The Mnemonic Mirror

8 December 2016 - 11 March 2017

Exhibition Labels

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Artists: Aaron Seeto, Robert Pulie, Debra Phillips, Archie Moore, Clare Milledge, Linda Marrinon, Deb Mansfield, Emily Hunt, Tony Clark, Gary Carsley, Troy-Anthony Baylis, Kylie Banyard. Curated by Kylie Banyard and Gary Carsley.
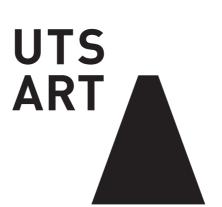
The Mnemonic Mirror is an artist-initiated project exploring the complex processes of memory. Though much of the information we commit to memory is the humdrum of the everyday, many of our more meaningful recollections are collected subconsciously—stockpiled until specific stimuli bring them to the fore.

Artists, in particular, find much value in memory. In trying to gain a deeper understanding of their artistic process, they regularly delve into personal memory banks. Works of art, therefore, can often be seen as mnemonic devices. For this project, the curators have imagined memory as a compendium of things read, felt, observed, or otherwise learnt, which creates our own personal archives.

In recent times, the recording of personal images and text on social media has changed the roles that chronology and geography play in the shaping and making of memory. Where personal memories were once stored at the edges of the mind—comprised of hazy recollection and nostalgia—they now exist as an exact record, easier to access and consider. This blurring of the line between past and present has, in turn, created a new resource for artists, as well as a space from which we might explore the past and communicate the issues of the future. *The Mnemonic Mirror* questions the implications of these changes and scrutinises the consequences, both good and bad.

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Debra Phillips

b.1958, Melbourne, VIC

Untitled (35mm Slides: Grey) 20`16

Inkjet print

Untitled (Medium Format Film: Red) 2016

Inkjet print

Untitled (4x5 inch Film: Green) 2016

Inkjet print

Untitled (35mm Film Strips: Blue) 2016

Inkjet print

Untitled (Copper Sheet A) 2016

Inkjet print

Collection: The artist

Debra Phillips' practice focuses on systems of knowledge and understanding, and how these in turn influence our understanding of the world.

Working primarily in photography, Phillips explores the medium as an imperfect form of record keeping and its role in everyday history making. Recurring themes include the uncertainty of the physical world, the limitations of knowledge, disappearance and obsolescence, concealment, masking and identity creation.

Featuring a selection of plastic holders used to scan and digitise analogue film negatives, these works are a record of process. Uniting digital and analogue techniques, they are a poetic tribute to the history of photography, and the memories and images that have been captured on the film held within.

Debra Phillips

b.1958, Melbourne, VIC

Untitled (Astra Bridal Photographic Services, Melbourne 1966:1) 2016

Inkjet print

Untitled (Astra Bridal Photographic Services, Melbourne 1966:2) 2016

Inkjet print

Collection: The artist

The idea that photography can provide a physical space within which to interrogate and comprehend global events has preoccupied Debra Phillips throughout her career.

Using her work as a form of inquiry into conditions of contemporary life, Phillips triggers memories and associations that expand our understanding of the world as a complex place of revelation and possibility.

Robert Pulie

b.1969, Sydney, NSW

Nada 2014

Oil on carved Western Red Cedar

Collection: The artist
Courtesy   The Commercial, Sydney

Using the medieval woodworking technique of relief intarsia, Robert Pulie carves timber to create mosaic-like pictures that move with the contours of the grain.

With his idiosyncratic humour, Pulie depicts a Jesus-like figure emerging from the timber. Open-palmed and shrugging his shoulders, this contemporary saint is an evasive and reluctant alternative to the traditional iconography that might hang on a wall.

Robert Pulie

b.1969, Sydney, NSW

Detour 2014

Oil and rabbit skin glue on carved antique Australian Cedar Skirting Board

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Robert Pulie's art practice moves between two and three dimensions, and positive and negative values, often driven by the characteristics of the materials he works with.

Using timber reclaimed from an old skirting board, with *Detour* Pulie lets the wood dictate the work by carving around its inherent patterns until a figure emerges.

With this gesture he engages with the tree's history and memory, celebrating both its growth and continued beauty.

Robert Pulie

b.1969, Sydney, NSW

I message me :(2015

Alkyd and oil finger painting on etched glass, felt, marine ply, sterling silver, epoxy

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

In *I message me* :(, a painted iPhone displays a mock private conversation between Robert Pulie and himself.

By using blue and grey to identify each participant in the discussion, he evokes the familiar speech bubbles of a text exchange as wryly drawn emoticons, relying on our familiarity with smartphones to comprehend the meaning.

