OUT
OF THE
MATRIX

21C PRINTMAKING AT RMIT

Suzanne Davies

Out of the Matrix explodes the canons of traditional printmaking. While the artworks in the exhibition are redolent with knowledge of art and printmaking history and demonstrable technical mastery of the traditions of analogue and digital image generation, we are confronted with materially compelling objects, structures, screens, elaborate installations, time-based filmic references and performative works that resonate with an energy born of curiosity and idiosyncratic personal engagement.

The curator Dr Richard Harding worked closely with all the exhibiting artists, commissioning new work, reconfiguring some existing pieces and building, simultaneously, intense visceral and conceptual relationships between works. The result is a powerful, immersive yet intimate viewing experience.

2016, the Year of the Print, is an auspicious year for Printmaking in Australia. It is 65 years since RMIT laid the foundations for the Diploma of Printmaking course, the first in this country. And we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Print Council of Australia. So now is the perfect time for RMIT Gallery to present an exhibition that enables us to experience a discipline that can be endlessly reinvented.

The expanded practices of print form a core focus in the RMIT Art Collection due to the far-sighted establishment of a printmaking studio by Tate Adams and joined by George Baldessin and Hertha Kluge-Pott with master printers on staff such as John Robinson and Neil Leveson. During the 1970s and 80s, the studio worked with Charles Blackman, John Brack, Joel Elenberg, Mirka Mora, John Olsen, Michael Shannon, Roger Kemp, Gareth Sansom amongst many others to produce editions. More recently acquisitions have included records of performance works (Gosia Wlodarczak and Ah Xian) drawings in light (Reko Rennie), prints on aluminium and Perspex (Stephen Haley, Darren Wardle).

For this exhibition we warmly thank Curator Dr Richard Harding, the contributing artists who have been a joy to work with, Helen Rayment for her close work on the catalogue, RMIT Gallery staff for their professional commitment and Professor Calum Drummond, Deputy Vice Chancellor for his enabling support of RMIT Gallery.

OUT OF THE MATRIX

Dr Richard Harding

…You take the blue pill – the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill – you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.

MORPHEUS, THE MATRIX, 1999

When thinking of the matrix several things spring to mind: printing, code and the Wachowskis' acclaimed cinematic trilogy of the same name. The connection of printmaking to science fiction is not a giant leap when diverse concepts of the matrix are aligned. If we follow the Wachowskis' white rabbit metaphor[1], as their protagonist Neo does, alternative modes of thinking and production begin to open up to us through a history of technology and practice.

This exhibition naturally evokes the 'mother' matrix. Triggering concepts of reproduction through notions of original and copy, sameness and difference, real and virtual… on and on we go down the rabbit hole. Moving between analogue and digital realms, definitions of print and print based practices are difficult to identify. In the ever-expanding accumulation of mediums and techniques the unifying factor to all print explorations is the matrix.

The Wachowskis' plot imbeds observation and surveillance into its story line through the opposing forces of the machines and the humans.

Performprint
Bearings, beauty and irrelevance,
2015 – 2016

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1   In the first scenes of *The Matrix*, the protagonist Neo reads the instruction 'Follow the White Rabbit' on his monitor. As the film progresses the audience receives other clues that reference Lewis Carroll's, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Various ways of seeing are constantly being referenced within and throughout their trilogy, as it is within art practice and for my purpose here, print practice. As more artists acknowledge the utilisation of technology such as scanners, photocopiers and cameras within their practices, the more the matrix moves away from a definitive tangible object to virtual invisible code and back again. These devices have become vital tools employed for note taking, preparatory work and final output.

Deborah Williams' current artworks move her practice from intaglio mediums into the digital realm, acknowledging the camera not only as a preparatory tool in her practice but also a surveillance device. In her series the *Instinctive Association, 2016,* surveillance of the pack enacts a sense of belonging and safety from within, yet also indicates an unnerving presence of being watched with intent. Williams' work appears to ask the question: who is watching who?

