaginations at work, supported by brilliant craft and intellectual sophistication. I am sure the exhibition will surprise, entertain and engage.

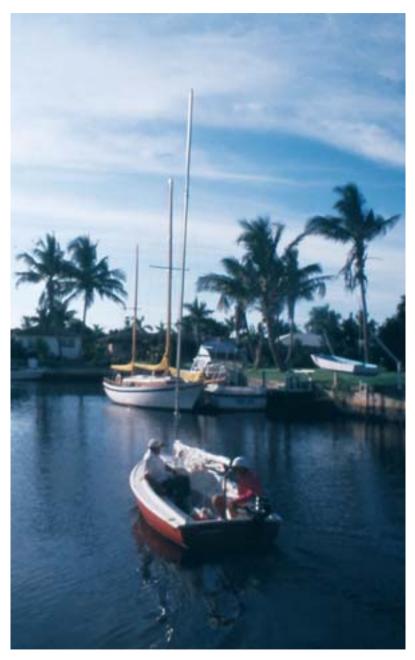
I take this opportunity to thank everyone associated with KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect. The original insights of writers have richly extended our appreciation and understanding of the Samstag artists' work, and the distinctive catalogue – typical of Samstag's high quality standards – is indebted to the creative talents of the designers at Fusion. We gratefully acknowledge our Art Museum staff, whose skills and experience have contributed so much to the outcome.

And the Art Museum is especially pleased that the exhibition will tour to a sister institution, the Queensland University of Technology Art Museum, Brisbane, extending the audience for this fascinating project.

Finally, a partner of the University and sponsor of the exhibition who must not be overlooked, is Mr Samstag's trustee, Bank of America Private Bank, Florida, USA. Despite its great distance from Australia, the trustee's generous open-mindedness towards the Samstag Program and its activities reveals a sophisticated approach to its fiduciary role. We take pleasure in also celebrating this special and friendly relationship.

But, most celebrated of all in KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, is the University of South Australia's growing links with its talented Samstag alumni. I sincerely thank the Samstag artists for the inspiration of their art, their commitment and their ideas. This is a valued relationship we will warmly foster into the future

Erica Green Director University of South Australia Art Museum



Gordon Samstag and friend out sailing: Naples canal, Florida, circa 1989

KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect

Ross Wolfe

The famous anecdote, that Albert Einstein had his best ideas while out sailing, sounds right, even to ordinary minds. Although the prerequisites of Einstein's science would have been in place well before the master's gentle hand met tiller and sail, the vital thing we grasp as truth – an experience widely shared – is inspiration coming on the breeze.

Gordon Samstag loved to sail, though it seems he put this pastime largely aside during his many years in Adelaide. But after retiring from the South Australian School of Art in 1972, he and Anne for a while sought out the seaside warmth of tropical Cairns, North Queensland, before eventually heading home to America and a leisurely place of sunny waterways on the south-west coast of Florida, called Naples, where Gordon bought a boat and resumed sailing.

The ocean breeze off Naples is strong and clear: Gordon was inspired.

Sometime later Gordon sketched out the fundamentals of his final will, bequeathing the large part of an enviably plush estate to assist Australian artists with scholarships for overseas education. Magnificent, generous scholarships. In time, Anne passed away and then, childless and missing his life partner, so too Gordon. It had been a long life, devoted to art.

We can easily understand the cause behind Gordon's initiative to assist young Australian artists in the particular manner he chose. The staid culture and social personality of antipodean Adelaide greeting Anne and Gordon on their arrival here in 1961, would have registered on the urbane American couple (New Yorkers to the core) as singularly limited and bleak. Despite its possible appeal to conservative souls, Adelaide was then a stringent place, a place which culture-hungry young Australians with curiosity, capability and drive were sensibly in migration from, heading by whatever means, if they could, north, east, elsewhere – anywhere.

Nonetheless, Anne and Gordon stuck around in Adelaide, became involved, their visit lasting over a decade. They built a modern, high-hilltop house overlooking the city, walked their beloved dogs, played bridge with new friends and hosted splendid, end-of-year art school parties by their pool. But, as to why Gordon, a sophisticated, fifty-four year old New York bred painter – apparently rich, internationally travelled and with long years of experience teaching art in the metropolitan epicentre of world culture – would seek out the remote and conservative underbelly of 1960s Australia as a place to live and work, remains a compelling mystery.

Swag life is about breaking out, the romance of hitting the road, an instinct for strange places and high adventure. Samstag scholars are *swag* men and women.

We must assume that Adelaide was a tonic of sorts for the Samstags, though possibly it may also have provided refuge, a welcome place of professional exile, exotic in its way. Was their arrival in Australia flight, or fancy? Does it matter? Perhaps some siren called.

We do know that Gordon, exacting and difficult when performing in his professional artworld guise, privately was sociable; at heart he was kindly and modest, a man with demonstrated instincts for social justice as so much of his art attests. We can be sure that he and Anne felt affectionate regard for the young artists Gordon supervised daily. And that Gordon's remarkable, in perpetuity scholarships program – endorsed by Anne – was inspired by their perceptions of a place (dreary 1960s Adelaide) and his sympathetic feelings towards the best of the young Australian artists whom he came to see as profoundly disadvantaged, needlessly trapped at the geographic extreme of artistic life on planet Earth.

He wanted to send them out to the vastly more exciting and larger world of modern, Northern hemisphere culture.

And he did. The Samstag effect was born.

The melody of the swag in the Australian psyche runs deep, a Matilda call permeating our folklore and popular imagery. The swag stands foremost for the practical bushman's itinerant search for work, the arduous roaming on foot, just a few low baggage tools and props in support; a bedroll, billycan, corks swinging against the wretched flies. Patient, skilled and self-sufficient all, like Zen men.

