

Round About or Inside

30 September – 20 November 2021

In the book *Species of Spaces* (Espaces d'espaces, 1974) French novelist and philosopher Georges Perec elaborates on the predicament of understanding space. "The space of our lives is neither continuous, nor infinite, neither homogeneous, nor isotropic." To get a better sense of space, Perec argues, the challenge is not so much "to reinvent space, ... but to question it, or even simpler, to read it." His subject is not the void exactly, but rather what might be round about or inside it:

When nothing arrests our gaze, it carries a very long way. But if it meets with nothing, it sees nothing, it sees only what it meets. Space is what arrests our gaze, what our sight stumbles over: the obstacle, the bricks, an angle, a vanishing point. Space is when it makes an angle, when it stops, when we have to turn for it to start off again.

Round About or Inside aims to explore how artists from different geographic and cultural contexts might contribute to Perec's attempt to map and describe the manifold spaces and sites that mark our lives. To what extent do art and artists partake in defining, shaping and ultimately understanding the spatialities of worldmaking?

The artists included in this exhibition have not been invited to illustrate the many observations and guidelines provided by Perec, but to bring to the gallery works that reflect their own modes and means of apprehending space. Their positions are as rich as they are diverse, addressing space

as a pictorial substance, a field defining the relationship between land and being, a bodily feature, an architectural material, the sphere of social gathering and exclusion, an arena of ritual exchange, a new way to negotiate gallery spaces, a feat of technological exploration, and a realm of administrative organisation.

Artists: Paul Bai (AUS), Elizabeth Djakurrurr (AUS), Valérie Mannaerts (BEL), Philip Metten (BEL), Archie Moore (AUS), Yukultji Napangati (AUS), Brian O'Doherty (USA), Sarah Oppenheimer (USA), Steve Van den Bosch (BEL)

Exhibition design: Ashley Paine (AUS)

Curators: Wouter Davidts (BEL) and Angela Goddard (AUS)

Paul Bai

b.1968 Tianjin China; lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

The Infinite Distance between Two Points (No.7) 2021

Vinyl

Untitled (Mirror, No. 2) 2021

Mirror

Courtesy of the artist and Australian Fine Arts, Brisbane

Paul Bai

b.1968 Tianjin China; lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

The Infinite Distance between Two Points (No.8) 2021

Screenprint on T-shirts

Paul Bai

b.1968 Tianjin China; lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

Untitled (Sunrise and Sunset in the Landscape No. 8) 2021

Diptych: watercolour on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Australian Fine Arts, Brisbane

Best known as a painter well versed in the conceptual legacies of early modernism, Bai explores spatiality through painting, conceptual works, and video. He has developed an understanding of space he terms the 'Third Spatial Position', which is critical of the way ideas of space are often tethered to national boundaries and spatial identifications. His position is open, experiential, tentative, situational, and indeterminate and avoids binary qualifiers of space such as here/there, inside/outside, physical/conceptual. The noncommittal nature of Bai's schema allows us time to review the established spatial structure, to consider and contemplate before making a commitment.

Born in Tianjin, northeastern China, Paul Bai arrived in Australia in 1988. He obtained a doctorate in Visual Art at Griffith University Queensland College of Art in 2015, and currently teaches painting at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.

Elizabeth Djakurrurr

b.1961 Garum clan, Ganalbingu language; lives and works in Ramingining, Northern Territory.

Yukuwa 2020

Kurrajong (*Brachychiton diversifolius*), bush resin and feathers

Commissioned 2020, courtesy of Bula'Bula Arts, Ramingining

The Aboriginal people at Ramingining have several names or titles: European names (first names and surnames), clan names, language names and moiety designations—plus nicknames. One's clan name is also called the 'Likan' or 'elbow-joint' name, which connects you to a whole other section of society: it could be thought of as a corner connecting one person to the next.

The string in *Yukuwa* is made from kurrajong bark found in the area surrounding Ramingining in the Arafura wetlands of North East Arnhem Land. The *Yukuwa* belongs to the Yirritja moiety and the songline comes from the sunrise and is connected to Wunungurra family (Dhalwangu language) which is connected to the Malibirr family (Ganalbingu language). There is a *Yukuwa bungul* (dance) performed at funerals and some ceremonies that is danced with string, though it can also be acted out just in dance. This work is the manifestation of the idea of this dance and this songline which teaches the Ngarra (law).

Senior curator and previous Bula'Bula arts centre manager Djon Mundine recounts that in the Morning Star marradjirri (sacred string-making) exchange ceremony, the *Yukuwa* is connected to one end of a pole (made from a saltwater tree that grows near the mangroves) and bound in hand spun string that has been sung over and blessed. A pom-pom cluster of white cockatoo feathers is attached at the other end, representing the Morning Star (Venus) but also a child—a child attached to its mother via the umbilical cord, and to the spirit dimension. When we are born into the physical world, we come from the spirit dimension and remain connected to it by a spiritual cord, which at death pulls us back into that world.