Robert Pulie

b.1969, Sydney, NSW

Follow me 2016

Oil on carved cedar panel

Collection: The artist

Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Untitled 2005

Watercolour on paper and mountboard

Untitled 2005

Watercolour on paper and mountboard

Untitled 2005

Watercolour on paper and mountboard

Untitled 2005

Watercolour on paper and mountboard

Untitled 2005

Watercolour on paper and mountboard

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Linda Marrinon's watercolours are ironic parodies of the subjects they depict, as well as our tendency to be more comfortable with lowbrow forms entertainment over elitism and high culture.

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Still life with De Tocqueville bust 2003

Drypoint etching

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Linda Marrinon's still life works recall classical and neo-classical traditions, merging the disciplines of painting, sculpture and architecture.

In her compositions, painted copies of old master sculptures are assembled alongside trinkets, toys and miscellaneous objects from her studio. Revered historians such as Alexis de Tocqueville are also referenced, and given the same gravitas as children's book character Lord Woodmouse.

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Still life with Lord Woodmouse and Meryon Etching 2003
Drypoint etching

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Sunrise Over House 1988

White terracotta

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Linda Marrinon is a painter and sculptor known for her plaster and cast figures. Referencing the Hellenistic and Roman periods of classical sculpture, her works remain quietly contemporary in their poise, scale, adornments and subject matter.

In *Sunrise Over House*, a dwelling emerges subtly from a mass of white terracotta, with thumbmarks and fingerprints alluding to doors and windows. The surrounding clay appears as a cliff, and the home is understood to be perched atop a precipice.

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Matador 2006

Tinted plaster

Collection: Private collection
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Linda Marrinon is a painter and sculptor known for her plaster and cast figures that mix Classicism and whimsy.

Allowing the process to guide her, Marrinon embraces accidents and technical surprises as features of the work, enhancing textural details with adornments formed from plaster-soaked muslin or hessian. In the same way that Hellenistic sculpture was enlivened by the application of coloured paint, Marrinon's figures are brought to life with pigmented plaster and accessories.

Through her unique engagement with the past, Marrinon creates an alternative history of art, something that could have been, but wasn't – until now.

Linda Marrinon

b.1959, Melbourne, VIC

Mary 2006

Tinted plaster

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Aaron Seeto

b.1978, Sydney, NSW

Oblivion 2006

Three daguerreotypes, acrylic frames

Collection: The artist

Through an exploration of archives, family albums and photographic records, Aaron Seeto seeks to make visible alternate historical positions and experiences.

For *Oblivion*, Seeto sourced internet images of the 2005 Cronulla riots and then reproduced these as daguerreotypes. Highlighting how the incident was reported, understood and remembered, the unreliability of media coverage is echoed in the use of a volatile photographic process.

Aaron Seeto

b.1978, Sydney, NSW

Phases of the moon [War-time Refugees Removal Act 1949] 2016

Daguerreotype, acrylic frame

Collection: The artist

Aaron Seeto uses silver nitrate photographic processes to make works that explore familial histories, which coincides with an interest in the way stories are recorded, retold and reconstructed through time.

This series resurrects the daguerreotype, an early, highly volatile chemical photographic process with a mirrored finish, where images appear both positive and negative, depending on the angle of view.

For Seeto, the unpredictability of the medium reflects the unfixed nature of both history and memory: the ways in which images degrade, stories are created, and personal and collective histories are shaped.

Aaron Seeto

b.1978, Sydney, NSW

Fatal Collision [All is quiet, Geelong Advertiser, Mon 22 Jul 1861, Page 3] 2016

Daguerreotype, acrylic frame

Collection: The artist

Deb Mansfield

b.1976, Mt Isa, QLD

The dancing body has the potential to surpass the actual body 2016

Wall, grey paint

I can't quite give him up 2016

Photo-tapestry (handwoven while at sea), burnt bronze electrics

Honing gives consistency 2016

Burnt bronze electrics, multi-coloured marine rope

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Galerie Pompom, Sydney

Deb Mansfield combines digital media, handwoven textiles and sculptural elements to create installations that make active the relationships between objects.

In this suite of works, each component is given agency—including the painted wall—to acknowledge how they influence and inform one other.

In *I can't quite give him up*, a portrait of a sea captain (Ernst Hemmingway) surrounded by ocean, is spliced together with the torso of a sailor (The Artist's grandfather). A hand-cast bronze electrical socket here replaces the captain's right eye.

Adjacent to this, *Honing Gives Consistency* continues the perilous combination of water and electricity, with an electrical cable fashioned from bronze and marine rope.

