



Transmute

Gillian Lavery, Hannah Toohey, Rhonda Dee, Renuka Fernando, Katy B Plummer, Anna Magdalena Laerkesen, and Talia Smith. Curated by Celine Roberts

2 - 27 August 2017. Opening night Wednesday 2 August 6-8pm

Featuring the multidisciplinary works of seven artists, *Transmute* explores the connections that inform, sculpt or reshape us, from the deeply personal to the fleeting. From textiles to videography, *Transmute* is an immersive exhibition that interrogates the realm of who we are within the context of our relationships.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Hannah Toohey is a Western Sydney artist, currently in residence at Parramatta Artist Studios. Her practice is an exploration of printmaking as a sculptural medium, creating installation work based on the idea of 'print' and 'multiple'. Toohey's installation, *Docile Bodies*, engages with the performance of identity, and the various 'costumes' we adopt and discard as we navigate our daily lives. Over the course of 27 days, the human skin is able to fully replace itself; as such Toohey is drawn to this idea of our identity being in constant flux. This series of soft sculptures touches on the notion of the body, and specifically our skin, as a conduit for trauma, exposing the marks of our experience. This metaphorical act of shedding and re-adopting skin is simultaneously defensive and cathartic; in the perpetual performance of life, we are able to take one costume off and assume another the next day.

Gillian Lavery's art practice sits at an intersection between drawing and contemporary textiles. She approaches the territory of drawing with an emphasis on repetitive making processes derived from textile practices and histories. This results in artwork that is minimalist, with an emphasis on materiality and the act of making. Her process-based practice is a form of open-ended investigation led by ideas, materials and techniques. Rather than operating as statements or finite resolutions, the artworks can be seen as material evidence of the process of investigation.

The work *In progress; always (2017)* is a drawing experiment informed by loom weaving techniques and Shelia Hicks' woven portraits. The drawing is created in-situ responding to the particular conditions of space and time. This approach enables multifarious technical and structural possibilities; the drawing process transposes the warp and weft of weave into an open-ended, ephemeral installation adopting and bending the rules of tradition. The pieces then become fragment-like; bits, marginalia, half formed shapes or semi articulated ideas that meander across the gallery wall.

Renuka Fernando's work, *In Memoriam - a meditation on loss*, is part of an ongoing investigation of the transformative power of grief. Following the death of Fernando's father, this body of work considers personal loss, family connection and commemoration. Paper pulp has been made from shredded copies of her father's will, from which seeds grow. This signifies not only the processing of grief but the constant cycle of life that continues after loss.

Rhonda Dee's *Transmute* is a series of sculptures that attempt to pay closer attention to how it feels to be human in a time of deep uncertainty. Dee's works openly engage with the macabre, the grotesque, and the idea of death in life through the materiality of clay and the immediacy of collage. In some ways these works are a product of culture, but they're also an emergent product of other things, as evidenced by their vigorous interconnectivity into plant, animal and human hybridism. Distorted faces speak to the psychological depth that comes from living in fractured environments, which in turn, re-births new narratives of malleable identities. Highlighting an exchange of possibilities and tensions, Dee's practice brings into question the perception of self and other.

Rhonda Dee was born near the border of Texas and Mexico. Her work explores the internal geographies of the body and psyche with a Surrealist sensibility. She has had public commissions at Manly Art Gallery & Museum and Macquarie University Art Gallery. Her works can be found in permanent collections in Long Island University, NY, the Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, Sao Paulo Brazil, Macquarie University Art Gallery and The Australia China Arts Foundation.

Anna Magdalena Laerkesen investigates the solace of place and the vulnerability felt through displacement.

The idea of physical 'placement' is key to Laerkesen's practice, as she works with the body and manipulates space to enact experiences of position.

Wool is used to dissect the gallery and move the viewer within new spaces. Objects work with creating tension and diffusing the original intention of a painting for example.

Niches are carved out for disparate shrouded figures within the eternal landscapes of her paintings and photographs.

Homelessness, rising house affordability, and the international crisis of displacement are brought to the fore through paintings, photography, installation, text and collaborations with performers. In this way, Laerkesen makes the invisible and the overlooked, the central focus. Laerkesen draws parallels in their vulnerability - both are forced to carry all their worldly goods with them – both are hidden by categorisation.

Anna Magdalena Laerkesen is a New Zealander of Danish, Maori and English heritage who lives and works in Sydney. She is the Director of A.R.P Artists Residency Program and is a current resident of Brand X Studios, Tempe. Laerkesen has exhibited at Collab Gallery (2017), the Australian Centre for Photography (2014) and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (2012). She has been a finalist in the Fisher's Ghost Art Prize (2015/16), the Blacktown City Art Prize (2015) and the Moran Photographic Prize (2011).

Talia Smith is an artist and curator of Samoan, Cook Island and New Zealand European descent. Originally from New Zealand she is now based in Sydney, Australia. Her visual arts and curatorial practice utilises the mediums of photography and video to examine the emotional and physical traces we leave behind on the landscape, the histories we build and the ruins we leave. She has exhibited and curated shows at artist run spaces in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and New York with solo shows in both Australia and New Zealand. Smith is the founder and Co-Director of new artist run initiative Cold Cuts, is 2017's emerging curator at Firstdraft, is the 2017 Critical Animals curator and will be completing a residency with Bundanon Trust in August, 2017. In 2018 she will undertake her MFA at UNSW.

"Perhaps I have always been drawn to bouts of nostalgia, never being able to really let go of anything for fear of forgetting, a strong desire to understand where I am going and where I have been always in the back of my mind. As I have grown older and am now physically removed from the country I was born and raised in for twenty nine years, I find this desire to remember and connect even stronger."

A long distance relationship (II) is the second piece of a year long video project that attempts to make sense of the emotional and physical distance between the past, present and the future. There are three parts of the series, part two uses moments of personal history and the long and winding journey on the road in Death Valley to ruminate on the bonds of relationships and how they shape us.

Katy B Plummer works in performance, video, textile, sculpture and installation. Her work sits at the disheveled, shifting interface between an individual subjectivity and the collective consciousness. She tells stories about fervent belief, about fraught, failed and ambivalent femininity; the messy intimacy of violence, the phenomenology of resistance and the human urge to transcend the animal self. Both her video and sculpture work have, at their core, a feeling of spillage: of experience barely managed, of the failure of the body to gracefully contain the self.