First sight of a real swag, a swag that's done some yards, perhaps seen lying in the back of a modern bushman's ute, will surprise most city dwellers. The swag is unexpectedly big, heavy, clumsy-looking, a dusty bedroll whose rough utilitarian strength can catch the breath. The resilient swag is for flinging uncovered on the raw ground beside transient campfires, under the immensity of star-lit skies — to be scooped up and disappeared come morning when the long journey continues.

White minds are closer to Aboriginal in their swags.

Long gone in his original form but still remarkably alive in spirit and tradition, the swagman archetype has the artist soul in him. Called to a different purpose, independent-minded and indifferent to authority, the swagman takes us off the beaten track to hidden billabongs – unerring, like a beacon, true – the jumbuck a holy treasure in his bag.

Swag life is about breaking out, the romance of hitting the road, an instinct for strange places and high adventure. Australians do this, need it.

Samstag scholars are swag men and women.

Novembers roll around at Samstag Central, a bit like Groundhog Day.

Each year in November a new generation of Samstag scholars is announced to the world. It is an elite, privileged group, sifted and sorted from the ruck of worthy triers. Excitement reigns for a time, but this is just a beginning, much work remains; it's months yet before the scholars head out, study destinations resolved, the adventure underway. And then the alchemy of slow gestation forms the mature artist, as time passes. They become deeper, more experienced, skilled and wise.

Thirteen of these annual cycles have produced near one hundred Samstag alumni. An avalanche already of high achievers. The word is out!

These days it seems that no sooner has a new class of Samstag scholars been publicly announced, than the courting begins. Samstag-sponsored artists 'arrive' into public view ever more quickly under increasingly favorable scrutiny from the talent-spotting artworld: it is a phenomenon of rapid visibility and fast progress spawning heightened expectations, great curiosity and a desire to see more. Consequently, there are persistent requests that exhibitions be produced featuring the Samstag artists. OK, but... who to choose from the growing pool?

Diplomacy first.

KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect, seeks to foster the friendly relationship which has grown between the University of South Australia and its Samstag alumni. After all, we could be friends and partners for life.

The exhibition adopts simple principles with an eye to a future, recurrent model. The artists selected are all proven individuals of achievement who already command high professional interest. And they each represent quite different kinds of artistic practice and concerns, in keeping with the broad-minded spirit by which Samstag Scholarships themselves are awarded. Eclectic diversity, rather than theme, thus guides the choice of work.

The number of participating artists is compact, enabling relatively generous inclusion of recent work. Less is always more, and fewer artists here will ensure a rich pool of Samstag artists is reserved for similar, future exhibitions.

Ultimately, KINDLE & SWAG: The Samstag Effect attempts to show the individual strengths of each selected artist, and incidentally illustrate the positive effect which the Samstag opportunity has had in kindling their development and potential.

Besides what they clearly share in humanist values, a common feature in the recent work of all KINDLE & SWAG artists is the continuing trace of earlier preoccupations, strategies and media. This loyalty to values is a distinguishing strength and adds much interest. Yet undoubtedly these artists' work has evolved.

In the best of **Anne Wallace's** inspired and tantalizing mysteries – for example – there never was the possibility of closure for the viewer. Rather, there was always something you never could quite 'get', even though you always got 'something' (and sensed – believed – that you could get it all).

Nothing of this alluring mechanism has particularly changed in Wallace's work over the years, other than her impressively growing repertoire of subject matter and the sophisticated guile of her mysteries. Whether slowly contemplating Wallace's Lonely Road, Sang-froid, or the clever intelligence of Murder (as one must do), the viewer remains seductively engaged, spellbound, the fecund meanings emerging into partial comprehension. Typically, uncertainty prevails.

A very special Wallace quality is her ability to make visceral as well as intellectual connections with the viewer, and not simply through her considerable technical skill as a painter. Writer's Block, for example, is a conceptually precise metaphor, rich in dark and delicious humour in which the viewer's experience of the 'stalking-vulture threat' takes hold of the guts and unfolds upwards, opening like a third eye to the total body, direct and complete.

Driven by a similar deep faithfulness to the act and craft of painting, Megan Walch is another masterful exponent of understated humour as a tactic of engagement, although her concerns and strategies are diametrically different from those of Wallace.

Walch's profoundly imaginative work has long hovered in the realm of the fantastic, a painted mix of filmic, digital and abstract hallucinogens owing as much to the 'impossible possibilities' liberated by animated cartoonery, as to any theme or narrative A bundled conglomerate of Retro-Pop-Futurist images – beautifully executed – at once confusing, coherent and funny, Walch's bravura series of paintings, *Ikebana*, glow with an infused force of animated shapes, splatters, smoky puffs and whip-like lines, writhing with life and colour in a seeming void.

It is as if one could travel within these worlds, on a long journey to the stars.

Light – reflected or translucent – has been an abiding concern in **Nike Savvas'** surprising, inventive installations. This was evident far back in her renowned 1994 installation, *untitled*, featuring a room of small, suspended, painted polystyrene spheres – zillions of them – all fan-blown and vibrating colorfully together, reflecting light with kinetic brilliance

The persistence of 'light' as theme in a recent Savvas exhibition, *Under a White Sky*,¹ suggests a searching, metaphysical dimension to her practice. Recreated here, in part, for the *KINDLE & SWAG* exhibition and comprising a cluster of free-standing, clear glass sculptures of storks (titled *Zero to Infinity*), each of them individually hand-blown and sited against a backdrop of shimmering paintings which represent cascading waterfalls, Savvas has contrived a means to physically render sparkling, ethereal, crystal light. But, magically, she has also illuminated a metaphor for transcendence itself.

Equally concerned with rare human experience at an extreme spectrum, **Nicholas Folland's** instincts have drawn him to very different meditations on more material and elemental kinds of physical landscape, and the kinds of circumstance which challenge human resolve and capacity.

