

shape
SHIFTERS

A RETROSPECTIVE OF AUSTRALIAN COLLAGE

ARTISTS

Tony Albert, Brook Andrew, Suzanne Archer, Tom Arthur, David Aspden, Sydney Ball, Ray Beattie, Richard Bell, Malcolm Benham, Lee Bethel, John Bokor, Warren Breninger, Mike Brown, Michael Butler, Angie Cass, Tony Convey, Ross Crothall, Grace Crowley, Isabel Davies, Juan Davila, Lawrence Daws, Domenico de Clario, Karla Dickens, Xanthe Dobbie, Stephen Earle, Lise Floistad, Leonard French, Rosalie Gascoigne, James Gleeson, Richard Goodwin, Elizabeth Gower, Greedy Hen, Robert Grieve, Barbara Hanrahan, Katherine Hattam, Paul Higgs, Frank Hinder, Megan Jenkinson, Anita Johnson, Michael Johnson, George Johnson, Philip Juster, Deborah Kelly, Peter Kennedy and John Hughes, Peter Kingston, Brett Whiteley and John Allen, Robert Klippel, Eveline Kotai, John Krzywokulski, Colin Lanceley, Bruce Latimer, Helen Lempriere, Kerrie Lester, Elwyn Lynn, Polly MacCallum, Fiona MacDonald, David McDiarmid, Arthur McIntyre, Bridgid McLean, Danie Mellor, Robert B Mitchell, Allan Mitelman, Margaret Morgan, Elizabeth Newman, John Nixon, Caroline Oakley, Desiderius Orban, Jenny Orchard, Louise Paramor, John Peart, Leon Pericles, Carl Plate, Clifton Pugh, Ken Reinhard, Leonie Reisberg, Joan Ross, Gareth Sansom, Kurt Schranzer, Sandra Selig, Martin Sharp, Garry Shead, Eric John Smith, Ian Smith, Madonna Staunton, Ann Thomson, Mark Titmarsh, Nicky Tsekouras, Meredith Turnbull, Nik Uzunovski, Hossein Valamanesh, Vicki Varvaressos, John R Walker, Guy Warren, Brett Whiteley, Vyvian Wilson.

Presented with the support of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
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FOREWORD

Emerging from cubism in the early 20th century, collage soon evolved among the avant-garde as a fitting expression of social and political change. Today, collage is as relevant as ever, mimicking and mirroring our fast-moving, fragmented, image-saturated world.

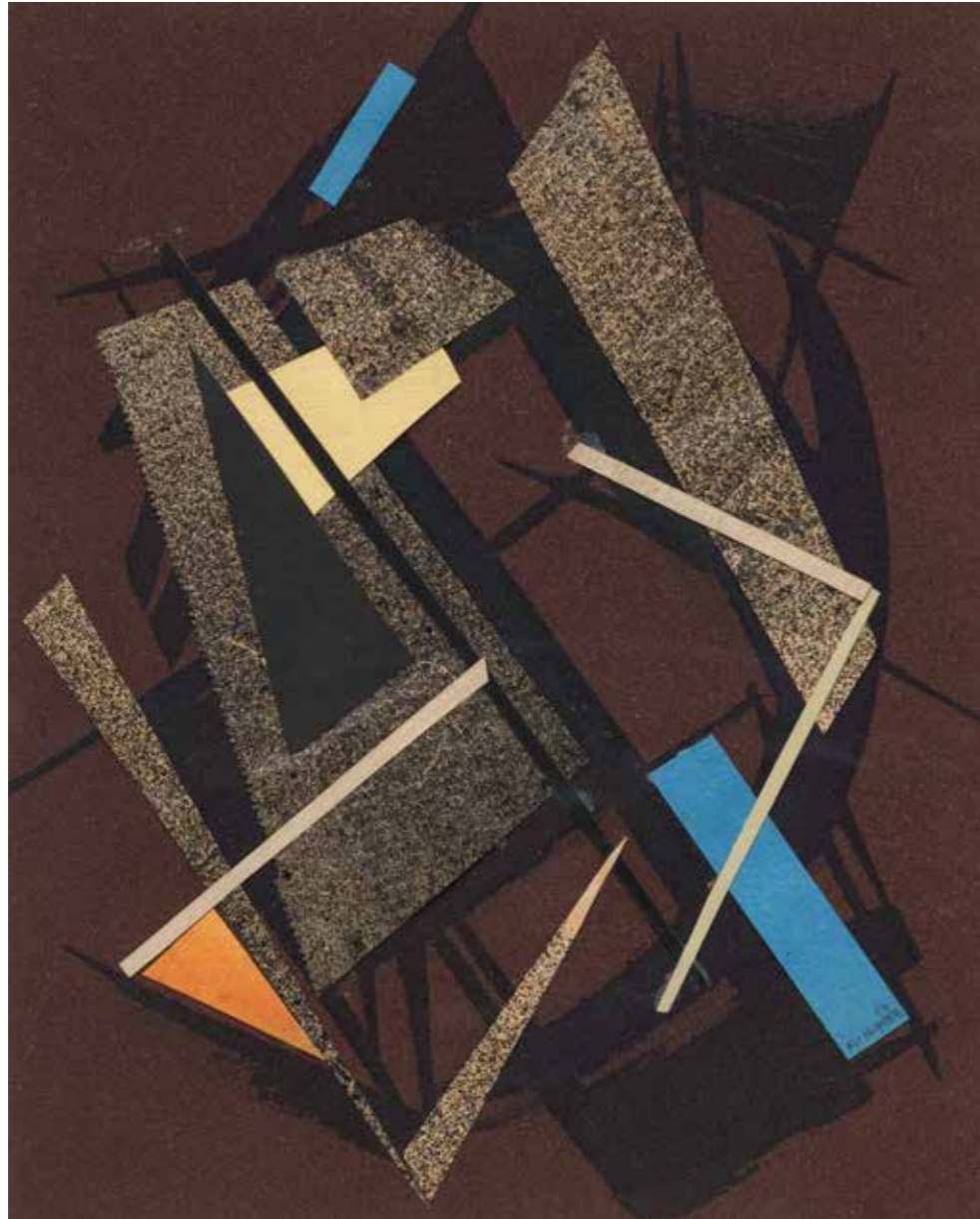
Collage is a relatively unsung medium in Australia, though some exhibitions dedicated to the form have appeared. Examples include 'Art of Parts: Collage and Assemblage from the Collection' (2016) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 'Stick It!: Collage in Australian Art' (2010) at the National Gallery of Victoria, and, closer to home, '10: The Collage Show' (1982) at Wollongong Art Gallery, which toured to several regional galleries across Australia.

'Shape Shifters' makes a case for the importance of collage in Australian art, with a varied but discrete selection of works spanning from the 1930s until recent times. Curated by Illawarra artist and educator, Angie Cass, 'Shape Shifters' captures an understanding of the complexities of collage from a practitioner's perspective. This makes for an unexpected, playful and accessible approach to collage. The exhibition also reveals much about the medium in an Australian art historical context.

The scope of 'Shape Shifters' could not have been realised without the support of the institutional lenders. The Art Gallery of New South Wales generously partnered with us to enable the loan of many important works. We are also grateful for the support of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Artbank, and the artists and private lenders who generously loaned various works. Combined, each of these works reverberate with selections curated from the Wollongong Art Gallery's collection.

Lastly, this exhibition is made possible with the support of the Wollongong City Council and the team who worked tirelessly with Cass to bring her cut-and-paste vision to the community: Louise Brand, Milly Hyde, Nicola Dillon, Vivian Vidulich, Julie Danilov, and our first-rate installation team. Most of all, a heartfelt thank you to Angie Cass for her tireless commitment to shaping 'Shape Shifters' into this epic presentation.

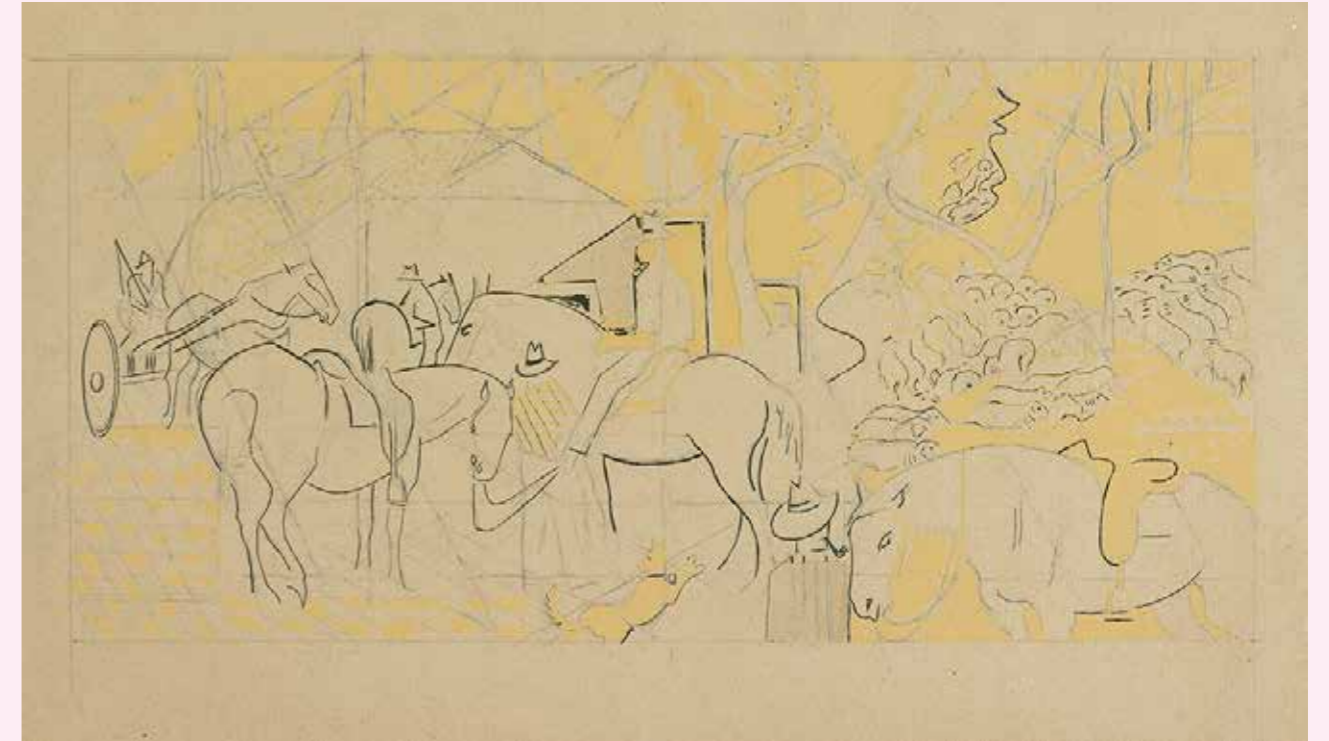
Daniel Mudie Cunningham
Director, Wollongong Art Gallery



FRANK HINDER (1906–1992)

Frank Hinder employed collage sporadically from 1934 to 1978. *Brown construction - Study* (1954) is included in 'Shape Shifters' as an example of an artist simply capturing the materials around them. The artist's wife was the sculptor, Margel Hinder (1906–1995), who was working in wood at the time. Sandpaper was ubiquitous for both artists. In *Brown construction - Study*, Hinder has cut, arranged and affixed striking abradant shapes onto a warm brown sandpaper background. The effect is a lyrical and textured abstraction in keeping with Hinder's fascination with Cubism.

