

Gertrude Studios 2021

If Not At Arm's Length

Curated by Tim Riley Walsh

Gertrude Contemporary
Saturday 18 December 2021 –
Saturday 30 January 2022

The Gertrude Studios 2021 exhibition *If Not At Arm's Length* examines how art can mediate our relationships with each other, our familial units, and broader society. The exhibition structures its analysis around a series of four dispersed thematics: the civic, the familial, the digital, and the public, exploring art's agency across these overlapping realms at a time when interaction is impacted by existing and new regimes of distance. The exhibition features new and recent work from Gertrude's nineteen current Studio Artists, displayed across all of the galleries at Preston South.

If Not At Arm's Length considers in lieu of proximity how art acts as a conduit across differing boundaries, with particular attention to the meanings and structures of language and their fluctuations over cultural, intergenerational, and even geologic ranges. In keeping with the annual exhibition's ongoing celebration of Gertrude's unique studio culture, *If Not At Arm's Length* also profiles the social bonds generated through a shared community of creative thought and production, reflecting on how art brings us together in varying registers – as artists, as viewers, as a civic group, and as wider public bodies.

Gertrude would like to acknowledge and thank our generous supporters, patrons, sponsors and programming partners whose support enables us to continue building the careers of Australia's contemporary artists.

Gertrude Contemporary is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria; the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body; and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments:



Gertrude acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters on which we operate. We pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and their ancestors and Elders - past, present, and future.

List of works

1. Hoda Afshar
Agonistes, 2020
3D printed busts
9 parts, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane
2. Joseph L. Griffiths
Untitled (Pipe Sculpture), 2021
Salvaged water pipes, steel fittings and fixtures
459 x 285 x 240 cm
Courtesy of the artist
3. Justin Balmain
Lapsed Time (Empire), 2015/2021
Single channel video, sound
34 minutes 3 seconds

Lapsed Time (Sunset), 2015/2021
Single channel video, sound
26 minutes 40 seconds

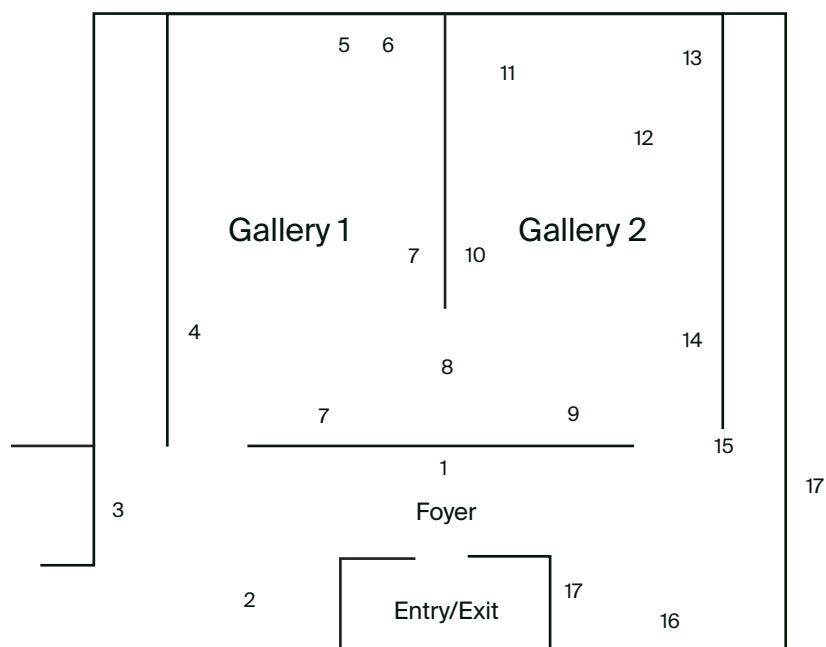
Courtesy of the artist
4. Darcey Bella Arnold
Atrophy Painting study, 2020
Acrylic on linen
153 x 183 cm
Courtesy of the artist and ReadingRoom, Melbourne
5. Amrita Hepi
The Kiss, 2020
HD video, 16:9, colour, sound, carpet, plastic-wrapped mints
3 minutes 17 seconds
© Amrita Hepi. Courtesy the artist & Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne
6. Jason Phu
i am nothing without you but you are everything without me, 2019
Spray paint on linen
120 x 90 cm

