



THE GOLD AWARD

ABDUL ABDULLAH

PETER ATKINS

DEL KATHRYN BARTON

JULIE FRAGAR

CHRIS LANGLOIS

SAM LEACH

ABBEY McCULLOCH

IMANTS TILLERS

ROCKHAMPTON
ART
GALLERY

62 Victoria Parade, Rockhampton
PO Box 1860
Rockhampton, Queensland 4700
Australia

www.rockhamptonartgallery.com.au

THE **GOLD** AWARD 2014

5 July – 31 August 2014

The *Gold Award* is a joint initiative of Rockhampton Art Gallery Trust
and Rockhampton Regional Council, developed by Rockhampton Art Gallery

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Rockhampton Art Gallery is owned and operated
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THE GOLD AWARD

Rockhampton Art Gallery is proud to present the 2014 *Gold Award*; the second instalment of one of Australia's richest contemporary painting prizes. The *Gold Award* is a national invitation painting award with an acquisitive cash prize of \$50,000 made possible by a generous bequest to Rockhampton Art Gallery Trust from the Estate of Moya Gold (1928–2000). Moya Gold was a central Queensland philanthropist and educator who recognised the joys and opportunities that the arts and education can provide. The *Gold Award* was developed to honour her ideals by providing the opportunity for central

Queensland audiences to experience the best of contemporary Australian art. The Award also builds on the Gallery's legacy begun 40 years ago by securing some of the most outstanding contemporary art in Australia for the collection.

The inaugural winner of the Award in 2012 was Queensland indigenous artist Sally Gabori with her work *Dibirdibi Country*; a monumental abstract painting that focuses on the country of her late husband on the northern coast of Bentinck Island. It is a work of immense significance for a regional Gallery's holdings and has become a centrepiece

of the collection. Other works were later acquired for the collection from the 2012 Award by artists Ben Quilty, Kate Shaw and Jason Benjamin.

The 2014 Award continues the emerging tradition of inviting artists to submit up to five works; presenting a fulsome and rich exhibition that allows for a compelling representation of an artist's individual practice. I would like to thank the 2014 artists for accepting our invitation to enter and their confidence in the important role regional galleries play in Australia's contemporary art scene. I would also like to thank the 2014 Judge, Glenn Barkley, independent curator and former Senior Curator at Museum

of Contemporary Art, Australia for his demanding work in selecting a winner.

The *Gold Award* is a biennial award and a joint initiative of Rockhampton Art Gallery Trust and Rockhampton Regional Council, developed by Rockhampton Art Gallery.

Tracy Cooper-Lavery
Gallery Director

Sally **GABORI**
QLD | b.1924
Dibirdibi Country 2011 | 198 x 455 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen | Winner 2012 Gold Award. Gift of the Moya Gold Trust through the Rockhampton Art Gallery Trust | 2012.007



ABDUL ABDULLAH

b. 1986 | LIVES AND WORKS IN WA

Perth-based and working predominately in painting, Abdul Abdullah is the son of a sixth-generation Australian and a Malaysian Muslim. He considers himself as an 'outsider among outsiders'¹ and it is this perspective that informs the portraits from the *Monster* series. He writes:

Each subject, including myself, is a young Australian from a Muslim background. They do not bear any Islamic signifiers other than their Arabic names. I am interested in the perception of young Muslims in the contemporary multicultural Australian context. While we may not bear any external indicators, it is the name that defines us as the 'other', and presages many assumptions and misconceptions about what we represent. These names are predisposed to assumptions of misogyny, violence, suppression of liberty and guilt. In the popular imagination we assume the role of the bad guy.²

The portraits of *Daliya*, *Raaghe*, and *Wassim* are vertical diptychs, a composition where Abdullah echoes the

style of religious iconography and stained glasses windows from churches.³ Each of his friends wears a patterned or printed shirt and their faces are partially obscured by dark shadows. Abdullah explains:

Raaghe came to Australia as a refugee from Somalia and Wassim came from Morocco via Belgium on a working visa. They and I fit into what I would call 'Muslim misfits'. I have deliberately left the eyes black, to in a way dehumanise the subjects - almost to demonise them. This is how I feel we are perceived.⁴

Abdullah considers how appearance and titles confuse perceptions of others, and it is through the avenue of portraiture that he explores the complex world of human communication.

1 <http://www.fehillycontemporary.com.au/pages/abdul-abdullah/>, accessed 13 June 2014.

