

WE'RE NOT DEAD YET



WE'RE NOT DEAD YET

Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery
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www.werenotdeadyet.com.au



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Photography Lyn Nixon

RIGHT / *Insectory* | Megan Christie 2015 | recycled pine furniture, rice paper, mixed media | 50cm x 20cm x 20cm
Photography Lyn Nixon





CURATORIAL FOREWORD

Anna Louise Richardson

Dear women (and men),

When we talk about gender equality in art, we talk about different views through the glass ceiling, but we don't seem to talk about the role of age. Examining the underrepresentation of women in the canon is central to the dialogue, but in an industry enthralled by the 'new' there is a large blank space when it comes to women finding their artistic voice later in life. Art has never flourished in a vacuum and a life lived with all the challenges of career, family, relationships and responsibilities can offer a rich foundation for a woman in the prime of her life, ready to reveal the artist she has become.

We're not dead yet is an invitation to consider the practices of six women over the age of fifty, women who have lived full lives and now choose to voice their formidable agency as artists. As practitioners they are emerging, as human beings they bring a depth of knowledge and experience that youth simply hasn't had the time to gather. Together they offer a creative energy that can't be ignored. It's time to put aside any expectations of how older women might express themselves, this group of women have found their voices and it's time to listen.

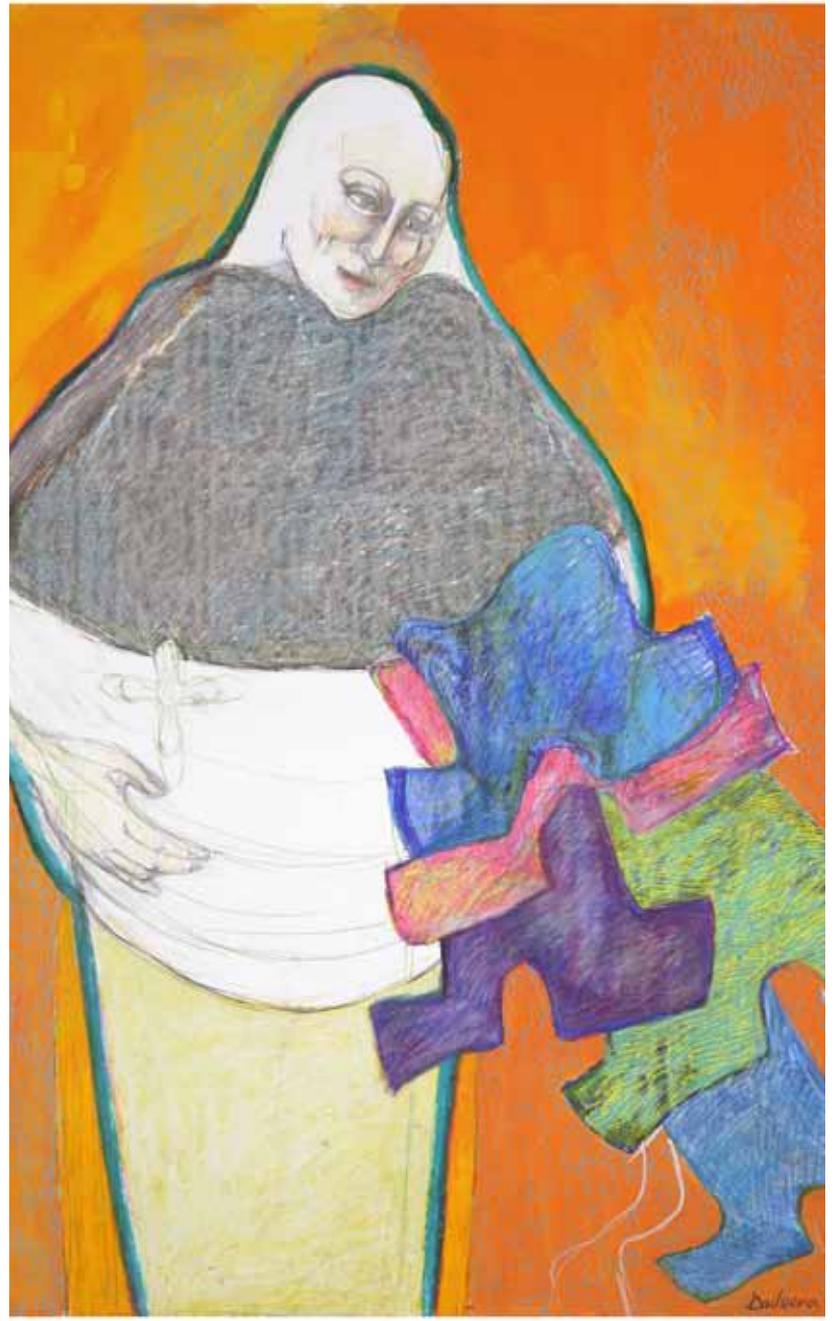
Exploring themes of familial space, the environment, intimacy and femininity, the work of these artists deserves our attention. Reimagining the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery as an expanded domestic environment subverts and celebrates the idea of the home as a site of matriarchal power. The project, including the group exhibition, artist talks, symposium and high tea is intended to foster a conversation addressing the many different roles that women's life experiences play in enriching the artistic ecology that sustains us all.

Anna Louise Richardson
Curator, *We're not dead yet*

LEFT / *We're not dead yet artists* | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

RIGHT / *Turning Point* | Megan Christie 2009 | recycled jarrah, jarrah veneer | 60cm x 60cm x 45cm
Photography Neil Erasmus





NOTES ON EMERGING, FULLY GROWN

Gemma Weston

To be an artist 'emerging' today is a difficult business. It seems there are more artists than there have ever been before. Perhaps this is proportional, as there are also more people than there have ever been before, but it is doubtful that there has been a proportional increase in worthwhile artistic opportunity. To be an emerging female artist is more difficult still. In 2011, two thirds of Australian art school graduates were women, but women artists made up only a third of artists exhibiting at 'CAOS' (Contemporary Art Organisations Australia) level institutions(i). To be an female artist 'emerging' later in life presents another set of challenges, as the term 'emerging' seems inextricably entwined with the demographic of the 'young adult'.

In 2009, The New Museum in New York opened its inaugural triennial - *The Generational: Younger than Jesus*. The triennial would serve as the flagship event in the Museum's long-term project to support 'new art and new ideas', with the aim of capturing through wide ranging surveys of international 'emerging' art the "signals of imminent generational change"(ii). *Younger than Jesus* featured 50 artists from 25 countries, all born after 1976, "inspired by the fact that some of the most influential and enduring gestures in art and history have been made by young people in the early stages of their lives". Reviewers viewed this subtext largely as a provocation. Their searches for the zeitgeist named a number of broad trends - anarchical multiple identities, an almost militant sense of detachment - but appeared to remain largely unconvinced that age-specific curatorial premises could yield it up, noting that even a curatorial catalogue essay likened generational analysis to reading horoscopes: "suspiciously nonspecific, although we long for [them] not to be"(iii).

However, the deliberate conflation by curators and institutions of art that addresses the now with art made by the young appears itself to be part of an international zeitgeist. In Australia, *Primavera* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney has since 1992 presented a yearly survey of artists under 35; Melbourne's biennial *Next Wave* festival, launched in 1984, gives priority in its Kickstart program of mentorship and support to projects where the key artists are 30 years of age or under. The annual *New* exhibitions held at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art since 2003 are less specific about demographics but tend use the terms 'young' and 'emerging' interchangeably.

Think-pieces on the ascendancy of the term 'emerging' and its relationship with age in arts funding and support programs hit peak numbers around 2011-2012(1), reaching little consensus but at least acknowledging the demographic complexity of an industry where 'early career' might not necessarily mean 'early 20s'. Currently, The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) describes an emerging artist as one that has practised as a professional artist continually for less than 5 years. After 2015's funding shake-up, the Australia Council seems even less inclined to make distinctions; 'emerging' as a term is now attached to 'experimental', describing a specialist panel of assessors and referring less to the artist than the artform, with 'emerging' implying a new kind of undefined avant-garde practice.

Despite attempts to decouple it from age, this sense of novelty implied by newness shadows the use of the word 'emerging'. It suggests something either not-quite-fully realised or something that might not yet stick. A key criticism of *Younger Than Jesus* was that these artists were so new that it was hard to know whether to take them seriously, in case they didn't stick around. The New Yorker's Peter Schjeldahl argued that it was likely that few of those artistic visions would prevail beyond it: "*The only sorting system for artists that matters—according to individual quality and influence—will prevail, in time, over fashion. Not that there's anything wrong with fashion. Novelty keeps us spry, and it cleans up after itself by being gone in a minute.*"(iv)

With the benefit of hindsight, Schjeldahl's claim bears some fruit. *Younger Than Jesus* did produce from its numbers a gaggle of hugely influential 'art stars'(2), but such presumption that the 'system' is an organic meritocracy that will correctly align itself given time demonstrates a leap of great faith that is difficult to share given the ongoing efforts - particularly by feminist historians, academics, artists, curators - to closely examine its failings and exclusions.

Linda Nochlin's still-incendiary text, *Why have there been no great women artists?* lays out in 1971 a roadmap for navigating the back alleys of the 'meritocracy'. Nochlin argues that in order to properly comprehend the

FAR LEFT / *Holeproofs* | Daveena Cox 2013 | oil pastel, pencil on paper | 102cm x 64cm
Photography Daveena Cox

LEFT / *Awash with joy* | Daveena Cox 2013 | mixed media on paper | 122cm x 86cm
Photography Daveena Cox

scope of her provocative question, the common misconception that art is a "direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience, a translation of personal life into visual terms" must also be addressed(v). The myth of the 'transcendental creative act' made by a preternaturally gifted genius disguises that "the making of art involves a self-consistent language of form, more or less dependent upon, or free from, given temporally defined conventions, schemata, or systems of notation, which have to be learned or worked out, either through teaching, apprenticeship, or a long period of individual experimentation." Art is a practice requiring long-term commitment and devotion inaccessible for some due to competing social expectations, enacted in and inseparable from social, institutional and educational contexts, which in themselves create structural inequalities that impact on the length and depth of an artist's participation. 'Sorting systems' can be understood to produce rather than privilege 'individual quality and influence'.