Frank Hinder, *Brown construction - study*, 1954, ink and collage on sandpaper, 28 x 22.5cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gift of Margel Hinder. © Courtesy of the Estate of Frank Hinder



GRACE CROWLEY (1890–1979)

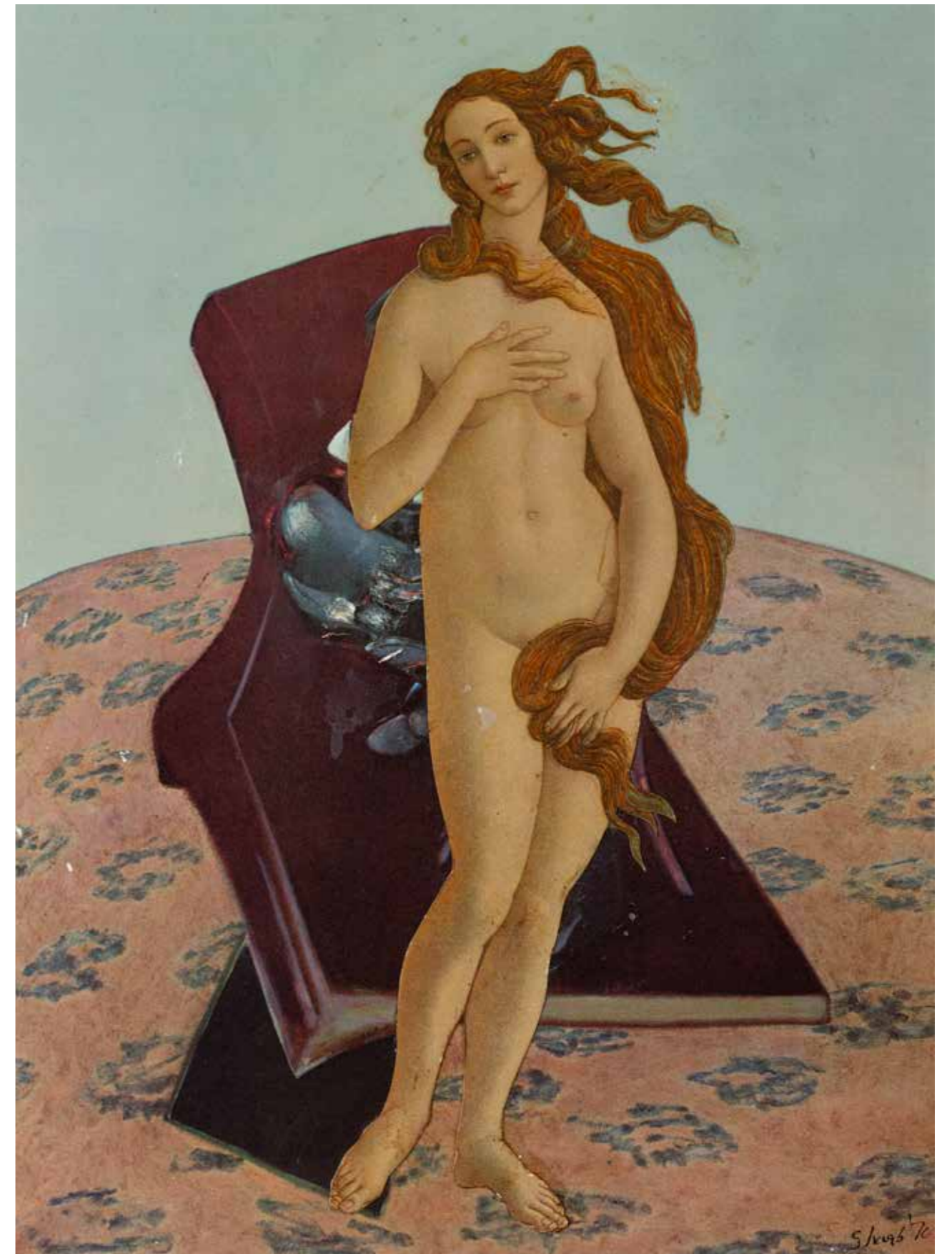
Composition Study for "The drover's camp" (1937), is an early example of collage being used to combine sketches. Crowley's collage is functional and elegant and the subject references her early years as the child of graziers. It is also the earliest example of collage in 'Shape Shifters'. Given the now-common technique of sticking two or more drawings together, it is remarkable that Crowley was doing this almost 100 years ago.

Grace Crowley, *Composition study for 'The drover's camp'*, (1937), pencil, pen and ink, gouache, collage on brown paper, 17 x 34.3cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Bequest of the artist. © Courtesy of the Estate of Grace Crowley

MARTIN SHARP (1942–2013)

Martin Sharp is one of Australia's iconic collage artists who is best known for his work in the 1960s counterculture magazine *Oz*, and for his contribution to the restoration of Luna Park. *Venus* (1970) is one of a series of Sharp's miniature cutups from the 1970s. It depicts a coupling of two pages collaged from reproductions in art books. The eponymous Venus from Sandro Botticelli's (1445–1510) *Birth of Venus* (c.1485) has been extracted from her shell and glued onto the background of one of the *Three studies for portrait of Lucian Freud* (1966) by Francis Bacon (1909–1992). The placing of the nude over the furniture is a harmonious colour match, but Venus barely covers the figure of Freud underneath.

Martin Sharp, *Venus*, 1970, collage of cut book illustrations on book illustration, 33.8 x 25cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of Dr Ronald Fine, 1981. © Street of Dreams Martin Sharp Ltd/Copyright Agency, 2024



SHIFTING SHAPES

'Shape Shifters' is a retrospective of Australian collage from the 1930s to the present day. Despite collage's hot renaissance this century, Wollongong Art Gallery (WAG) has not held a major exhibition of collage since '10: The Collage Show', curated by Ray Hughes in 1982. A deep dive into collage at WAG is therefore long overdue. 'Shape Shifters' aims to explore the complexity of collage; its materials and processes and to show how it has developed ideologically and conceptually in an Australian context.

Collage is a medium where disparate materials are juxtaposed to create new meaning. The word 'collage' comes from the verb, 'coller', to 'stick', or to 'glue' in French (New Latin, from Greek *kollō*) (1). The term was coined in 1912-13 in Paris in the modernist age by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963), but in fact, collage had more intimate origins in 12th century Japan where monks fused pieces of paper to create religious manuscripts. In Europe, from as early as 1650, paper substrates were being embellished with quartz crystals and scatterings of tinsel. Moreover, fabrics were glued onto prints, engravings, and even fashion plates. From inception, collage was often ornamental.

By the mid-19th century, new media such as die-cutting, foiling and saturated-colour printing widened the definition of the medium further. Christmas and Valentine's Day, greetings, calling cards, and manufacturers' brochures became common printed ephemera in wealthy homes. Women, the primary consumers of these items, and having no access to paid artistic production, were soon advancing the art of collage in photo albums by juxtaposing their 'amateur' watercolours with paper cut-outs and photographs. Their collages were often witty, and sometimes subversive, transmogrifying familial and friendship narratives by gluing their heads onto animal bodies. Sixty years after these material experimentations by women, Picasso and Braque began merging mass-printed technologies into their artworks; disrupting convention by simplifying pictorial space, and completely reshaping the history of art.

In the decades between the beginning of World War I in 1914 and the end of World War II in 1945, two art movements emerged which accelerated the trajectory for collage to be politically and psychologically charged with

meaning. Hannah Höch (1889-1978), Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971), and John Heartfield (1891-1968) were members of the Dada Group (beginning 1915), each making anti-establishment photomontages with their own provocative styles by juxtaposing photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings in acerbic and humorous ways. Simultaneously, other Dada artists were experimenting with verbal collages where cut-up words were thrown together to make nonsensical poetry as commentary on the irrationality of war. Surrealism, which partly emerged from Dada, and whose protagonists included André Breton (1896-1966) and Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), were directly influenced by the ideas of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Breton and Dalí believed that the unconscious mind was not that far removed from reality. Several well-known artists in Australia at the time adopted the ground-breaking concept of the expression of the subconscious mind in art. James Gleeson (1915-2008), Australia's most renowned Surrealist, began using collage and positioning incongruous materials - meticulously cut - to unravel the mystery of the human psyche. The 1910s until the 1940s were interesting times for collage, and many concepts and forms recognisable in the medium today, arose during these decades.

The lesser-known Australian artist, James Cant (1911-1982), born near Melbourne but living in London in the mid-late 1930s, made one of the most digestible collages in *Objects that desire* (1937), where edible white cake sprinkles were glued between pale numbered drawings onto a flat canvas (2). The intended meaning of the collage is a mystery, but it is possible that *Objects that desire* was created for the 'Exhibition of Collages, Papier Collés and Photo-montages' held at the Guggenheim Jeune Gallery in London in November 1938. The exhibition's title reveals a classification of collage, a concept that 'Shape Shifters' explores.