Whilst Williams' series moves her process from one which privileges the hand-made matrix into the realm of code, Andrew Gunnell's work engages an active dialogue between analogue and digital modes of production. His series *These Must Be The Places,* 2016, is derived from captured video and investigates time within a static image. According to Gunnell these "are images that are held in suspension [and] oscillate in their ability to describe time/place."[2]

2   Andrew Gunnell, Artist Statement 2016

Deborah Williams
A Single Gaze, 2016
Inkjet print on
archival Rag
Photographique

Here there is the suggestion of tranquility within still images that reference the binary of the digital realm through coded analogue output.

Questions of looking, movement and surveillance are also played out in my own work *Queer*, 2016. A giant mirrored barcode is installed along a corridor and highlights a "between" space. The gallery visitor activates this transitory passage in the act of moving through, passing from one gallery to another, and from one place to the next. The coded mirror captures, inverts and replicates the viewer in a Foucauldian discourse of power as they are simulated in a heterotopic space becoming a matrix for the mirror.

According to Jean Baudrillard in *Simulation and Simulacra,* "all messages in the media function in a similar fashion: neither information nor communication, but referendum, perpetual test, circular response, verification of the code"[3].

3   Baudrillard, Jean 1981, *Simulation and Simulacra* (p.75)

Andrew Gunnell
*These must be
the places,* 2016
Installation view
Inkjet, Acrylic and
screen print
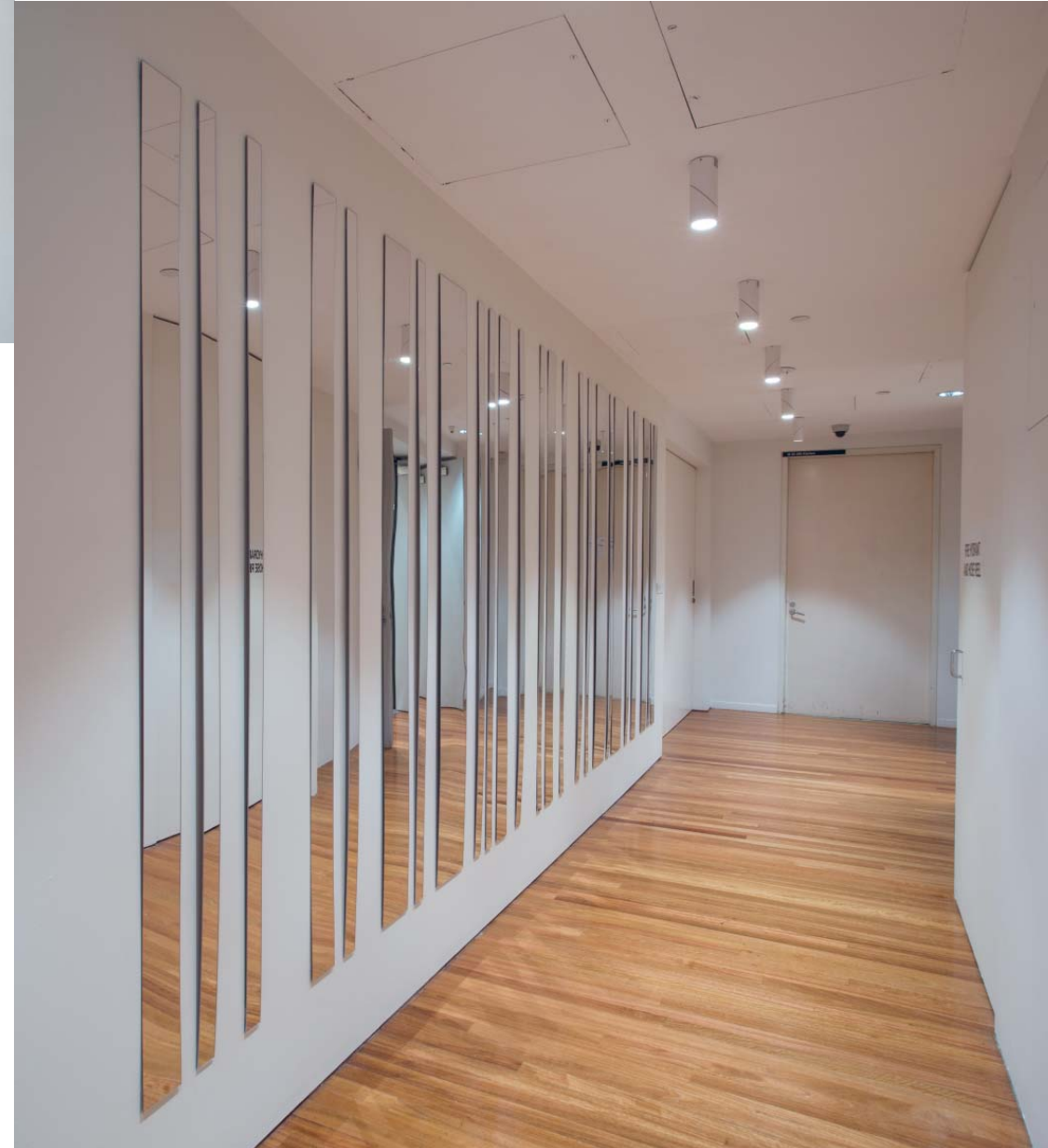
Marian Crawford's *Blood antiquities* (2015) verifies this circular response. Her artworks are created using found images in the media, downloaded from the web, that reference the recent destruction of historic sites in Palmyra. She combines these digital sources with traditional letterpress text and appliqued sequins, situating Syria's crisis in multiple production matrices and realities. Her methodology of appropriation and reproduction returns these distressing images to public circulation in a transfigured and activist manner through traditional media capable of multiplying themselves. This brings to mind Boris Groys' claim that "in [the] framework of contemporary culture, an image is permanently circulating from one medium to another medium, and from one closed context to another closed context"[4].