Valérie Mannaerts

b.1974 Brussels, Belgium; lives and works in Brussels.

I like messy 2021

Canvas, wool, printed silk, oil paint, bamboo

I like messy too 2021

Canvas, wool, printed silk, oil paint, bamboo

I like messy (drawing) 2021

Paper, ink, pencil

Courtesy of the artist

Valérie Mannaerts explores both the visual and material realm between collage and sculpture, between drawing and object. Playing with the physiognomy of things and bodies and the plastic correspondences between them, the artist has developed a visual language that welds her personal imaginary with larger art-historical and cultural references. In her work opposites meet, ranging from the abstract and the sensual, the haptic and the surreal, as well as the private with the societal. Mannaerts deploys a wide variety of materials, ranging from wood, bronze, ceramics, textile and papier-mâché to paper, pencil, paint, and canvas, resulting in works that establish a firm yet ambiguous occupation of space—conveying affinities with architecture, furniture, clothing, fashion display and theatre scenography.

Valérie Mannaerts

b.1974 Brussels, Belgium; lives and works in Brussels.

Ariel 2009

Paper, metal

Courtesy of the artist

Archie Moore

b.1970 Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Kamilaroi/Bigambul peoples; lives and works on Ngudooroo (Lamb Island).

MIS SPACE 2021

Ink on paper; intervention in Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces*, 1974

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney

Philip Metten

b.1977 Genk, Belgium; lives and works in Antwerp.

5020245 2020

Collage on paper, polystyrene

F250 2020

Collage on paper

P3-40 2021

collage on paper

1BP65Y 2021

Collage on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp

In the last decade, Philip Metten has made large-scale sculptural installations that explicitly engage in a dialogue with architecture, including a bar in Antwerp (*Bar*, 2013), the scenography for an exhibition at Extra City Kunsthall in Antwerp (*The Corner Show*, 2015), the cladding of the facade of Kai Matsumiya Gallery in New York, NY (*153. Stanton*, 2015), a mobile screening dispositive (*Cinema*, 2017), and a restaurant in Borgerhout area of Antwerp (*Essen*, 2020). By doubling the material and conceptual regime of sculpture with the more practical concerns and social demands of worldly practices and programs, Metten explores the functional potential of one of art's age-old mediums. Most recently Metten has engaged in making three-dimensional collages, composed of snippets of paper and remnants of old and abandoned cardboard models. Glued inside foam-wrapping elements the artist has scavenged on the street, these works conjure up a diverse range of images, from Mesopotamian edifices to hi-tech cities, art deco ornaments to sci-fi vessels.

Archie Moore

b.1970 Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. Kamilaroi/Bigambul peoples; lives and works on Ngudooroo (Lamb Island).

Bannertree 2000–04

Video transferred to digital file, colour, silent, 2:17 min

Bannertree floor 2021

Synthetic polymer paint on nothing

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney

Growing up in rural Queensland taught Moore about racism in its varied forms, and harsh childhood experiences led him to develop a keen interest in language and how it is constructed, used, and valued as a cultural medium. Moore deals with memory in many works that interrogate personal and national histories. His ongoing interests include key signifiers of identity—skin, language, smell, home, flags—and the borders of intercultural understanding and misunderstanding, including the wider concerns of racism. Uncertainty is an ongoing theme pertaining to his paternity and Kamilaroi heritage. Moore explores the psychological effects of space and interactions between people and their home environments. As Moore states, "I feel simultaneously connected to and disassociated from the place where I grew up and where my Aboriginal family is from."

Yukultji Napangati

b. c.1971 near Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay, Western Australia and Northern Territory). Pintupi peoples; lives and works in Kiwirrkurra, Western Australia.

Untitled 2016

Synthetic polymer paint on linen

Private collection

Pintupi artist Yukultji Napangati was born near Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay), a huge salt lake in the Great Sandy Desert. She came to Kiwirrkurra in 1984 when she was around fourteen years old and this event is said to be her first contact with non-Aboriginal people, prior to which she had been living on country with eight family members. Napangati and her family were described as the 'lost nomads' or the 'Pintupi nine'.

Napangati began painting for Papunya Tula Artists in 1996, attracting attention through her inclusion in the 2005 *Primavera* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. In 2018 this painting won the Wynne Prize for landscape painting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Yukultji Napangati

b. c.1971 near Wilkinkarra (Lake Mackay, Western Australia and Northern Territory). Pintupi peoples; lives and works in Kiwirrkurra, Western Australia.