Around this time, many other Australian artists were in Europe, mainly to gain an esteemed art education with significant artists of the day. In Paris, Grace Crowley (1880-1979) (p3) had been influenced by André Lhote (1885-1962) and Albert Gleizes' (1881-1953) planning approach to painting which required many preliminary drawings. Crowley's *Composition study for "The drover's camp"* (1937),

is the earliest collage in 'Shape Shifters'. Here, Crowley stuck two sketches together to change the configuration of an image. From the late 1920s onwards, other Australian artists were bringing collage home, initially taking on paid work in advertising and graphic design. Albert Tucker and Max Dupain, impacted by the hardship of the Depression, both worked in these industries. Their innovations in splicing photos and dislocating compositions for magazines like *The Home* (1920-1942), influenced the history of collage in Australia. The origins of fine art collage in this country cannot be separated from its commercial relation.

Shortly afterwards, the outbreak of World War II interrupted the careers of Australian artists such as Gleeson, Albert Tucker (1914-1999), Frank Hinder (1906-1992), and Robert Klippel (1920-2001). They had the unlikely training of making camouflage materials or sculpting miniature war planes and boats for education purposes during active service. These experiences may have been foundational to their art careers. Klippel, for example was fascinated by the working parts in machinery, Hinder was driven to understand our perceptions of space, and Tucker's 'antipodean heads' emerged from his drawings of veterans in a war hospital. During the 1950s, Hinder, Tucker, Gleeson, and Klippel were already making iconic collages.

At the same time, artists in Australia were moving rapidly away from European direction. By the 1960s, galleries and critics were coming under fire from contemporary artists, citing outmoded attitudes to subjects, styles and materials. This was an exciting time in the history of Australian collage. The Annandale Imitation Realists (1961-1964) taunted the art establishment by encrusting their collaborative paintings with found objects; Martin Sharp (1942-2013) (p4), another prominent collagist, drew on his childhood collage practice to become one of Australia's Pop Art instigators of visual psychedelia; and Brett Whiteley (1939-1992) (p28) propelled his collages to international acclaim through eccentric and poignant material juxtapositions.

The 1970s were a time of significant social and political upheaval in Australia, with movements for feminism, Indigenous rights, and environmental conservation gaining momentum. Artists responded to these issues with artworks that were both politically engaged and

aesthetically innovative. Vicki Varvaressos (b. 1949) (p32) combined gestural abstraction with collage to parody female stereotypes; Isabel Davies (b.1929), came to collage through an unanticipated shift in her drawing practice, citing her proximity to other women artists at the Women's Art Forum as a factor for change.

During the rise of postmodernism in Australia in the 1980s, collage, with its capacity to combine dissimilar images and materials, became a powerful medium for artists to explore issues of identity and representation. Leonie Reisberg (b. 1955) (p36) was collaging her photographs, creating unsettling and charismatic images of her life in flux. This was also the decade of the mixtape and sampling in other media. Peter Kennedy (b. 1945) and John Hughes (b. 1948), whose culturally hybrid artworks include installations and sound collage, created the video *On Sacred Land* (1983-1984) from documentary and other moving image fragments. The work was created during the first term of the new Labour Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, who campaigned for reconciliation in Australia. *On Sacred Land* contrasts ideologies of Western territory entitlement with Aboriginal attitudes to land ownership. Not until the Mabo Case in 1992 were Indigenous land rights recognised in Australian history and unceded land first returned to the original owners. Film, sound, music, and new media were defining a new political era for collage culture in the 1980s.

Concurrently, First Nations artists began exhibiting activist works aimed at revising Australian history and identity. Richard Bell (b. 1953), a member of the Murri community, is an activist and artist who uses collage by incorporating photographs, printed texts, and found objects into his artworks to critique the commodification and appropriation of Aboriginal art by the white art market. Tracey Moffatt (b. 1960) is a filmmaker and photographer known for her montages which twist dominant Western narratives. Tony Albert (b. 1981) (p23), repurposes racist kitsch to question stereotypical representations of Aboriginal peoples. Joan Ross (p22), originally from Scotland, combines second-hand imagery in collage and digital animations to critique the British invasion of Australia and the damaging impacts of consumerism on the environment. One of the most compelling Australian contexts for collage in the works of Ross, Albert and others, is in the subversion of innocuous junk to highlight bigotry and injustice.

The assimilation of activism with collage produced another significant body of work in Australian collage history. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s to 1990s, and the government's inaction and apparent prejudice, provoked David McDiarmid (1952–1995) (p24) to respond through collage and print works made for the AIDS Council of NSW and queer events such as Mardi Gras. Years later, in the early 2000s, Michael Butler (1959–2022) tackled homophobic hypocrisy in *Are You Being Served?* (p25), a collage with multiple references and a witty punch.

For some artists in Australia, collage has been a tool to question static representations of sexual identity. Deborah Kelly (b. 1962) (p40) creates animal hybrids in paper collages and digital animations. Gareth Sansom (b. 1939) (p26) has been creating tongue-in-cheek self-referential collages since the 1970s and has a slanting engagement with fetishism and subculture. Both Kelly and Sansom are influential collage artists, both in Australia and internationally too. In 'Shape Shifters', they represent the breadth of contemporary collage, materially and conceptually, alongside four other collage artists: Paul Higgs (b. 1954) (p31), a painterly collagist; Evelyn Kotai (b. 1950), who sews cut-up canvases using invisible thread; Karla Dickens (b. 1967), a Wiradjuri woman who upscales found objects to critique legacies of colonialism and patriarchy; and Nicky Tsekouros (b. 1997), a queer artist, who utilises collage as a response to late capitalism, community, and sustainability.

'Shape Shifters' has gathered over 80 unique artworks to tell a story of Australian collage. The exhibition aims to dive into these works' material diversity, mysterious processes, and magical outcomes. The sequential process of making a collage is an understudied component in the history of the medium. Yet, its micro-actions performed idiosyncratically by artists, constitute the very work itself. Many artists in 'Shape Shifters' describe the inciting incidents of gathering, gleaning, and collecting objects from op shops, street junk, and recycling depots. Then, once accumulated, there is the work of collecting, classifying and archiving these materials, often with taxonomical precision. Some collage artists crumple, stain, paint over, layer, or overlap their materials, and others content to contrive elegant or transcendent content. Long before a collage is glued together the artist may cut, rip, slice, or break materials into fragments, or make a mechanical or digital intervention with the inclusion of photocopies

and photographs. At some point, small acts of choosing, grouping, arranging, constructing and deconstructing items might determine the direction a collage takes. Additional techniques of shifting scale, sanding back or building up texture might rupture or deepen a narrative. In collage, the techniques of juxtaposing similar or jarring scraps is a vital and often definitive activity. Also, inverting the remains of these oddments through the use of negative space can make an enigmatic or resonating effect. Whatever the synthesis, what lends collage its mystery, is its process.

In 'Shape Shifters', four themes portray the essence of Australian collage: Visceral and Painterly; Subversive and Provocative; Playful and Conceptual; and Beautiful and Sublime. Iconic collages spanning these categorisations are clustered to show relationships and reveal Australian contexts. In many cases, well-known collages hang beside less explored ones.

Collage is an umbrella term for two- and three-dimensional glued artworks, including assemblage, montage, photomontage, animations, and sound or video sampling. The glue in the recordings is in the editing process. 'Shape Shifters' is primarily concerned with Australian collages made on a two-dimensional plane. The show includes many animations and video collages because these embody a technological and innovational shift in the history of collage art. Mark Titmarsh (b. 1955), for example, makes works on paper, but he also builds collaborative sound collages and film montages.

The span of collages in 'Shape Shifters' is from the 1930s to the present day. Early examples of the medium from Grace Crowley and Frank Hinder show how European artists exerted a great influence on their Australian peers. However, from the early 1960s, collage with Australian themes quickly gained momentum: Gareth Sansom's (b.1939) painterly collages since the 1960s are seminal in this regard. In the same decade Barbara Hanrahan (1939–1991), an artist and novelist, first incorporated her Adelaide family and Australian nature into her prints and collages. Later, *Blue cooch* (1981) (p15), a feminist collage by Margaret Morgan (b. 1958), highlighted the Hills Hoist as a metaphor for Australian domesticity. Across the decades, Robert Klippel, Brett Whiteley, and Martin Sharp revelled in creating quirky collages referencing Australia, sometimes with Sydney landmarks or characters at the core. In the

1990s, Arthur McIntyre (1945–2003) and Fiona MacDonald (b. 1956) both researched events in Australian history to make salient commentaries using photo media.