2 Abdul Abdullah, 'Artist Statement', 2014, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

3 Abdul Abdullah, email correspondence, 13 June 2014, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

4 *ibid.*

Raaghe 2014
oil on canvas | 180 x 90 cm
[P.8, LEFT]

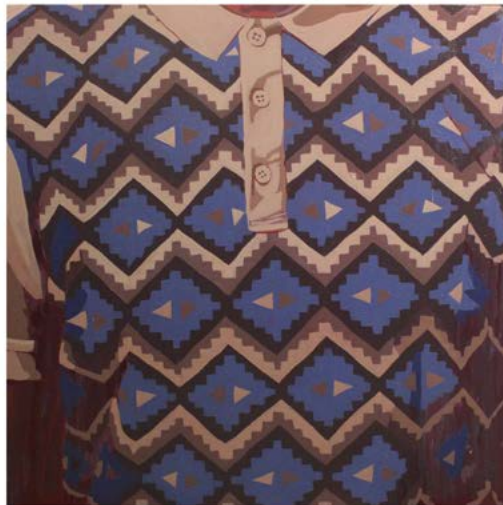
Daliya 2014
oil on canvas | 180 x 90 cm
[P.8, LEFT]

Wassim 2014
oil on canvas | 180 x 90 cm
[P.8, RIGHT]

Abdul-Hamid 2014
oil and resin on canvas
120 x 120 cm
[P.9, TOP]

Wassami 2014
oil and resin on canvas
120 x 120 cm
[P.9, BOTTOM]

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Fehilly Contemporary, Melbourne





PETER ATKINS

b. 1963 | LIVES AND WORKS IN VIC

Peter Atkins is an avid collector, filling his studio with both exotic and mundane objects, acquired through his extensive overseas travels, but also sourced around his city of residence, Melbourne. Everything from a Peruvian robe to football socks can be a source of inspiration for Atkins.¹ He then distils the essential elements of chosen objects through representations of colour and shape in a process he describes as 'abstract ready-mades'. This references the same way Dadaist Marcel Duchamp elevated unlikely, everyday objects to pieces of high art through creating a new context for display.

The series *Jazz* is inspired by original jazz record covers from the first half of the twentieth century, which Atkins found online at Ebay and Secondspin. Elements of the original record covers are painted onto large sheets of roughly stitched canvas in a process he describes as:

adding and subtracting, moving, enlarging, flipping and distorting various elements until what remains is a different arrangement, a newly

composed album cover ... These elements have been collated from a range of divergent sources which include other albums, cassettes, book covers and, in the case of 'Miles Davis - Kind of Blue', a car bumper sticker which shows a stylised Miles in blue silhouette playing his trumpet.²

Atkins correlates his art making process in the *Jazz* series to the very nature of the music genre itself with each sharing, he states, 'the same core fundamentals – intuition, composition, appropriation, arrangement, spontaneity, and, in particular, improvisation'.³

1 Ashley Crawford, 'Peter Atkins', in *Artist Profile*, Issue 19, 2012 pp. 80-85.

2 Peter Atkins, 'Artist statement - Jazz', June 2013, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

3 *ibid.*

Louis Armstrong's Greatest Hits

2013 | acrylic on canvas tarpaulin drop sheet | 215 x 205 cm
[LEFT]