Reflections on the hard realities of Australian desert and Antarctic exploration have inspired exceptional, celebrated works of 'living' sculpture, forged from an unlikely marriage of materials such as ice, granite and electricity.

Folland's ability to create highly original works of three-dimensional art which obliquely communicate ideas of powerful human experience, yet which successfully stand alone as fascinating objects, is special. In his *untitled* - *lifeboat series* works, he builds on his recent performance, heave away!, 2 investigating the rich metaphorical possibilities of this humble and iconic vessel of human transport and survival.

Few young Australian artists have experienced the trajectory of celebrated recognition which so distinguishes **Deborah Paauwe's** photographic practice. Of course, such success brings with it rats and worms, a poisoned chalice, potentially, of criticisms, expectations, envy and demands. It takes clear-minded strength for the celebrated artist to remain unhurried, and on course.

From early experiments with modest autobiographical ephemera, such as dresses and shoes, Paauwe's disciplined strategy of unfolding her subject in a 'gradualist' manner, has progressed with great thematic consistency to confident, ambitious experiments with elegantly posed human subjects. These express subtle but insistent messages of gendered physical intimacy; a tender, female closeness, revealed teasingly in sensuous fragments, like glimpsed, and libidinously rich Victorian ankles.

Of course, success brings with it rats and worms, a poisoned chalice, potentially, of criticisms, expectations, envy and demands. It takes clear-minded strength for the celebrated artist to remain unhurried and on course.

One of Paauwe's less recognized achievements is the meditative dimension finessed by her work, somewhat in the manner of Morandi's endlessly graceful variations which – albeit through very different forms and media – sustain repeated viewings. Superficially, his theme and method, like Paauwe's, seem almost unchanging, ubiquitous even: but of course the effect is dynamic, the work invested with secret alchemies which ultimately transform their literal subject.

Kristian Burford creates a very different kind of human world in his meticulous installations of individuals seemingly overwhelmed by a sensual, or psychological torpor. At the material level, Burford's extraordinary, life-sized tableaux, *Kathryn...* and *Christopher...* (presented here as editioned, photographic documentations), reveal his perfectionist instincts and artful skills in sculptural modelling.

Ambitiously however, Burford intends for his hermetically sealed environments to provide a particular experience for the viewer: indeed, he gains immediate traction through his works' pervasive hedonist tone, and the explicit foregrounding (in *Christopher*) of a naked male and (in *Kathryn*), a semi-naked female, each rendered and posed to suggest sensual languor.

Awesome, it gently floats before you — as if emerging unexpected from the deep into searching light. It is a leviathan, alien creature from the dark silent space of an ocean never previously explored, its probable brethren strange, primaeval things, all similarly adrift in the immensity of outer space.

Although these images may be read sexually (and indeed may be so intended), they are also forensic explorations of psychological dimensions. It can be seen, for example, that Burford's subjects indulge in self-absorbed fantasies. And through the device of unusually detailed, narrative captions, he carefully explains the events and circumstances which comprise each fictive work; he channels his viewer down a prescribed path of readings. In this way we learn that 'Kathryn' is staying at her grandparent's house, and that she has not simply been scratched and bitten by the cat, while in the sunroom, but 'has placed her injured finger in her mouth so as to contain her pain and her blood'. There is more.

Of course, viewed from another, allegorical, perspective, the dimension in Burford's work commonly perceived as sexual innuendo, might actually suggest something quite different and sublime, an ambiguity which intensifies the longer the work is contemplated.

Consider, for comparison, the religious fervour portrayed in Bernini's similarly ambiguous, and justifiably exalted, *Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*, in which the Saint's ecstasy ('the sweetest caressing of the soul by God') is palpably physical, and whose 'heart penetrating' angel is indistinguishable in identity from that of Cupid.

No less reverent and loving, **Timothy Horn's** astonishing masterpiece, *Discomedusae*, raises sculpture almost to the level of apotheosis.

The first thing about *Discomedusae* is its scale. Awesome, it gently floats before you – saline-motionless, self-illuminating – as if emerging unexpected from the deep into searching light. It is a leviathan, alien creature from the dark silent space of an ocean never previously explored, its probable brethren strange, primaeval things, all similarly adrift in the immensity of outer space.

The theatrical symbiosis of scale, concept and form which has long characterized Horn's work and which is realized so completely in *Discomedusae*, reveals an original artistic imagination in full flight, striving ardently to animate a vision far beyond the ordinary. Moreover, there is a crucial skill and patience in Horn which combine to distinguish him. It is an heroic capability which can forge such a glowing vessel of light, this chandelier, a splendid baroque and animist thing of visual and textural wonder.

Few artists capable of this epic dreaming can also take ordinary coal between their hands, and – wizard-like – fashion such beauty.

¹ Nike Savvas, *Under a White Sky*, September 2003. Roslyn Oxleyg Gallery, Sydney.

² Folland was one of six Samstag alumni commissioned by the Samstag Program to produce site-specific installations around Adelaide, between late 2003 and early 2004. The *Disclosures* projects will be documented in a forthcoming Samstag publication.

KRISTIAN BURFORD

Michael Newall

Born 1974 in Adelaide, Kristian Burford completed an Honours degree in Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 1995, before being awarded an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship in 1999. The Samstag Scholarship allowed him to study at the Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles where he completed a Master of Fine Arts in 2002. Remaining in Los Angeles, Burford has subsequently shown widely in Australia, the US and Europe. Most recently he has mounted solo exhibitions at The Happy Lion in Los Angeles (2003) and I-20 in New York (2004), and was a featured artist in Mike Kelley's *The Uncanny* (Tate Liverpool, UK; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria, 2004).