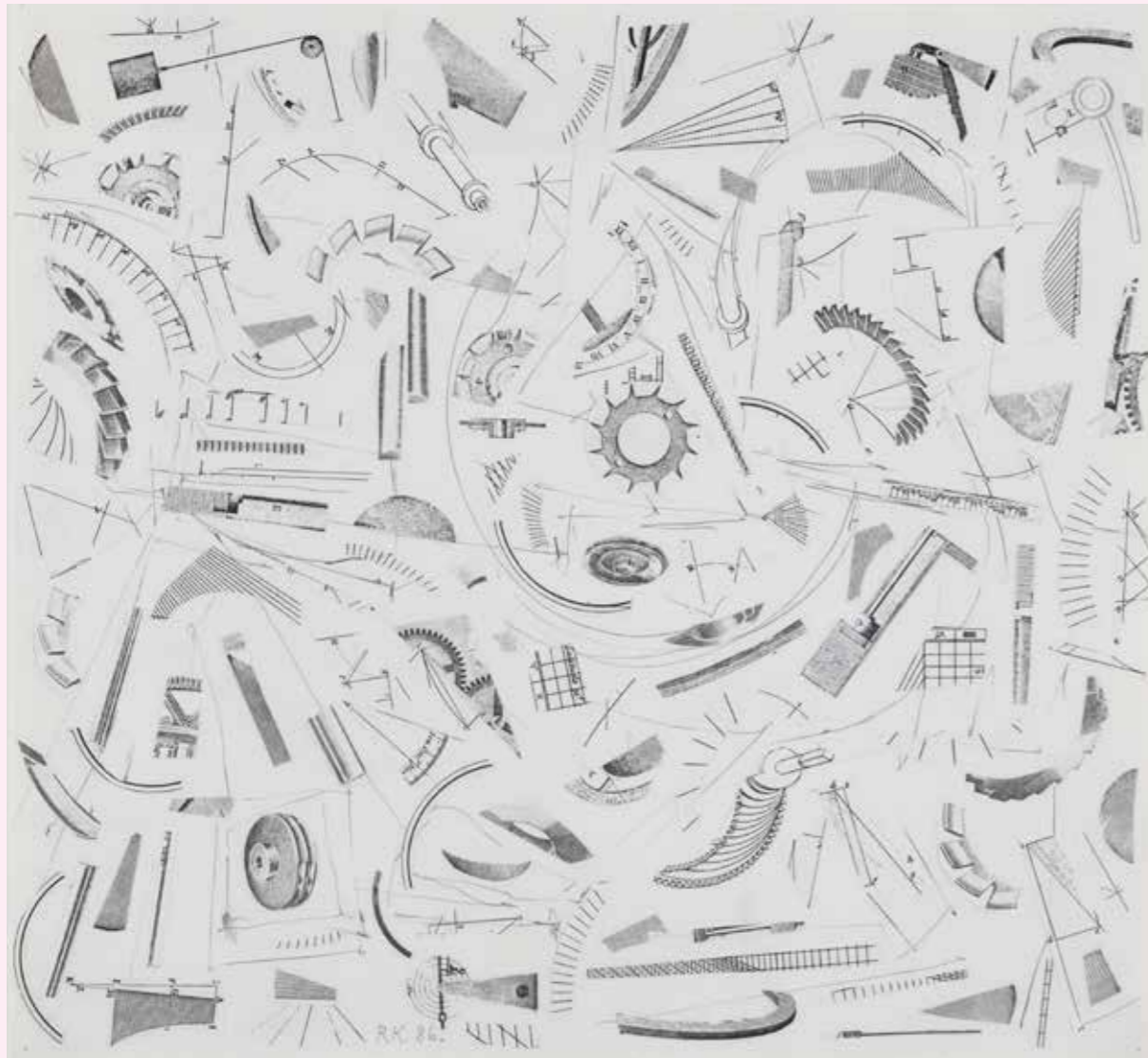
Since then, many more artists have found collage to be a fitting medium to explore concepts and ideologies around being Australian or being Australian in a global culture. For example, Brook Andrew (b. 1970) (p17), is a Wiradjuri artist, who interrogates colonial archives to question dominant narratives; and Xanthe Dobbie (b. 1992), is an on- and offline maker of art and film who draws on humour, pop, sex and modern iconographies to capture their experience of contemporaneity. Finally, there are some artists in 'Shape Shifters' who create timeless collages, conjuring up a spiritual impression of being IN Australia. The artworks of Evelyn Kotai (b. 1950) (p20), John R Walker (b. 1957), and John Peart (1945–2013), resonate deeply in this way in this show. 'Shape Shifters' is an expansive retrospective and not all major collage artists could be included. Notably absent contributors to the medium include Mary Webb, Albert Tucker, Sidney Nolan, Tony Tucker, Pat and Richard Larter, and more. I am thankful to all the artists, collectors, and gallery directors and owners for making or loaning works, and for giving their time so generously to make 'Shape Shifters' possible.

Shifting shapes is serious work, and I hope the collages presented in the show bring joy and appreciation of a somewhat sidelined medium. As we say in the business, what goes on collage, stays on collage!

Angie Cass

Curator 'Shape Shifters'

- 1 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/coll->
- 2 Patrick Elliott, *Cut and Paste: 400 years of collage*. National Galleries Scotland, 2019, p119.

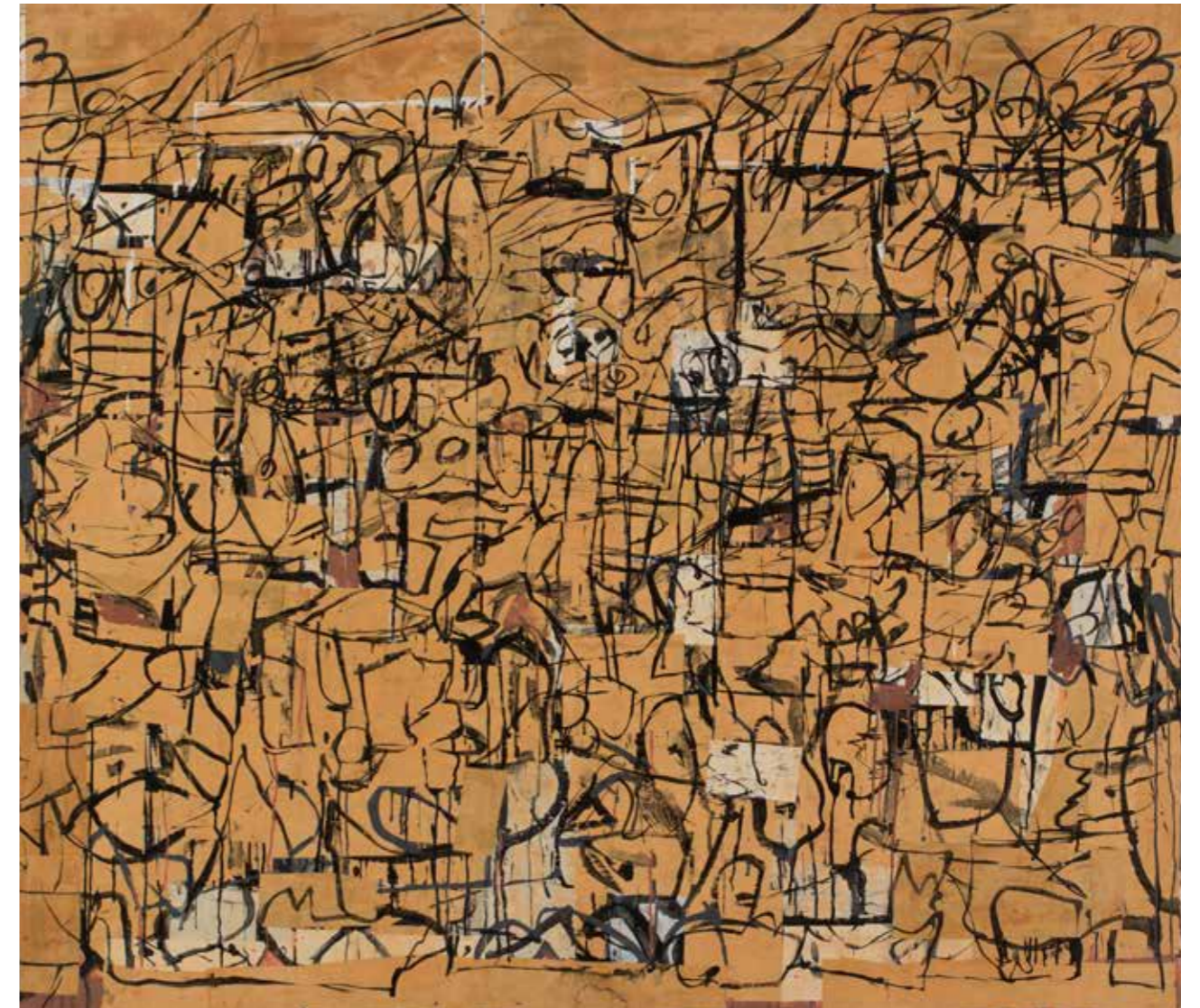


ROBERT KLIPPEL (1920–2001)

The photocopier is an important instrument in modern collage. In *Untitled* (1986), Robert Klippel photocopied images of machine objects from industrial manuals and reconfigured them in a delicate and airy abstract composition. By switching across a range of dark and light machine settings Klippel has been able to suffuse this collage with grainy textures and heavy lines. Where necessary he has hand-drawn lines of connection.

Klippel was a playful and analytical artist who made collages as stand-alone artworks and as precursors to his metal sculptures. Few other artists in the history of Australian collage exemplify the joy and energy of this medium quite so quintessentially as Klippel.

Robert Klippel, *(untitled)*, 1986, collage of cut photocopies, ball-point pen on paper, 24.8 x 26.7cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of the Wollongong Gallery Society, 1987. © Andrew Klippel. Courtesy of the Robert Klippel Estate, represented by Annette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney and Galerie Gmurzynska, Zurich



SUZANNE ARCHER (b. 1945)

Private grounds (1967) is one of Suzanne Archer's early abstract collages. She has built a dislocated field of torn paper and overlaid it with strong calligraphic strokes. A line in perpetual motion travels through it. Archer is known for her powerful earthy landscapes. She prepares the foundations of her paintings with collage as if she were physically wrenching materials from the ground itself.

Suzanne Archer, *Private grounds*, 1967, collage, ink and PVA glue on board, 137 x 157cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of Ruby and Bernard Makula, 1987. © Suzanne Archer

KATHERINE HATTAM (b. 1950)

Katherine Hattam takes the title of her collage *The integrity of the personality* (2014), from psychoanalyst Anthony Storr's 1960 book of the same name. In doing so she is exteriorising hidden thoughts and feelings, using collage as a tool. The image refers to Hattam's memories of feminist 'consciousness raising' in the 1970s. *The integrity of the personality* is dominated by a kitchen table that has been split in half to signify Hattam's artistic and domestic personas. The pillars of Penguin blue paperback spines are reference books, the orange spines are Penguin fiction. Hattam's method of overlaying pages from factual and fictional texts with gouache asks us to dig deep. Only by examining our superficial properties and traits can we acquire a coherent self. The technique of including text in collage is common and underlines one of the medium's often hidden traits.

Katherine Hattam, *The integrity of the personality*, 2008; 2014 {reworked}, collage of book pages and spines, charcoal and gouache on paper, 154 x 114cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Kathleen Buchanan May Bequest Fund 2014. © Courtesy of Katherine Hattam and Daine Singer, Fitzroy, Victoria





DESIDERIUS ORBAN (1884–1986)

Desiderius Orban used any material at hand to solve a visual problem. He once melted Caran D'Ache crayons on a hot plate and drew with the wax. Orban forged collage in a similarly exploratory way. His methods indicate the mindset of a restless artist on the hunt for material treasures that have impact and resonance.