Deb Mansfield

b.1976, Mt Isa, QLD

I can't quite give him up 2016

Phototapestry (handwoven while at sea), burnt bronze electrics

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Galerie Pompom, Sydney

Deb Mansfield

b.1976, Mt Isa, QLD

Honing gives consistency 2016

Burnt bronze electrics, multi-coloured marine rope

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Galerie Pompom, Sydney

Kylie Banyard

b.1974, Wollongong, NSW

Impossibly vivid time travel 2015

Oil and acrylic on canvas

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Galerie Pompom, Sydney

Kylie Banyard creates worlds that are mysterious yet familiar. In the process of repurposing, both objects and spaces, her works cast new light on the present.

Impossibly vivid time travel is motivated by the recent proliferation of social media platforms and online experiences, as well as an interest in unconventional lifestyles, countercultures and utopian ideals. The alternative spaces Banyard creates are eerily uninhabited, suggesting a view of the future that is fantastical and, potentially, hyperreal.

Kylie Banyard

b.1974, Wollongong, NSW

Being here and longing for there (Soleri's Studio) 2016

Oil and unstretched acrylic on linen and canvas banner

Private collection

Paolo Soleri (1919-2013) was an architect, urban designer, artist and philosopher who created Arcosanti, an experimental community in the Arizona desert that strove to balance the natural world with the built environment. Driven by his philosophy of "arcology" (architecture + ecology), Soleri believed cities should function as living systems, capable of responding to problems of urbanisation and overpopulation.

In *Being here and longing for there (Soleri's Studio)*, Kylie Banyard displays a finished painting over an unstretched canvas, as if it were a painter's drop sheet, combining method of production with finished product.

Troy-Anthony Baylis

b.1976, Sydney, NSW
Jawoyn peoples

Postcard (Crystal, Sandy, and Alice) 2011

Reconstructed faux-mesh

Collection: The artist

Troy-Anthony Baylis

b.1976, Sydney, NSW
Jawoyn peoples

Postcard (Bella and Cherry) 2010

Reconstructed faux-mesh

Collection: The artist

Troy-Anthony Baylis

b.1976, Sydney, NSW
Jawoyn peoples

Postcard (Acacia and Sandy) 2015

Reconstructed faux-mesh

Collection: The artist

Troy-Anthony Baylis combines elements of craft and performance in his work to explore 'queering' as a means of unsettling heteronormative representations of Indigenous culture.

Alluding to practices brought by Christian missionaries, Baylis suggests this imposed social order limited Aboriginal expression, excluding sexual and gender diversity from the recording and interpretation of history.

In his *Postcard* series, Baylis uses a material resembling Glomesh, once a 'must have' Australian fashion accessory that has achieved cult status in the queer community. Painstakingly handcrafted, each piece contemplates his mixed Irish/Aboriginal heritage and his sexuality, representing plot points on his personal journey.

Troy-Anthony Baylis

b.1976, Sydney, NSW
Jawoyn peoples

Postcard (Nelly and Mona) 2012

Reconstructed glomesh

Collection: The artist

Gary Carsley

b.1957, Brisbane, QLD

Scenes from the life of Paris 2016

Multi-channel video (3.40 minutes, looped), wallpaper, free-standing sculptural elements
Editing and post-production: Yi Song and Yisha Huang

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: Thatcher Projects, New York and Torch Gallery, Amsterdam

Gary Carsley merges traditional modes of image making such as painting and drawing with digital, immersive technologies. He also has an ongoing interest in handmade materiality, which serves as a form of resistance against the homogeneity of mass production.

In *Scenes from the life of Paris* Carsley reinterprets the Greek legend of Paris, Prince of Troy, via a surreal animation of two busts by Italian neoclassical sculptor, Antonio Canova. Alternating rhyme and repetition, the script is voiced by an Australian-accented text-to-speech program, further heightening the absurdist nature of the work.

Against a backdrop of floral wallpaper, both real and virtual, this historical retelling plays with time and perception, authenticity and mimicry, all to humorous effect.

Tony Clark

b.1951, Canberra, ACT

Six sections from Clark's Myriorama 2013

Acrylic and permanent marker ink on canvas

Collection: Roslyn Oxley and Tony Oxley, Sydney

For almost three decades, Tony Clark has painted interchangeable sections of landscape that recall a popular nineteenth century card game designed by John Clark (no relation). Called *Myriorama*, or 'Many Thousand Views', the game consists of illustrated fragments of landscape arranged to form different panoramas.

Featuring a uniform horizon line and restricted palette of four colours, Clark's painted *Myriorama* panels similarly anticipate human rearrangement. Theoretically endless, Clark's work is one of Australia's most enduring art projects, inviting new readings and meanings as it continues.

Emily Hunt

b.1981, Sydney, NSW

Reification 2015
Objectification 2015

Unique hard-ground zinc etchings on paper and pencil on paper

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Interested in the history and aesthetics of German Renaissance printmaking, caricature, absurdism and surrealism, Emily Hunt incorporates etching, watercolour, collage and ceramics in her practice.

