



## synthetic/aesthetic

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Opens at Gallery 4a on Friday, 27 April from 6–8pm

To be opened by Penelope Seidler

Exhibition dates: Saturday, 28 April – Saturday, 2 June 2007

Curator: Danielle Johnson

**synthetic/aesthetic explores the intersection of the body, fashion, photography and art in an exhibition timed to coincide with Rosemount Australia Fashion Week 30 April – 4 May 2007 (formerly Mercedes Australian Fashion Week). The exhibition will provide a counterpoint to the mainstream event, challenging existing notions of beauty and physical identity in Australian society. The works in this exhibition explore serious personal and conceptual concerns and are beautiful and alluring, but in unexpected and sometimes confronting ways.**

Photographers **Owen Leong** and **Monika Tichacek** create analytical and contemporary versions of the self-portrait, which challenge the limitations and expectations of the body's appearance. Both artists employ the theatrics and the charged impact of costume. Tichacek's images, from *The Shadows* series may be at first seem abject (when we imagine the physical pain of her laced skin) and yet we are inextricably drawn to the strength and beauty of her physical presence and perseverance. Similarly with Leong's works, which present a haunting re-birth in *Internal Contradiction 2* and *Internal Contradiction 4*, and a gaping and oozing void in his work *Hole*. Leong's use of eighteenth century British clothing in 'Hole' examines the nature of the contemporary body within post-colonial Australia. Leong's work continues to explore the layers of his identity as an Australian with Chinese heritage.

**Tim Richardson** is an Australian photographer and director based in New York. He has an established career that bridges the divide between fashion, art and film. He, like Leong, uses digital manipulation. In Richardson's case his work suggests themes of gesture and technology. The feminine figure and its pictorial/historical context often filtered through Richardson's use of modified digital media. The photographs (conceived for a fashion designer) reference Duchamp's *Nude Descending A Staircase*.

**Belinda Lai** and **Todd Robinson** have both had successful careers in fashion design (Lai won the Mercedes Benz Startup Young Fashion Designer 2004, with label Belinda Martin and Todd's designs were featured in Mercedes Fashion Week in 2001). They now both undertake a cutting edge and art-focused practice, informed by their fashion experience. Robinson's work video *sightlessness (Mez)* predominantly presents a moving piece of deep red velvet – Robinson tells us that it is a blind woman who touches and agitates the velvet). The result of this information and the video itself is an emphasis on tactility and the sensuousness of the material, as the audience too are immersed in a dark space, free of other stimulation, the audience can almost feel the velvet as it moves on the screen. His work *loomstate* is also about the quality and texture of fabric, as well as a reference to the labour involved with its making. In this installation a bolt of fabric is unravelled to reveal an intriguing sculptural and seemingly endless fold.

Belinda Lai and photographer, **Alice Wesley-Smith**, work collaboratively to form an installation that incorporates art, fashion, photography and visual and conceptual layering. Lai's work builds layers of uniquely decorated fabric, representing the individual joys and tragedies that mark a person, which you 'wear' through your life. While Wesley-Smith's photography reveals the layers that form the self we present to the world and the self we reveal when we remove these layers.

Fashion and event designer, **Shane Dunn**, creates a site-specific piece, combining his talents in both fields. The materials in his work (which range from paper patterns and calico to the bags from major fashion houses) address the divide between the making and selling of clothing.

**Biljana Jancic** creates a series of works based on a *performance to be executed on the opening night of the exhibition* (Friday 27 April, 6-8pm). In this performance she creates an ethereal vision by encasing herself in a backlit construction made entirely from inflated freezer bags. Jancic comments that 'Somewhere in the process the bags lost some of their function and I lost my body in their containment. My main concern is the material and there is a compromise reached between the material's utility and physicality and my intention to make the material transcend its materiality.'

**For further information or to request images please contact**

Danielle Johnson, M: 0411 342 140 or E: [daniellejohnson\\_mail@yahoo.com.au](mailto:daniellejohnson_mail@yahoo.com.au)

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