



Emily Parsons-Lord, Standing Still (with practice, one may learn to accept the feelings of groundlessness), 2020. Photo: Louis Lim

Artist

Emily Parsons-Lord makes ephemeral installations and performances that draw on climate science, natural history and politics. Themes of tragedy and comedy are simultaneously explored through performance and scale; as Parsons-Lord investigates the materiality of the invisible, and interrogates the silent narratives that shape our realities.

Context

Emily Parsons-Lord's large-scale video work *Standing Still (with practice, one may learn to accept the feelings of groundlessness)* (2020) explores climate change-induced cleaving and crumbling and its residue as a site of extreme physical and emotional destruction. The work unmask the tenuousness of our foundations, both physically and emotionally, as compounding heat stress buckles infrastructure and the affecting experience of watching the world crumble perturbs the human psyche. This often-invisible process plays out across parallel timespans: the geologic and the immediate.

After the visceral spectacle of climate breakdown—flood, fire, and drought—we are often left with the lingering disquiet and apprehension. In the aftermath the scale and immediacy of the emergency retracts and cools, allowing apathy to take hold until the next shocking display.

Gallery Discussion

1. Watch the video work 'Standing Still'. Describe how the work illustrates climate breakdown?
2. Why is it important that air is visible?
3. How can air act as a metaphor for unseen/unspoken forces in society?
4. How can you capture air and make it tangible?
5. How impactful is the sound design in Parsons-Lord's work?

Classroom Activities

1. Picture the air. What do you imagine... Draw your imaginings
2. Experiment with making air visible. Record your findings
3. Experiment with making air audible. Record your findings



Yasbelle Kerkow, *Our Inheritance*, 2019, Voivoi (pandanus), Mat 1: 150cm x 90cm; Mat 2: 60cm x 150cm; Vakadivilivili (Batiki weave) 50cm x 70cm, sound 00:03:04. Courtesy of the artist and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

Artist

Yasbelle Kerkow is an Australian-born, Fijian (vasu Batiki, Lomaiviti) artist based in Melbourne. Kerkow's work aims to share Pacific stories and advocate for Pacific communities in Australia through contemporary art practice. Her work centres on weaving traditional materials of pandanus, flax and cotton cord in a contemporary practice. Kerkow is a community arts facilitator and leader of New Wayfinders, an emerging Pasifika artists collective.

Context

Two of the handwoven mats in Yasbelle Kerkow's *Our Inheritance* feature motifs from Fijian women's tattoo designs. The markings represent a visual language that are indicative of her mataqali (clan), the role they play in the vanua (community/land), and are influenced by their environment. These motifs have been woven into the mats using *somo* (black pandanus fibre) created using a natural dying process in which the *voivoi* (pandanus) is buried in iron-rich soil of the mangrove swamp for a number of days before being boiled with purple leaves.

The other mat in the series is a *Vakadivilivili*, a mat only made by those from the island Batiki and a traditional mat for the *yavusa toranibau* clan. Kerkow collaborated with her Aunty Baki and Aunty Salai who passed on their knowledge and teachings. The sound piece is a conversation between the three family members as they sit together weaving, conveying how these intergenerational conversations become woven into the works themselves.

"I call it a blessings because she's [Yasbelle] here and she really wants to learn something from our family, it's our inheritance from our family it's our identity, this is our identity, our traditional mat and I'm so glad that Yasbelle wants to learn"—Excerpt taken from a conversation with my Aunty Baki and Aunty Salai.

Gallery Discussion

1. For Yasbelle Kerkow, the facilitation of community events that celebrate Pacific culture is as much a part of her creative practice as the production of objects. How are community gatherings an important form of cultural expression?
2. Kerkow's practice employs traditional materials of pandanus, flax and cotton cord in a contemporary interpretation of weaving. Interpret the meaning conveyed through the mixing and matching of traditional and contemporary techniques and materials
3. Kerkow's work is composed of both woven object and sound. Identify the parallels between the woven objects and audio recordings installed in the gallery.

Classroom Activities

1. Create a sound work that captures your environment by recording audio on your computer. Elements to consider include content and tone of speech, environmental sound samples, music and duration.
2. Create an installation for listening to the sound. Consider the kind of physical environment you want to create in order to emphasize the meaning embedded within your audio work.
3. Present a live performance of your audio work to your class. How does the live performance change the meaning and experience of the sound work?