Burford makes life-size, 'hyperreal' sculptures of figures, placing them in elaborately constructed sets – typically recreations of entire rooms. The figures, which appear in various states of undress, are usually shown alone, engaged in private physical and psychological dramas. In KINDLE & SWAG, Burford is represented by photographic works documenting two of these sculptural installations. Both installations have very long titles that give the narrative context to Burford's scenes. Kathryn... (2004) sits on a settee in her grandparents' sunroom, wearing only knickers and her grandmother's make-up. There is a cat's collar in her right hand, and a bleeding arc marks her left wrist where the cat itself (not visible in the work) has scratched her.

Christopher...(2004) shows a naked man engaging in a less innocent diversion. 'Christopher' lies, pretending to sleep in front of a video camera, his hand in a bowl of water. The full title explains that he is trying to induce himself to urinate (a trick remembered from boarding school days), capturing the moment on video.

What starts as play for 'Kathryn' gets a little out of hand, while 'Christopher' actively contrives his own loss of control. Kathryn's and Christopher's languid poses suggest that there might also be a certain pleasure to be found in their situations – and not just for the voyeur.

In a short story, Burford has written of another character, a boy, 'P.', who, perhaps hallucinating, undergoes a transcendent experience when he breaks his arm: 'the common wish for a release from material being was promised to P. in a whisper-like suggestion, vaguely pronounced by the appearance of his distorted [broken] arm. ... P.'s experience was spilling out and flowing away from that which constituted his material predicament'.

We might infer the same of Kathryn and Christopher, that through their loss of control over their bodies, they too intimate such a languorous fantasy of dissolution of the self in the world.

¹ Kristian Burford, 'A Short Story of a Broken Limb', Procrustean Bed (exhibition catalogue), Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 1998, unpaginated.

image:

During the later period of Christopher's residence at boarding school he learnt that if the hand of a sleeping boy were to be submerged in tepid water, the boy would be made to wet his bed. After the passing of a considerable number of years, this knowledge has provided him with a subject for a short video. He is producing the video alone, on this Sunday evening, in a chamber that once served as his mother's sewing room. In the years between her death and Christopher's present production, it has contained only a small number of disused items that have failed to find a home elsewhere in the apartment, 2004 cibachrome print (agfa superchrome) series of two prints, each 50 x 60cm (framed 78 x 88cm) edition of five







Kathryn is staying at her grandparent's house. It is nine o'clock on a November evening. She has escaped the company of her grandparents to play with her grandmother's cat, a queen named Lucy, by moving into the sunroom of the house. After some minutes of happily petting the cat it has turned on Kathryn, penetrating the skin of her left index finger with its fangs and raising three lines of skin on her left wrist with the claws of its left paw. In response to Lucy's attack, Kathryn has grabbed at the cat in an effort to disentangle herself from it. She has been fortunate enough to find the cat's collar with three fingers of her right hand. This has allowed her sufficient purchase on Lucy's slippery form to remove the cat to the carpeted floor of the sunroom. Kathryn has placed her injured finger in her mouth so as to contain the pain and her blood. She has then recognized that she has wet herself, and has, simultaneously, taken the finger from her mouth, 2004

cibachrome print (agfa superchrome) series of five prints, each 50 x 60cm (framed 78 x 88cm) edition of five

NICHOLAS FOLLAND

Russell Smith

Born in Adelaide in 1967, Nicholas Folland completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 1998, followed by Honours in 1999. In the same year he won an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship, which enabled him to study at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam and at the University of Barcelona in 1999-2000. He has exhibited in solo shows at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, and in group exhibitions in Adelaide, Perth, Rotterdam, and most recently in 2004: Australian Culture Now at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. His work is held in the collections of the Art Gallery of South Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Folland's work has always explored relationships between human beings and nature. Early works featured eucalyptus saplings clad in yellow vinyl upholstery, and artificial hills made of cushioned modular seating. A series of wallworks used Astroturf and sports-field line-markings to make witty references to pop art, minimalism, land art and landscape painting. In recent years this juxtaposition of nature and artifice has given way to darker works that examine human anxiety in the face of overpowering natural forces, a theme inspired by the often tragic accounts of explorers who pitted themselves against the extreme conditions of desert, ocean and polar ice.

Mount Hopeless (2001) was the first in a series of 'hot rocks' works inspired by the journals of explorer Edward John Eyre. Viewers were invited to touch massive granite boulders that, thanks to industrial heating rods embedded deep in the stone, unexpectedly radiated warmth, an uncanny, dreamlike echo of the scorching desert sun. Solidified Spirit, inspired in part by Scott's Antarctic voyages, marked the beginning of Folland's experiments with refrigerator motors and freezer coils, creating ice crystals in the gallery space that grew into rock-like conglomerations, continually melting and re-freezing in an uneasy equilibrium.

According to Immanuel Kant, the experience of the sublime in nature depends on viewing the power of natural forces from a safe vantage point, giving us 'the courage to believe that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence'. Folland's work refuses this pictorial distance and its fragile illusion of transcendence. Instead, elemental natural forces are presented as faintly perceptible premonitions of disaster, touching the body lightly like hairs prickling at the back of the neck. They are reminders of our vulnerability, the rumbling of massive forces sensed from far away.