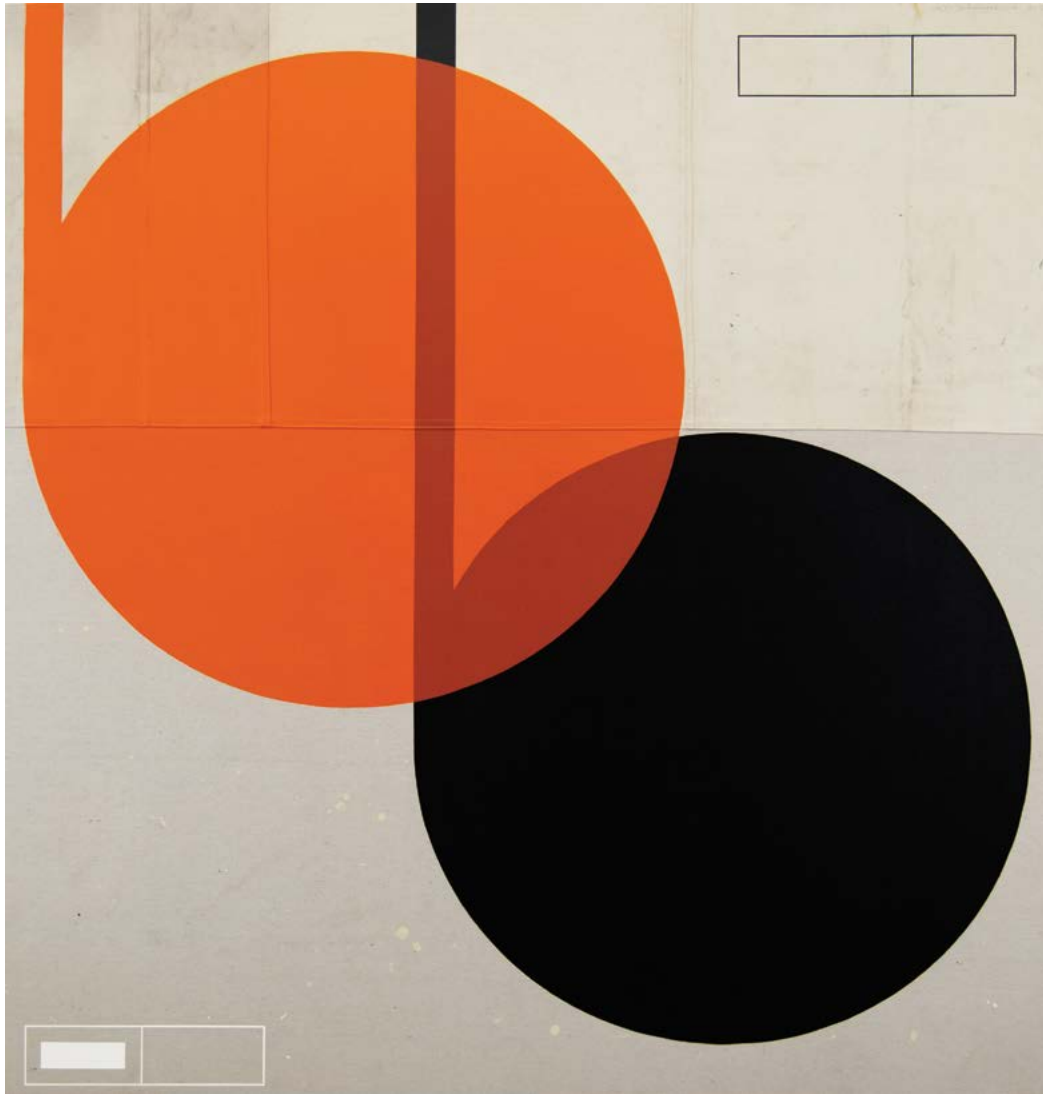
The Bix Beiderbecke Legend

2013 | acrylic on canvas tarpaulin drop sheet | 215 x 205 cm
[P.12]

Miles Davis – Kind of Blue 2013

acrylic on canvas tarpaulin drop sheet | 215 x 205 cm
[P.13]

Artworks courtesy of the artist, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne; Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide; Bett Gallery, Hobart; and Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney





DEL KATHRYN BARTON

b.1972 | LIVES AND WORKS IN NSW

Del Kathryn Barton creates fantastical worlds that take inspiration from the natural environment, but also express the vast potential of the imagination. Growing up in the Hawkesbury region near Sydney, the experience of roaming through the bushland and being surrounded by wildlife and plants was filled with magical, endless possibilities.¹ The experience informs Barton's practice, and *sapling* seems to be set in a metaphysical landscape, somewhere between the real, and the imagined.

A female figure stands in 'tree pose', mid-calf deep in a body of electric blue water. Two other heads seem to float on the surface of the water, their aqua eyes staring vacantly into space. Around the pool of water is brightly coloured vegetation, including a lily growing from a sawn tree stump. The central figure's torso and thighs are covered in an intricate black and white feather pattern, but also reddish leaves and red and blue bows. Wrapping around her arms, and protruding from her body are large leaves, some from the fruit salad plant, others showing water lily pads.