The matrix's ability to multiply and alter itself through printing, circulating and performance is acted out in Joel Gailer's practice. *Hot metal,* 2016, for example, presents an insight into how modes of production can be manipulated and manoeuvered at the artist's will. The title suggests the traditional copper matrix of etching or drypoint; however what is presented is screen printed text on a reflective Mylar sheet. The words, printed backward, are reflected and inverted onto the floor extending the work into an ephemeral sphere. *Licence,* 2012,

4   Groys, Boris 2009, *Politics of Installation* (p.6)

includes three artworks presented on a plinth yet does not offer the viewer a printed surface but a USB housed in a perspex container. Here we encounter the virtual matrix awaiting the command to publish, prophesying production from invisible code to material artifact.

Gailer's practice is extended through the collaborative development Performprint[5] and the work *Bearings beauty and irrelevance,* 2015. Performed by an anonymous skater outside the gallery, this performance cross-references Philip Auslander's theories of "Liveness" regarding the original performance and its documentation or recording[6]. Rolling back and forth over a single spot of ink, the wheels of a skateboard offer the point of contact and the matrix of the performance proclaiming, "give me some relief".

Notions of enactment and performance resonate with many artists who utilise a matrix base. A printed mode of production may bring with it a consciousness of the moment of contact between plate and paper as an event, as a ritual or even an embrace. In Bridget Hillebrand's practice it is the action of touch—of feeling one's way over a surface—that is activated. She utilises the tactility of print to investigate experiences of rock climbing, producing a haptic exploration of the Australian landscape. Her collected chalk *frottage* is balanced with text carved from linoleum that according to Hillebrand, "[has] the power to render

5 Performprint is a collective created by collaborative team Joel Gailer and Michael Meneghetti aimed at engaging communities with print as a performative vehicle for social commentary.