Marina Pumani Brown, Ngayuku Ngura Kuwari (My Home Now), 2019, acrylic on linen, 2 panels, 150 x 150 x 3cm each.

Artist

Marina Pumani Brown was born in Mimili Community on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the far northwest of South Australia. She comes from a long line of strong female painters and grew up watching these women paint. Her grandmother was Milatjari Pumani, one of the most famous artists in the APY region, her mother is Betty Kuntiwa Pumani, and her aunt was Ngupulya Pumani.

Learning from these women, and beside them, she has since developed her own interpretation of the Tjukurpa passed on to her. In her art practice, Marina shows contemporary ways of seeing her ancestral knowledge, sharing insights into her experience of day-to-day community life. She references her family's homeland around Antara and Victory Well, which lie nestled in the granite hills of the Everard Ranges. Marina often spends the weekends out on country with her mother and daughter, collecting minkulpa (bush tobacco) and maku (witchetty grubs).

Context

Ngayuku Ngura Kuwari (My Home Now) (2019) explores Pumani Brown's connection to Country, intergenerational storytelling, and knowledge sharing. Pumani Brown's role in the larger story of cultural continuity is expressed in these paintings, which resemble abstract maps of the landscapes she knows so well. Each work is imbued with ancestral history and a distinct colour palette and design that reflects Pumani Brown's connection and celebration of culture.

Gallery Discussion

1. For Marina Pumani Brown and her family, painting is a form of recording, sharing and further developing cultural knowledge. Discuss how manifestations of culture may change over time depending on the context in which they are produced.
2. Sacred connection to country is at the heart of Marina Pumani Brown's painting practice. Discuss how she uses visual language to communicate her connection to place.
3. Pumani Brown has identified some of the cultural knowledges embedded within her paintings. Discuss the ways in which viewers personal and cultural lenses alter their understanding of the work.

Classroom Activities

1. Identify the Traditional Owners of the land on which you live. Research the elders and emerging leaders within this community and the cultural advocacy they are undertaking.
2. Identify a landmark within your local geography that is significant to you. Create an illustration of the landmark and its surroundings using a birds eye perspective. Add detail to your illustration to communicate to audiences the location's significance to you.
3. Identify the elders and leaders within your extended family. Share with your class two cultural objects that illustrate how they communicate values and share culture within your family?



Georgia Morgan, Paradise Utility, 2019, pine, screws, bugles, cage door, cable ties, corrugated iron, found timber, air conditioning tube, rope, weed mat, staples, pipe cleaner, blue tarp, sindoor, ash, foam, texta, wire fence, basket, yellow waders, orange safety mesh fence, cupboard door, paint, windshield sun shade, electrical conduit, buoy, shade cloth, fibre glass, besser blocks, hot water urn, saree, 250 x 141 x 200cm. Photo: Remi Chauvin.

Artist

Georgia Morgan (b.1992) is a Tamil-Australian artist who lives and works in lutruwita/Tasmania. Morgan's performance, sculpture and installation-based practice challenges perceptions of value through her selection of materials. Morgan also addresses how people value places through site-based research and installations. The mediums she works with respond to the sites, and often juxtapose 'valuable' and 'less valuable' materials such as ceramics and photocopies.

Context

Georgia Morgan's installations offer a cultural and personal lens through which her audience can understand alternate perspectives informed by the artist's Tamil-Australian heritage. Morgan reimagines spaces, creating memorable and spiritual experiences in otherwise ordinary sites.