In *Citadel* (1971), Orban cuts rectangles from magazines, books, and other media to build a paper fortress that resides over a mangled landscape. Clouds above appear to hang upside down. Dominating the composition is the titular *Citadel* which has a dark and compelling appeal. The cracks created in textas unify the fortification but also signal that it may soon collapse. *Citadel* won the Wollongong Art Prize in 1971.

Desiderius Orban, *Citadel*, 1971, collage of book and magazine illustrations, fibre-tipped pen, wax crayon on paper, 28.3 x 42.3cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of Erica Green, 1995. © Courtesy of the Estate of Desiderius Orban



MARGARET MORGAN (b. 1958)

In the 1970s and eighties, Sydney artist Margaret Morgan (who is now based in the United States) became known for her working-class feminist depictions of domesticity. In *Blue cooch* (1981), she has drawn a woman in her bare yard with her companions, a dog, and a Hills Hoist – that most Australian of domestic icons. On the vertical edges, hand-coloured and collaged photographs of houses sandwich the drawing in between. The garden space is mapped out and numbered in Letraset, alluding to the geographical confinements of house and home. For Morgan, collage is a democratic artform; its materials are ubiquitous and inexpensive, and they permit set-up in the smallest of home spaces.

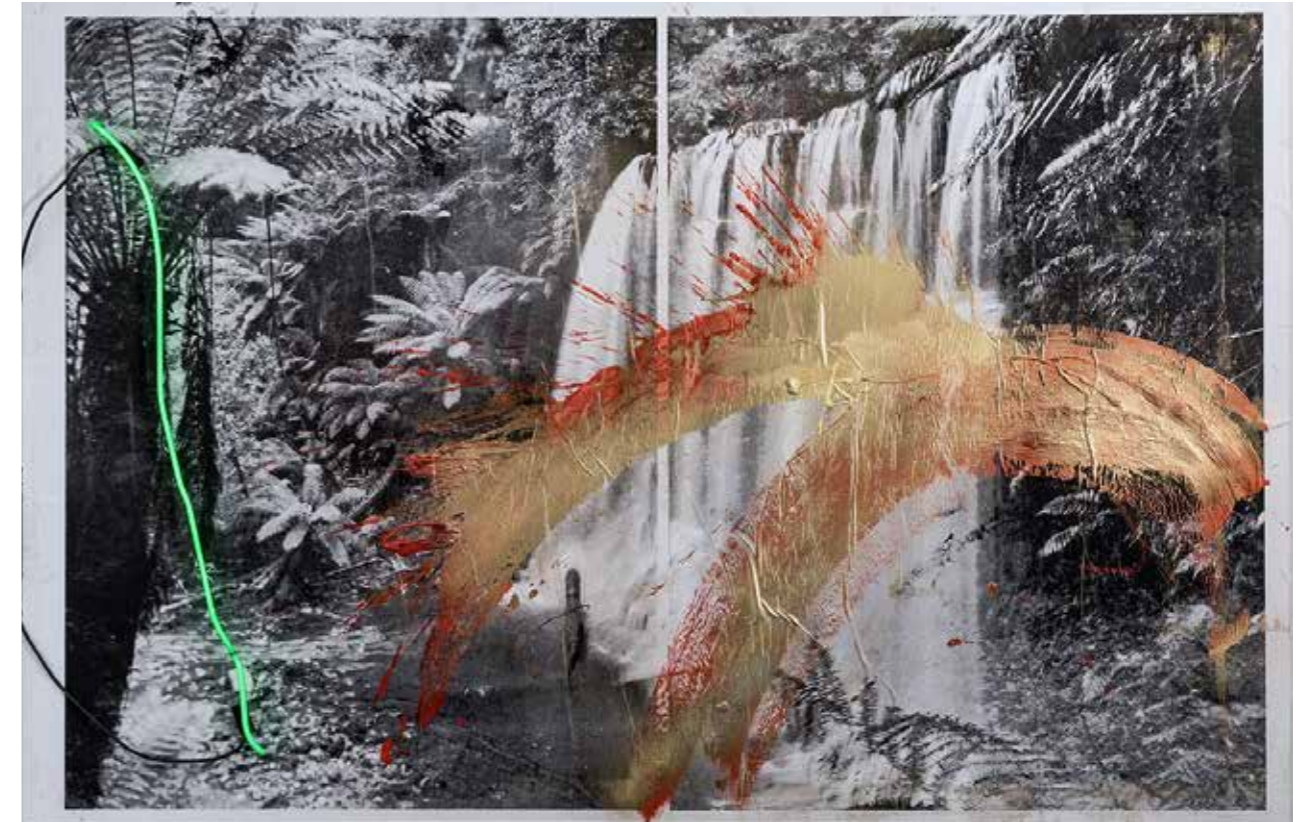
Margaret Morgan, *Blue cooch*, 1981, pencil, brush and ink, synthetic polymer paint on paper, 54.5 x 80.5cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of Peter Fay, 2015. © Margaret Morgan



ELWYN LYNN (1917–1997)

Elwyn Lynn maintained that all his work evolved from collage. *Harvest* (1980), a stark white painting with underlaid newspaper clippings has been interrupted by neutral, black and red shapes. The exposed lettering refers to modernism, Japanese visual culture, the Colonial Bay state of Massachusetts in USA, and Nothnagel, a German word denoting a horseshoe smith. The relationship between the words is not known. However, Lynn made his reputation as a textural collage artist who enriched surfaces and then forged welts and wounds as metaphors for pain and endurance, often in reference to war.

Elwyn Lynn, *Harvest*, 1980, synthetic polymer paint, collage of canvas, newsprint, printed paper, rock fragments, lead and string on canvas, 79.8 x 125.8cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 1981. © Elwyn Lynn/Copyright Agency, 2024



BROOK ANDREW (b. 1970)

Brook Andrew is a Wiradjuri artist who combines archival images with present-day media to debunk dominant historical narratives. In *Untitled (waterfall)* (2017), a quiet, idyllic scene has been spoiled by a gilded waterfall and a crudely connected neon strip. By juxtaposing discordant materials Andrew asks us to rethink the original photograph. The question is – whose history is this? And do the archives reflect the damage wrought by the invading culture of consumerism and the negation of its responsibility to the environment?

Brook Andrew, *Untitled (waterfall)*, 2017, paper, synthetic polymer paint, metallic pigment powder, neon and glue on dibond, 160 x 240cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Ferrier Hodgson, 1976–2018 (now KPMG), works acquired through Amanda Love, LoveArt. © Brook Andrew/Copyright Agency, 2024



KEN REINHARD (1936–2024)

The public private preview (1964) is a collaged triptych of a pompous in-crowd mingling beneath two paintings in a graffitied gallery. Many courtly subjects from art history are gossiping about the price and content of the images above, oblivious to their re-contextualisation by the artist. In this work, newspaper is shadow, Letraset is information, and the small, checkered pattern of chef's trousers is the secret signifier of trivialisation. Ken Reinhard has fused paint and graphics to parody the boorish establishment who spurns the talents of commercial artists. Collage, for Reinhard, is a medium that can precisely amplify a message. *The public private preview* was the winner of the Sir John Sulman Prize 1964.

Ken Reinhard, *The public private preview*, 1964, oil, paper, pencil, Letraset lettering, aluminium on hardboard, 122.8 x 213.4 x 5.2cm frame. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Wendy Barron Bequest. © Ken Reinhard Estate

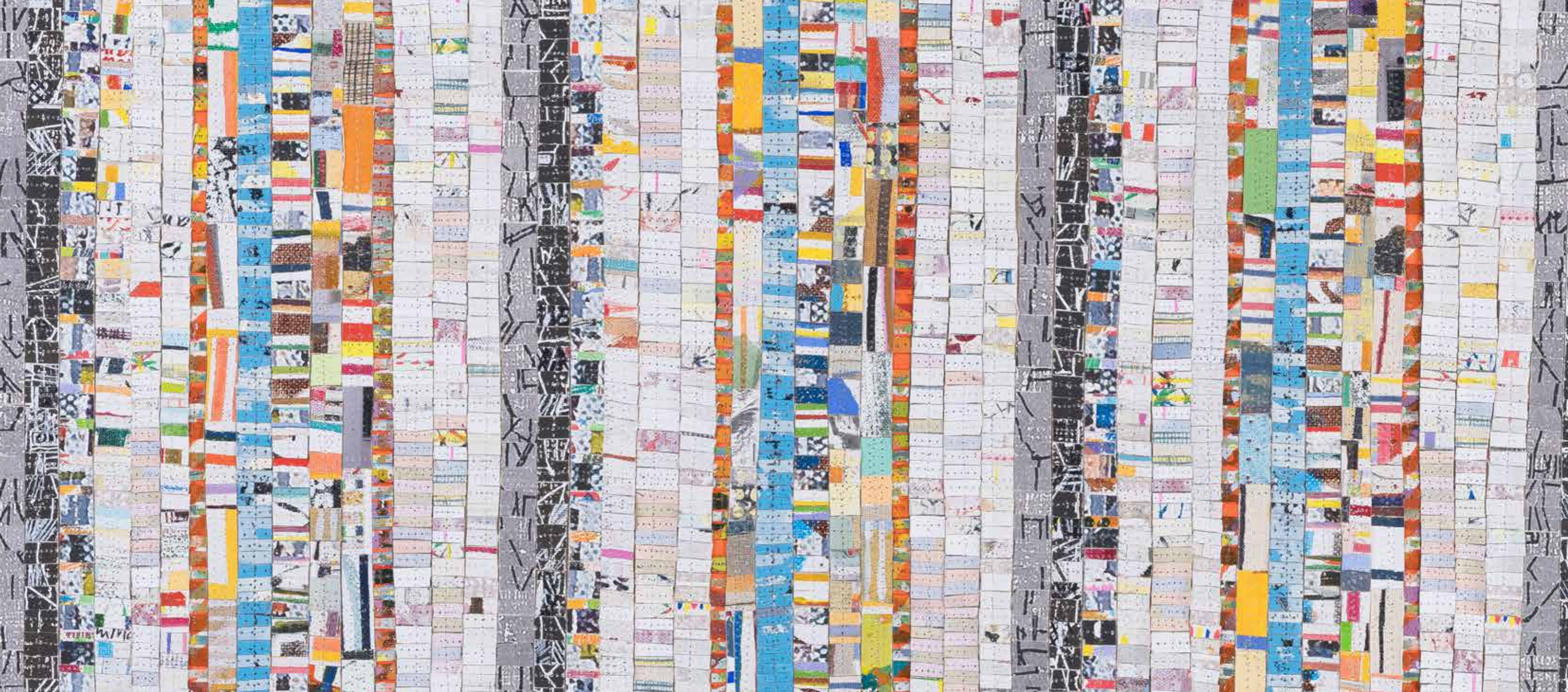


MARK TITMARSH (b. 1955)

Mark Titmarsh is a collage artist who creates from a databank of fragments, often splicing components, and then archiving them for later use. The figure in *Face to face* (1987) has multiple presences: it is simultaneously solid and ephemeral, and it also holds our gaze like the Mona Lisa. Titmarsh is fascinated by faces that capture moments of deep thinking, looking lost or being deeply in love. His collaged photocopies from this period reveal these states of private contemplation.