6 For a more detailed account of Auslander see *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge,1999.

Bridget Hillebrand
Direct Start, 2016
Installation view
Linocut and chalk
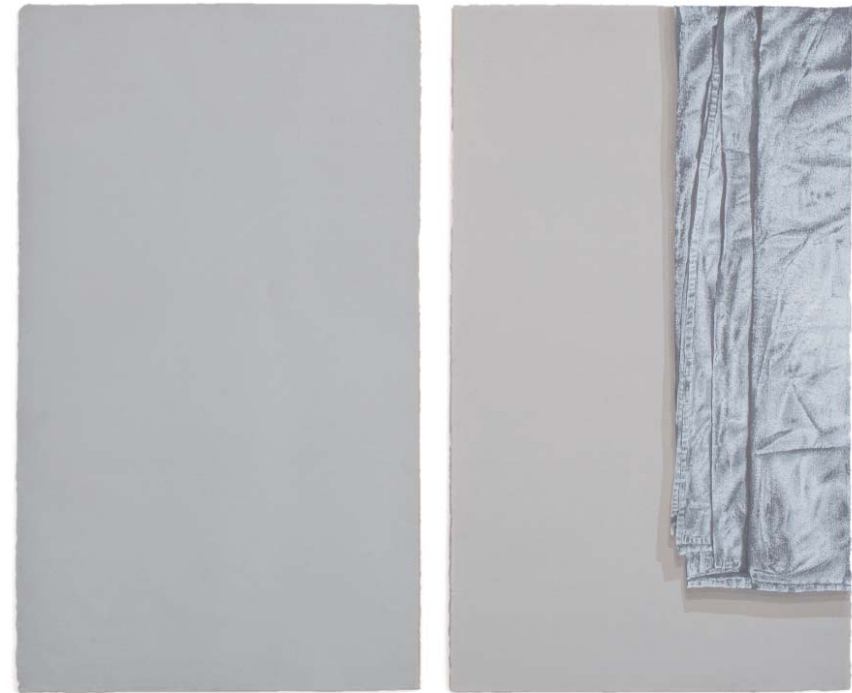
the formerly invisible nuances of a rock face, visible and real" (2016)[7]. The artist then enables the viewer to participate in her performance encouraging the viewer to feel the work through touching and rubbing, thus changing the artwork and enabling the print to transform into a new yet related form. Touch is similarly employed by Clare Humphries as a defining aspect of her methodology. Humphries translates actions that are typically reserved for the printing plate—such as sanding, *à la poupée* ink application, wiping and burnishing—and directs them instead to the (printed) image surface, thus developing the inked paper as yet another matrix. By doing this Humphries aims, "to produce an image surface that echoes the touched skin of material objects"[8]. It is through this ongoing process that Humphries activates Boris Groys' claim that, "reproduction is as much infected by originality as originality is infected by reproduction"[9]. Added to this conundrum of reproduction

7 Bridget Hillebrand Artist Statement, 2016

8 Clare Humphries Artist Statement, 2016

9 Boris Groys 2009, *Politics of Installation* (p.6)

Clare Humphries
What remains, what returns, 2016
Hand-burnished
linocut print

and authenticity is Humphries creation of an aura, achieved through the simulation of what could be a photograph or a painting, yet in fact is a reproducible printed artwork.

Some artists within this band of printmakers move away from the traditional matrix of plate, block or screen and use referents of printed matter through materials, multiple and repetition. Here the essence of the matrix has altered… maybe there is a glitch in the system? Rebecca Mayo's *Merri Creek Zeltbahnen,* 2013 – 2016, for example, is positioned as a social practice incorporating weeding, planting, sewing, printing, dyeing, collecting and walking. The project was triggered by her participation as a volunteer restoration worker at the Merri Creek in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Mayo produced a series of Zeltbahnen[10]—made of cloth printed and dyed with plants collected at sites along the creek. Mayo explains "the zeltbahn were made to be erected and worn at the creek during restoration gatherings. I conceived that the wearer would decide if they wore the weeds against their body or on display"[11].

10 The zeltbahn (quarter tent) is a single garment that, when buttoned to other zeltbahnen creates a shelter for many. It can also be buttoned to itself in three different ways creating three alternative designs, for walking, cycling and horse riding respectively. Rebecca Mayo, Artist Statement, 2016.

11 Rebecca Mayo, Artist Statement, 2016

Rebecca Mayo
Merri Creek Zeltbahnen 2013 – 2016
Installation view
Calico dyed and screen printed with indigenous and exotic plants of the Merri Creek, zinc buttons, eyelets, hemp rope, tent poles

Ongoing concerns for our environment and ecological survival are likewise manifest in Ruth Johnstone's project *Common Garden: house to studio, Fitzroy,* 2014 – 2016. Of note, these artworks were created through the destruction of the matrix. Here non-indigenous plants collected from the artists' neighbourhood are crushed as they imprint onto paper, allowing further inspection and notation. Johnstone's seemingly care-free *flâneur* methodology is underwritten by

commentary on the so-called 'weeds' that have taken root and evolved since white settlement.