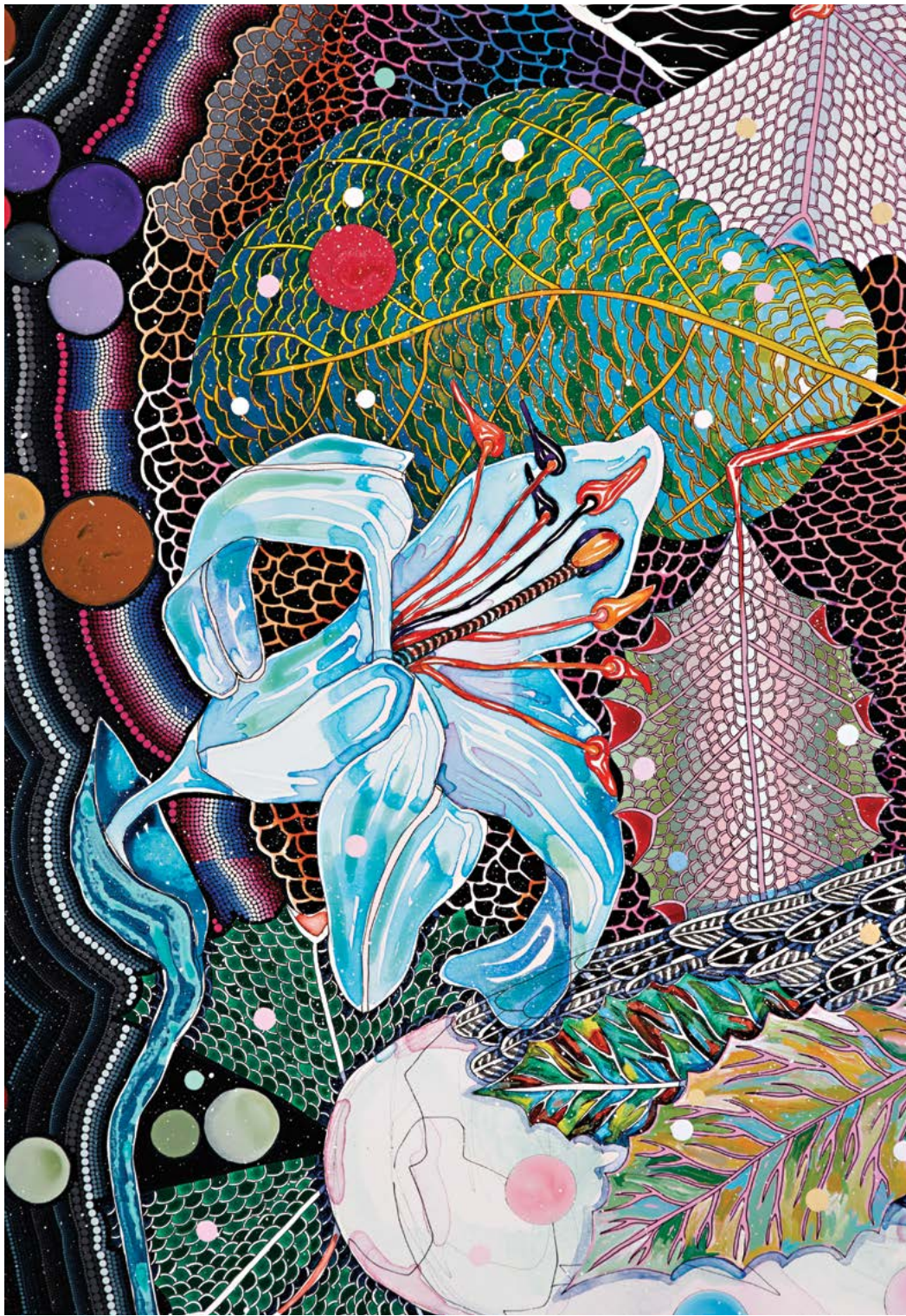
She is crowned with a feather coiffure, and surrounding her is an almost celestial body in rainbow hues, formed from tiny coloured dots and organic patterns. The intensity and energy created through these dots brings to mind the work of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, and Barton is also referencing the energy and experience of her childhood hallucinations, recalling 'fields of energy and unravelling of perception'.² *sapling* occupies a compelling, melancholic space that seems to hint at the real possibility of environmental catastrophe.

1 Julie Ewington, *Del Kathryn Barton*, Dawes Point, NSW: Piper Press, 2014, p. 31.

2 Del Kathryn Barton in Julie Ewington, *Del Kathryn Barton*, Dawes Point, NSW: Piper Press, 2014, p. 77.

sapling 2014
acrylic on French linen
240 x 180 cm
[LEFT, DETAILS PP.16-17]

Artwork courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney





JULIE FRAGAR

b. 1977 | LIVES AND WORKS IN QLD

In this series of paintings, Julie Fragar explores the dramatic story of Antonio de Fraga, the first of her paternal family to arrive to Australia. Fragar tells the story:

In 1850, at the age of 12, Antonio's father — unbeknownst to his mother — sent him away on an American whaling ship to avoid conscription. He never returned. Antonio and a crew of adult men chased sperm whales around the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans until they were shipwrecked off the Malay coast. The crew were starved for more than a week and washed to shore by a timely Southerly wind. Living in Malaya for several years, Antonio departed on a second whaler, this time becoming shipwrecked and captured by the cannibals of Fiji. The rest of his crew were "penned like chickens" and eaten. Antonio however, finding favour with the local king, was released and cared for by missionaries who brought him to Sydney, Australia.¹