i have no worries, but i hope my loved ones are taken care of, in this world and the next, 2019
Ceiling paint house paint on linen
120 x 90 cm
7. Catherine Bell
Rubin Vase After My Father, 2021
Colour print on dibond
200 x 110 cm (print), 202 x 112 cm (framed)

Sensory Archaeology #1 (Father's Vessel), 2021
Hand carved Aramis deoderant stick
7.5 x 4 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
8. James Nguyen
Miss Your Face, 2021
Moss covered doormat
72 x 44 cm
Courtesy of the artist
9. Kay Abude
(DON'T) BE AN ARTIST semaphore performance (family) - Gertrude Glasshouse, 2021
Archival pigment print, Paper: 310gsm Canson Rag Photographique with Epson Ultrachrome® HDX inks
77.7 x 92.7cm

(DON'T) BE AN ARTIST semaphore performance (family) - Tullamarine, 2021
Archival pigment print, Paper: 310gsm Canson Rag Photographique with Epson Ultrachrome® HDX inks
77.7 x 92.7cm

Courtesy of the artist
10. Andrew Atchison
Orange Problem, 2021
Neon, aluminium, mixed media
Irregular dimensions
Courtesy of the artist
11. Sarah Brasier and Matthew Harris
Another Day at the Office, 2021
Acrylic on marine ply
200 x 122 cm
Courtesy of the artists
12. Sam George and Lisa Radford with Evelyn Pohl and Yundi Wang
Dugong Sublime (Mozzarella), 2021
Steel, paint, castors, fish tank, mozzarella, brass bell lyre clamps, paper, rocks, stones, sea water
150 x 36 x 21 cm
Courtesy of the artists
13. Georgia Banks
Abbie Chatfield (Feminist), 2020
From the 'Georgia Banks does the Archibald' series, 2020–22
Mixed media on board, bubble wrap, Archibald prize entry form, tape, pen, conservation-grade foam
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
14. Ann Debono
Book, 2021
Acrylic and oil on linen
2 parts, 112 x 152 cm each, 224 x 152 cm overall
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
15. Narelle Desmond
Hot Autumn, 2021
Melted plastic, timber frame
62 x 33 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist
16. Mia Salsjö
Lithoglyphs: Time and Beyond, Space and Beyond, Sound and Beyond, 2020–2021
20 million year old Bluestone, laser etched, sound recording
7 parts, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
17. Mikala Dwyer with Gina Moore
Pigeon, 2021
Digital animation
Infinite loop
Courtesy of the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 1301SW, Melbourne, and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington



Artist Biographies

Hoda Afshar was born in Tehran, Iran, and is now based in Melbourne, Australia. She completed a Bachelor degree in Fine Art – Photography in Tehran, and her PhD thesis in Creative Arts at Curtin University. Hoda began her career as a documentary photographer in Iran in 2005, and since 2007 she has been living in Australia where she practices as a visual artist and also lectures in photography and fine art. Through her art practice, Hoda explores the nature and possibilities of documentary image-making. Working across photography and moving-image, she considers the representation of gender, marginality and displacement. In her work, she employs processes that disrupt traditional image-making practices, play with the presentation of imagery, or merge aspects of conceptual, staged and documentary photography. Hoda is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Joseph L. Griffiths traces the patterns and systems of urban civilisation from archaeological sites to the suburbs, attempting to read the built environment as an index of deeper cultural and ideological positions. His projects involve sculpture, fieldwork, research, drawing, video and temporary interventions in public space. His recent works have utilised the historical form of the fountain to map the circulation of water through human systems, hydraulic infrastructure and urban ecologies. Joseph completed a Master of Fine Art at Monash University Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, under the supervision of Callum Morton and Nicholas Mangan. He graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2007 and has exhibited nationally and internationally.