Engaging the ongoing conversation between science and art, Lesley Duxbury's practice focuses on atmospheric phenomena, combining imagery and text, asking us to consider changing weather patterns. Duxbury's *Splitting Light #6,* 2016, offers the viewer the optical play
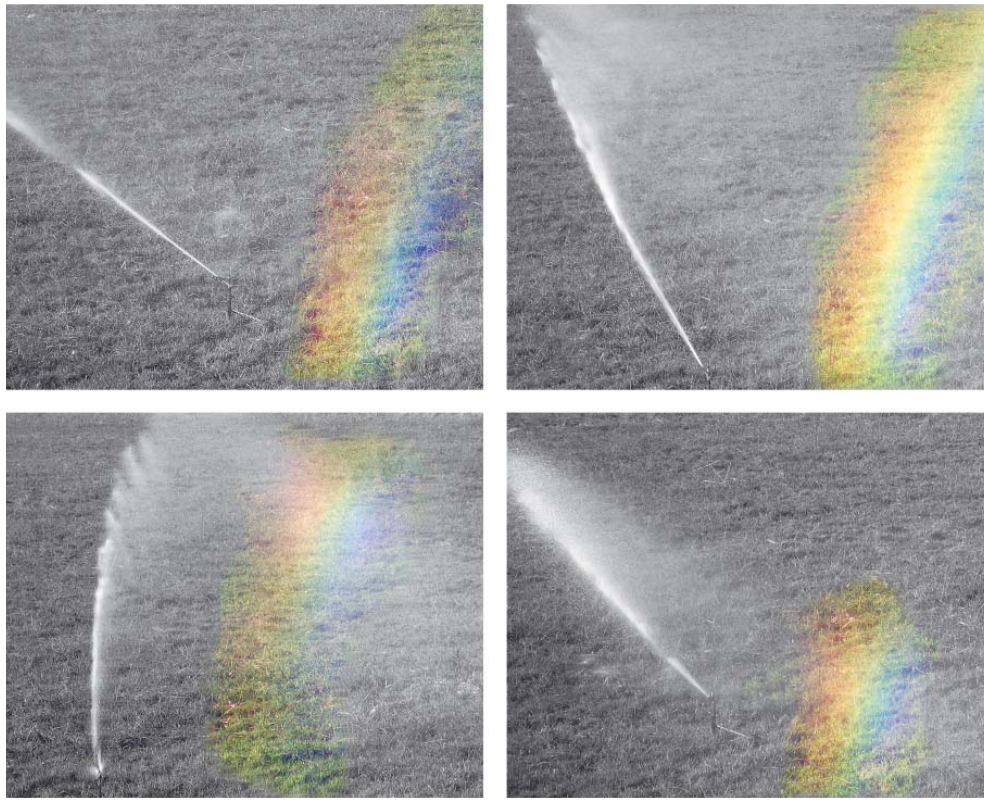
of the rainbow through manufactured means. An agricultural sprinkler summons the sense of nurturing that is required to grow crops while producing child-like delight in those fleeting moments it offers the viewer a rainbow. A suggestion of movement in the image is fostered through blue and red mica dust flocked to the text; the text in turn offers Isaac Newton's scientific explanations for rainbow phenomena as the coloured dust enacts the play of light.

While Duxbury's artworks offer fleeting perspectives of a visual phenomena, Andrew Tetzlaff installs large-format digital photographs to engage viewpoints beyond the everyday. In *Displace (suspension)*, 2016, an image of Melbourne's Yarra River flows up the gallery wall bringing the viewer closer to the work as it continues overhead. The inverted river becomes a site for looking, reflecting and re-visiting geographic locations through virtual representation. At the same time the body of water functions as a matrix or model for his approach to

Lesley Duxbury
Splitting light #6,
2016
Inkjet Print

Lesley Duxbury
Splitting Image #5,
2016
screen print

Splitting Image #6
2016
inkjet print
Installation view

installation, "flowing through the space…[engaging] a felt awareness of our geographical, physical and temporal location"12.