The eyes in this work are sharply painted, but other features are chintzy and smudged by paint. The red-lined lips and the right side of the face are deeply delineated, and so too is the shoulder. We read the form of this figure through an approximation of shadow, and we sense her mood from her ambiguous stare.

Mark Titmarsh, *Face to face*, 1987, collage, synthetic polymer paint on paper, 13.3 x 9.6cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1987. © Courtesy of Mark Titmarsh



EVELINE KOTAI (b. 1950)

For almost two decades Eveline Kotai has been cutting up her representational paintings and repurposing them as tiled abstractions. *Obi 3* (2018) is a broad sash that has been stitched from old canvas squares. From a distance, it has horizontal blue/black/yellow or silver/white stripes but on closer inspection, these blocks splinter into even smaller pieces of individual fascination. It is as if the original paintings have been mysteriously atomised and then reconstituted as spiritual icons.

Eveline Kotai, *Obi unfurled 3 - Complex harmonies* (detail), 2018, paint, nylon thread, linen, canvas on obi, 394 x 30cm. Photograph: Simon Cowling. © Eveline Kotai



JOAN ROSS (b. 1961)

In her animation *The claiming of things* (2012), Joan Ross takes John Glover's landscape as the backdrop for a commentary on the impact for First Nations people of colonisation on Country. The viewer observes a fluorescent fence being erected to demarcate a settler couple's purchase of Aboriginal land. Later, the wife figure tags a rock with 'Banksia', a wry nod to Joseph Banks and the guerrilla graffiti artist, Banksy. Towards the end, a pile of rubbish is subsumed by rain into the river. Ross superimposes her signature fluorescent palette onto Glover's muted scenes to signify colonial interventions as alien or toxic in the natural environment.

Joan Ross describes herself as a gleaner who rescues bric-a-brac from local council clean-ups and garage sales. She memorialises these items using her trademark wit to political ends.

Joan Ross, *The claiming of things*, 2012, single-channel HD video animation, duration: 7 min 36 sec. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 2023. © Joan Ross



TONY ALBERT (b. 1981)

In *Card up your sleeve* (2018), Tony Albert satirises the voyages of Captain Cook in a pseudo-board game. The work's title refers to a player having a secret skill or hidden advantage. Albert's collage draws attention to the weaponised invasion of Australia by the British in the 18th century. The elevated hardboard characters on the orange background originate from 1980s computer games such as *Space Invaders*. The winner gets to be eaten up by Pacman, a symbol of rampant consumerism.

Albert is a descendant of the Girramay, Yidinji and Kuku Yalanji peoples. He is known for his collages and assemblages made from racist kitsch, which he terms 'Aboriginalia'. Albert challenges superficial interpretations of these once-popular souvenirs and household objects to ask foundational questions around First Nations' rights to self-determination.

Tony Albert, *Card up your sleeve*, 2018, vintage playing cards, coasters and matchboxes on board, 37.2 x 48.2cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 2018. © Tony Albert



DAVID MCDIARMID (1952–1995)

(Love and hate) (1991) is a collage made from mosaiced holographic film. The background tiles are radially organised to embrace the hand and the hand itself is more squarely shingled and outlined in black. McDiarmid has used glitzy materials and acid colours, evoking the disco and glamour of the gay party culture of the time. However, the symbolic tattoos convey a darker undercurrent. *(Love and hate)* is McDiarmid's commentary on the HIV/AIDS epidemic which cut short the lives of many in the 1980s and beyond, including McDiarmid who died in 1995. The collage has a less obvious kinetic component; the viewer must keep changing position to dodge the flashing reflective surface. This collage is a prime example of how the materials of collage carry meaning and can be wielded to deliver powerful sociopolitical messages.



MICHAEL BUTLER (1959–2022)

For 20 years, Michael Butler lived and worked in isolation, exhibited infrequently, and kept the art world at arm's length until his untimely death in 2022. The core of Butler's practice was meticulous collage, and delicately elaborate drawing. Arresting imagery, riotous decoration and lush finishes were his metier. Fearless, his withering social observation, and erotically charged "shock and awe" became his stock-in-trade. His practice was laborious, physical, contemplative, and emotionally taxing.

At first glance, *Are you being served?* (2007) appears charming, nostalgic, even anodyne. However, among the decorative allure, and beneath the sardonic humour is a seething critique of homophobia and hypocrisy that riffs on the collage provocations of the German Dadist John Heartfield, and the British artist Richard Hamilton. Bold as brass, the star of Butler's show is the British actor John Inman and his flamboyant alter ego Mr Humphries from the BBC TV comedy *Are You Being Served?* Inman (and the show) had offended many 'gay men' for 'giving them a bad name'. Contemptuous of self-loathing homophobia, Butler's riposte is ruthless – Mr Humphries offering a flaccid inverted 'Sieg Heil', a swastika, and three deadpan words – buttons and bows. John Kirkman John Kirkman is a Sydney-based curator and cultural producer. He was Michael Butler's partner for thirty-two years.

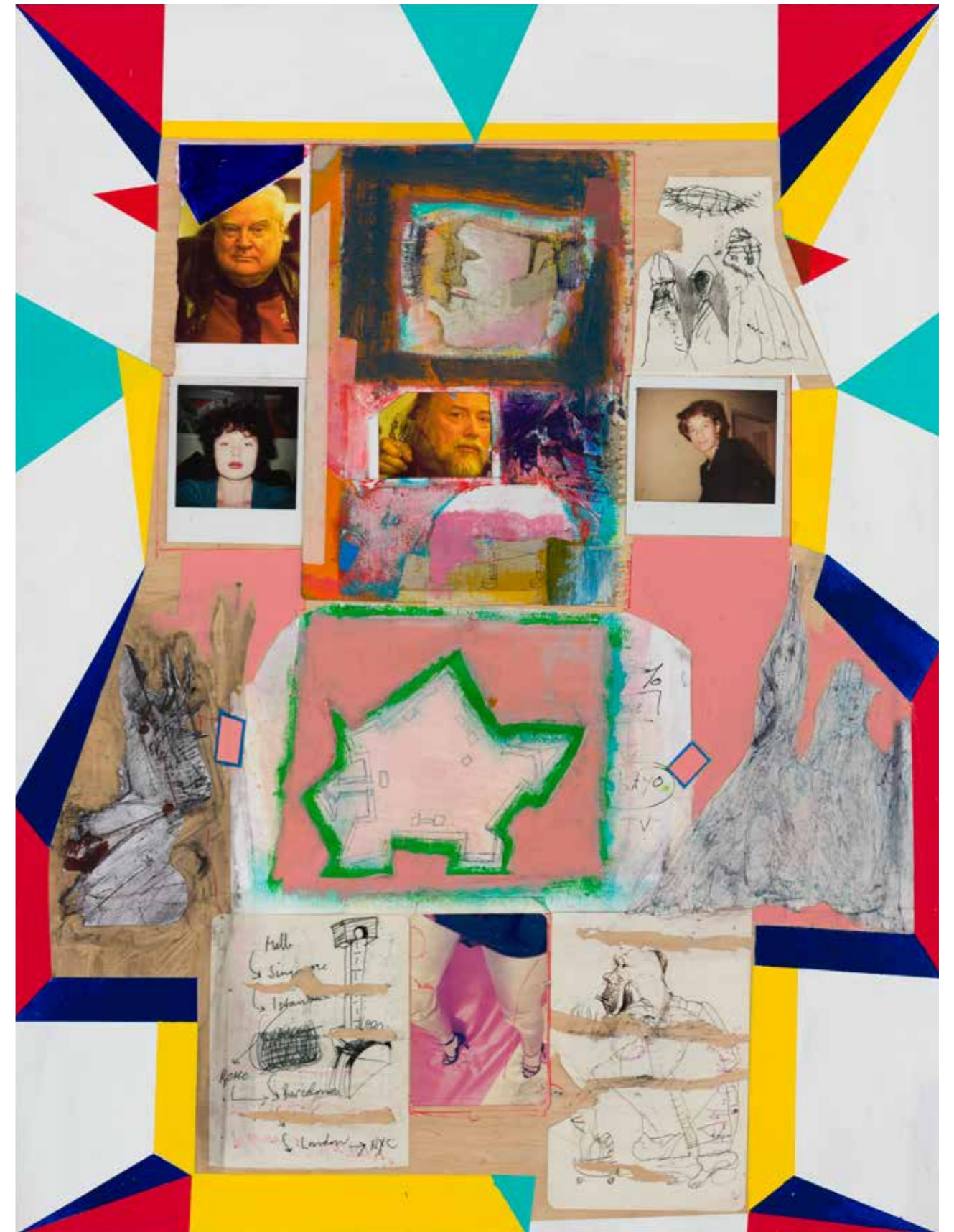
David McDiarmid, *(Love & hate)*, 1991, collage of cut-self-adhesive holographic film on enamel paint on plywood, 144.5 x 123.5 x 5cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased with funds provided by the Patrick White Bequest 2021. © Reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder and the David McDiarmid estate