Earlier this year Folland presented a performance work called heave away! A lifeboat containing a crew of singers was rowed out into the River Torrens. With the boat anchored in the middle of the river, a single rower continued to pull hopelessly at the oars, while the choir in the stranded lifeboat resolutely sang old sea-shanties, maudlin songs of leaving home and setting off into the unknown. Folland's current work continues this line of inquiry, invoking narratives of courage, risk, failure and loss. A lifeboat is the most provisional and desperate of shelters, sign of both the fragility and tenacity of human existence.



heave away! 2004 performance; with the participation of Urban Myth Theatre of Youth River Torrens, Adelaide



TIMOTHY HORN

M. M. Anderson

Receiving an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship in 2002, Timothy Horn travelled to Boston for graduate study at Massachusetts College of Art (MFA, 2004). Prior studies in sculpture and glass include Canberra School of Art, ANU (Honours, Bachelor Visual Art, 2001), where he was awarded a University Medal. Five solo shows have established Horn as an emerging artist, exhibiting widely around Australia and most recently in the US and Europe. Selected group exhibitions include the National Sculpture Prize (National Gallery of Australia, 2001), Gulliver's Travels (touring Australia, 2002), Beautiful Rebellion (Harvard University, MA, USA, 2003) and Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture (International Sculpture Center, NJ, USA, 2003). Horn is the recipient of a Rome Studio Residency (British Academy, 2001), and a Yaddo Artist Residency (Saratoga Springs, New York, 2004). Born in Melbourne in 1964, he maintains a studio in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

In KINDLE & SWAG, Horn is represented by his most ambitious work to date, Discomedusae. It draws its name and its contours from an etching of a jellyfish by Ernst Haëckel, a renowned mid-nineteenth century German zoologist. Yet Discomedusae belies its titular and biological sources, conflating representations of the animate and inanimate by transgressing normative categories for the organic and the constructed. As a sculpture whose formal dimensions expose the extravagance and sublimity of desire, a dissembling beauty which becomes 'the beginning of awfulness,' Horn's Discomedusae molds into sensibility a paradoxical eros, an exquisite tension cast within the plenitude and restraint of repetition. Its content and affect oscillating between the homely and the 'unheimlich', 2 Discomedusae incorporates (lit. 'gives material form to') the metonymic pulse of desire, of an impassioned interiority aestheticized and rendered concrete through the measure of

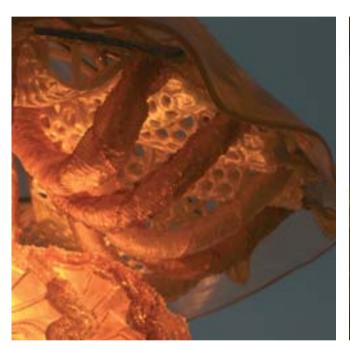
a visual dialectic. This dialectic, a continual movement which limns the horizon between attraction and repulsion, beautiful and grotesque, real and ideal, is visually sustained through Horn's capacity to wed substance and ornament, to establish a locus for grandeur within the intimacy and increment of detail.

Discomedusae incarnates these ambivalences, these extremes. In Horn's willingness 'to linger intently over [this] object, to hold and sculpt every detail and particular in it,' he envisions a phenomenology of desire which situates Discomedusae within a visual poetics that materializes the sovereign ambiguity of love. Suspended, psychologically and in its physical form, Discomedusae reigns as an organ of light, silent, illumined and illuminating; its form harbors an archaic wealth evocative of its Gorgon namesake, an opulence which cascades a veiled yet spectacular beauty — one which allures, withdraws, overflows.

Part-garment, part-glass, both appendage and core, jellyfish cum chandelier, Horn's *Discomedusae* embodies an enigmatic translucency; its crystalline appearance, wrought in the flesh of amber rubber, dissolves into a material hybridity, reiterating the essential, procreative paradox of eros.

'Only love is capable of being aesthetically productive,' writes Mikhail Bakhtin. The beauty of Horn's *Discomedusae* resides in the tension of bringing this truth to light.

- ¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, 'The First Elegy' in Duineser Elegien [Denn das Schöne ist nichts als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen...].
- ² Freud's term for the 'Uncanny'.
- 3 Mikhail Bahktin, Toward a Philosophy of the Act, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 64.
- 4 Ihia





Discomedusae (detail) 2004 synair polyurethane rubber, light bulbs 150 x 190 (diameter) cm



DEBORAH PAAUWE

Daniel Palmer

Deborah Paauwe was born in Pennsylvania in the United States in 1972 and moved to Adelaide, South Australia in 1985. She graduated from the University of South Australia with a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) in 1994, and in 2000 completed an MA Fine Art (Combined Media) at the Chelsea College of Art & Design, The London Institute, England, courtesy of an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship, awarded in 1999. Represented by Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne and Sherman Galleries in Sydney, Paauwe has held a number of solo and group exhibitions both in Australia and internationally. In 1996 her work was included in the group exhibition Hearsay: New photo artists, at the Australian Centre for Photography (ACP), Sydney and again at the ACP in 2001 in The Syntax of Style. During 1997, her work featured in The Measured Room at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia and in 1999 in the Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition.

In 2000 her work toured nationally in the Monash University Gallery exhibition *Telling Tales: The child in contemporary photography.* Paauwe's photographs were also included in the exhibition *Photographica Australis* at the Sala del Canal de Isabel II in Madrid as part of ARCO 2002, and which toured Asia throughout 2003-04. Paauwe also participated in the *Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art* in 2004. A monograph, *Deborah Paauwe: Beautiful Games*, written by Wendy Walker, was published in 2004. Paauwe currently lives and works in Adelaide.

For almost ten years, Deborah Paauwe's large colour photographs have focused on the female form, captured at various stages of youth. Her models range from girls to women in their late teens and seemingly only slightly beyond. Always, however, their bodies are cropped, usually neck to knee, so that their faces, individualising features and personality are obscured. Instead, we must scrutinise body shape, clothing, skin and hair for detail and information. What is found often punctures the initial sweet appearance of these works – tiny cuts, bruises, rashes or deep pores unsettle. These are the 'sparks of contingency' that compel our gaze and break through the mannered gestures.

The photographs in this exhibition extend many of the artist's conceptual concerns, which combine youth, the female body, sexuality, identity, power relations, femininity, fantasy and voyeurism. Although the viewer can never be sure, Paauwe occasionally appears in her work, introducing performativity and issues of imaging the self as subject. In some respects, the work can be seen as a mirror of Paauwe's own memories.