Fragar pictures this ancestral story using a technique that seems to layer transparency over transparency, and frame within frame. The grotesque and aggressive experiences of the journey, but also the story of maternal loss are shown with visceral candour. Fragar adds:

These works are an imaginary and mixed-up interpretation of that story. The images are not concrete. They hypothesise about how the story might have played out ontologically and psychologically...What was [the] definitive (and difficult) lived experience for my ancestors becomes a self-reflexive source of drama in the studio where people become characters, and lives end up in the oblique stuff of painting.²

1 Julie Fragar, 'Artist Statement', 16 June 2014, Rockhampton Art Gallery Archive.

2 *ibid.*

Penned like chickens eaten like chickens (Fiji) 2014
oil on board | 90 x 70 cm
[LEFT]

Cannibal Tom 2014
oil on board | 90 x 70 cm
[P.20]

The Whaling 2014
oil on board | 90 x 70 cm
[PP.20-21]

Mother consoles herself with Blah Blah (Flores) 2014
oil on board | 90 x 70 cm
[P.21]

Father takes control Father goes mad 2014
oil on board | 90 x 70 cm
[NOT PICTURED]

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Heiser Gallery, Brisbane



CHRIS LANGLOIS

b. 1969 | LIVES AND WORKS IN NSW

In October 2013 Chris Langlois spent time at Broken Hill in far western New South Wales. It was a place he had visited several times as a child and the vast, vacant landscape continued to play in his mind, but this was not specifically because of the geographical location. Langlois describes his experience and his intentions:

I think what draws me to an empty landscape is the intangible space of the horizon; it is unattainable, it is purely a place of the imagination, somewhere in the mind to escape

too but in reality never approachable. Because of that I find it alluring... I was really lucky with the weather when I was out there, fantastic storms, so powerful and violent, storms you don't get here on the coast in NSW. Storms that suck the earth into the sky and dump it back down again.¹

From this trip came the two paintings, *Weather systems (Mundi Mundi) No. 1* and *Weather systems (Mundi Mundi) No. 2*. Both show the horizon line low down on the picture plane, positioned to anchor the scene. Dominating the rest of

the pictures are massing weather systems, experiences that Langlois found to be 'big, epic happenings'.²

The cool grey palette, with touches of intense blue skies, and flushes of red dusty earth enhance the sense of awe, but also a sense of experience and memory. The landscape is only partly about the physical geographical place, and for Langlois it is also an evocation

of an 'introverted imaginative space and place'.³

1 Chris Langlois, email correspondence, 13 June 2014, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*

Weather systems (Mundi Mundi) No. 2 2014
oil on linen | 153 x 259 cm
[ABOVE]

Weather systems (Mundi Mundi) No. 1 2014
oil on linen | 153 x 213 cm
[PP. 24-25]

Artworks courtesy of the artist, Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney, and Heiser Gallery Brisbane