Andrew Weatherill moves the matrix out of the rarified into the everyday through process, opting to evoke notions of the experiment rather than the artifact. *Monocular Vision II,* 2016, explores the act of looking by challenging the viewer to locate a point of reference that unifies the work into one image. Like a game of manoeuvers Weatherill entices the gallery spectator with his sense of materiality using masking tape, paste up photocopies and suspended perspex to question our vision of what is perceived and what is represented.

Jonas Ropponen employs found and acquired materials to create prints that contribute to his conceptual concerns of dualism or the binary. The text work *Fade to Black/There's a light,* 2016, counters the abstract image *Found timber, lost words,* 2016, to form a dialogue of silence and morality. Ropponen's open candor within the artwork questions a mother's actions while displaying the effects of a personal crisis. His

12 Andrew Tetzlaff, Artist Statement, 2016
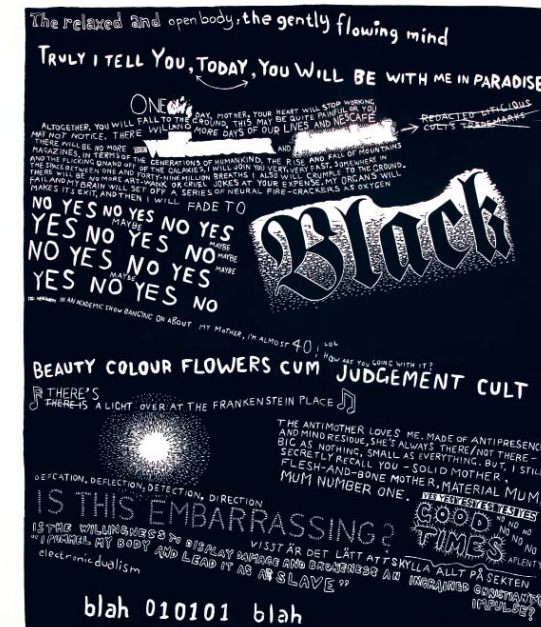
use of one and zero underlines the virtual matrix within an analogue delivery. It is through his methodology that Ropponen carves out his disappointments and his hope, coding his queerness through the *Rocky Horror Picture Show's*[13] Brad and Janet singing, "there's a light… over at the Frankenstein place". Here the mother matrix assists the artist's quest for parental reconciliation.

Image and text is likewise presented in the work of Andrew Keall. The use of found objects, etching, assemblage and animation highlights this multi-media artist's use of print based philosophies. The readymade, the virtual and traditional are seamlessly combined into what Keall refers to as the "push and pull at the holes and gaps between experienced events and their rendering into language". These holes and gaps are rendered up the gallery wall as his artwork simultaneously critiques the matrix while emulating the flow of code from *The Matrix* film.

Jazmina Cininas heralds a new world order with banners displaying *Micah,* 2015, and *Lilia,* 2015, both werewolf heroines. These activist banners combine with Cininas' *Girlie Werewolf Suits,* 2002, displayed

13 *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 20th Century Fox, 1975.

as if fashionable outfits in a store window. The history of martyred women is front and centre in this display of defiance. The movement of Cininas' images from high-end rarified reduction linocuts to digital textile printing repositions the editioned image into a one-off state, transforming the reconfigured artwork into a unique original. At this juncture Cininas has changed her context by changing her matrix and substrate; and in so doing reinterpreted what Groys calls, "an essential rupture, as a new start that opens up a new future"[14]

In embracing the matrix as 'the start of the new', Cininas' practice exemplifies a conceptual orientation evident across *Out of the Matrix*. Whilst each artist in this exhibition uses the matrix as a tool of reproduction they also, more importantly, approach the matrix—and with it discourses of print practice more broadly—as a point of departure. Theirs is not the matrix of the Wachowski siblings'—a form of programmed knowledge that suppresses revolution—but a place from which something else originates. What emerges from *Out of the Matrix* is not the repetition of tradition, but a discursive space that reactivates print-informed practice within an expanded field.