This current body of work presents a secret world shared by two women, whose closeness, coyness and innocence appears slightly at odds with their age. Their petting suggests a mutual privacy and underlines Paauwe's interest in capturing moods of both exposure and concealment. Carefully directed postures, hands, and falling hair imply both moments past and the pleasure of posing. The soft palette of skin tones and lacey vintage dresses against the stark, black background also gives a heightened sense of theatricality, conjuring the intimacy and unknowability of the darkroom of the images' origin.

To Remember 2004 type C photograph, 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six





Tender Trap 2004 type C photograph 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six



Hide and Seek 2004 type C photograph 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six

NIKE SAVVAS

Ben Curnow

Born in Sydney in 1964, Nike Savvas is currently based in London. As a graduate of Sydney College of the Arts, her earliest solo exhibitions were at First Draft (West) in 1990, and the Institute of Modern Art in 1992. She completed an MFA with honours at the College of Fine Arts (UNSW) in 1994, and was awarded an Anne & Gordon Samstag Scholarship in 1996, subsequently studying at Goldsmiths College (University of London). Since then, Savvas' exhibiting career has developed internationally in tandem with a continued presence in Australian galleries. In 1998, her work featured both in London's New Contemporaries (Camden Arts Centre) and Sydney's Primavera (MCA). More recently she has been included in group exhibitions in Europe, Australasia, the United States and Asia: notably the East International (Norwich, 2003), Visual Music (MoCA, Los Angeles and Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, 2005) and the Indian Triennale (New Delhi, 2005).

Much of Savvas' work consists of large-scale installations that 'translate' visual ideas from the language of painting into that of three dimensions – or from the context of popular culture into that of high art; or both. In any case, the act of translation produces meanings other than those pre-existing in either language. It results in a form of signification that doesn't contain any essence, as the original source might, so much as it refracts; a rhetorical construct whose identity is its non-identity, predicated upon its transparency or its claim to simply reflect what was meant, and thus to come to itself from the outside; yet which necessarily constitutes an excess or surplus.

Considering this paradox, Savvas' work is upbeat: it doesn't dwell upon what may be lost in translation, but what is gained in such a process. She evokes a non-material space from the interstices, the unassigned gaps and disjunctions – an aesthetic space of open association and reverie, shimmering between concrete sensory engagement and the alternately 'naturalised' states of abstraction and representation.

Zero to Infinity, consisting of 19 uniquely crafted, transparent sculptures of storks made of blown glass, and the Waterfall paintings, in which a familiar image of natural beauty emerges from thousands of foil-stamped metallic dots, were shown together in the artist's 2003 exhibition, Under a White Sky, at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney. As this title implies, the conditions under which they attain to presence are not those of nature, or any other universal scheme, but rather artificial, culturally and historically constructed ones; their 'habitat' is the art gallery.

Storks, although lodged in popular mythology, are indeed out of place in the Australian landscape: they seem like chimerical creatures of fantasy, or, perhaps, figures of speech that are, in error, taken literally. The waterfall also offers a symbolic image of origin, in the flow from the divine to the earthly. But the easy and playful appeal of Savvas' work to our aesthetic sensibilities likely masks the radical endeavour it embodies, as an attempt to redefine the concept of presence, a practice based on the vigorous questioning and breakdown of the boundaries and assumptions involved in art and aesthetics. While the critical space art occupies today is nothing if not uncertain, here Savvas both reflexively delimits and harnesses this state of indeterminacy as an imaginative resource.

Zero to Infinity; Waterfall (silver); and Waterfall (blue) 2003 hand-blown glass, and foil and acrylic on canvas installation view, dimensions variable







Waterfall (silver) 2003 foil and acrylic on canvas 162.5 x 160cm Waterfall (blue) 2003

foil and acrylic on canvas 162.5 x 160cm



Zero to Infinity 2003 hand-blown glass dimensions variable

MEGAN WALCH

Edward Colless

Megan Walch graduated from the University of Tasmania's Centre for the Arts at Hobart in 1989. She completed a Master of Fine Arts at the San Francisco Art Institute California, on an Anne & Gordon Samstag Scholarship in 1997, and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, USA 1996. In 1998 she received a grant of a studio in the Sharpe Foundation's Space Program for one year in Manhattan and later based her studio in Brooklyn. She is currently working in an Asialink studio at Khon Kaen University, Thailand.

When Megan Walch was awarded her Samstag Scholarship in 1994, she went straight to San Francisco – an enlarged, urbanised and smoggy version of her home town of Hobart. Walch had already established a reputation for anarchic, 'looney toon' fantasy scenes with tiny maniacally animated creatures like smurfs skidding on frisbees flung into outer space.

The zippy graphic mode of these early works was surprisingly derived from restored Italian Renaissance and Baroque painting she had seen while travelling in Europe in 1992. 'I spent three months in Venice.' she explains, 'where I had an internship at the Guggenheim Museum. Many of the frescoes in Venice, Florence and Rome had been cleaned; and their luminosity and even gawdy colour amazed me. I realised I wanted to paint with the juicy fantasy that was in these fresh, bright images.'

San Francisco gave this 'juice' a twist. Walch recalls how the Californian light and space – so significant for the kind of West Coast painting she had been interested in – was filtered and even poisoned by smog. 'That's the kind of toxic beauty that I'm interested in,' she says, 'potentially lethal and nasty, but elegant at the same time.' Halfway through her Masters degree, the Art Institute gave Walch a scholarship to the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, to attend a nineweek master class.