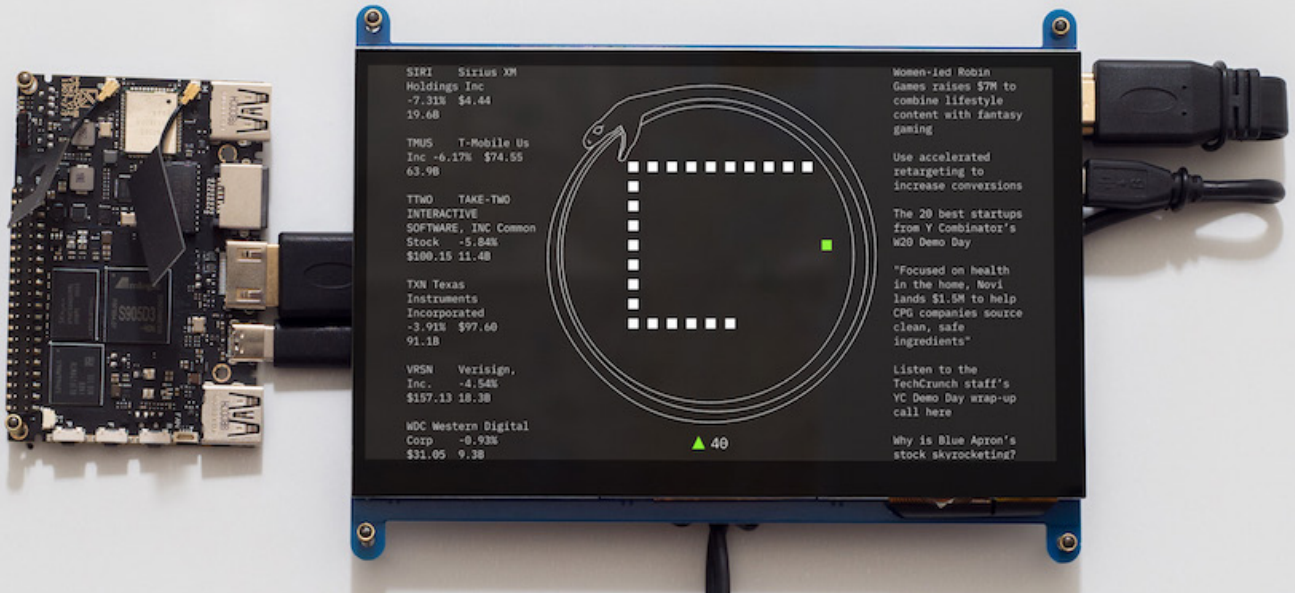
This dream is real (2020) is a site-specific installation that references the Malaysian kampong (village) that her mother grew up in. This work looks at intergenerational relationships and the failure inherent in translating memories—there are no photos that exist of her mother's kampong and so the artist solely relies on her mother's words and memories via Skype conversations. "I have been skyping my mum in Sydney from Hobart. We talk about the kampong she grew up in. I try to get a lay of the land. She mainly tells me stories about people; her neighbours fighting with one another; when her dad died suddenly and her mum and twelve siblings moved house; and her Christian friend giving her high heels donated from some British church." (Morgan, 2020). This installation is the result of these conversations and in the artists words: "She is remembering and I am imagining." (Morgan 2020).

Gallery Discussion

1. What makes something valuable?
2. How does Georgia Morgan rely on symbols to communicate meaning?
3. How does being in a gallery change the meaning of objects?

Classroom Activities

1. Looking at an object of perceived value, recreate this high object using low material (recycled/ found).
2. Locate an item that holds a personal value and photograph it in a location that transforms its perceived value
3. Exploring a local site collect objects that can be used for mark making. Using the object create an experimental artwork that responds to the site.



Guy Louden, Snake, 2020, software, hardware, live financial data and news, 13 x 30 x 3cm.

Artist

Guy Louden is a Perth-based artist and curator with a focus working in the experimental artist-run gallery sector which creates opportunities for artists to create and exhibit emerging work. Louden's art practice explores ideas of technological change and political upheaval through alternative mediums including computer programming and games.

Context

Guy Louden's Snake (2020), a remake of the classic videogame, is a critique of techno-capitalism. It presents the ultra-financialised tech industry as "both totally trivial and dead menacing" (Louden, 2020). The work plays on the game format of the original: the player scores points by 'eating' a dot and the snake grows until it inevitably crashes into itself. During each play-through the game pulls live information into the frame, showing real-time financial data from big tech companies alongside breaking news in the start-up scene. Between them the mythic symbol of the ouroboros, the snake that eats its own tail, slowly revolves. When the game is over, the player is always offered another game, another chance to crash again. Snake is playable online at <https://www.guylouden.com/snake.html>

Gallery Discussion

1. Why should games and algorithms be considered art?
2. How has Guy Louden considered his audience in 'Snake'?
3. How does Guy Louden rely on symbols to communicate meaning?
4. What impact does technology have upon an individual's feeling of wholeness?