SAM LEACH

b. 1975 | LIVES AND WORKS IN VIC

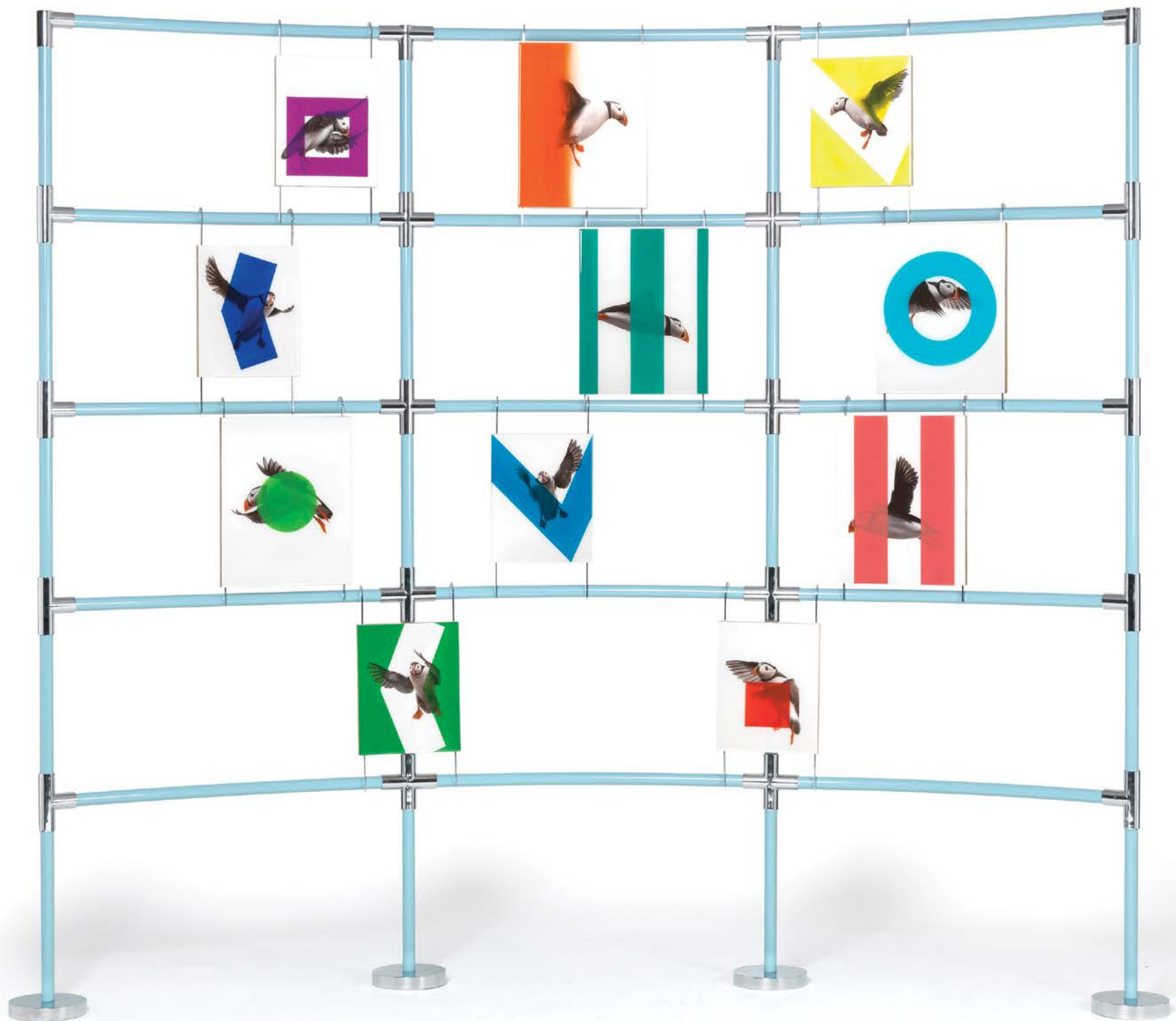
Sam Leach's work draws from a myriad of influences and ideas – Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment, American inventor Buckminster Fuller, American abstract painter Jasper Johns, German biologist Jakob von Uexküll – which are then placed into a singular framework for considering the relationship between animals, humans, and the spaces that both inhabit. His realist paintings with pristine surfaces feature animals and landscapes that have been over-painted with brightly coloured targets, or that feature once-futuristic motifs.

Proposal for a puffin habitat shows eleven small panels featuring the curious little puffin bird on each panel in various states of flight and landing. Painted over the top are thick stripes in luminous colours. Each panel then hangs in its own rectangle, and as the title might suggest, forming a new habitat. The framework for *Proposal for a puffin habitat* brings to mind the work of Buckminster Fuller, who proposed 'dymaxion' (a word created from Dynamic, Maximum, Tension) as a new, technologically efficient system of constructing living spaces.

Cognition test 2014
oil and resin on wood | 45 x 35 cm
[LEFT]

Proposal for a puffin habitat
2014 | oil and resin on board,
mounted to a wooden modular
rack | overall: 300 x 300 cm
consisting of six panels 35 x 25
cm, and five panels 45 x 35 cm
[PP.28-29]

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney





ABBEY McCULLOCH

b. 1975 | LIVES AND WORKS IN QLD

Abbey McCulloch's large-scale portraits of women use both idealised, highly constructed magazine images and staged photographs of female subjects, including herself and close friends as source material. When it comes to the idealised, aspirational images we are surrounded with today, McCulloch is drawn to the idea that something unsettling lies beneath the surface. In creating her portraits, McCulloch works the surface in broad planes of rich gelato pinks, yellows, and greens, but tenures any notion of the saccharine with the intensity of the subject itself.

Her women are painted in various emotional states, from tormented and aggressive, to vulnerable and introspective. McCulloch explores the interplay between how a woman is perceived compared to how she perceives herself, all within a framework of contemporary culture and societal values. *The Pelvis Series* represents an extension in how McCulloch represents women, and here she pictures herself holding, examining, and peering into a human pelvis.

McCulloch considers the pelvis is a:

defining part of female anatomy but also an object of fascination and a symbolic and visceral link to our centre of gravity... the pelvis as an object reflects our curiosity about mortality, exploring our own weaknesses as though somehow the process of discovering and confronting them makes us stronger and less vulnerable.