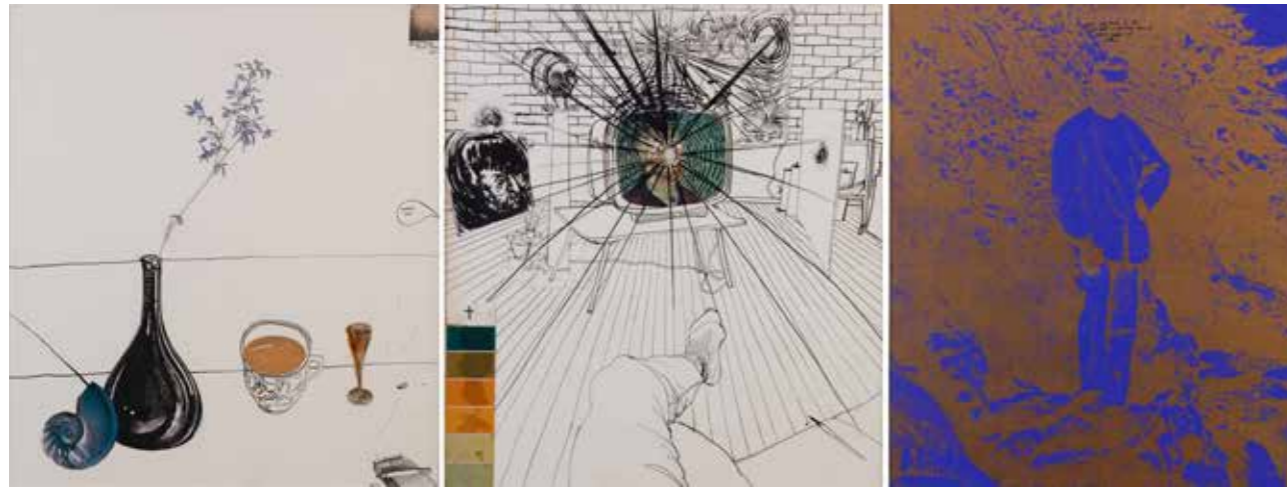
Michael Butler, *Are you being served?*, 2010, collage, pen on board, 40 x 84.2cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of John Kirkman and Michael Butler, 2024. Photograph: Jennifer Leahy. © Courtesy of the Estate of Michael Butler

GARETH SANSOM (b. 1939)

Gareth Sansom has combined Polaroid photographs with other media in *Memories* (2021). Polaroids are distinctive snapshots that enable the creation of memories which can be physically and instantaneously shared. Eight characters, drawn and photographed, are suspended above a spikey room map and a figure in high-heeled shoes. The sum of *Memories* is a toppling multi-headed beast with an empty stomach and dangling legs. At the boundaries of the collage, the biographical narrative is supported by rhomboids of flat colour configured to look three-dimensional – a typical Sansom motif.

Gareth Sansom, *Memories*, 2021, mixed media on plywood, 80 x 60cm. Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney. Photograph: Luis Power. © Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney





BRETT WHITELEY (1939–1992)

Still life with shell (1970) ignites our curiosity with an incendiary balancing act that combines, in the first panel, a cigarette on an open box of matches with a collaged photograph of a camera flash alluding to an impending explosion. In the central panel, another detonation has occurred: Van Gogh appearing on television has been shot at, presumably with a bullet. In the centre is a tiny, faded photograph of Michael Hobbs, to whom Whiteley had given *Still life with shell*. The image is dominated by Whiteley's Van Gogh-influenced shattered light rays. Rimbaud, the 19th century poet, is the subject of the final panel, photographed in Harar, Ethiopia in 1883. That Rimbaud and Van Gogh (two of Whiteley's heroes), should be the topic of a triptych, the artist retains a sense of mystery as to the subject in the first panel.

Brett Whiteley, *Still life with shell*, 1970, ink and gouache, ink and collage, screen print, triptych, total 62.5 x 163.5cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Gift of Mr Michael Hobbs, 1991. © Wendy Whiteley/Copyright Agency, 2024



KERRIE LESTER (1953–2016)

During her exuberant career, Kerrie Lester likened herself to a bowerbird scavenging for materials that would illuminate her storytelling. Spoons, tea towels, clothes labels, ribbons and flour bags have all been used in her collages, often for their gaudiness and graphic fonts. In *Life cycle* (1978), a silver etched frame has been repurposed to showcase a grasshopper crafted from corn husks. On either side of the trinket, she has glued two 'Fried grasshopper' food labels in a parodic cultural synthesis. Her collage denotes the grasshopper's short life span as food and inanimate tourist ephemera.

Lester embodies the collage artist who hunts, collects and upgrades kitsch to warp its original purpose as innocuous toys and ornaments.

Kerrie Lester, *Life cycle*, 1978, Advertising mirror panel, quilted canvas, paper labels, corn husks, wooden frame with piano keys, 39 x 59cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 1979. © Kerrie Lester/Copyright Agency, 2024



MADONNA STAUNTON (1938–2019)

During her lifetime, Madonna Staunton was a self-described 'scavenger'. Her collages are primarily composed of found scraps that have been aged or weathered. *Untitled* (1979) is themed around postage stamps and date markers. Several techniques are at play in these works: overlapping and transparent layering, ripping, crumpling, and descriptive geometry, in the form of appropriated texts.

Staunton was known for her harmonious juxtapositions of discarded elements and her gridded arrangements, a formation that became a trademark throughout her 50-year career.

Madonna Staunton, *Untitled*, 1979, paper collage, 35 x 35 x 2cm. Artbank Collection. Acquired 1981. © Courtesy of the Estate of Madonna Staunton, and Milani Gallery, Brisbane



PAUL HIGGS (b. 1954)

Hurstville platform wall (2020) is a paint construction by Paul Higgs. The inspiration for this work came from an anxious wait on Platform 4 at Hurstville Station, in Sydney's southern suburbs, where the artist examined the graffiti and signage on the wall opposite to occupy time. The collage has triangular intervals which appear as bunting above and emaciated pyramids below. They almost meet in the middle ground but are shunted aside by the station's bricked wall. The two clocks, which tell different times, are electric sanding discs reclaimed as timepieces. In this collage, Higgs tames wood, torn paper, paint and found objects in a maelstrom of things until finally, the centre holds.

Paul Higgs, *Hurstville platform wall*, 2020, string, pins, wood, mesh and acrylic paint on paper, 128 x 176cm. © Paul Higgs

VICKI VARVARESSOS (b. 1949)

The best face value for autumn (1978) is a painterly collage parodying advertising tropes that regard women as passive sex kittens. In stark contrast, the protagonist in Varvaressos' collage is a self-possessed woman wrestling a big cat into submission. The ghostly faces beneath her are pages cut and pasted from a *Vogue* magazine article about seasonal make-up ideas. By painting over the beauty tips, Varvaressos links artmaking with beauty rituals by contextualising the gendered and ephemeral act of 'putting on a face' with the heroic and traditionally male-dominated act of painting.



Vicki Varvaressos, *The best face value for autumn*, 1978, synthetic polymer paint, collage of cut magazine illustrations on canvas, 155 x 155cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 1981. © Vicki Varvaressos

DANIE MELLOR (b. 1971)

The setting in *Marri diramu: balam dugurrba* (2016) is a birthing site beneath fig trees, significant for generations of Aboriginal people (The title combines a Dharawal and Jirrbal words for mighty and tree.) Mellor, an artist with Ngadjon/Mamu, Scottish, Irish, and American heritage, incorporates adapted Western clothing to depict a post-settlement context where change is already underway. The complex hybridity of First Nations and Colonial cultures is represented in the contrasting cool blue and white of the imported willow pattern ceramic, and the warm skin tones of the women and the bodies of the indigenous animals. The image is laced with small crystals and glitter, an ironic decoration on this majestic natural landscape.

Danie Mellor, *Marri diramu: balam dugurrba*, 2016, mixed media on Saunders Waterford paper with wash, glitter and Swarovski crystal, 147 x 97cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 2016. © Danie Mellor



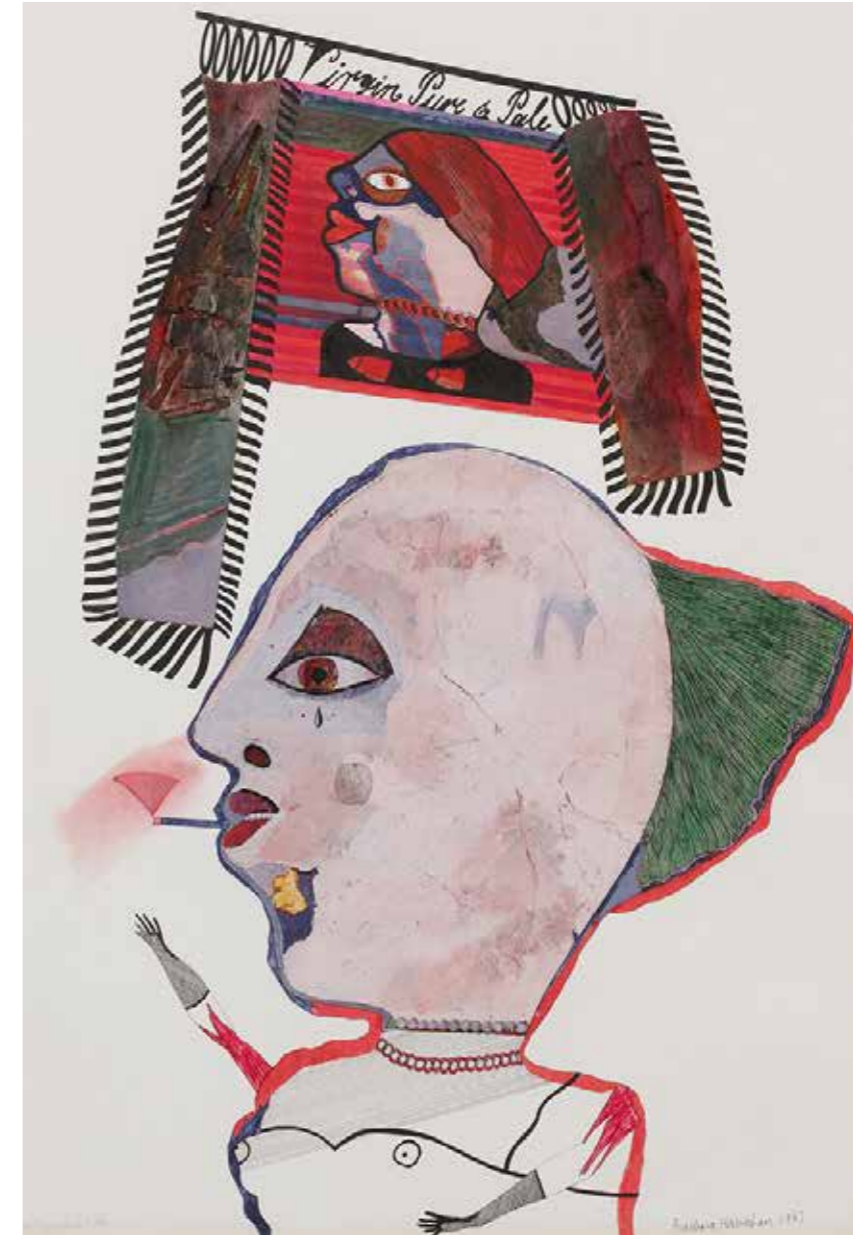


LEONIE REISBERG (b. 1955)

Time and place are evocative themes in the photographs and collages of Leonie Reisberg. In *Mythological dream* (1980), two naked women stand in front of a fallen tree. A cut-out of an outstretched arm with a cupped hand reaches into the composition. In the foreground a second collaged element holds our attention; a woman in red clothing wearing a stag skull mask. The upturned tree is a metaphor for transformation and the cupped hand – her hope for the future. The ensemble of the skull and the feminine energy from the four women reflect Reisberg's desire for change, knowledge and political awakening. At the time she was in flux, and soon to study in the United States. The subtle juxtapositions in this collage give it a supernatural quality.