Classroom Activities

1. Play 'Snake' on Guy Louden's website (www.guylouden.com/snake)
2. Reflection - How does the game act as a critique of techno capitalism?
3. Create a metaphor for capitalism



James Nguyen, Monochromes, 2018-ongoing, birch panels and mixed media skin lightening products, 10 panels each 40 x 30 x 3cm.

Artist

James Nguyen is a Melbourne-based interdisciplinary artist who often works collaboratively with family and friends to make work about the politics of art, self-representation and community identity. Through documentary and performance, his works combine well-known cultural motifs with humour to challenge societal norms.

Context

James Nguyen. *White on White* was painted by Kazimir Malevich in 1918 representing a purity of form severed from reality and relating to sensory feeling alone. A hundred years later, James Nguyen started collecting skin whitening creams to create his work *Monochromes* (2018-ongoing). Each of these paintings represent a skin whitening product designed for treating blemishes and sunspots, lightening complexions and dark areas of skin including the erogenous zones of the genitals and armpits. Each panel is a nod to painters of important white paintings in art history: Kazimir Malevich, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Hunter, Robert Ryman, Robert MacPherson, Mark Tobey, Jasper Johns, Bram Brogart, Joseph Albers, and Ellsworth Kelly. From the institutionalised whiteness of high minimalism to the industrialised and sexualised whiteness of the beauty industry, this series engages with the monochromatic materiality of whiteness as a painterly medium.

Gallery Discussion

1. What question is the artist asking?
2. How is Nyugen's collaboration with family members integral to the meaning of the work?
3. Why is Nguyen commenting on the white male dominance in western art history?
4. What is the connection between the colour white and the contemporary world?
5. Why do you think whiteness has been idealised as a beauty standard?

Classroom Activities

1. Consider your cultural lens, what are your beauty ideals?
2. Investigate how contemporary art institutions are either reinforcing or seeking to shift representations of artists?



Jess Bradford, An Image of a Tiger, 2018, plywood, Tasmanian oak, metal, ceramics, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium, dimensions variable. Photo: Docqment. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie pompom.

Artist

Jess Bradford (b.1987) is a Singaporean-born, Sydney-based interdisciplinary artist who works across painting, ceramics, video and installation. Bradford's practice explores her mixed-race heritage by questioning stereotypical representations of cultural identity. Bradford reveals how the complexity of her cultural identity unfolds over time and place, by working and reworking archival material and the objects she creates.

Context

Jessica Bradford explores the constant shifting of culture through time and space through her installation An Image of A Tiger. Bradford presents a series of sculptures that reinterpret archival iconography from Singaporean cultural park Haw Par Villa (formerly known as the Tiger Balm Garden). The artist grew up near the park which was previously known as Tiger Balm Garden. The garden was built by Burmese-Chinese philanthropists Aw Boon Haw and Aw Boon Par, who made their fortune selling Tiger Balm ointment worldwide. Bradford considers the changing name and cultural meanings of this place over time, as a metaphor for the adaptation of culture over time and place. Do you mean 'as a metaphor for the deterioration of cultural tradition over time and distance ?'

Gallery Discussion

1. How can context, time and place alter cultural meanings?
2. How does the artist use symbolism to reference the shift of places of cultural significance?
3. Discuss cultural ownership vs financial ownership be a saleable commodity? Discuss

Classroom Activities

1. Altered meaning collage- Slice an image of a culturally significant person/object/place into fragments. Do the same with an image of a culture commodity. Reassemble your fragments.
2. Consider the impact the commodification of culture has had on the meaning and authenticity of the image.
3. Pattern design - appropriate a cultural symbol by creating a repeat pattern that alters detail and or colour.
4. Abstraction - Use modelling clay to form an object of cultural significance. Abstract the object by squashing, stretching Think about aspects of your own culture.



Lachlan McKee, Blocks, 2020, acrylic on polycotton, 61 x 51cm.
Lachlan McKee, House, 2020, acrylic on polycotton, 61 x 51cm.