In this era of online self-diagnosis and instant public access to medical information, it is possible to easily and quickly overwhelm ourselves. We are bombarded by statistics, solutions and factoids today and perhaps we are getting further away from being able to trust our instincts and ourselves, resulting in a deep suspicion of our own bodies.¹

¹ Abbey McCulloch, 'Artist statement', 30 May 2014, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

Apex 2014
oil on canvas | 167 x 210 cm
[LEFT]

The Antiquarians 2014
oil on canvas | 167 x 210 cm
[P.32]

Anomaly 2014
oil on canvas | 167 x 210 cm
[P.33]

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Helen Gory Galerie, Melbourne



IMANTS TILLERS

b.1950 | LIVES AND WORKS IN NSW

Emerging in the Australian art scene during the advent of post-modernism, Tillers embraces appropriation, referencing the work of others to create new meaning within his own system of canvas board installations. As Tillers explained, the idea of using boards, ‘comes from the French poet Mallarmé who wrote in 1895: “Everything, in the world, exists to end up in a book”. The panels have been numbered right from the start and the panel count is continuous’¹. Tillers works across the canvas boards, often appropriating an Australian landscape painting, and cutting into and stencilling over the top,

words from place names and poetry.

Capricornia was inspired by a trip to northern Queensland, but also from Xavier Herbert's novel set in colonial Australia, also titled *Capricornia* (1938). Tillers describes the work as a kind of 'visual poem', including Aboriginal tribal names and place names for gold mining regions, each laid out to correspond with their geographical locations. The golden background of the painting references this geographical history, as well as Stephen Mallarmé's line, 'Gold gone and wind of nothingness blowing this modern void'.



The black lines are appropriated from 1950s biro drawings by French-American Louise Bourgeois. This adds a further sense of the topographical to *Capricornia*, but also the idea of swelling oceans or aboriginal markings. For Tillers, this work is 'a meditation on geography, history, morality, mortality and identity'.² His recent works *Epiphany* and *Nature Speaks EV* continue with Tillers' image and poem quotation, and questioning

Capricornia 2011
acrylic and gouache on 64 canvas
boards | 203 x 284.5 cm
[ABOVE]

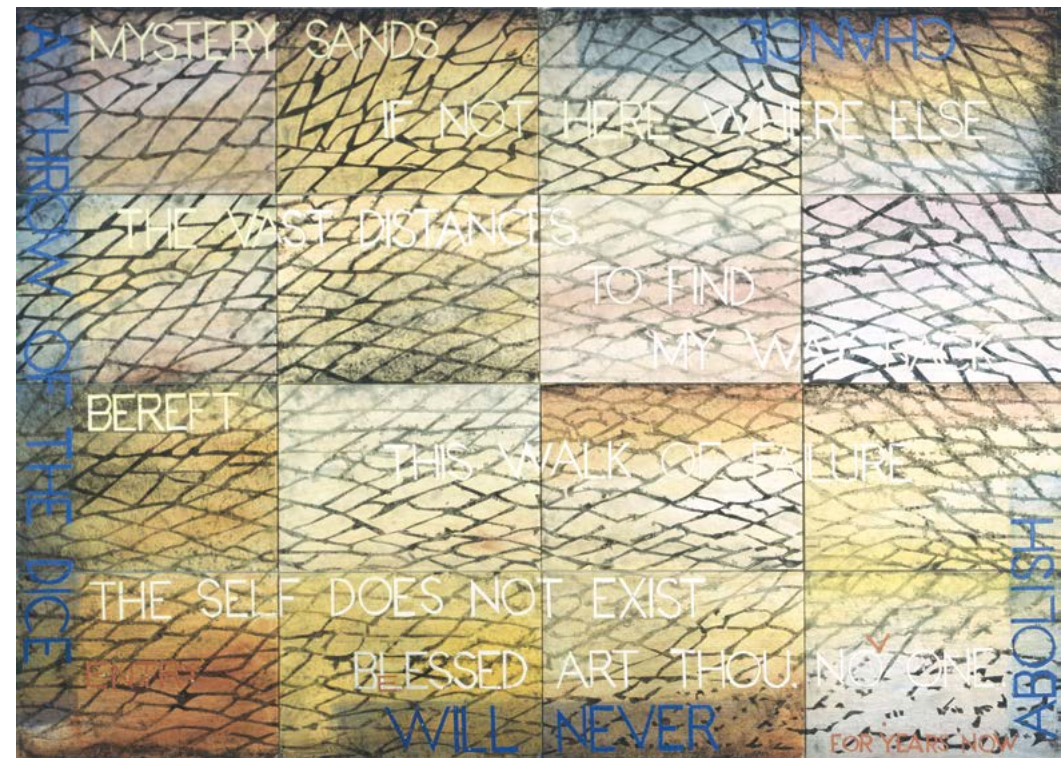
Epiphany 2014
acrylic and gouache on 25 canvas
boards | 127 x 178 cm
[P.36]