Untitled 2009

Synthetic polymer paint on linen

Private collection

Yukultji Napangati's expansive paintings articulate her relationship to her Country and the experience of her upbringing. Her Country is predominantly sandy, and her paintings not only hint at the wide expanses of sandhills, but also perhaps at the waves on the surface of Lake Wilkinkarra when it is full, as well as ritual body painting, all enfolded within the complex temporal, spatial and spiritual dimensions of a Pintupi worldview.

Brian O'Doherty

b.1928 Ballaghaderreen, Ireland; lives and works in New York, NY, United States.

Rope Drawing #128 Flipped Corner (Green/Blue) 2017

Nylon cord, latex paint

Collection: Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
Donated by the artist, 2018

Born in Ireland in 1928, and now based in New York City, Brian O'Doherty left Dublin in 1957 as a qualified medical doctor and emerging artist. He is now renowned as an artist, writer, critic, television host, filmmaker, and educator.

O'Doherty invented several personae and from 1972 to 2008 changed his artist name to Patrick Ireland in protest at the killings of civil rights marchers in Derry, Northern Ireland. One of the pioneering figures in the conceptual art movement in 1960s New York, O'Doherty published the essay "Inside the White Cube" in *Artforum* in 1976 which cemented his position as a key figure in the discourse around the presentation of art in the context of the gallery space.

O'Doherty's rope drawings, which first appeared in 1973, have been described as offering new ways of negotiating the space of a gallery, using colour and line in three dimensions. The rope drawings often envelop corners, articulating visual and spatial relationships that make the viewer acutely aware of their body and perspective.

Sarah Oppenheimer

b.1972 Austin, TX, United States; lives and works in New York, NY, United States.

I-001-7070 2021

Aluminium, steel, timing belts and exhibition architecture

Courtesy of the artist

Sarah Oppenheimer is an architectural manipulator. She explores the built environment as an orchestrated field of stasis and change and amplifies the interdependency of architectural boundaries and human action. With technologically elaborate architectural installations and instruments, most of which can be manipulated by visitors, she recasts our experience of space and sense of orientation—displacing what we understand as inside and outside and inverting what we perceive as front and rear, near and far, here and there. The resulting works establish a field of action within the time-based system of a living building.

Ashley Paine

b.1979 Brisbane; lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.

Exhibition Architecture for Round About or Inside 2021

Pine framing and MDF

Commissioned 2020; courtesy of the artist

Ashley Paine's exhibition architecture is based on a fragment of Frank Lloyd Wright's plan of Fallingwater (namely the main floor living–dining–entrance space). An extrusion of the building plan, the construction explores Wright's juxtaposition and contrast between an orthogonal building geometry and the diagonal movement and views through the space. There is an alignment between the entry of Fallingwater and that of the gallery, with the superimposition of two plans and two architectures meeting at the front door. Paine also consciously invokes a history of building collages by architects and artists such as Daniel Buren, Michael Asher, Rem Koolhaas, and the firm Ciriacidis Lehnerer.

This exhibition architecture echoes Philip Metten's design for the first Corner Show at EXTRACITY Kunstall, Antwerp—as in that project this is an extrusion of a two-dimensional drawing into three dimensions.

Is the exhibition architecture a copy, a model, or a work of architecture? Physically, it contradicts the existing space, and conceptually it sits in an ambiguous relation to the art works. It is responsive neither to the existing space, nor to the art works, and demonstrates a degree of autonomy in the gallery. But at the same time, it is specific rather than generic, in that it refers to a particular space and constructs particular spatial effects in the gallery.

Steve Van den Bosch

b.1975 Antwerp; lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Representation (B7.5 C18.75 L7.5) 2021

Wall painting

The museum director was asked to photograph an exhibition wall of her choice. The resulting print was given to a professional paint shop to be scanned as a colour sample to produce a new wall paint. This new mixture was then used to paint all four walls of the exhibition space.

Courtesy of the artist

Steve Van den Bosch

b.1975 Antwerp; lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Assistant 2021

Hydraulic door closer dismantled from the museum director's office doorframe, on display for the duration of the exhibition

Courtesy of the artist

Steve Van den Bosch focuses on the seemingly expressionless, tacit, and unspectacular. His work zooms in on the boundary between invisibility and pure materiality and puts artistic production, exhibition, and interpretation into perspective with a taste for the absurd. By erasing, doubling, blurring, reversing, or reconnecting the elements that define a work of art, he creates objects and situations that undermine their own status as art. The reduced appearance of his work is less an aesthetic preference for minimalism or conceptualism than a desire to look for the point where a work tends to dissolve into the context that facilitates it.

Steve Van den Bosch

b.1975 Antwerp; lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

I know but when you ask me, I don't 2012

Audio installation

A digital recording of the spoken title stretched to match the duration of the exhibition's daily opening hours

Courtesy of the artist

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