Artist

Lachlan McKee (b. 1998) is a Brisbane-born, Melbourne based artist who works primarily in painting and drawing. His painting and drawing practice is influenced by Armenian-born American painter Arshille Gorky, who explored the space between narrative and abstract. Gorky connects European Surrealist painters and the painters of the American Abstract Expressionist movement. McKee's practice is developing to incorporate stop motion animation which realizes the movement suggested within his paintings.

Context

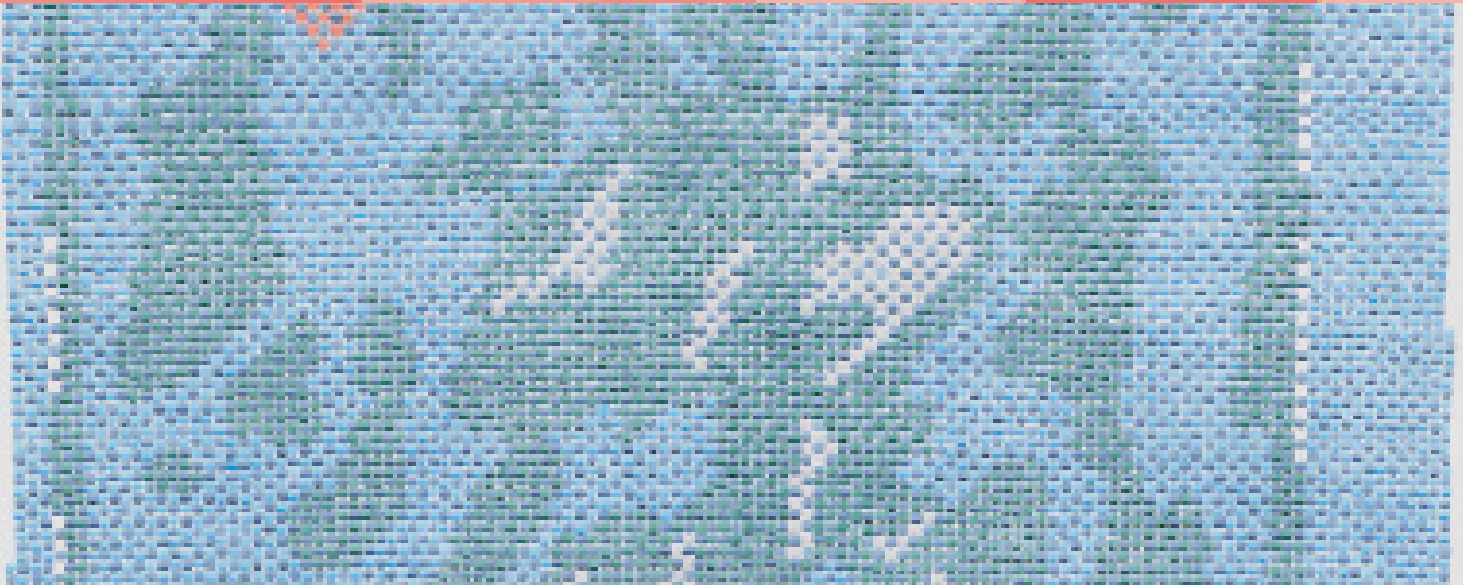
Lachlan McKee's paintings *Blocks* (2020) and *House* (2020) explore the pleasure and failures of the pictorial plane in painting. McKee plays with the conventions of composition, breaking down the traditional separation between figure and ground to create a more ambient and fluid image-world. This language is composed of synthetic colours, meandering contours, and abstract shapes that interact dynamically and dance on the precipice of becoming resolved figures. McKee's works play with the depth of the image, layering forms over each other, causing them to rise and then recede creating a complex visual web that plays with the eye.

Gallery Discussion

1. Visually deconstruct McKee's work. How has he exploited pictorial planes through his mark making.
2. What symbols and motifs do you recognise in the work?
3. How does McKee's create such unconventional compositions?
4. What are the similarities between the works. How do they demonstrate this concept of a complex visual web.

Classroom Activities

1. Create a composition that explores foreground, midground and background (different pictorial planes) using only colour and pattern.
2. Create a series of line drawings on tracing paper. Layer these adding colour and pattern to selected layers, experimenting with the different pictorial planes.