Leonie Reisberg, *Mythological dream*, 1980, collage of gelatin silver and Polaroid photographs, 24.9 x 37.1cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1984. © Leonie Reisberg

Barbara Hanrahan, *Virgin pure and pale*, 1967, collage, gouache, pen, ink on paper, 75.0 x 52.5cm. Collection Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 1968. © Courtesy of the Estate of Barbara Hanrahan



BARBARA HANRAHAN (1939–1991)

In the collage *Virgin pure and pale* (1967), Hanrahan presents two women: one above, scarved and framed in a curtained window; and one below, bald, and therefore powerless, with a tear flowing from her eye. The similarity in their basic features suggests that this is a character with a 'divided self'; a theme for which Hanrahan was known. The woman above seems content, but her party-girl binary is faking happiness. Much of Hanrahan's work, both visual and literary, has visceral themes of sex and beauty, domestic comforts and anxieties, and spiritual release. Hanrahan was primarily a printmaker. Collage is a medium often used by printmakers to upcycle old prints but also to maintain a creative practice when access to costly press machinery is low.



JENNY ORCHARD (b. 1951)

Jenny Orchard's quirky aquarium in *Blue floating conscious mind, into the galaxies, into the trees* (2020) is teeming with whimsical lifeforms; eccentric plankton, uprooted trees and talking orchids. Conveying quiet empathic purpose, Orchard combines exquisite cut-outs and pigments to create an imaginary world where all creatures are equal. Orchard's collage belies her interest in the Greek philosopher Parmenides who held that existence is a unified whole, despite changing forms and motion over time.

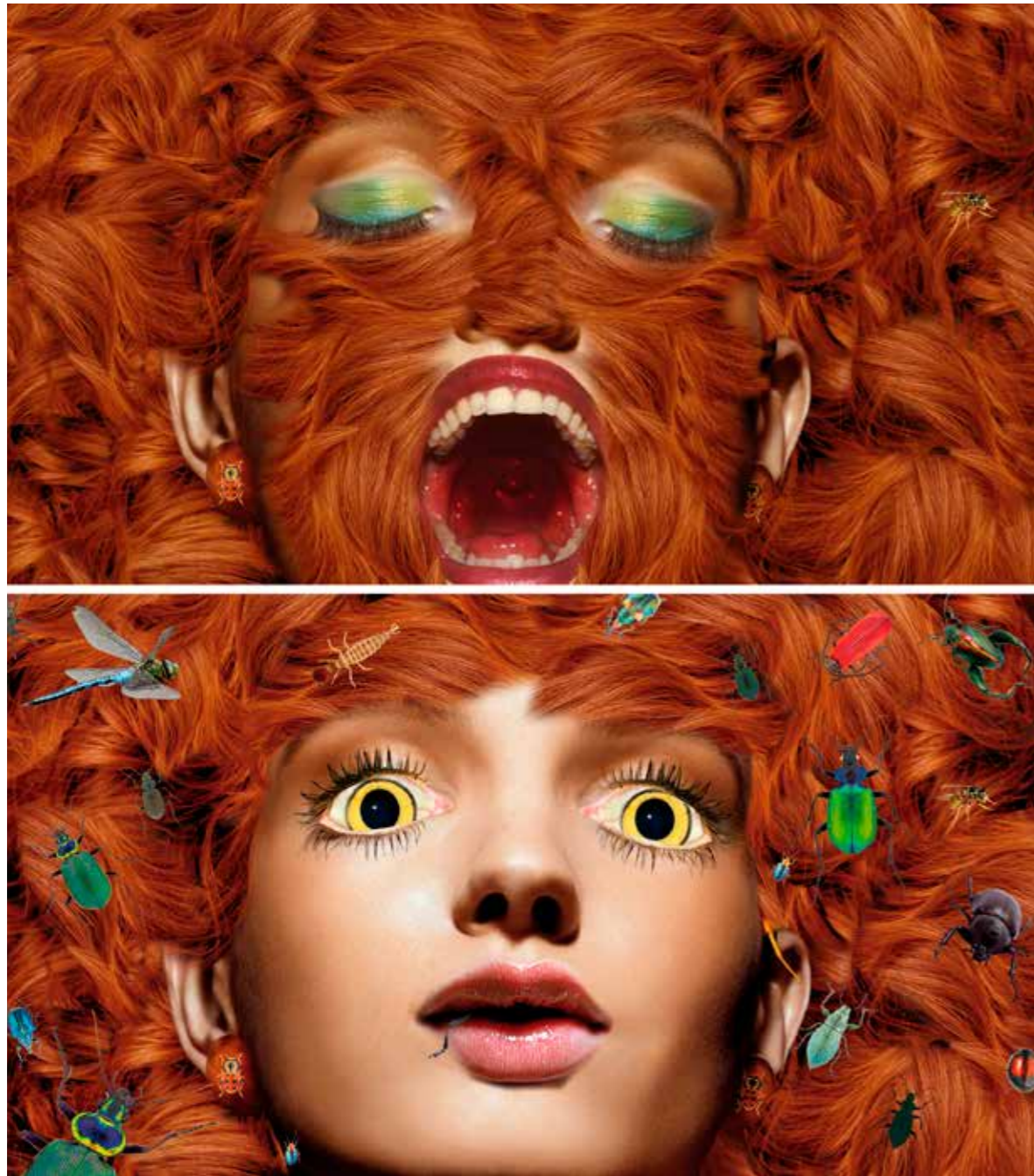
Jenny Orchard, *Blue floating conscious mind, into the galaxies, into the trees*, 2020, watercolour, collage and gouache on paper, 76 x 56cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 2020. © Jenny Orchard



TONY CONVEY (b. 1946)

In his teens, Tony Convey escaped from boarding school and was pursued by two teachers until the path ended and he was standing on the edge of a cliff. In that moment a fox appeared beside him and gazed up. Convey says that the warm energy in the animal's eyes saved him. In *Magnetic animals* (1998), Convey has painted himself and his totemic fox as twins united by a rainbow stream of bubbles. Convey is referred to as an Outsider artist and uses materials in his collages that are salvaged from the nearby river and fields.

Tony Convey, *Magnetic animals*, 1998, oil on tin on painted wood, 74 x 121 x 8cm. Collection Wollongong Art Gallery. Purchased 1999. © Tony Convey



DEBORAH KELLY (b. 1962)

Beastliness (2011) is a digital animation created from hand-cut paper collage. Deborah Kelly questions fixed notions of gender and sexuality through her feminist menagerie of animal forms who engage in a frenzied dance that erupts in kaleidoscopic ecstasy. The fantasy world in *Beastliness* is full of bold pairings and experiments: a hedonistic praying mantis, a leaping foxy butterfly, and a hare with a nest of eggs heat up and devour each other in a cosmic finale.

Kelly views collage as a political tool to highlight a world in crisis. Her hybrid creatures occupy a sci-fi universe and communicate a sophisticated message about community, sexual identity, and environmentalism.

Deborah Kelly, *Beastliness*, 2011, digital animation, duration 3:17min. Artbank Collection. Purchased 2012. © Deborah Kelly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ANGIE CASS

In 2022 John Monteleone, the former Director of Wollongong Art Gallery (WAG) gave his support to the idea of a collage retrospective which evolved into 'Shape Shifters'. Since then, many staff at WAG have been vital to the execution of this show. I am grateful to Vivian Vidulich who advised on the catalogue and invitation designs and put me in touch with art collectors. Thanks to Milly Hyde and the install team. Thanks also to Kiki Gillam and Julie Danilov for organising the community workshops.

I am very grateful to Louise Brand whose knowledge of the WAG collection has contributed greatly to the broad definition of collage in 'Shape Shifters'. Thank you to Nicola Dillon for designing the catalogue, invitation and signage. And thank you to Daniel Mudie Cunningham, WAG's new Director, for fine-tuning the exhibition.

My grateful thanks to the professionals at the lending institutions. In particular, thank you to Lesley Harding and Chloe Jones at the Heide Museum of Modern Art. At Artbank, I'd like to thank Sigourney Jacks and also Oliver Watts who showed me around the Artbank collection and most generously agreed to give the Opening Remarks for 'Shape Shifters'. Thank you to Maud Page and Chenoah Diagne at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, whose support of 'Shape Shifters' has been most appreciated.

Many collage artists and collectors have given their time and expertise to this exhibition. Grateful thanks to Mark Titmarsh, Leonie Reisberg, Katherine Hattam and Paul Higgs for insightful conversations about collage. Thank you to John Kirkman for his kind support for the exhibition and for loaning a collage by the unsung Michael Butler. And thank you to Cassi and Gina Plate who loaned important works by their father, Carl Plate. Finally, thank you to all the artists who have contributed artworks to 'Shape Shifters' and made this exhibition a fine homage to Australian collage.

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