Justin Balmain's research-led approach draws on visual art, video essay and documentary disciplines to create hybrid multimedia works. The work addresses the strategies and functions of objects at the interstice of virtual and actual space, and within the collective imagination. Studio experimentation and collaboration has included cinematographers, performers, painters, writers, industrial designers, ethnographers, curators, activists and pop-musicians. Balmain's artwork has been exhibited widely in Australia and internationally, and is held within public and private collections. Since 2017 he has been engaged in a long-term research-driven residency with Enough Room for Space, Brussels, that continues through visits and discourse.

Darcey Bella Arnold's practice involves making images, objects and organising projects. Her work has an interest in materiality and visual languages. It considers the artist's close and unique relationship with her mother, Jennifer. Jennifer has an acquired brain injury, which amongst other things, has altered her use of language. Using gleaned material, she has explored her mother's unique use of language and combined it with the artists' language of image making. Through the use of diacritic marks and the misuse of the English language, narrative is left open for interpretation, intentionally, and language becomes a configuration in the creation of a compositional image. Darcey completed a BFA, Drawing at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2007, and a BFA, Honours at Monash University in 2009. She is represented by ReadingRoom, Melbourne.

Amrita Hepi is an award-winning First Nations choreographer and dancer from Bundjalung (Aus) and Ngāpuhi (NZ) territories. Her mission as an artist is to push the barriers of intersectionality in form and make work that establishes multiple access points through allegory. Her practice at present is interested in forms of hybridity - especially those that arise under empire. An artist with a broad following and reach, her work has taken various forms (film, performance, sculpture, text, lecture, participatory installation), but always begins with the body as a point of archive, memory, dance and resistance. Amrita is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne.

Jason Phu's work is like a blood orange. Someone will slice it open and be like "oh why is this orange red," and then someone else will say "that is a blood orange you idiot," and then there will be someone else nearby who says "ahh no I can't see the juice squirted in my eyes and now I'm blind," and then while this whole commotion is going on another person has taken a slice to enjoy on the sand by the ocean. Jason is represented by STATION, Melbourne, and Chalk Horse, Sydney.

Catherine Bell is a multi-disciplinary artist and academic based in Melbourne. Her creative-led research explores the role of the artist in the archive and healthcare setting, art on the margins, socially-engaged and relational approaches to art making, feminist and care ethics in collaborative practice and challenging taboos surrounding death and dying. Yearlong artist residencies in the oncology ward at St Vincent's Hospital (2016-17) and Caritas Christi Hospice (2012-13) in Melbourne involved implementing sustained, communal creativity with patients and staff to promote reflective and meaningful discussion on death and the dying. Catherine was awarded an Australian Post-Graduate Award to complete her PhD at Monash University in 2003-07. Catherine is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

James Nguyen works with documentary, installation and performance. Often collaborating with family and friends, together they create work that examines the politics of art, self-representation and how these decolonising strategies can contribute to diasporic dialogues.

Kay Abude is an artist living and working in Melbourne, Australia. Her creative practice engages many different forms of making, including sculpture, large-scale installation, performance, photography and silk-screen printing. Kay is fascinated with the nature of labour, with its economic, repetitive and somatic properties, and how work connects and separates us, taking so much of our time that it comes to define our lives. Kay completed a Master of Fine Art (by research) at the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, The University of Melbourne in 2010.

Andrew Atchison is an artist, writer and curator currently based in Melbourne/Naarm. He works across multiple forms and has ongoing critical interests in queer identity formation, public art practices, language, colour, and the aesthetics of withholding.