With a network of new friends and mentors from this experience, and after getting her degree, she moved to New York, where she ended up staying for almost three years, pushing the foggy, aqueous surfaces of her painting into oceanic, hallucinatory states. Then her crazy little toon characters, some comically wearing gas masks, began to reappear, riding auroral ribbon-like waves in spacey voids or dodging fat goopy calligraphic explosions. When she left the US in mid 2000 and brought her work back for the *Primavera* show at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art later that year, it had a new kinetic and playful effervescence. Filaments of ejaculate would collide and spin manically in vortices, reminiscent of the new Japanese pop idiom known as 'superflat'. 'These works were about the fantasy in American culture of self-destruction,' Walch explains, 'but they led me into the Asian supermodern experience.'

Not surprisingly, Walch was drawn again toward high density, smog-ridden urban experiences... this time in Tapei, where in 2002 she had a three-month residency in the Australia Council studio. Walch loved Tapei's mix of commercial vulgarity and distant heritage, noticing how Chinese calligraphic traditions had been appropriated into neon and corporate signs. She adopted some of these calligraphic motifs as filigree forms, turning them into iridescent, flowery alien life forms.

In the latest work, back in Australia, these fantastic creatures prance, play and attack with deliberately infantile, carnivalesque energy. Walch's world is populated by mischievous demons, as mad and bad as Dr Seuss's Cat in the Hat. Its inhabitants play with our world in the way gremlins tamper with a machine. And with the same effect.





Extreme Ikebana series #2 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm



Extreme Ikebana series #3 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm

ANNE WALLACE

Mark Pennings

Anne Wallace was born in 1970 in Brisbane, where she lives and works today. She studied visual arts at the Queensland University of Technology between 1988 and 1990. Wallace was awarded an Anne & Gordon Samstag Scholarship in 1993, enabling her to undertake a Masters Degree at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, from 1994 until 1996. She has exhibited regularly at Darren Knight Gallery since 1992, and her work has been included in a number of curated group exhibitions in Australia. Her work has most recently been included in *The Ten Commandments* at the Dresden Hygiene Museum, Germany. Her work is held in a number of public and private collections.

Anne Wallace's work can be best described as a kind of 'cinematic realism'. It's not a realism that mythologises the image-world like Pop Art, nor does it rely on the Photorealist treatment of the prosaic as a hallucinogenic spectacle. Rather, she plays with cinema's ability to manufacture experiences and to 'stage' reality. The artist employs this schema to explore the distances between desire and reality, and between the seductive stories presented on screen and the mundane events that generally mark our lives.

Wallace's realism unfolds within the cinematic frame of the mise-en-scène. This frame provides a familiar construction of experience as a glamorous performance that we identify with and seek to imitate. Yet, the frame is only a starting point for the artist. She uses it to welcome us in, but also to construct psychological paradoxes and portentous events that are not easily contained.

Her nondescript cinematic frames are in fact stages on which she develops a narrative syntax that emphasises the incomplete and the open-ended. In *Sang-froid* a seated businesswoman contemplates a pistol she holds in her gloved hand; some act of violence is in the offering, yet she remains frozen in space, seemingly disarmed by dramatic anticipation. In a scene for a natural born killer, a lone hitchhiker stands beside a truck on a desolate roadside. Questions arise: is he the truck driver who has run out of petrol, or has he just murdered the truck driver?

In another picture called *Writer's Block* symbolism seems to drive a story in which a vulture prepares to prey on one's fear of failure. Such works deliver uncanny scenes that are imbued with the kind of ominous signs seen in drama and horror genres. Yet, instead of blood we are presented with cold melodramas or generic events that refuse to entertain us with the usual denouements.

There is also a lingering melancholia in Wallace's work that is welded to the realisation that art, like cinema, deals with fabrications of the real. All is an apparition, and the fabulous life we imagine we can have and the seductive mirages we cling to, are the prerequisite tricks we play on ourselves to manage disappointments and to get through the day. Her work is therefore always somehow wiser after the fact. For it seems to say that the glamorous images in film and art do not offer us hope as much as empty rituals, and that ultimately, illusions can never be trusted.



Lonely Road 2004 oil on canvas 36 x 47 cm



Writer's Block 2000 oil on canvas 111.5 x 136.5cm



Sang-froid 2004 oil on canvas 77.5 x 100.5cm

LIST OF WORKS

Kristian Burford

born 1974, Adelaide, Australia

Kathryn is staying at her grandparent's house. It is nine o'clock on a November evening. She has escaped the company of her grandparents to play with her grandmother's cat, a queen named Lucy, by moving into the sunroom of the house. After some minutes of happily petting the cat it has turned on Kathryn, penetrating the skin of her left index finger with its fangs and raising three lines of skin on her left wrist with the claws of its left paw. In response to Lucy's attack, Kathryn has grabbed at the cat in an effort to disentangle herself from it. She has been fortunate enough to find the cat's collar with three fingers of her right hand. This has allowed her sufficient purchase on Lucy's slippery form to remove the cat to the carpeted floor of the sunroom. Kathryn has placed her injured finger in her mouth so as to contain the pain and her blood. She has then recognized that she has wet herself, and has, simultaneously, taken the finger from her mouth, 2004

cibachrome print (agfa superchrome) series of five prints each 50 x 60cm (framed 78 x 88cm), edition of five courtesy the Samstag Program During the later period of Christopher's residence at boarding school he learnt that if the hand of a sleeping boy were to be submerged in tepid water, the boy would be made to wet his bed. After the passing of a considerable number of years, this knowledge has provided him with a subject for a short video. He is producing the video alone, on this Sunday evening, in a chamber that once served as his mother's sewing room. In the years between her death and Christopher's present production, it has contained only a small number of disused items that have failed to find a home elsewhere in the apartment, 2004

cibachrome print (agfa superchrome) series of two prints, each 50 x 60cm (framed 78 x 88cm) edition of five private collection