It's likely that an artist who 'emerges' into the institutions of exhibitions, galleries and critics later in life does so on the back of not a snap decision made in a vacuum but after decades of what Nochlin might define as creative practice or thinking(3). Perhaps this practice has been managed around other commitments of career or family, or both, perhaps framed in the terms of the amateur or hobbyist rather than the 'professional' artist who can leverage the finite commodity of time away on residency or in the studio. A commonly cited Australian exception to the accepted timeline for success, Rosalie Gascoigne (4)(vi), held her first exhibition in 1974 at age 57, but multiple biographies document years of collecting, arranging and thinking structured around life at home and root her critically acclaimed practice of sculptural assemblage in an long term engagement with the Japanese art of flower arranging, *ikebana*(5).

Biography - her marriage and children, her life in the remote town of Mount Stromlo, her isolation from the 'art establishment' and lack of formal training - has been integral to establishing the narrative of Gascoigne's work. However, she provides another exception in that her practice has largely escaped being viewed through the lens of her gender, which tends to provide ambient background noise to primary interpretations relating to landscape, assemblage, appropriation or various philosophies. Gascoigne is allowed to be an artist first, whose experiences inform but do not define her practice. Nochlin had already argued against "*the existence of a distinctive and recognizable feminine style, different both in its formal and its*

expressive qualities and based on the special character of women's situation and experience"(vii). 'Domains' of experience and style often pejoratively categorised as feminine - interiority, emotion, excessive desire – are present as if not more often in the work of male artists, but are recast in more heroic narratives. However, the persistent association of 'femininity' in Western visual culture with particular qualities - submissiveness, softness, superficiality, the decorative - and narratives that retain either pejorative associations or are considered to be of lesser value presents an ongoing challenge for women artists, particularly those wishing to directly explore 'gendered' arenas of experience - domestic life, motherhood, the construction of femininity itself.

A woman coming to art later in life, after having been devoted to other professions - perhaps a marine biologist, an MBA, an Olympic cyclist, a vet, a physiotherapist, a mother - embodies a number of contradictions and challenges. She might have her practice viewed as a hobby or vocation, while also existing outside funding structures and exhibition opportunities that can propel artistic practice into the 'professional' strata. Her practice may be based on potentially decades of experience, interpreted through and evaluated against the lens and currency of 'the now'. If that experience has involved motherhood or homemaking - and especially if her practice draws directly from those experiences as subject matter - her works risk interpretation, in Nochlin's words, as 'quintessentially feminine' - the embodiment of an essentialist 'truth' about a natural, unconstructed 'femininity'. They might be seen to be making 'women's art' rather than art. But still, how can the long denigration of subjects or styles by their historical association with femininity be made good without exploration of their substance, meanings and importance, without staking a claim for their value? The naming of success stories, like Gascoigne, and continued efforts to rescue a host of others from the margins of history will only go some way to address these challenges. Instead, the impetus should be - as it was in 1971- to look beyond individuals and instead examine the frameworks that assign or deny value, significance and authority to particular subjects and voices, to acknowledge and celebrate where those voices are speaking from, and why.

(1) For example, Blouin ARTINFO's *What Does "Emerging" Really Mean in the Art World?*, Julia Halpern, April 15th 2011; ArtsHub's *What is an emerging artist?*, Staff Authors, April 2nd, 2012; The Guardian's *Young, emerging or ready? For early career artists, it's all in the labelling*, Eleanor Turney, November 26th 2012.

(2) Although the list of enduringly ascendant 'YTJ' alumni includes Tauba Auerbach and Kitty Krauss, the biggest and most recognisable of its names are male: Ryan Trecartin, Cory Archangel, Ryan Gander, Cyprian Gallard, and co-curator Massimiliano Gioni, who went on to curate the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2013.

(3) An anecdote: after 'emerging' onto the market at age 89 after six decades of painting, Cuban-born American artist Carmen Herrera received a lifetime achievement award from the Walker Art Centre some five years later. At the ceremony, painter and friend Tony Bechara reportedly toasted her with a Puerto-Rican epigram, "The bus — *la guagua* — always comes for those who wait," to which Herrera responded: "Well, Tony, I've been at the bus stop for 94 years." From *The New York Times*, *At 94, She's the Hot New Thing in Painting*, Deborah Sontag, December 19th 2009.

(4) Although, in keeping with Nochlin's text, the identification of exceptions does not disqualify the rule, and one should be wary of revisionism if the rules of the canon itself are the problem.

(5) See Vici MacDonald, Rosalie Gascoigne, 1998, Regaro: Paddington NSW; Kelly Gellatly (ed), Rosalie Gascoigne, 2008, National Gallery of Victoria: Melbourne VIC; Mary Eagle, ed. *From the Studio of Rosalie Gascoigne*, 2000, Australian National University Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra ACT.

(i) The COUNTess: Educating and exhibiting artists, December 2nd 2012: <http://countesses.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/educating-and-exhibiting-artists.html>

(ii) New Museum Digital Archive, Exhibition: "The Generational: Younger than Jesus", April 8th - July 12th 2009, http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/937

(iii) Peter Schjeldahl, *Their Generation: "Younger Than Jesus" at the New Museum*. *The New Yorker*: The Art World, April 20th 2009.

(iv) *ibid.*

(v) Linda Nochlin, *Why have there been no great women artists?*, ARTnews January 1971; republished www.artnews.com, April 30th 2015.

(vi) *ibid.*



THE ART OF NON-ATTACHMENT

Kate Alida Mullen

For furniture maker Megan Christie, *We're not dead yet* will be something of a retrospective. Since turning to woodwork in her more mature years, her immense output features a diversity of 'functional art forms', each one markedly independent from the one before. Megan differentiates each creative project by continually introducing new techniques that expand her repertoire: the variety and treatment of the wood may vary, or her design will borrow inspiration from a different historical pool of style. Thematically, however, Megan is consistent in her message of advocating ecological and ethical consciousness around the land.

A recent body of her work deals pointedly with the arrogance and ignorance that so often accompanies the way people manage and manipulate the natural environment. This work was conceived in response to witnessing the illogical, at times destructive, decisions made in the name of land management. For this, Megan incorporated original painting into her furniture designs to articulate the issue at hand. Insects, birds and mammals grace the surfaces of a series of display cabinets, birdcages and tables with the same precision seen in botanical painting.

These works call particular attention to a second element consistent within Megan's practice: the point of contention between art, design and craft that is embodied neatly in both the materiality and the creative process behind her furniture.

Provoked are complex questions around the notion of furniture making as art: what happens when a conceptual piece of furniture is relocated from display in an art gallery to a lived home environment? Does the work's transition to an interactive object degrade or enhance its status as art?

Flight Cabinet is one example: a painted china cabinet made from recycled pine furniture, rice paper and acrylic paint. Its shelving is adorned with hand-painted birds in flight, thus appearing too precious to be used for its intended purpose. However, a barely detectable layer of glass acts to protect the handy work so, while making known the delicacy of its artistry, its accessibility is in fact quietly encouraged by its design. Megan says: "I was deliberately making



art with the intent that they could be used but by using them you in some way compromise the artistic vision of the piece”.

Megan creates consciously; her concepts precede her methodology. The design and craft armatures that come with her chosen medium imbue her creative process with a strict code of methodological and technical conduct. And it is this process that Megan is attached to. Upon completion of an artwork, Megan upholds a stance of non-attachment, even indifference, towards it: “If someone destroyed it, what would upset me would be the destruction and waste of that timber, not of my artwork”.

When asked what observations can be made with the hindsight afforded by a retrospective, Megan comments that, more and more, the relationship between humankind and the landscape resonates organically and clearly through her work with locally sourced recycled or naturally fallen timber.



LEFT / *Megan Christie* | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

RIGHT / *Flight Cabinet* | Megan Christie 2015 | recycled pine furniture, rice paper, acrylic | 90cm x 40cm x 110cm
Photography Megan Christie





LEFT / *Yawk Yawk* | Megan Christie 2014 | sheoak, acrylic, printed cotton (Eva Nganjmirra) | 165cm x 160cm x 80cm
Photography Megan Christie

ABOVE / *Tree Change* | Megan Christie 2015 | WA blackbutt, marri, glass beads, ply | 80cm x 37.5cm x 120cm
Photography Megan Christie

MEGAN CHRISTIE

Medium

Furniture.

Education

Advanced Diploma of Design (Three Dimensional Design),
Central Institute of Technology, WA.

Diploma of Art (Print Making), Central Institute of Technology, WA.

Diploma of Art (Furniture Design),

Australian School of Fine Wood, Dwellingup WA.

Practice

Landscape and narrative form the basis of my practice, with an interest in environmentally sustainable modes of production that express beliefs about how we respond to the use of natural materials and farm our surroundings.

Past life

After pursuing various careers including veterinarian, lecturer, riding instructor and beef cattle farmer, I have taken up a career as an artist, primarily working in fine furniture design.

We're not dead yet

The idea for *We're not dead yet* arose from a degree of frustration at the lack of opportunities and recognition accessible to older, emerging women artists. The response was the same as it always is - if you want something enough, get a group of strong women together and make it happen. The great thing about the exhibition is the opportunity to work with a group of interesting, talented women who are all dedicated to their art practice yet still have full busy lives and strong family connections. It celebrates the things women do well which are often overlooked or undervalued - working collaboratively, organising and getting things done, supporting relationships and the unique connection of mothers and daughters. I love working with Anna, we make a great team. This show has been and is fun, exciting and at the same time addresses a range of issues which are important to all of us, as artists and as human beings.

www.meganchristiedesigns.com

BELOW / *Lotus Seat* | Megan Christie 2015 | WA peppermint, printed linen (Ann Carmel Mulvein) | 85cm x 58cm x 80cm
Photography Megan Christie

OPPOSITE PAGE

LEFT / *Kimono Mirror* | Megan Christie 2013 | sheoak, lacquered ply, glass mosaic | 74cm x 40cm x 171.5cm
Photography Megan Christie

MIDDLE / *Kimono Desk* | Megan Christie 2013 | sheoak, lacquered ply, glass mosaic | 110cm x 45cm x 121.5cm
Photography Megan Christie

RIGHT / *Kimono Cupboard* | Megan Christie 2013 | sheoak, lacquered ply, glass mosaic | 40cm x 40cm x 180cm
Photography Megan Christie





FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Kate Alida Mullen

As a peachy dawn light slinks over the rocky plains of Western Australia's central Pilbara, I find myself at a once bustling prospectors' site, reflecting upon the enigmatic and alive clay incarnations of artist Karen Millar. Perhaps no obvious conclusion can be drawn between contemplating Karen's artwork and my current setting: miles from nowhere yet geographically and, in many ways, spiritually and industrially the epicentre of this massive stretch of land. Intuition, however, tells me there's something there.

For one, Karen's artworks communicate in the way of this sand hill country. If you stay still long enough to receive them, her configurations bear secrets that reveal themselves in whispers to your inner ear. Like the ghostly desert oaks that surround my perch, they whistle of the innate, delicate details of human nature and, once felt, their insights seem to uncomplicate, if only for a moment, the inescapable vastness in which we're suspended.

Karen's compilations of elements from the untouched environment offer us allegories for the archetypal human composition. *In Defence* is a clay sculpture exemplary of her works' capacity to quietly untangle the intricacies of the fragile cores we each protect beneath defensive thorns. Hand-molded elongations of metallic spikes pierce both the hollowed out inner and exterior parts of creamy, spherical objects, prompting a sense that the defensive patterns that unfurl organically at micro, cellular levels are echoed at macro and psychological ones.

Several years ago, a decision to step away from the security of employment enabled Karen the physical and mental space needed to dive deep into her art practice. It had always been in the background, vying for her attention against the multiple roles that fit under the hat of Provider: mother, wife and career woman. With this step away from social expectation came creative liberation, as well as a more consistent home base in Perth following a nomadic existence as a maritime archeologist.

Underwater archeology took Karen to exotic locations for years at a time on expeditions to uncover large shipwrecks. Through this she came to know intimately places like Thailand, Sri Lanka and China "from the inside out", she



says. Similarly, her artwork deals with the deeper inner workings of the psyche and of nature. Her observations are delivered with an organic aesthetic and are often understated in scale, keeping faithful to the sacred internal realms from which they surface.

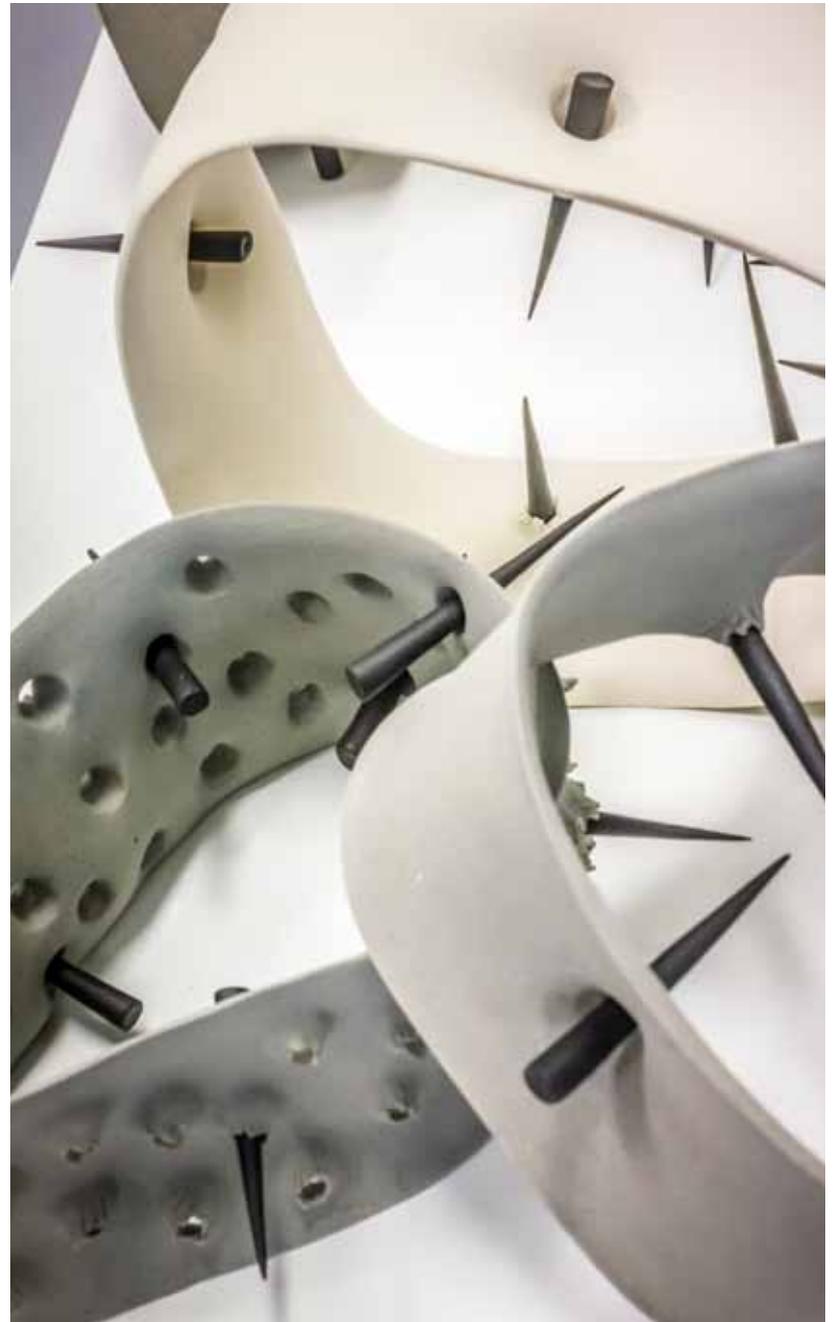
Mounting personal evidence has taught Karen that trust in one's own intuition is vital in the creative process. She became more confident in this inkling while developing ephemeral land art during two art residencies at old stations in rural Western Australia. These experiences lead her to respond to the landscape with fire, clay and found bones and driftwood.

More and more, Karen is consciously allowing her intuition to guide her in her art practice and sees *We're not dead yet* as an opportunity to arrive at new work through uninhibited experimentation. It is through this approach that expressions from a collective consciousness may emerge.

FAR LEFT / Karen Millar | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

BELOW / *Urchin Lights* | Karen Millar 2015 | porcelain, jarrah, halogen lights | 10cm x 100cm x 20cm
Photography Acorn Photo







LEFT / *In Defence* | Karen Millar 2013 | porcelain | dimensions variable
Photography Gary Parris



ABOVE / *Erosion Series* | Karen Millar 2016 | porcelain | dimensions variable
Photography Pascal Proteau

BELOW / *Fly Away* | Karen Millar 2016 | porcelain on aluminium mesh | 90cm x 90cm
Photography Karen Millar

KAREN MILLAR

Medium

Sculptural ceramics.

Education

Advanced Diploma of Visual Art, Central Institute of Technology, WA.

Practice

My work is a tribute to the beauty and evolutionary strength of the natural world. Through the connection I have with our environment and the range of assaults it faces, I have come to understand the significant role we play in maintaining the fragile equilibrium of our ecosystems. I have sought, in my most recent body of work, to highlight the seemingly invisible impacts of our interventions.

Past life

Guilty white South African. Immigrated in 1977. Main professional career over more than twenty years as a maritime archaeologist. Working in Asia predominantly (China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Maldives). Teaching local archaeologists to manage their underwater historical resources. The biggest impact on my thought process, the way I view the world and the value I place on things has come from being a mother. This heightened sense of moral responsibility towards humanity and the environment comes from the daily process of nurturing and loving a child into adulthood. I have integrated 'making' into my life in various ways throughout my previous career. In the past five years I have given my skills and expressions in art full time attention. This is what I intend to be doing for the rest of my life.

We're not dead yet

My work and thought processes are in perfect synchronicity with the exhibition concept being explored in *We're not dead yet*. Emerging women artists who are older, have so much life experience to draw from for their art and yet are inevitably seen as hobbyists. For this exhibition, I will explore the opposition of older women as fragile, fixers, the glue and not the important functional part, by creating a number of works that address a range of concerns and issues that occupy my thinking.

www.karenmillar.com.au



LEFT / *Where do they sleep at night* | Karen Millar 2015
porcelain, wire, steel | dimensions variable
Photography May Ali

RIGHT / *Story Boxes* | Karen Millar 2012
porcelain, found objects | dimensions variable
Photography Karen Millar



THE SILENT WEIGHTS WE BEAR

Kate Alida Mullen

Daveena's drawings invite a phantasmagorical experience. She presents us with images of scenes and characters that feel uncannily like ones dormant in our own subconscious; those which flash to the surface in the midst of absurd, flickering dreamscapes. In truth, it is the essence of familiarity within her subjects, peering through the enchantment of her rendering, that prompts this sensation for Daveena is a realist through and through; a practiced observer of life.

A spirit of defiance in her drawings calls forth a lineage of historical feminine artists who were irrepressible in the face of their male dominated social contexts. For instance, her compact scenes of lived urban environments revisit those of French Impressionist painter Berthe Morisot, who was staunchly devoted to capturing the limited spaces accessible to women in early 19th century France. So too does her vivid palette and lyrical line work reminisce of the untamed and textured drawings that saturate the pages of Frida Kahlo's diaries. Kahlo was uncompromisingly sincere in expressing her condition as a Mexican woman living as an artist in the earlier part of the 20th century.

Continuing these traditions from a modern, western standpoint, Daveena takes on the spaces of domesticity in the primal medium of drawing. In doing so, she encourages the longstanding connotations that exist around them to shift. Rather than confining or mundane, her honest portraits reveal these spheres as rich in emotional drama and activity, ones worthy of acknowledgment, even celebration. They speak of the resilience and strength of women, not their repression. Women are depicted as the strongholds of these spaces more so than subservient to their upkeep.

For the past twelve months Daveena has been living in Saudi Arabia with her young family, attempting to integrate the roles of mother and artist within a culture that sits at the other extremity to her former life in Australia. She finds the silence that defines the local Arabic women of her new home more confronting in reality than she expected it to be from afar. Connection with this group of women is something altogether denied. In response, symbols of caged birds have begun to permeate her pages and Niqab-like veils have swept into her backgrounds as means of describing the silence in this social



dynamic. Whereas her work produced in Australia typically made visible those spaces often unseen as a result of being so habitual, Daveena is now closely witnessing a different, more severe and controlled type of silence; one impenetrable to outsiders.

One of the artist's recent works speaks of a condition of womanhood that surpasses even these barriers: "our interconnectedness" she says "and the emotional weight that people bear, consciously or unconsciously". Pictured is a woman peddling an imagined bicycle with an engorged bubble bound to her back. In it is supported a nebulous network of female characters - from elderly women to a newborn child - staggered akin to Russian Babushka Dolls. The often-unseen burdens of caretaking that shade our intimate relationships act, simultaneously, as networks of support. The layered build up of erased pencil line in Daveena's imagery refers in a literal sense to her overarching theme of invisibility, which she will continue to explore for *We're not dead yet*.

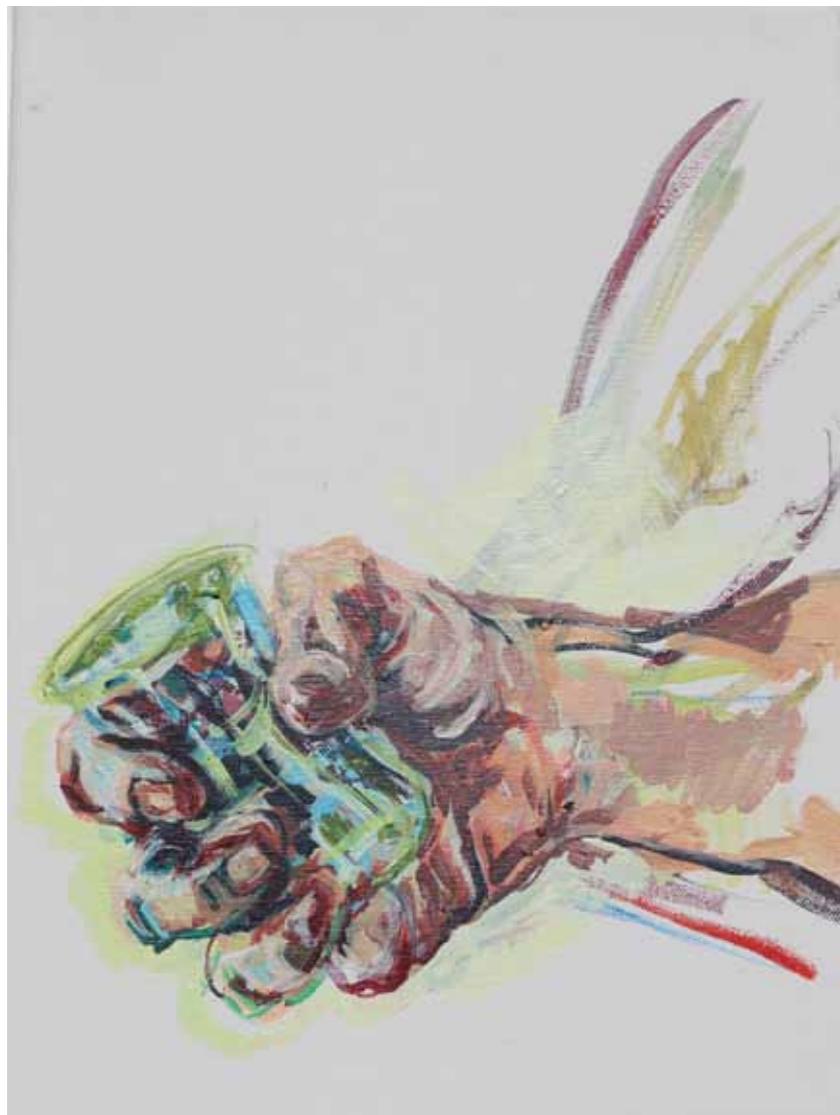


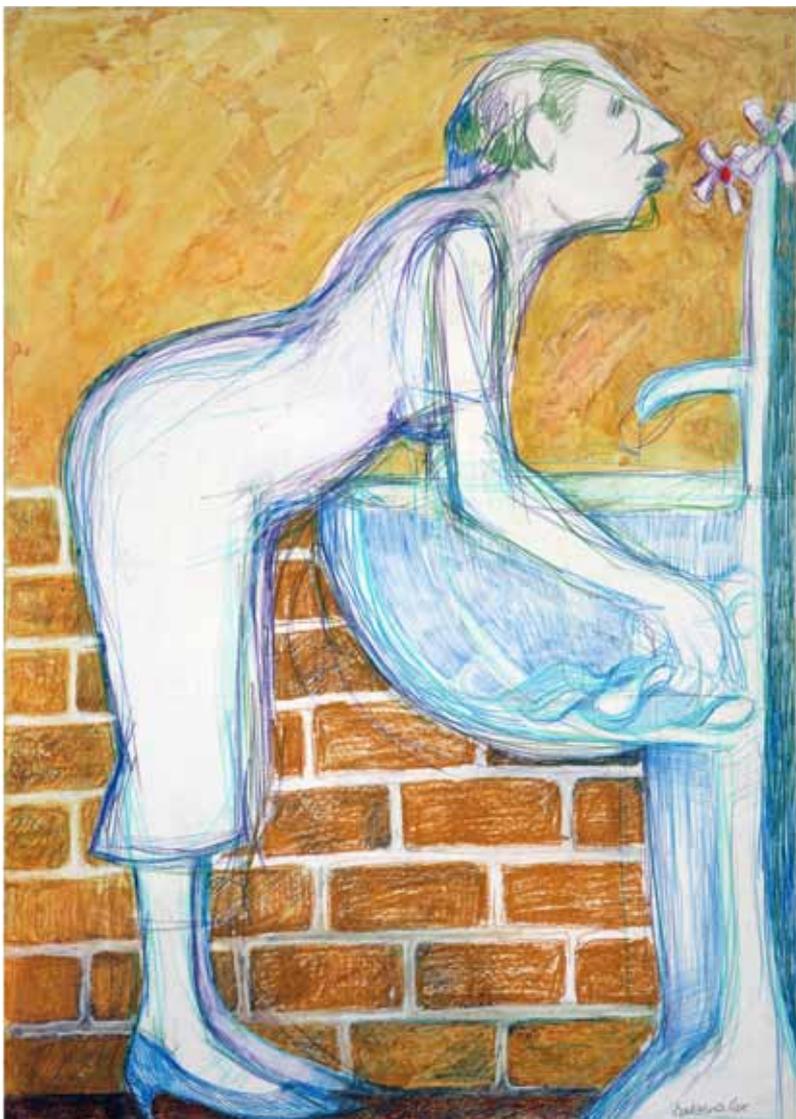
LEFT / *Daveena Cox* | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

RIGHT / *An Arabic Welcome* | Daveena Cox 2015 | acrylic on canvas | 35cm x 25cm
Photography Daveena Cox

LEFT / *The house of a friend 1* | Daveena Cox 2015 | acrylic canvas | 25cm x 35cm
Photography Daveena Cox

RIGHT / *The house of a friend 2* | Daveena Cox 2015 | acrylic canvas | 25cm x 35cm
Photography Daveena Cox





DAVEENA COX

Medium

Drawing and painting.

Education

Diploma of Fine Art, Claremont School of Art, WA.
Currently living in Saudi Arabia - a mind altering course involving politics, philosophy, geography and social demography. A real education.

Practice

Emerging from studio for regular life drawing and portrait painting from life.

Past life

Escaped the country for art school at nineteen. Sundry odd jobs. Most recently teaching life drawing.

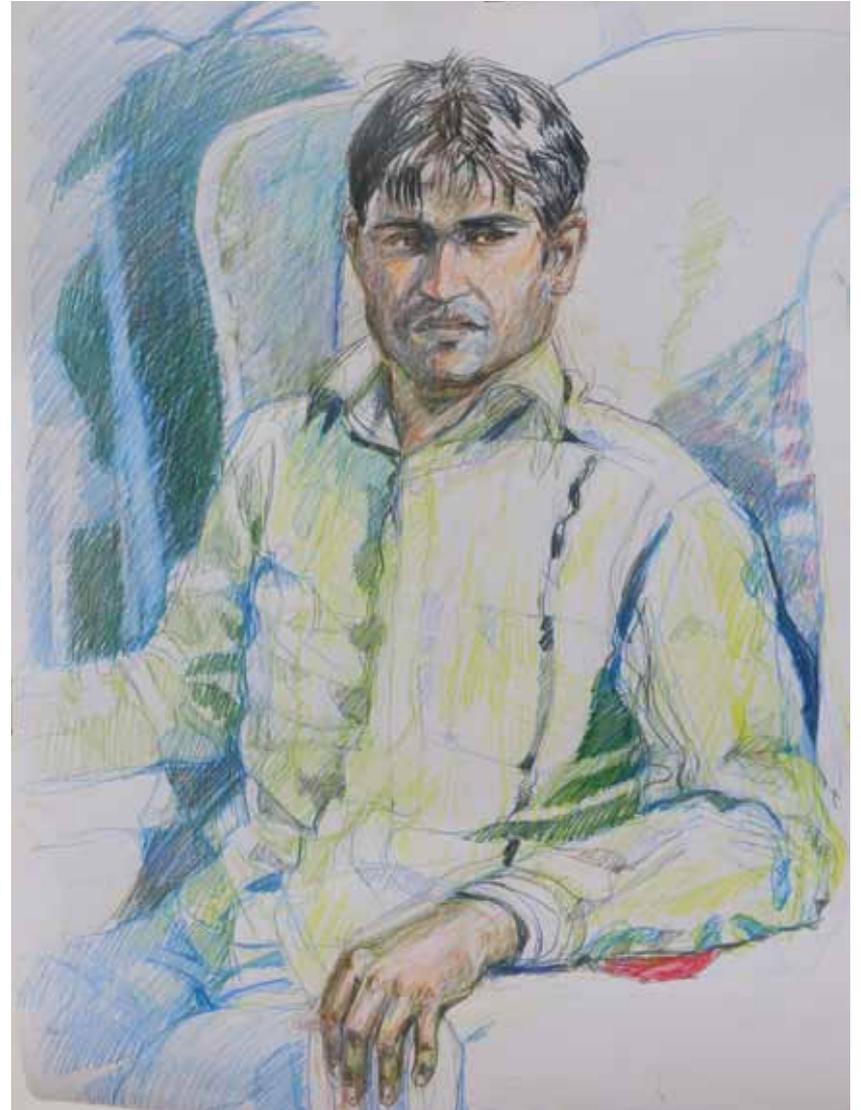
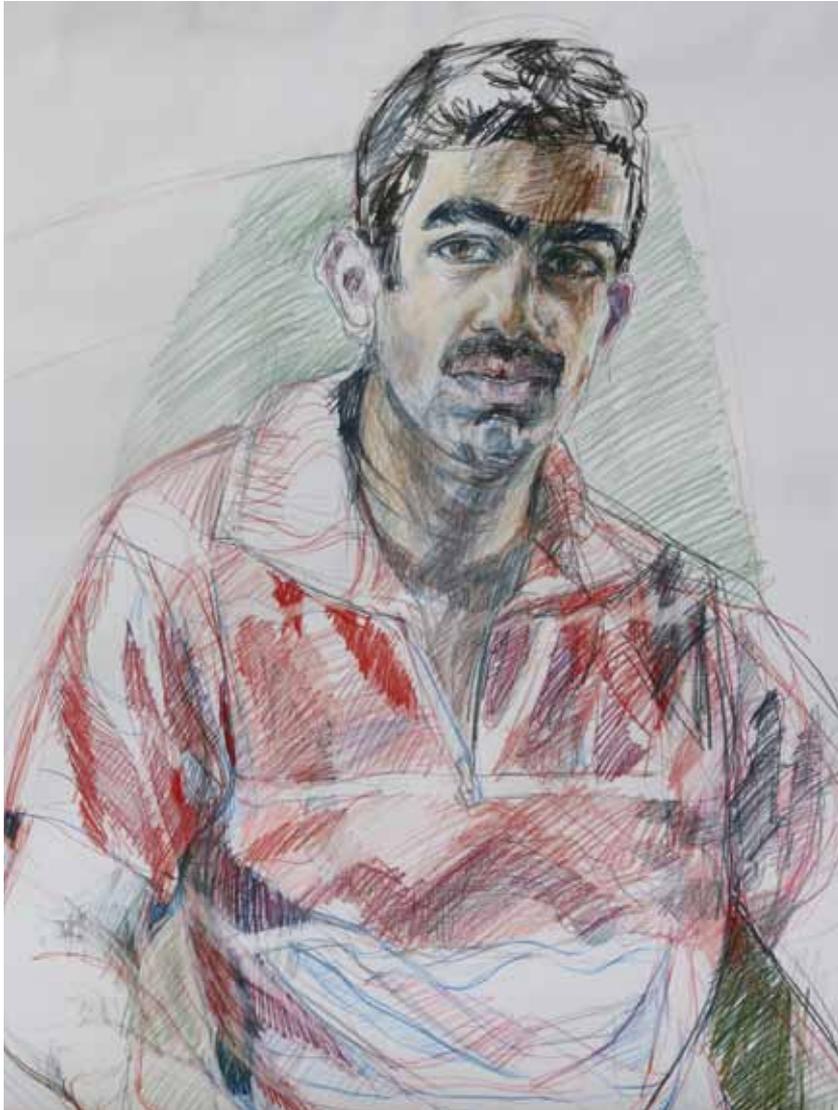
We're not dead yet

My art practice sits firmly within my domestic space. Art always has to progress alongside my family. As surely as you need to find a place for children's beds and washing machines so I always need to find a space within the house for a studio. With more or less time work changes in its scale and focus. Shrinking to little still lifes and self portraits when the demands of family fill my head or school holidays allow just little bits of time and I need to work less ambiguously. Given more time I go to another place. Opening the trapdoor to the cave within for drawings about much less certain things.

www.daveenacox.com

LEFT / *Stranger in a strange land* - Alban | Daveena Cox 2015 | coloured pencil on paper | 70cm x 60cm
Photography Daveena Cox

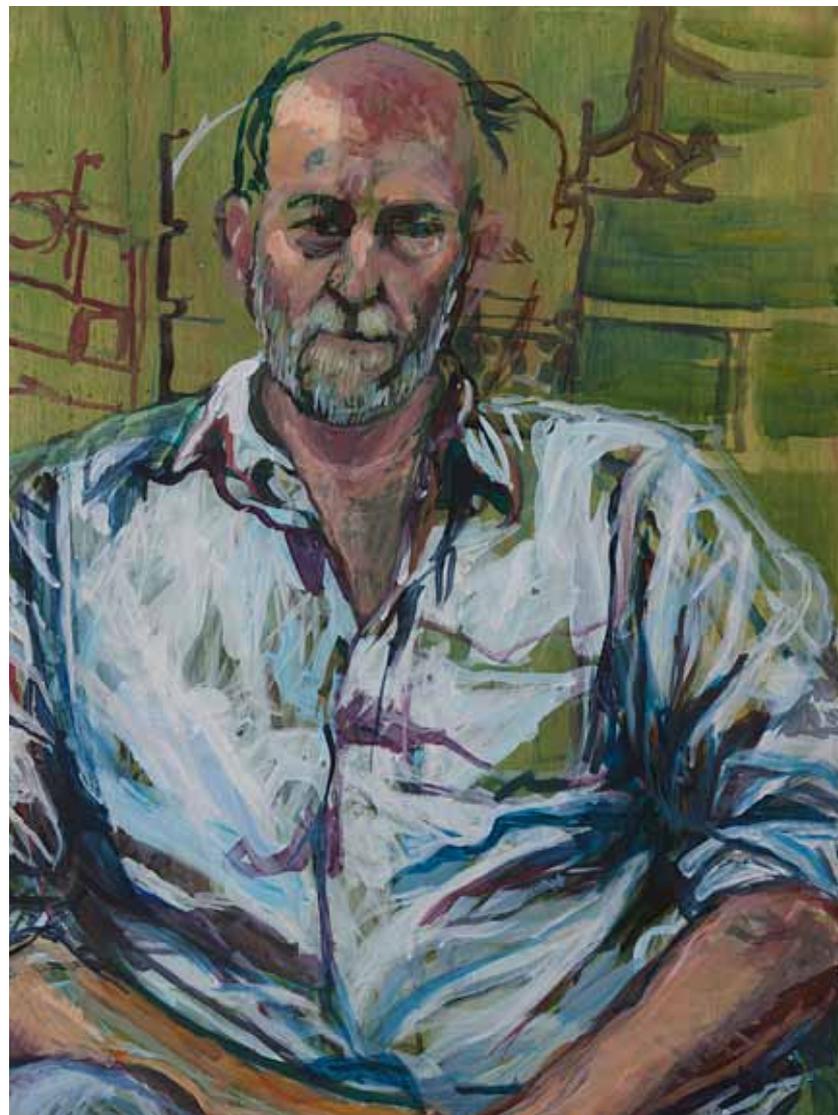
RIGHT / *Stranger in a strange land* - Anis | Daveena Cox 2015 | coloured pencil on paper | 70cm x 60cm
Photography Daveena Cox



LEFT / *My beautiful son* | Daveena Cox 2014 | acrylic on canvas | 90cm x 60cm
Photography Daveena Cox



RIGHT / *Tony* | Daveena Cox 2013 | acrylic on board | 90cm x 60cm
Photography Daveena Cox



UN Sung GIFTS

By Kate Alida Mullen

From within the patriarchal paradigm of the 21st century, the art of Lisa Dymond monuments the strength and power of the matriarch, harking back to the way of the world before 2000 BC. The omnipresence of matriarchal clan systems in the Neolithic Age was founded in the logic of biology however accompanied by a solemn and prolific reverence toward women; women's inherent and mystical capacity to create life was central to social structures.

Through her sculptural practice, Lisa has revisited some of the earliest pagan fertility totems, or Venuses, produced during the last matriarchal era - some of which are up to 40,000 years old. Salvaged aluminium cookware and papier-mâché CWA Cookbook pages have been used ingeniously by Lisa to replicate a series of these goddess figures. Here, the chosen media are tokens of domesticity and so, coupled with Lisa's craft-based methods, speak to a modern notion of femininity that is of particular pertinence to the artist's generation of women: her breed of Australian baby boomers are characterised within this fusion of ancient and contemporary - and of sacred and mundane - feminine symbology.

A product of her time, Lisa attests to feeling at home when working with aluminium cookware, which she sources from recycle shops. These once utilitarian vessels are first reverted from their decommissioned status; then rendered dysfunctional as Lisa repurposes them with the aid of an english wheel and air hammer. With their flat bottoms rounded out, the now faintly battered, spherical forms evoke exaggerated, lyrical female curves. Variations of these geometric shapes are assembled like car parts to mould buxom fertility figures. In another series, the same domes have been used to sculpt Venuses in papier-mâché. The act of reinstating outdated cookware is in response to the blanket of invisibility that often befalls women with the coming of middle age.

As a full time artist in her fifties, Lisa Dymond is now in the thick of her second career. Her first was in physiology, which has grounded her art practice in a sound understanding of the human body and the processes of healing. As with her experience as an emerging artist, in her role as a physiotherapist Lisa felt the shroud of invisibility creep in, paradoxically as she was advancing in

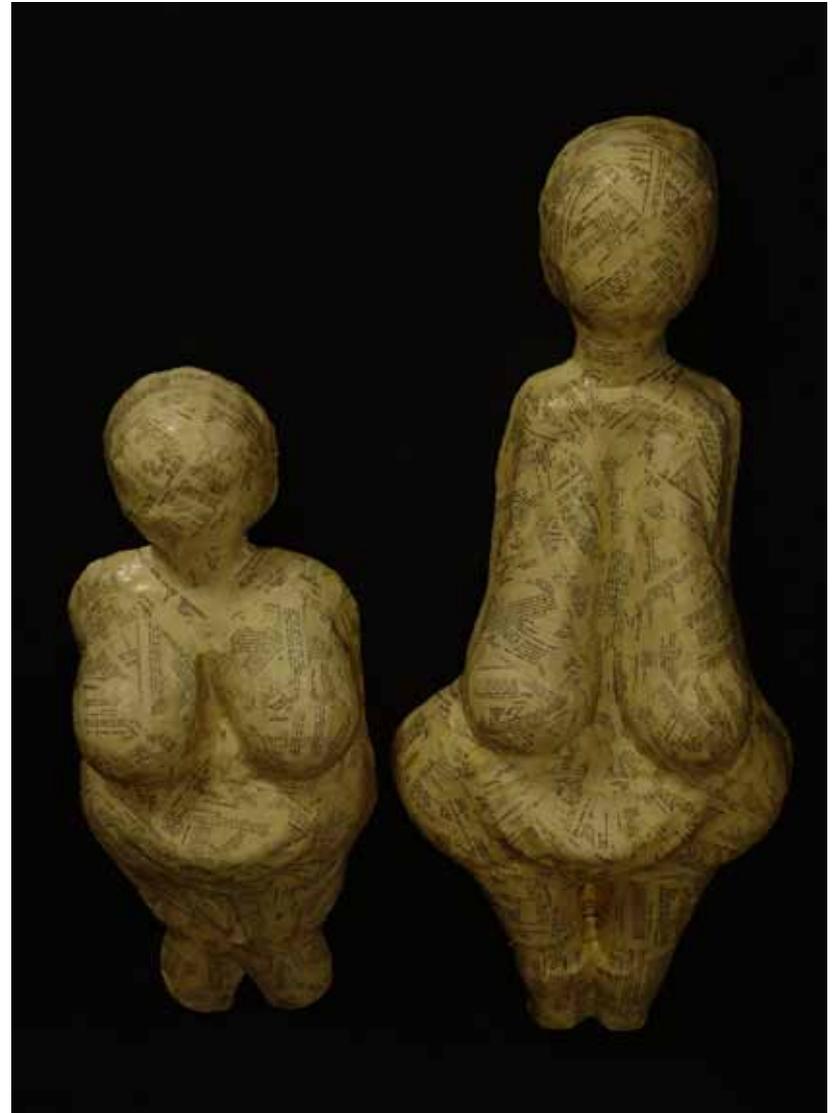


her field. She has observed across industries that the gift of experience is often viewed as secondary next to the energy and beauty youth has to offer.

In the face of this trend, Lisa affirms “even though the patriarchal world doesn’t always see older women as powerful, I believe we are”. A series of glass canisters dressed by a variety of woven textiles have been developed for *We’re not dead yet*. Each of the six jars is woven with an array of materials that represent a different matriarchal quality: one uses bandage material to recognise healing and first aid, for instance; another honours the motherly acts of nourishing and feeding by interweaving tea towels, napkins and cutlery. They stand as a humble homage to the timeless matriarchal gifts of service so often overlooked as gifts.

LEFT / Lisa Dymond | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

RIGHT / *Venus de Obsolete* | Lisa Dymond 2013 | aluminium cookware, recipe books, glue | dimensions variable
Photography Michael Dymond







LEFT / *Matriarchal Jars* | Lisa Dymond 2015 | glass, textile, mixed media | 21cm x 14cm x 14cm (each)
Photography Michael Dymond

ABOVE / *Ruts* | Lisa Dymond 2012 | wooden ladders, textile, steel, aluminium | 480cm x 40cm x 6cm
Photography Michael Dymond

LISA DYMOND

Medium
Sculpture.

Education
Advanced Diploma of Visual Art, Central Institute of Technology, WA.

Practice
My artwork is sculptural, conceptual, and starts with an aspect of humanness that I wish to express. Form is extremely important to me. The materials I use always add meaning to my works. In *We're not dead yet*, much of my work speaks of domesticity and the collective of women's knowledge, women in the workplace, the notion of being obsolete/decommissioned, baby boomers and their opportunistic nature, plus popular attitudes towards aging. Perhaps, collectively, my work speaks of "we're not dead yet, not by a long shot."

Past life
Having been a physiotherapist in private practice for thirty years, I have had the joy of stepping into other people's lives for a short while. I am intrigued by the human body, but totally captivated by human behaviour, the choices we make and the impacts that these choices have on ourselves, others and the environment. Our 'humanness' influences my work.

We're not dead yet
This exhibition explores societal attitudes towards aging women. The term 'aging women' simply refers to women over fifty who are past their childbearing years. It seems as women age in the workplace, a cloak of invisibility begins to shroud them, and they diminish. This is me, an emerging artist in my fifties. So the trick is, 'how to be empowered' in this situation. Personally, I stay strong, active and gain strength by being in the company of other amazing like-minded women my age. Our lives are already a rich tapestry. We have a lot to offer, in our words, in our actions, and in our art. A team of women over fifty is a far stronger presence than an individual. This exhibition will be an amazing platform to confirm that we are artists who make noteworthy artworks, and that women over fifty have much to offer to the art world.

www.lisadymondart.com

BELOW / 1946 - 64 | Lisa Dymond 2012 | steel, wood, paper towels, tissue, glue | dimensions variable
Photography Acorn Photo



BELOW / *Upsizing* | Lisa Dymond 2015 | recycled aluminium cookware | dimensions variable
Photography Michael Dymond



THE CULTURE OF THE COPY

Kate Alida Mullen

Swiss-Australian artist Monique Bosshard Curby uses printmaking to ponder the notion of the copy and the rise of modern society's culture of incessant copying. The habit of producing copies arose as a security measure - a means of ensuring proof and contingencies were firmly in place. However, as Baudrillard prescribes in his theory of simulacra and simulation, it is now endemic. Baudrillard puts forward the idea that replication has gradually come to constitute the real and that we find ourselves in a world in which the copy has been rendered the original and connectedness with the true original lost.

While this phenomenon is virtually reenacted through the process of printmaking, Monique subverts the use for which the medium was designed - that is, for reproducing multiples of an original. As if by rule, her work denies the possibility of the carbon copy across all manner of printing techniques. Often only developing prints that cannot be reproduced beyond a singular edition, Monique's approach situates her work where the media of painting and printmaking interplay.

In a recent work, *I AM*, monoprints have been overlaid with soft ground etching. The work consists of twenty individual panels, each one unique in dimension and composition. Together, their haphazard arrangement forms a whole entity interlocked with pockets of negative wall space. The surfaces of the panels owe their dense yet delicate textures to a subtle evolution of layers achieved through monoprinted fragments of translucent dressing material, or gauze. Tonally, the prints that substantiate the lower section of the collective *I AM* are darker, moodier and feature more distinct matrix-like forms. The panels grow less muddled as they creep upward and, more and more, engender visceral and bodily associations through the development of softer, fleshier hues. Coupled with the loose weave of the gauze, Monique's prints summon suggestions of skin, of healing sores and bruised bodies. While a view of vulnerability plays out in exposing these typically concealed, fragile parts, so too does one of resilience.

Through her painstaking process of layering, the negative traces of the object originally imprinted are diluted, thereby extending the realms they reference. It is the artist's duty to facilitate this organic course of dilution and dissolution as



it unfolds across the surface of the paper.

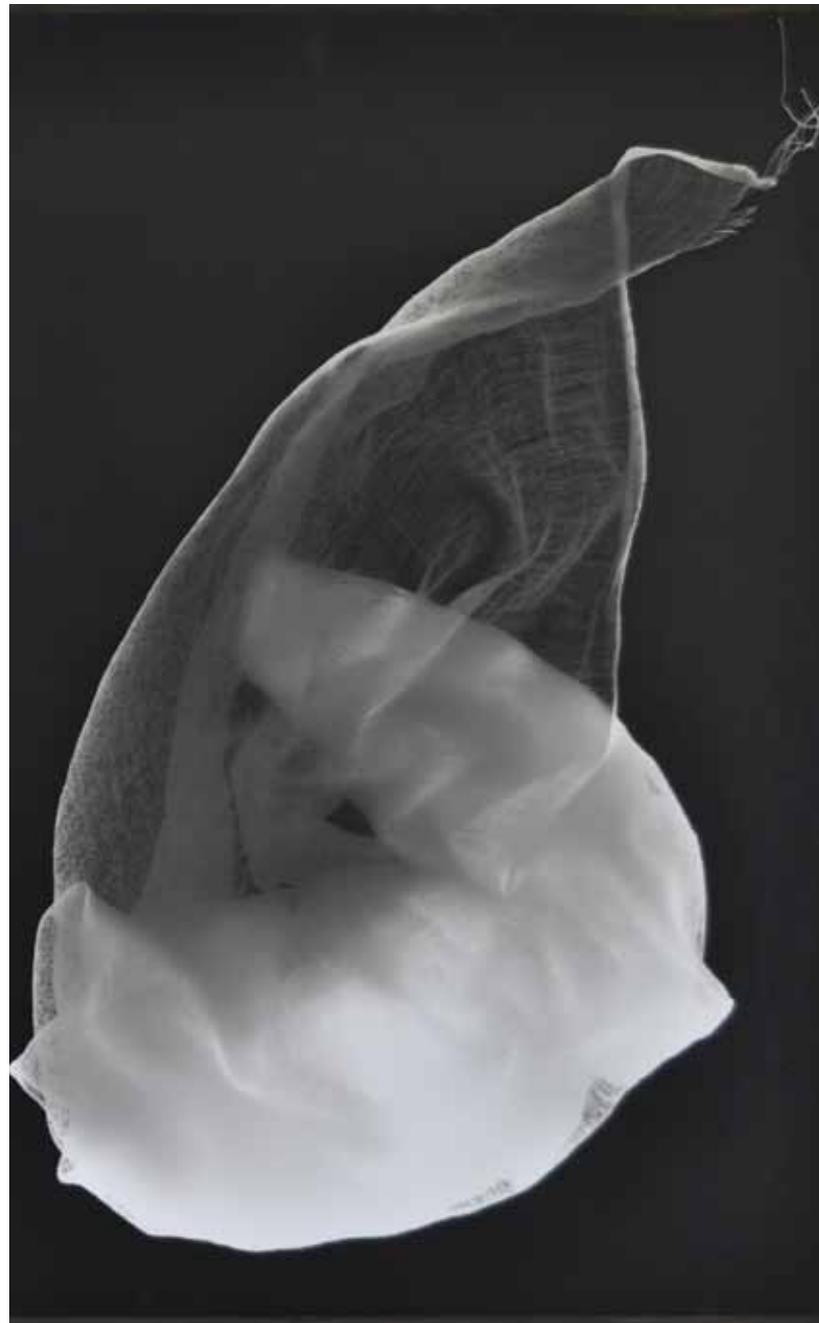
These ideas neatly bundle together in the intimate site of the bathroom, a theme that will run through Monique's work for *We're not dead yet*. The artist attributes her interest in the bathroom to its inextricable and universal link with the body; it is a place "of washing off", where "the repetitive action of cleansing" takes place. Paradoxically, it also incites exposure and concealment, both self-confrontation of one's honest reflection and the act of transforming it.

On a personal level, it's as if the artist's interrogation into the meaning behind doubles was encoded at birth, for the Swiss-born artist has a twin sister. Monique studied and practiced painting and sculpture for many years in Europe before migrating to Australia with her husband and daughter.



FAR LEFT / *Monique Bosshard Curby* | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

ABOVE / *I AM (detail)* | *Monique Bosshard Curby* 2014 | monprint, softground etching, relief print | dimensions variable
Photography Monique Bosshard Curby





MONIQUE BOSSHARD CURBY

Medium

Printmaking.

Education

Bachelor of Arts - Art and Education, School of Art and Design, University of Berne, Switzerland.

Practice

I have been exploring the themes of the body and states of mind, oscillating between the notions of memory, fragility and resilience. Depending on the technique used, the medium of printmaking allows me to produce either multiples, almost endless variations of the same matrix or very unique and individual pieces. The idea of the copy versus the individual interests me on a personal level too, being a twin myself. I'm always seeking the dialogue between the idea and the process.

Past life

While for most of my life teaching has been the most important part, working on my own practice has become more and more important.

We're not dead yet

I think it's an idea very worthwhile exploring. The age of invisibility is a theme not just for us women artists in particular but all professional (and non-professional) women. Who makes the decisions of what is worth showing? Who decides when someone is too old for a job, a career? How do we get judged? I'm keen to find out more.

www.moniquebosshardcurby.com

LEFT / *Captured Series* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2013 | photogram on Ilford paper | 40cm x 20cm (each)

ABOVE / *I AM (detail)* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2014 | monoprint, softground etching, relief print | dimensions variable
Photography Monique Bosshard Curby



OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP LEFT / *Reaching levels* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2010 | giclee print | 21cm x 25.6cm

TOP RIGHT / *Point of no return* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2010 | giclee print | 21cm x 28.7cm

BOTTOM LEFT / *Uphill embarkation* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2010 | giclee print | 21cm x 28cm

BOTTOM RIGHT / *Plan for migration* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2010 | giclee print | 21cm x 27cm

BELOW / *Once I Was (Double Portrait)* | Monique Bosshard Curby 2012 | monoprint on Kizuki paper | 46cm x 62.5cm
Photography Monique Bosshard Curby



HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

Kate Alida Mullen

Emerging Western Australian artist Lyn Nixon commenced her practice as a textiles artist, later merged into woodwork and is now a prolific photographer who will often incorporate print, video and painting.

Whether devising a multidimensional video installation, competing as a cyclist in the world championships or raising a couple of kids, Lyn exerts a fierce commitment and a natural inclination to venture intrepidly into the depths of whatever the undertaking. When asked to verbalise what might exist at the root of her dogged drive, she pauses, before contending the cause to be beyond pure ambition; one more closely aligned with an innate yearning to know her subject fully. And to know, one must experience.

This trait can be seen further still in the subterranean themes and sites of fracture Lyn delves into through her art. For Lyn, her art practice is a way of reckoning with phenomena that cannot be entirely comprehended and in the process sheds light on the fact that, in such cases, uncertainty pervades even science's attempts to do so. Science in fact pays increasing evidence to support that there is always uncertainty in predictable situations. This notion informs the musings on natural disasters, the chaos theory and scientific methods of enquiry that recur throughout Lyn's vast and varied oeuvre.

An ongoing pursuit of earthquakes led Lyn on a recent pilgrimage to several rural towns in Western Australia's central wheatbelt. This region is home to a number of sites that still wear the aftermath of old seismic shifts, left largely untouched, preserved in stone and brick. One case study is Meckering, which in 1968 bore the brunt of Australia's second strongest onshore earthquake on record. With a magnitude of 6.9, its reverberations shook Lyn's childhood home in nearby Perth and she recalls her father diving to shelter her under the kitchen table.

Unsettled calm, a series of photographic portraits of present day Meckering, record traces of this rupture in recent history. Lyn documents details encountered amid the rubble in a way that has them appear as though sourced from archival records. Their almost disconcerting quiet and stillness belies their reminder of the omnipresence of planetary motion. These are



projected onto abstract geometrical paintings of bold blocks of colour, stark in contrast to the projections they support.

In a printed digital image, a scene of a local woman sitting candidly in her sparse living room subdues the theatrical crack that extends up the wall, creeping into the ceiling cavity. The inherent instability of all we perceive as solid is chillingly normalised when framed within familiar domesticity.

A later body of work *I spy with Google* interrogates those spheres often naïvely perceived as private in a three-part compilation of graphic books. For them, Lyn trawled online real estate platforms to amass a collection of comically personal photographs of bedrooms and domestic spaces that are unwittingly accessible to a global audience at the click of a mouse.

A strange and subtle discordance is felt in experiencing Lyn's work as she artfully draws our focus upon the cracks that we collectively choose not to see, obvious though they may be.

FAR LEFT / Lyn Nixon | 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon

BELOW / *Peeking Inside I* | Lyn Nixon 2014 | found photography on Hahnemuhle paper | 28cm x 71cm



BELOW / *Roslyn* | Lyn Nixon 2015 | photograph on archival paper | 59.5cm x 49.5cm

RIGHT / *Shelter* | Lyn Nixon 2015 | solvent transfer photograph on BFK | 53cm x 40cm





LYN NIXON

Medium

Photography and printmaking.

Education

Currently completing a Bachelor of Art (Fine Art), Curtin University, WA.
Diploma of Art (Furniture Design),
Australian School of Fine Wood, Dwellingup WA.

Practice

I am an emerging West Australian artist working primarily in photography and printmaking. My practice explores the fragility of existence, focusing on notions of impermanence, the human condition and the attempts to measure, define and predict uncertainty. My work has been exhibited in international exhibitions in Cheongju, San Francisco and Hong Kong.

Past life

Ten years in marketing and sponsorship roles in both the corporate and not for profit sectors. Six years in the sport industry as an elite cyclist representing Australia, coaching and board representation. Eight years in educational settings in fields of science, mathematics and design/technology.

We're not dead yet

This exhibition is a unique and exciting opportunity to work with a group of very talented women who, like me, are developing their art practice later in life. There are many issues regarding the way creative works are often categorised as 'art vs craft' or 'artist labour vs domestic labour', particularly if the works are made by women artists. In this exhibition, curator Anna Louise Richardson has purposely exploited this conundrum by placing artworks, by older women, in a domestic construct within in a gallery context.

As an international cyclist the press referred to me as "Lyn Nixon, mother of two" when reporting on a notable result that I had achieved. I am looking forward to the discussions that may be stimulated by this show and hope that my work will be viewed as that by Lyn Nixon, Artist.

www.lynnixon.com

BELOW / *Orange Van* | Lyn Nixon 2014 | photograph on matt paper | 53cm x 40cm







SEEN AND HEARD

Kate Alida Mullen

When a woman in her middle age decides to be an artist, she is at the same time making a commitment to go head to head against a strong current of convention, societal expectation and her own conditioned thought patterns - factors that have come to define and thereby restrict those within the age and sex demographic representative of 'mother'. For example, one cannot be both dedicated artist and victim of the syndrome of invisibility, a condition claimed to encroach upon women at the coming of a certain age, generally about fifty. To be an artist requires a disregard for the popular views on aging; one must persevere with conviction in thought and action, disallowing anxiety and loss of confidence to seize hold. And if it does, then make art about it, as have Monique Bosshard Curby, Lisa Dymond, Megan Christie, Daveena Cox, Karen Millar and Lyn Nixon - the lineup of mature age, emerging Australian artists showing in the *We're not dead yet* exhibition, which runs synchronous with the symposium of the same name.

We're not dead yet surveys the common experiences of mature age women endeavouring to be recognized as creative professionals in contemporary Australia. Here, the generation of women born during the post World War II baby-boom come under the microscope: the same challenges met by the cross-section of the arts industry they occupy are of equal relevance to the women who dwell outside of it. Of main concern are the tensions at play between family and professional commitments, as well as the weight of expectation that comes with the embodiment of matriarchal and feminine roles. For many a baby-boomer, venturing away from an assumed path of self-abnegation to seriously pursuing an 'indulgent' activity like art will often bring about guilt trips triggered by both external and internal voices. In opening up discussion about how these issues may be overcome, considerations around dominant attitudes come to the fore. It invites one to speculate on what could be effected with a simple but broad-reaching shift in these social mindsets, not least of which could be the undoing of self-limiting beliefs that habitually plague older women.

In the imagined world of superheroes, invisibility is regarded as a most enviable power. Central to the art of this power - as modelled by the formidable *Invisible Woman* in the classic *Fantastic Four* comics - is the

ability of its bearer to will in and out of a state of physical invisibility. It becomes a heavier trait to wear - and even heavier to counteract - when the infliction is instead psychological in nature, thus subtle and deep seated. Whether a by-product of modern society or the unfolding of natural law, this condition is more or less cast upon women without their consent - although individuals will always retain the mental faculty to submit to it or not. In response to this phenomenon, several of the artists involved in *We're not dead yet* explore the notion of dissolution in their art practices. Monique Bosshard Curby uses monoprining to literally dissolve, over time, the original imprints of objects into textural abstraction. Through a laborious process of layering, a once solid outline is blurred to the point of disappearance: an intimate portrait of a transition into obscurity. Lisa Dymond has looked more explicitly at the way aging is perceived by a broader consciousness in her recent sculptural series *The Gift*. Made from brown paper, *The Gift* presents three boxes, or gifts. Androgynous faces merge forth from each one. They are read in a chronology: the first face is young, robust and well formed; the second one begins to crumple and the third is a mere suggestion of its original. This reflection speaks metaphorically of the prevailing stance toward the older population whose offerings are seen, more and more, as without value. In the face of these observations, what if women collectively stood to view their reduction in visibility as an ally, rather than enemy - a quality that can be turned on and off as desired, like *Invisible Woman's*. Perceived invisibility could in fact grant a sense of liberation that enables women to cast off social pressures and judgment from their path to free self-expression.

For women, outrageousness and controversy have been proven useful in combating the invisibility of middle age, although both come with their own dangers: the former can educe the 'not to be taken seriously' stigma and the latter can invite personalised moral attacks. Melbourne based artist Polixeni Papapetrou can relate. Her photographic portrayals of her young children have shaken up widespread controversy around the topic of child exploitation. Papapetrou is one of the arts industry professionals speaking at the *We're not dead yet* symposium, alongside Megan Monte, Frances Barrett, Dunja Rmandić, Valerie Sparks and Jo Pollitt. In July 2008 Papapetrou's 2003 photograph of her then six year old daughter, *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Beatrice Hatch before White Cliffs*, featured on the cover of Art Monthly Australia. Upon its

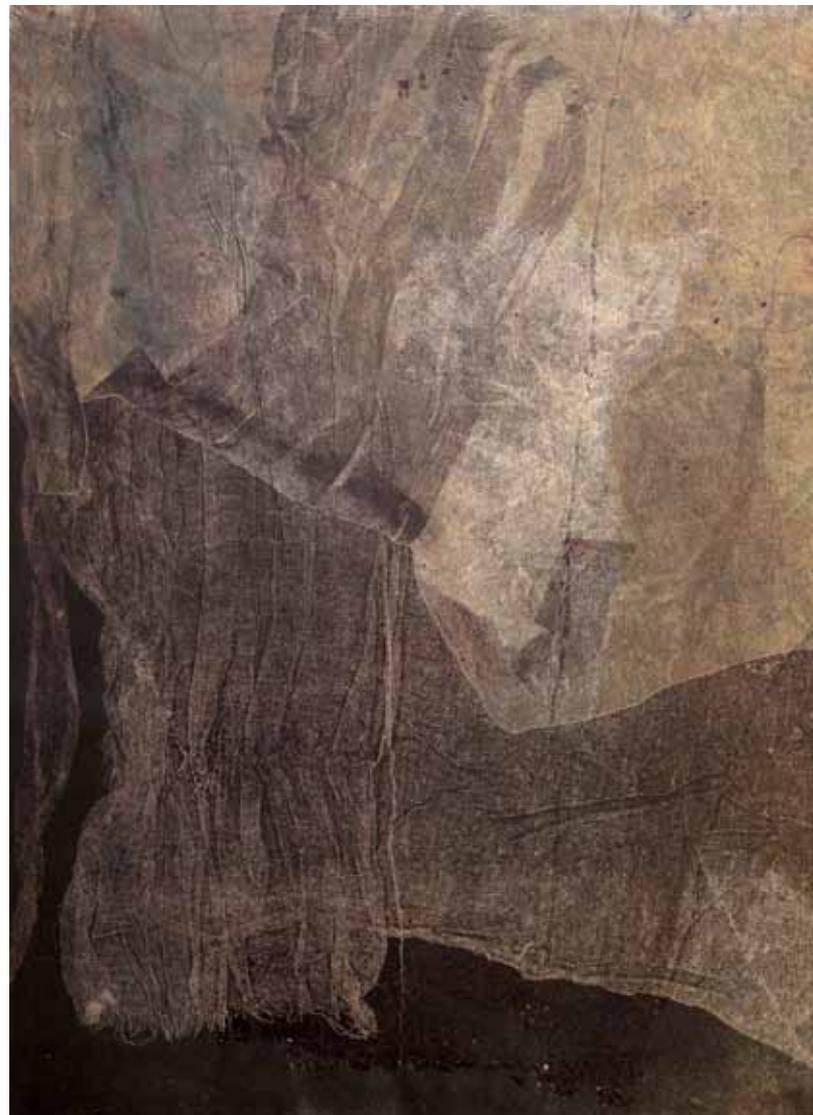
release Papapetrou came under fire from the then Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd who said that he “cannot stand” the photograph. Accusations around the indecency of objectifying children in art, whether yours or not, have garnered the artist a central position in an international debate that has proliferated since.

There is no single way of approaching the entanglement of art practice, working life and family. Papapetrou turned her attention to art in a full time capacity in 2002, at age forty. At this time, she had recently retired from a lengthy career in law to start a family. While other artists involved in the project such as Megan Christie, Karen Millar and Lyn Nixon held off on their artistic careers until their children were well into high school years and beyond, interestingly, Papapetrou’s decision to become a full time artist was strengthened by her entry into motherhood. For her, photography is first and foremost a platform upon which to engage, collaborate and play with her children. Her young daughter and son organically influenced her work and soon established themselves, willingly, as steady subjects. As their mother’s muses, they can be seen adorned in elaborate masks and costumes, enacting fantastical scenes in both real and painted landscapes. Daveena Cox, who has produced a new series of drawings especially for *We’re not dead yet*, is also engrossed in a full time art practice alongside rearing a young family. Her work as a part-time art teacher over the years has enabled her to support her family by way of art.

While it must be acknowledged that within the span of history, there has never been an intergenerational gap quite as pronounced as the one occurring amid this unprecedented technological boom, the truth is that attitude shifts are already in motion as the wheel revolves and a new generation rides towards its own battle with middle age. Essential to unifying this disparity are projects like *We’re not dead yet* that carve out space within a public forum to air these omnipresent yet unspoken and largely unseen truths.

RIGHT / Fold | Monique Bosshard Curby 2011 | monoprint on Kizuki paper | 58cm x 48.5cm
Photography Tonia Curby

FAR RIGHT / Danger Tape | Lyn Nixon 2014 | photograph on matt paper | 120cm x 80cm





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the participating artists Megan Christie, Karen Millar, Daveena Cox, Lisa Dymond, Monique Bosshard Curby and Lyn Nixon. You are an inspiring, powerful and passionate group of women - this project is for you.

Thank you to the symposium participants Megan Monte, Polixeni Papapetrou, Dunja Rmandić, Valerie Sparks, Jo Pollitt and Frances Barrett for your enthusiasm, support and teachings.

Thank you to Gemma Weston for your mentoring, endless support, reassurance, cocktails, writing and advice. Thank you to Kate Mullen for your insightful, lyrical and sensitive writing. Thank you to Ann Brooke for the exhibition gardens. Thank you to Ashleigh Browne for your assistance and ideas on the exhibition design. Thank you to Abdul-Rahman Abdullah for your tireless listening, advice, assistance, love, graphic design and muscles. Thank you to Maxine McInerney for your delicious cakes. Thank you to Julia Richardson for your support and for always being there to help. Thank you to Rupert Richardson for your assistance and muscles. Thank you Lyn Nixon for your photography and energy. Thank you Megan Christie for your lifelong support, love and endless tip runs. Thank you Richie Kuhaupt and Picton Press.

Thank you to the friends and families of the artists, who supported them, helped with the exhibition and made this project happen. It has been a pleasure to work with you all on this project. I am honoured by your enthusiasm and dedication to celebrating this all woman project. Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge the support and gratefully thank the Department of Culture and the Arts, City of Fremantle, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, and FRINGE WORLD Festival 2016.

Anna Louise Richardson
Curator, *We're not dead yet*



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Culture and the Arts**

FRINGE WORLD



City of
Fremantle

mooresbuilding
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RIGHT / *Candy House* | Lyn Nixon 2014 | photograph on matt paper | 53cm x 40cm

NEXT PAGE / *Installation view* | Lisa Dymond 2015
Photography Lyn Nixon