Sarah Brasier is an artist working on Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri land. She is interested in friendship as a creative motivator and aims to build a supportive community of people in the art world. Her practice has a foundation in painting, but also extends to incorporate animation and performance-based video. Each of Sarah's works could be interpreted as a scene from a life-long revenge tale, punctuated by moments of despair, happiness and occasional simple pleasures. Psychodramatic scenarios incorporate astute observations, absurdist thoughts, drawing on personal histories rendered in bright colours and humour to offset the dark origins elucidated through the practice. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Art and graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2018. She also holds a Bachelor of Applied Science.

Matthew Harris was born in Wangaratta (Yorta Yorta/Scandinavian) and is an artist and sometimes curator whose own work often debases normative hierarchies with a queer mix of sentimentality, cuteness, vulgarity and abjection. Since dropping out of high school as a teenage goth, Matthew has had solo shows at Futures, Galerie Pompom, Neon Parc, Alaska Projects, Blindside. Matthew has been included in group shows at Murray Art Museum, The Hole, Hayden's, Bus Projects, Sullivan & Strumpf.

Sam George and Lisa Radford have been working together since 2008 and use conversation and oral histories to produce works that refer to documentary processes, shared narratives and coded language. The nature of their collaboration means their performative work has, in the past, taken the form of beer coasters, a very large knotted-flag, a normal sized flag printed with an unreadable collection of emails, an award winning painting rejected by ANL but decoded by a visiting ex-navy general and, videos of spliced and cut responses to an abstracted de-contextualized questions spoken and mimed.

Georgia Banks' works begin with an invitation and a provocation. Sometimes they are met with an overwhelming response, sometimes no one answers at all. They do not value either of these outcomes over the other. In recent years she has been banned from Tinder, sued by the estate of Hannah Wilke, and awarded Miss Social Impact in a national beauty pageant. She would like to go viral, become a reality TV star, and be inaugurated into the Guinness World Records Hall of Fame. They have never had a filling nor broken a bone (although they have been crucified) and once was convinced that they had accidentally sliced away a part of her labia during a performance (they hadn't).

Ann Debono is a painter living and working in Melbourne. She graduated from VCA Honours in Fine Art in 2015. Ann's paintings attempt to image imaging. She uses her own photographs and found images as sources for her collage-like paintings. In her work, the tangible, present, 'real' world is always opening upon a spectral field of absence: the past and the future. For the artist, the material world, touched and seen, is a palimpsest of temporalities that are all showing through one another. Her paintings pose questions like: Can the eye be said to be in contact with the objects it apprehends in the same way that the hand can contact? And which sort of contact with the world does the referring of imaging imitate? Ann is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Narelle Desmond is a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores the intersection of art, design and popular culture through conceptual considerations of object making. Research triggers a studio practice that currently draws on speculation as a mode of production and Italian Radical Design of the '60s and '70s. Narelle is a co-founder of Conners Conners Gallery at the Fitzroy Town Hall and was a founding member of artist group DAMP. She currently teaches design at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne.

Mia Salsjö scores and performs music compositions as part of an investigation of architectural forms and systems, their underlying principals of mathematics and geometry and how these representations can be traced to underlying base codes. Working from pictorial references, plan projections and meticulously plotted co-ordinates, Salsjö intersperses notational values throughout the spaces under inquiry. The resulting outpouring includes drawings, codexes, diagrams, word association games and multi-instrumental manuscripts. These give rise to films, installations and performances with chamber and ensemble groups. Now based in Australia, Salsjö has worked for many years in Havana, Cuba and in Indonesia, where both musical and architectural traditions have influenced her work.

Mikala Dwyer's compounds invite open-ended interaction and take the viewer across boundaries of time, space and geography. While playful and exuberant on the surface, they almost always impel us to imagine something darker beneath—or above. Ordinary and familiar materials draw us in, transformed so as to bring attention to the unseen or occult or what society banishes from view. Emerging from a deep and disobedient engagement with modernist form and space, Dwyer's works have an eye on the future and relationship at their heart—they have been described as 'profoundly sociable'. Mikala is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 1301SW, Melbourne, and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington.