

*Bonita Ely:
Future Tense*

12 October 2019 - 8 February
2020

Exhibition
Labels

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Bonita Ely is recognised as a leading voice within contemporary art practice in Australia and internationally since the 1970s. The intellectual and artistic groundings of her practice are diverse, encompassing feminist methodologies, Fluxus, speculative fiction, Taoist teachings, conceptual art, parody, museum displays and scientific typologies.

This exhibition brings together several works that propose darkly humorous dystopian futures and hybrid evolutions wrought by environmental degradation and genetic engineering. Each project centres around parodic combinations of different species—such as locust/human, rabbit/snail—and reflects our desires, fears, manipulation and emotional connection with other species. Ely's works are not only inherently futurist and speculative, they are often also iterative, building upon previous showings. This exhibition includes two new configurations of installations, as well as several historical works that date from or document earlier projects.

We Live to be Surprised (1989/19) is Ely's latest installation of 'snabbits' - half snail/half rabbits. Engineered as a food source for an over-populated planet by a futuristic agribusiness regime, these initially benign creatures have evolved into a feral monoculture, peeking out from the rubble of redundant technologies.

Shown in Australia for the first time since its debut at Documenta 14 in 2017, Plastik Progressus (2017/19) parodies natural history dioramas. Set in 2054, it details the extraordinary taxonomies of creatures genetically engineered to consume plastic and, in the process, clean up our mess in the streets, oceans and rivers. This iteration includes a new section examining the plastic pollution of Maiwar, the Brisbane River.

Also included are works relating to two other projects; a 1973 painting from 'The Locust People' and documentary photographs from 'Dogwoman' performances in the early 1980s.



Plastikus Progressus: Momento Mori 2017/19

Plastic, cellophane, metal, photographs, sound, works on paper, and touch-screen

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

We Live to Be Surprised 1989/19

Plaster, mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

The Locust People 1973

Acrylic on canvas

Private collection

Dogwoman Makes History (performance documentation) 1985

Digital photograph scanned from 35mm slide

Dogwoman Makes History (performance documentation) 1985

Digital photograph scanned from 35mm slide

Dogwoman Communicates with the Younger Generation (performance documentation) 1982

Digital photograph scanned from 35mm slide

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Bonita Ely with the locust people (studio documentation) 1975

Digital photograph scanned from 35mm slide

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane