

Marlene Gilson OAM & Matthew Harris

After All

Gertrude Contemporary
22 August – 17 October 2026

After all presents a selection of works by revered senior artist and Wadawurrung Elder Marlene Gilson OAM from the past decade, in dialogue with a series of new paintings by Matthew Harris whose practice draws reference from his mixed Koorie / European heritage. Gilson's practice is noteworthy for its efforts to overturn the colonial grasp on the past by reclaiming and re-contextualising the representation of historical events. Through this, she asserts the presence of First Nations peoples, before and after colonisation, on what always was and always will be Aboriginal Land. Favours the ancestral lands of her people, and events that have occurred on their lands, as her preferred subject matter and context, Gilson's elaborately painted history paintings provide the counter to the historical representations that misrepresent such histories, through fictionalisation or erasure.

Harris' new series extracts selected texts, quotes and illustration from historical documents, publications and reports speaking of and about Aboriginal people, from the perspectives of the colonising British, between the years of 1839 - 1905. Elucidating the explicit racism of the documents, these works are a damning reminder of the frictional foundations of this land's colonisation. In recent years, Harris has entwined traditional processes of Aboriginal pigment production with the western canon of minimal abstraction. In ways, this operates to invert late modernism's adoption of Aboriginal practices as purely aesthetic forms of painterly abstraction, vanquishing their expressions of dreaming, of Country, and as culturally specific modes of storytelling.

After all places these important artists of different generations in connection to challenge which kind of histories should hold a place in our future. Respectively, Marlene Gilson rewrites how history has been recorded, and Matthew Harris reminds us exactly of how it was recorded.

Artist biographies

Marlene Gilson OAM (born Warnambool, 1944) lives and works in Gordon, Wadawurrung Country, Victoria. Selected solo exhibitions include *Binbeal*, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, 2023; *My Place – Before*, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, 2021; *Marlene Gilson, Biennale of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2018; *What If*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Naarm Melbourne, 2017; *Guraham – King William – His Country*, Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka, Ballarat, 2015; *Wadawurrung – Past, Present & Future* (with Deanne Gilson), Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum, Naarm Melbourne, 2014; and *Welcome to our Country (Ngardang baap yarrang) – Mother and Daughter – Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) Dreaming*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2012.

Selected group exhibitions include *Wayngurrla – To Make Good*, Barwon Park Mansion, Winchelsea, 2026; *60th Biennale di Venezia: Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere*, Venice, Italy, 2024; *Wurrdha Marra*, National Gallery of Victoria, Naarm Melbourne, 2023; *For Our Elders*, Eureka Centre, Ballarat, 2023; *Australiana – Designing A Nation*, Bendigo Art Gallery, 2023; *Change the World*, National Gallery of Victoria, Naarm Melbourne, 2022; *Deadly Narratives*, Koorie Heritage Trust, Naarm Melbourne, 2021; *Colony: Frontier Wars*, National Gallery of Victoria, Naarm Melbourne 2018; *The National Picture: The Art of Tasmania's Black War*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, and Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 2018; *21st Biennale of Sydney: Superposition*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2018; *Sovereignty*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Naarm Melbourne, 2016; and *10th Anniversary Victorian Indigenous Art Awards*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2015.

Marlene Gilson OAM is represented by Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney.

Matthew Harris (born Wangaratta, 1991) lives and works in Naarm Melbourne. Selected solo include *Stilled*, Futures, Naarm, 2026; *Overland*, Wangaratta Art Gallery, Wangaratta, 2025; *Essential Oils* (with Tyrone Te Waa), Toi Tauranga Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2025; *Stone After Stone*, Futures, Naarm, 2024; *Sky without Stars*, The Commercial, Sydney, 2024; *The British Museum*, Futures, Naarm, 2023; *Panopticon*, Connors Connors, Naarm, 2022; *Spiritual Poverty* (with Sarah Brassier), Gertrude Glasshouse, Naarm, 2023; *Doom*, Futures, Melbourne Art Fair, Naarm, 2022; *Goo*, Futures, Naarm, 2021; *The Simple Life*, Galerie Pompom, Sydney, 2021; and *Hell*, Neon Parc, Naarm, 2018.

Selected group exhibitions include the *18th Lyon Biennale: Passer d'un rêve à l'autre / To pass from one dream to another*, Lyon, France, 2026; *2026 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Yield Strength*, Art Gallery of South Australia and Samstag Museum of Art, Tarndanya Adelaide, 2026; *All the World's Memories*, UNSW Galleries, Sydney, 2026; *Unbecoming*, La Trobe Art Institute, Bendigo, 2025; *Kisses*, The Commercial, Sydney, 2024; *8th Yokohama Triennale: Wild Grass: Our Lives*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan, 2024; *Between Waves*, Australia Centre for Contemporary Art, Naarm Melbourne, 2023; *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Naarm Melbourne, 2022; and *Choose Happiness*, Murray Art Museum Albury, 2021.

Matthew Harris was in the Gertrude Studio Program from 2020-2023. Matthew Harris is represented by Futures, Naarm; and The Commercial, Sydney.

Gertrude acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders past and present.



Australian Government
Visual Art, Craft and Design Framework



CREATIVE
VICTORIA



List of works

1. Marlene Gilson
Unknown 2017
oil and acrylic on linen
20.5 x 25.5 cm
Private collection, Naarm Melbourne
2. Marlene Gilson
Unknown 2017
oil and acrylic on linen
20.5 x 25.5 cm
Private collection, Naarm Melbourne
3. Marlene Gilson
The Funeral 2018
oil and acrylic on linen
20.5 x 25.5 cm
Courtesy of the Smart-Frangos Collection
4. Matthew Harris
Big Time 2025
ochre and acrylic binder on canvas
200 x 300 cm
5. Marlene Gilson
Firestick Burning 2021
acrylic on linen
61 x 76.3 cm
Private collection, Naarm Melbourne
6. Marlene Gilson
Building a Home, Family Altogether 2023
acrylic on linen
60 x 76 cm
Private collection, Naarm Melbourne
7. Matthew Harris
George Augustus Robinson, The Papers of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, 1839–1852, vol. 2, ed. Ian D. Clarke, p. 142. 2026
ground charcoal and acrylic binder on canvas
81.5 x 61.5 cm
8. Marlene Gilson
Actors Playground in Ballarat 1854 2020
synthetic polymer paint on linen
76 x 100 cm
Private collection Ballarat
9. Matthew Harris
Mary Spencer, Aunt Spencer's Diary (1854), ed. Amey Cooper, p.15 2026
ground charcoal and acrylic binder on canvas
81.5 x 61.5 cm
10. Marlene Gilson
The Eureka Stockade 2019
acrylic on linen
76 x 100 cm
Private collection Naarm Melbourne
11. Matthew Harris
R. Brough Smyth, Fourth Report of the Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria (1864), p. 21. 2026
ground charcoal and acrylic binder on canvas
122 x 61 cm
12. Marlene Gilson
The Life and Times of Bundoora Homestead 2018
acrylic on linen
120 x 120 cm
Courtesy of the Darebin Art Collection
13. Marlene Gilson
Bunjil's Final Resting Place, Race Meeting at Lal Lal Falls 2015
acrylic on linen
122 x 150 cm
Collection of the artist
14. Matthew Harris
Reminiscences of David Reid, as given to J. C. H. Ogier in November 1905, who set them down in the third person, National Library of Australia Collection, p. 30–31. 2026
ground charcoal and acrylic binder on canvas
122 x 61 cm

All works by Matthew Harris courtesy of the artist and FUTURES, Naarm Melbourne; and The Commercial, Sydney