14 Boris Groys, 2009, *Politics of Installation* (p.6)

Andrew Keall
Etc, 2016
Mixed media

Mass, 2015
Digital Animation

Git, 2014
Mass, mass, ma &
ass, 2014
Pa, 2014
Was, 2014
Installation view

Artists biographies

Andrew Gunnell lives and works in Melbourne and on the Bellarine Peninsula. He is a Technician/Lecturer in Printmaking at RMIT University and a committee member of the Print Council of Australia. His work is held in collections including: National Gallery of Australia, State Library of Victoria and Australian Print Workshop.

Clare Humphries' current practice explores objects of the deceased and notions of materiality within rituals of bereavement. She is a lecturer in Drawing and Printmedia at the Victorian College of the Arts and has work represented in major public collections including the National Gallery of Australia.

Rebecca Mayo's practice incorporates printmaking, textiles, walking and urban ecology. She works with locally growing plants extracting natural dyes as screen printing medium. The resulting textiles pay attention to the repetition common in her studio practice and ecological restoration. She teaches at RMIT University School of Art and is a PhD candidate at the ANU School of Art, Canberra.

Andrew Tetzlaff is an artist, curator and academic. His practice considers the felt bodily encounter of matter, phenomena and site— specifically focusing on ways material objects can reveal or allude to intangible forces. Recent projects include: 2015 – *The Door in the Wall, Yarra (suspended)*, *CONCRETE POST 3* and *Tomorrow Never Dies*; and 2014 – *Situations and Displace*.

Jazmina Cininas' technically demanding reduction linocuts of female werewolves have been exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally. The unconventional portraits feature in ABCTV's *Re-Enchantment* documentary project and can be found in many major Australian public collections. Jazmina completed her PhD project *The Girlie Werewolf Hall of Fame* in 2014.

Lesley Duxbury's research interests include the natural environment, the atmosphere and its phenomena, motivated by extended walks in remote landscapes. Her work has been shown in solo and curated group exhibitions in Australia, UK, Korea, Japan and New Zealand and is held in all major public collections in Australia.

Richard Harding is an artist and senior lecturer in the Print Imaging Practice Studio, School of Art, RMIT University. Harding's research is informed by architectural and queer theory utilising various media, traditional and digital, as a vehicle for an ongoing studio practice. His current projects focus on codes, masculinity and space.

Ruth Johnstone lectures in the Print Imaging studios, School of Art, RMIT University where she completed her PhD project *Revisiting the Print Room*. Her artwork is in national collections including the NGA and British Museum and she continues her weed census project with residencies at Fremantle and Hill End in 2016.

Performprint is the collaboration of Michael Meneghetti and Joel Gailer. They take the performative aspect of the community print studio as a philosophical premise and re-interpret this theatre into a concept. Using cross community collaboration they engage print as a performative vehicle asking the viewer to think about the broader ideas that link print and performance.

Andrew Weatherill is a Melbourne based artist. The appropriation of everyday objects and intervention through traditional printmaking techniques informs his mark making. Andrew is currently researching the concept of how space is perceived thorough two-dimensional imagery. He has exhibited nationally and internationally including at the Hong Kong Visual Art Centre.

Marian Crawford's works explore representations of loss and mourning with a particular focus on intractable conflict and environmental degradation. She lectures at Monash University, Art Design & Architecture, has a Master of Arts from RMIT University and has exhibited her work nationally and internationally since 1996.

Joel Gailer's work directs its focus to the mass produced and commercial world of print and copy-based technologies. Highlighting our excessive and compliant consumption of printed media his prints are a light-hearted reverence for printmaking and its relationship to mass production, media and print processes.

Bridget Hillebrand is completing her practice-based PhD at Monash University. She has a Master Degree in Fine Art, RMIT University where she lectures in the Print Imaging Practice Studio at the School of Art. She has won a number of printmaking awards and is represented in numerous collections in Australia and overseas.

Andrew Keall is a Masters' student and a teacher within RMIT University's Print Imaging Practice Studio. His current art work takes up the physical and visual potential of text as a means to explore connections between perception and conception, and resultant Absurdist occurrences within the (in)coherence of object and sign.

Jonas Ropponen is a Melbourne-based artist, writer and university art teacher with a Masters in Fine Art. His practice combines painting, sculpture and printmaking. He uses found timber offcuts, discarded consumer materials, bodily fluids and incidental mark making in his prints. These are often shown together with his written pieces.

