

FUTURE PROOF

24 September - 22 October 2016

Curated by Katherine Dionysius & Amy-Clare McCarthy

Future Proof brings together new work by four recent Queensland graduates: Holly Bates, Spencer Harvie, Annie Macindoe and Matthew Sneesby. Working across painting, sculpture, and video installation, the artists' materials are as diverse as their conceptual pursuits. Chosen for strength of practice rather than a thematic connection to each other, the selected artists demonstrate the breadth and diversity of work coming out of Brisbane's art schools. *Future Proof* provides an opportunity for the artists to show new work that they have been developing post-graduation.

Future Proof is not a 'best of graduates' show. When we first started researching for this exhibition in late 2015, we spent time visiting the different graduate exhibitions in Brisbane, taking note of works that stood out to us. We reconvened a few weeks later to narrow down the selection to just four artists. We chose Bates, Harvie, Macindoe and Sneesby because they demonstrated practices that were not only visually and conceptually rigorous, but also diverse in medium and genre. Over the course of the year, we have met regularly and maintained close contact with the four artists, while they developed new work to present for Boxcopy.

Holly Bates, whose practice challenges pre-conceived notions of female sexuality, presents her new work, *Whiplash* (2016), an installation of four pink whips that resemble squids, protruding from a shiny, black, pleather bag shaped like a droplet and hanging from an industrial metal chain. The 'squids' intermittently drip a concoction of black ink, lubricant and water, which pools in the concaved concrete slab below. The work playfully approaches stigmas surrounding sexual fantasy and the female body, specifically menstruation and female ejaculation. Materiality is important in this work: the heavy, metal chain; the greasy liquid; the hefty concrete slab; and the shiny, pleather fabric, reminiscent of tacky costumes in adult shop windows. There is certainly a tension here between dirtiness and sterility—the dirtiness associated with sexual fetish, female ejaculation, and menstruation, versus the sterility of the gallery space, and the hospital drip system used to facilitate the work. The pink whips also reference a tension between pleasure and pain; usually a tool for enforcing submission and obedience, here they are reclaimed and recontextualised as items literally dripping with female pleasure.

Annie Macindoe's practice explores memory, trauma and loss; in particular how processing personal trauma is deemed appropriate only in a private context. Her dual-channel video work, *Prepositions of Time and Place* is a deliberately ambiguous and disorienting swirl of text and light, looking at the difficulty in communicating complex feelings associated with experiences of loss and trauma. The artist explains:

The text, sourced from private thoughts, reflections and conversations around the experience of loss, has been transformed through a process of fragmentation, deconstruction and reconstruction. This process acts as both a systematic treatment of language as an artistic medium, as well as a method of psychoanalysis that aims to more clearly understand how language can reflect traumatic memory and its immanent disorientation of perceptions of time and place.¹

Watching the work feels reminiscent of being in the state between dreaming and waking; lights dance before your eyes while moments of cognizance float just out of reach. It's hard to judge the passing of time, and the fragments of text are suggestive of a suppressed or painful memory.

Matthew Sneesby's practice of Post-Minimal abstract paintings utilise space, medium and light to develop experiential artworks. His works are more than paintings that hang on the wall—they are painting-sculptures, or painting-installations, that interact with the wall and the space around them. Sneesby's new work, *Minds Slope* (2016), is a continuation of his experimentation with surface, materiality and colour. As in previous works, Sneesby has painted a crisp, white square in the centre of his 'canvas' (which is actually a sheet of black, industrial PVC) and on the back of the work, he has painted with gold leaf, thus reflecting a glowing light onto the wall behind. *Minds Slopes* is more three-dimensional than his previous paintings: the PVC surface is breaking away from the support, peeling itself into the gallery space and doubling over the perfect, white square. Here, Sneesby makes evident his interest in Kant's consideration of the sublime to be formless and without boundaries. According to Sneesby, he aims to "evoke the psychological qualities of the unbounded, the sublime experience of limitlessness, so highlighting the emotional and reflective aspects of the artwork."²

Within his practice, Spencer Harvie is interested in 'misusing' systems of organisation, such as alphabetising, gridding, and colour coding, to show how futile these structures are in providing order to a chaotic world. For *Future Proof*, he has created *Holes and Mounds* (2016), a multilayered structure, similar to a museum display case or plinth, in which organic, stalagmite-like forms poke through circular holes. While the sparkling, ethereal stalagmites appear to have grown out of or into the gridded structure in a chaotic way, the deliberateness of the holes, allowing the forms to spout through to the next layer, points to the contrived nature of the structure. There is also some form of hierarchy present, with the top tier only having one mound rising out of it, which, with its white top, is capped and reclaimed by the display structure. The nature of the forms and how they supposedly materialised here in the gallery remains ambiguous, thus undermining the rational nature of the structure.

Future Proof was not conceived as a thematic exhibition, yet the works do share aesthetic and conceptual ties, and complement each other in unexpected ways. One of the great things about an exhibition like this is that it reveals unforeseen connections between works that might not otherwise have been shown together. Meeting with the artists throughout the process, it was interesting to find some common themes emerging. One such connection is between Sneesby's and Macindoe's works, which both play with light and perception to allude to human sensation and psychology. Another similarity can be found between Bates', Harvie's and Sneesby's use of contrasting forms; the artists' works juxtapose soft shapes or materials against rigid, austere forms. Perhaps a common thread running between all works is a sense of tension—a push and pull. For Macindoe and Bates, it's tension between public and private experiences. For Harvie and Sneesby, it's a tension surrounding formalist concerns of Modernism. Despite these tensions, however, there is an aesthetic unity; the largely monochromatic palette of the works in the exhibition, with the occasional pop of colour, formally unites them within the space.

¹ Personal communication with the artist, 2016.

² Ibid.

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