Martin George, Bubble, 2019, acrylic on cotton canvas, 183 x 152.5cm.

Artist

Martin George (b. 1993) is a Sydney born, Melbourne based artist whose primary medium is painting. George's practice explores abstract painting as a medium, investigating its ability to reflect contemporary notions – drawing from both decorative and abstract painting histories to create canvases that provide intentionally unresolved moments of reflection.

Context

George's paintings Spotlight and Bubble both layer abstract motifs and expressive gestures to create anti-technical paintings that mimic the moment before an image comes into focus. The paintings, with repeated cross-hatching motifs both obscure the sharp abstract form beneath and create a highly decorative surface which reference to Mondrian's Checkerboard paintings. The looseness of each of the gestures within the composition suggest an ambiguity of feeling toward painting after high modernism. .

Gallery Discussion

1. What meaning is created through the absence of an identifiable subject?
2. Does the subtlety of colour evoke an emotional response?
3. How do the repeated, simplified "pixels" reference Mondrian as an artist of influence?

Classroom Activities

1. Take a photograph that captures the subject of your current inquiry. Print the image twice.
Print 1: Select key "pixels" from the image, cut them out and collage them back together to form an abstraction.
Print 2: Select 3 key colours from the image, and a geometric shape that references the forms. Use paint to explore the repetition of the shape and hues as symbolic motifs.



Anti-Poem, 2020, wood, cement, sand, gravel, candle, cardboard, clay, plaster, papier mache, paper, magiclay, oven-bake clay, ceramics, fake potato, sponges, liquid nails, copper sheet, styrofoam, polyurethane foam, foam rods, wire, rubber bands, gloves, rope, house paint, spray paint, curly hair, wool, chalk, pigmented cement rocks, chicken wire, aluminium foil, metal rods, fabric, spoons and drop sheet, 103 x 150 x 200cm.

Artist

Nabilah Nordin (b. 1991) is a Malay Singaporean/Australian artist working and living in Melbourne. Interested in material invention, her installations embrace a wonky craftsmanship, playfully celebrating the monstrous, visceral, and anthropomorphic qualities of materials.

Context

Nabilah Nordin's *Anti-Poem* (2020) "yanks objects from the immediate vicinity and drags them into its orbit" (Nordin, 2020). The sculptural installation encompasses materials like spoons, rocks, wool, hair, globules of plaster and mashed paper, and balls of doughy mulch held together by glue, string, pegs and wire. Threatening to fall apart at any moment, these forms take shape by their own volition with the material qualities dictating their final arrangement. In *Anti-Poem* Nordin resists metaphor, representation, or narrative and instead foregrounds the autonomous life force of these materials which ooze, spill, leak, splatter, fall break, and crumble.

"Maybe *Anti-Poem* speaks about being a sculptor. Maybe it speaks about the childlike joy of babbling incoherently in a spongy, springy vocabulary of studio detritus and overflowing scraps. Maybe it shows the internal organs of a sculptor working." (Nordin, 2020)

Gallery Discussion

1. How many mediums are used within this work?
2. How does Nordin's work consider audience and the concept of social tension?
3. What aspects of the work do you find challenging?
4. How does the work use symbols, motifs or signs to communicate themes of gender, identity and or culture?

Classroom Activities

1. Develop a utopia pattern.
2. Draw this on building materials (bricks, pipes)



Nathan Beard, Floral Arrangement, 2019, archival inkjet print on Canson Baryta, Swarovski Elements, gold leaf, Fenty Beauty Diamond Bomb, glitter, mounting tape, 75 x 100cm.

Artist

Nathan Beard is a Perth-based interdisciplinary artist whose work addresses the complex interplay of culture and memory in the shaping of identity. Beard explores his Thai-Australian heritage through careful historical research and mix media experimentation. His work explores the culturally symbolic meanings of various hand gestures which are a part of Thai culture, including the brass nail extensions worn by Thai dancers to accentuate their movements.

Context

Nathan Beard explores his Thai-Australian heritage through careful historical research and mix media experimentation. His work interrogates the cultural associations and idiosyncrasies of various hand gestures found in traditional Thai culture, including the brass nail extensions worn by Thai dancers to accentuate their movements.