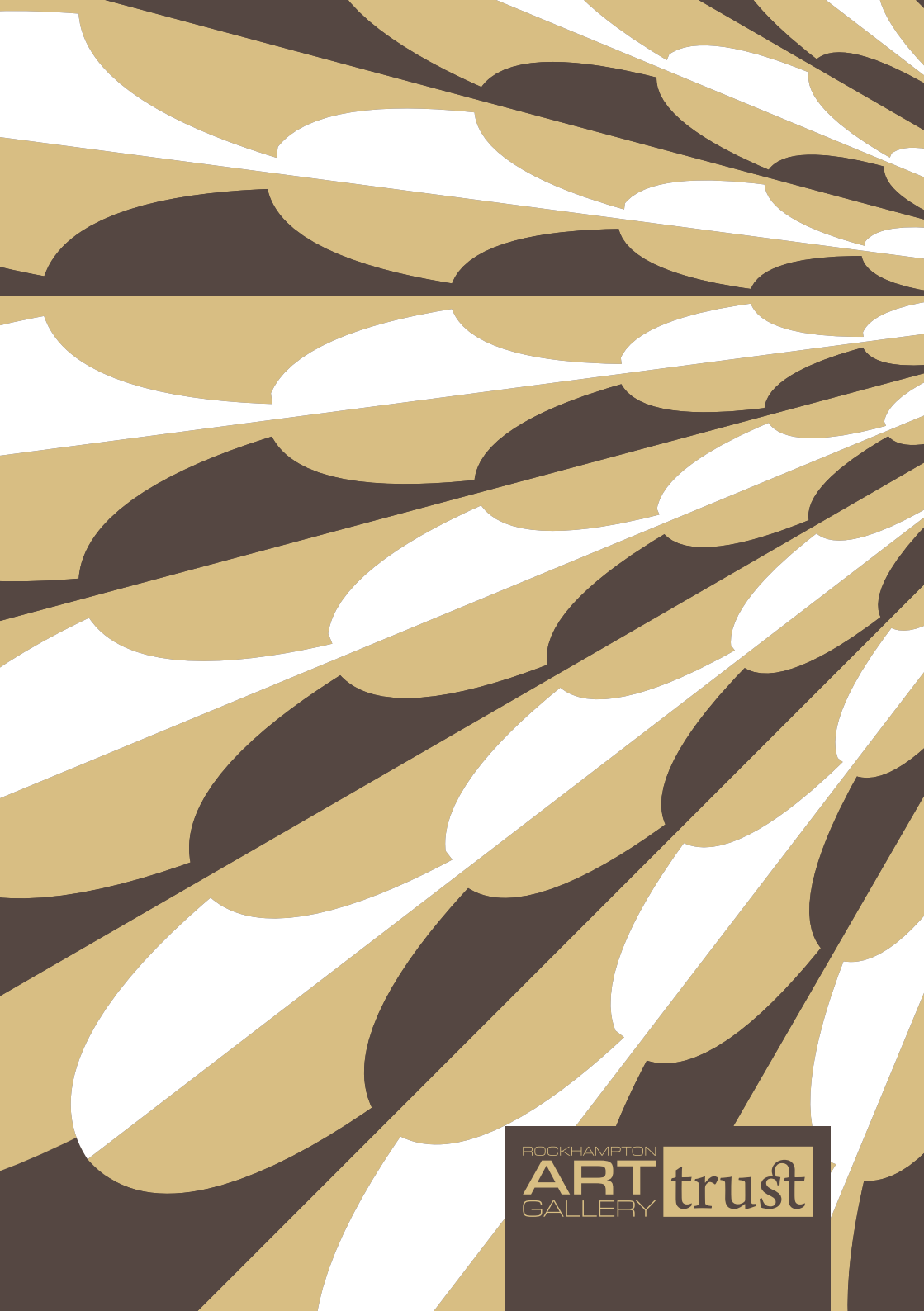
Nature Speaks: EV 2014
acrylic and gouache on 16 canvas
boards | 101 x 142 cm
[P.37]

about the self, identity, chance and belonging.

- 1 Quoted in Wystan Curnow, *Imants Tillers: the 'Book of Power'*, Roseville: Craftsman House, 1998, p. 72.
- 2 Imants Tillers, 'Artist statement', 23 February 2012, Rockhampton Art Gallery archive.

Artworks courtesy of the artist and Jan Manton Art, Brisbane





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