Deborah Williams is a keen observer of the canine realm and our own relation to it. Her perspectives have been further informed by travels to remote locales where she has explored cultural attitudes to pet ownership, semi domestication and abandonment. She is currently Coordinator, Advanced Diploma and Printmaking, Visual Art, VE, RMIT University.

LIST OF WORKS

Jazmina CININAS
Girlie werewolf suit, 2002
Hand sewn reduction linocut
on calico and mixed media
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Jazmina CININAS
Girlie werewolf suit, 2002
Hand sewn reduction linocut
on calico and mixed media
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Jazmina CININAS
Micah, 2015
Sublimation digital textile
printing on shamuse satin
200 x 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Jazmina CININAS
Lilia, 2015
Sublimation digital textile
printing on shamuse satin
200 x 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Marian CRAWFORD
Blood antiquities, 2016
Letterpress, intaglio and relief
printing, sequins, thread on
paper
Each piece 30 x 21 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Lesley DUXBURY
Splitting light #5, 2016
Screen print
80 X 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Lesley DUXBURY
Splitting light #6, 2016
Inkjet Print
80 X 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Joel GAILER
Licences (series) 2012
America in Art, 2012
License agreement, USB digital
file, Perspex
Dimensions variable

Joel GAILER
Licences (series) 2012
Fairweather, 2012 – 2016
License agreement, USB digital
file, Perspex
Dimensions variable

Joel GAILER
Hotmetal, 2012 – 2016
License agreement, USB digital
file, Perspex
Dimensions variable
All works courtesy of the artist

Joel GAILER
Hotmetal, 2012 – 2016
Screen printed Acrylic on Mylar
195 x 120 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew GUNNELL
These must be the places,
2016
Inkjet, Acrylic and screen print
3 panels each 60 x 74 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Richard HARDING
Queer, 2016
Acrylic mirror strips
435 x 200 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Bridget HILLEBRAND
Direct Start, 2016
Linocut and chalk
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Clare HUMPHRIES
What remains, what returns,
2016
Hand-burnished linocut print
84 x 103 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Ruth JOHNSTONE
*Common Garden: house to
studio, Fitzroy* 2014 – 2016
Unbound book: relief print, plant
pigment and letterpress
Dimensions variable: each page
38.4 x 29.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Mass, 2015
Digital Animation
Duration: 4:24 minutes
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Git, 2014
Soft-ground, aquatint,
burnishing, drypoint
12 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Mass, mass, ma & ass, 2014
Soft-ground, aquatint,
burnishing, drypoint
12 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Pa, 2014
Soft-ground, aquatint,
burnishing, drypoint
12 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Was, 2014
Soft-ground, aquatint,
burnishing, drypoint
12 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew KEALL
Etc, 2016
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Rebecca MAYO
Merri Creek Zeltbahnen
2013 – 2016
Calico dyed and screen printed
with indigenous and exotic
plants of the Merri Creek, zinc
buttons, eyelets, hemp rope,
tent poles
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

PERFORMPRINT
*Bearings, beauty and
irrelevance,* 2015
Performance: Saturday 21 May,
2016, RMIT Gallery

Jonas ROPPONEN
Fade to black / there's a light,
2016
Linocut
73 x 60.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Jonas ROPPONEN
Found timber, lost words,
2016
Woodcut, carved frame, spray
paint
63 x 63 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew TETZLAFF
Displace (suspension), 2016
Digital print on fabric
1400 x 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Andrew WEATHERILL
Monocular vision II, 2016
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Deborah WILLIAMS
Looked at, 2016
110 x 146 cm
Inkjet print on archival Rag
Photographique
Courtesy of Australian Galleries,
Melbourne and Sydney

Deborah WILLIAMS
A single gaze, 2016
110 x 146 cm
Inkjet print on archival Rag
Photographique
Courtesy of Australian Galleries,
Melbourne and Sydney

Acknowledgments

Jonas Ropponen
Fade to black / there's a light, 2016
Linocut

Found timber, lost words, 2016
Woodcut, carved frame, spray paint
Installation view

Out of the Matrix, Installation view
Gallery 2