With *Objectification* 2015 and *Reification* Hunt portrays worlds that are idyllic and brutal, reflecting the injustice and cruelty she sees playing out in the current geopolitical climate, as well as the smaller sufferings of everyday life.

Emily Hunt

b.1981, Sydney, NSW

Sheraton was a hoarder 2016

Glazed stoneware

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Emily Hunt

b.1981, Sydney, NSW

After Vigeland 2016

Stoneware, copper, glaze, gold dust, glass paint

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943) was a prolific Norwegian sculptor known for his figurative works depicting the journey of life through individual's inner strengths and struggles. His most famous work, the 18 metre high *Monolith*, was carved from a single granite block and consists of 121 figures writhing and scrambling to reach the top of the sculpture. Though Vigeland was enigmatic when asked the meaning, it has been interpreted as humanity's longing to reach divinity.

Emily Hunt has previously noted her fascination with art history's recording of human vice, folly, sexual or violent urges and hedonism. Hunt's slithering, dioramic compositions are an attempt to reconcile her own ambivalence towards human progress, as well as her own tendencies towards cynicism and self-indulgence.

Emily Hunt

b.1981, Sydney, NSW

Sweat and Money 2016

Glazed stoneware

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Emily Hunt is fascinated by 'the grotesque' – both in its original sixteenth century context as architectural embellishment, and as a contemporary reference to that which is ugly and gruesome.

Hunt's ceramic pieces explore present-day conceptions of the grotesque as it pertains to structural form. Her writhing compositions are not simply decorative; they constitute the structure of the sculpture itself.

Archie Moore

b.1970, Toowoomba, QLD
Kamilaroi peoples

Aboriginal Rainbow 2015

Acrylic on nothing

Griffith University Art Collection

Archie Moore's experiences growing up in rural Queensland, and the various forms of racism he has encountered, inform his multifaceted art practice. Questioning key signifiers of identity – language, politics, religion, flags, skin, smell – Moore's work is embedded in Aboriginal politics, often pointing out intercultural stereotypes or exploring uncertainties regarding his paternal Kamilaroi heritage.

Aboriginal Rainbow is part of a series of ten works that reimagine the Aboriginal flag, where the sun has been replaced by symbols appropriated from other ideological vocabularies. Referencing a range of religious, political and sexual orientations, Moore points out that while flags are meant to represent all, identity is never just one thing, it is complex and multifaceted. Made of acrylic paint rather than fabric, and without any supportive substrate, these flags gather their strength from the narratives informing their creation.

Archie Moore

b.1970, Toowoomba, QLD
Kamilaroi peoples

Dermis 2012

Acrylic paint, wooden dowel, steel brackets

Queensland University of Technology Art Collection

With *Dermis*, Archie Moore has deconstructed the Aboriginal flag, hanging each colour separately as if they were skins on a rack.

Moore's reference to 'skin' draws on the word's numerous connotations. A 'skin name' for instance, is a central, basic Aboriginal birthright identification, determining status and social responsibility, both to the land and its people. Moore might also be alluding to the sense of being stuck in one's own skin, an inability to experience what life is truly like for another.

Light and fragile, *Dermis* questions traditional readings of symbols and identifiers, positioning these as unsubstantiated and incomplete.

Clare Milledge

b.1977, Sydney, NSW

Self-Reflexive Critique: Iota 2016

Oil on toughened glass, bronze, fabric

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Clare Milledge's practice centres on the popular nineteenth century painting technique of *Hinterglasmalerei*, which involves the application and/or removal of oil paint from the reverse side of glass.

Text also plays a critical role for Milledge, both in the composition of the works and in their titles, used as a means of critiquing her preoccupation with social interactions, modern relationships and the human condition.

Clare Milledge

b. 1977, Sydney, NSW

Self-Reflexive Critique: Alpha Mu 2016

Acrylic on glass

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney

Designed to be looked at and through, *Self-Reflexive Critique: Alpha Mu* is a compilation of text fragments drawn from Tinder profiles, arranged alphabetically as a catalogue of projected desire and contemporary social interaction.

A location-based dating app with over 50 million monthly users, Tinder was designed by its founders to alleviate the fear of rejection people might experience when asking someone on a date. A "double opt-in" system, where users must show mutual interest before they can connect, removes the possibility of rebuff. However, the app's relative anonymity still allows for problematic exchanges.

Hand-painted directly onto glass, the work allows the viewer to traverse Milledge's private encounters, making spatial her personal experiences and connections with fellow Tinder users.

Clare Milledge

b.1977, Sydney, NSW

War Memorial (VIC) 2014

Oil on tempered glass, acrylic on hessian, aluminium leaf

Collection: The artist
Courtesy: The Commercial, Sydney