Beard's contemporary interpretations allude to the anxieties and emotional entanglements Beard has felt towards the symbolism of various gestures. These include the "cultural inauthenticity" of the wai (Thai greeting), fostered "through its ritualized performance in social and familial contexts" as well as its awkward use by tourists and imprisoned Westerners, who perform the gesture as a symbol of contrition.

Gallery Discussion

1. What question is the artist trying to ask in their work?
2. How does the artist use physical gesture to communicate meaning?
3. How does the work use symbols, motifs or signs to communicate themes of gender, identity and or culture?

Classroom Activities

1. Blind drawing - place your hand in a dynamic gesture. Looking only at your hand, draw your pose without looking at the paper.
2. How can you express different emotions through gesture? Experiment using photography and lights.
3. Think about aspects of your own culture. Develop a small object that could reference this part of your culture
4. Document the object experimenting with hand gesture and photography.



Tom Blake, index, centre, 2020, cyanotype, artist-made frame, 30 x 40cm

Artist

Tom Blake is a Sydney-based interdisciplinary artist who works across printmaking, sculpture, installation, performance and film. Blake creates moments for contemplation by abstracting sourced imagery. His works create a symbolic language through a repetitive drawing process, in which motifs become abstracted in order to encourage audiences to reflect on the physical, psychological and digital spaces that they occupy.

Context

Tom Blake's *if the leaves are still there* (2020) and *floating line* (2020) are created by drawing into the back of painted mirrors with etching tools to reveal fragmented loops and streams of golden light. The 'loop' and the 'stream' are both generative elements within Blake's practice, appearing through the arrangement and display of objects in the gallery and via the repetition of imagery and gestures across multiple forms and sites. Objects with a haptic relationship to our hands are also recurring motifs, bringing our attention to these quiet moments of convergence.

Gallery Discussion

1. What motifs do you recognise in Blake's drawings?
2. Discuss the way in which Blake has chosen to install the work. How does this impact the way the audience engages with the work?
3. How do the reflective surfaces encourage the audience to stop and contemplate the physical, psychological and digital spaces the works occupy.

Classroom Activities

1. Blind Drawing - place your hand onto the table in front of you. Looking only at your hand and not the paper. Draw your hand without looking at your paper (2 Minutes, 30 seconds, 10 seconds)
2. Photograph your face in an expressive gesture and print. Using tracing paper and line only create a simplified drawing of your face. (20 Lines, 10 lines, 5 lines)
3. Choose two of your drawings and layer them into one composition. Use this design and experiment with printmaking techniques.



Athena Thebus, *Angel's Warning*, 2020, custom wallpaper

Artist

Athena Thebus is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice spans sculpture, photography, video and writing. Influenced by her Catholic upbringing and Filipino mother; Thebus is driven by the desire to generate atmospheres thick with past shame and queer hope.

Context

Athena Thebus' *Angel's Warning* (2020) is inspired by the biblical story of Lot's wife. In it angels appear to Lot urging him and his family to flee the 'sinful' city of Sodom and that they will be saved if they leave immediately and never look back. Lot's wife takes one last look back at the burning city and is transformed into a pillar of salt. Historically, the word Sodom has negative connotations of homosexuality which leads speculate about other, queer interpretations of this story.

Angel's Warning suggests that perhaps Sodom sounded like fun to Lot's wife and maybe she didn't really want to leave. Also inspired by the poet Sappho's imagery of burning with desire, this work is rich with fiery symbols—combusting columns frame the central image of Lot's wife with a tattoo of throne angels on her back. Looking at her between the burning columns as she defiantly looks back, our perspective is from Sodom, implicating us to readdress our position.

Gallery Discussion

1. How does Thebus consider the re-interpretation of biblical stories in a contemporary context?
2. Why is challenging traditional narratives important for shaping contemporary dialogues?
3. How does the artist use symbolism to tell a visual story?

Classroom Activities

1. Collect 5 objects that are symbolically significant to your current inquiry.
2. Arrange the objects into a still life composition that communicates a narrative through symbolism.
3. Record the collection using a medium that adds to the symbolic meaning of the collection.