Stereoscopes 2004 mixed media viewing device two sculptures each 40 x 20 x 12cm

courtesy the artist and I-20 Gallery, New York

Nicholas Folland

born 1967, Adelaide, Australia

untitled - lifeboat series 2004 timber, fabric, enamel paint and polyester dimensions variable

courtesy the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

untitled - lifeboat series 2004 timber, enamel paint, crystal, sand and lightbox dimensions variable

courtesy the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

Timothy Horn

born 1964, Melbourne, Australia

Discomedusae 2004 synair polyurethane rubber, light bulbs 150 x 190 (diameter) cm courtesy the Samstag Program

Deborah Paauwe

born 1972, Pennsylvania, USA

Hide and Seek 2004 type C photograph 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six

courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney; Sutton Gallery, Melbourne and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide Tender Trap 2004 type C photograph 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six

courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney; Sutton Gallery, Melbourne and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

To Remember 2004 type C photograph 130 x 130cm (framed 150 x 150cm) edition of six

courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney; Sutton Gallery, Melbourne and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

Nike Savvas

born 1964, Sydney, Australia

Zero to Infinity 2003 hand-blown glass dimensions variable

courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Waterfall (silver) 2003 foil and acrylic on canvas 162.5 x 160cm

courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Waterfall (blue) 2003 foil and acrylic on canvas 162.5 x 160cm

courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Megan Walch

born 1967, Hobart, Australia

Extreme Ikebana series #1 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm

courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and Boutwell Draper, Sydney

Extreme Ikebana series #2 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm

courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and Boutwell Draper, Sydney

Extreme Ikebana series #3 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm

courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and Boutwell Draper, Sydney

Extreme Ikebana series #4 2004 oil on canvas 90 x 120cm

courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and Boutwell Draper, Sydney

Sugar drops 2004
oil, mixed media and
resin on marine ply
series of four, each 22 x 44cm
private collection

Anne Wallace

born 1970, Brisbane, Australia

Murder 2003 oil on canvas 77.5 x 100.5cm

private collection

Lonely Road 2004 oil on canvas 36 x 47 cm

courtesy the Samstag Program

Sang-froid 2004 oil on canvas 89 x 116cm

private collection

Writer's Block 2000 oil on canvas 111.5 x 136. 5cm

courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

ESSAYISTS

Ross Wolfe

Ross Wolfe is the director of the Samstag Program.

M. M. Anderson

Mary Anderson is an artist and writer currently pursuing doctoral work in theology and aesthetics at Harvard University, Cambridge, USA. A recipient of several awards including Fulbright, Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and Foreign Languages and Area Studies fellowships, Anderson is Visiting Professor of Art in Graduate and Critical Studies at Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA, USA.

Edward Colless

Edward Colless is an art critic and essayist, and the author of *The Error of My Ways* published in 1996, focusing on contemporary Australian art.

Ben Curnow

Ben Curnow is a freelance curator, writer and editor who is currently based in Auckland. He has written extensively on the work of contemporary Australian artists and curated exhibitions on both sides of the Tasman since 1990.

Michael Newall

Michael Newall is an Adelaide writer and artist currently based in the UK as lecturer in the History and Theory of Art at the University of Kent. He has written essays and reviews on visual art and culture for a wide range of Australian and international publications, including Broadsheet, Photofile, Object, The Australia and New Zealand Journal of Art and The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.

Daniel Palmer

Daniel Palmer is curator at the Centre for Contemporary Photography and lectures in the School of Art History at the University of Melbourne.

Mark Pennings

Mark Pennings is a lecturer in visual arts at QUT in Brisbane. He contributes to various art journals in Australia and is researching the history of Australian Video Art.

Russell Smith

Russell Smith lectures in literary studies at the Australian National University, Canberra. He contributes regularly to visual arts publications in Australia and is co-editor of the forthcoming issue of *Mesh* on New Media Art in the Asia Pacific.

All measurements are given in centimetres: height x width x depth





Anne and Gordon SAMSTAG photographed at Mamaroneck, New York, ca.1961

THE SAMSTAG PROGRAM

The Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships were established in 1992 through a remarkable bequest by American artist Gordon Samstag, who taught from 1961 to 1972 at the South Australian School of Art, now a part of the University of South Australia.

Mr Samstag's will provided substantial funds for awarding, annually, a number of scholarships to enable Australian visual artists to 'study and develop their artistic capacities, skills and talents outside of Australia'.

His gift ranks as the most unique bequest made expressly for the development and education of Australian visual artists, and it is also, most probably, the greatest. Samstag Scholarships – presented through the South Australian School of Art – pay for all the costs of twelve months of overseas study, including provision of a particularly generous stipend, return airfares and institutional study fees.

An American citizen, Gordon Samstag was born in New York City on 21 June 1906, and studied at the New York Art Students League before continuing his studies at the Academie Colarossi in Paris. A 1981 exhibition at the Wichita Art Museum, *The Neglected Generation of American Realist Painters* 1930-1948, confirmed his status as an American social realist painter of significance. His work is represented in the Toledo Museum, Ohio and the Sheldon Swope Gallery, Indiana. There are also public murals painted by Samstag (commissioned by the Roosevelt Administration's Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture) at post offices in Reidsville, North Carolina (1938) and Scarsdale, New York State (1940).

Following retirement, the Samstags lived for a while in Cairns, Queensland, before settling in Naples on the west coast of Florida, where Gordon died three years after Anne, in March 1990, at the age of 83.

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samstag





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I express my very great appreciation to the artists, all of whom so readily agreed to participate in this special Samstag experiment — a new chapter in our ongoing relationship. I am grateful to the writers, also, who have added such distinction to the catalogue. And I particularly thank Leanne Amodeo, Julian Tremayne, Alistair Monaghan and Jane Wicks for the support and excellent skills they each contributed to making this project what it is. The exhibition was the good idea of Erica Green: she convinced me that we could accomplish something not only worthwhile, but distinguished. R.W

The Art Museum would like to thank Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney; Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and the private collectors for the generous loan of works to this exhibition

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