



**SYNTHETICA**



# SYNTHETICA

A BLINDSIDE AND NETS VICTORIA TOURING EXHIBITION

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BOE-LIN BASTIAN  
KRISTIN MCIVER  
PAUL YORE

SIMON FINN  
KATE SHAW

BONNIE LANE  
ALICE WORMALD

#### FRONT COVER

Bonnie Lane  
*Make Believe* 2012  
Single channel HD video (still), 1 hour 5 minutes  
Image courtesy of the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

#### INSIDE COVER

Kate Shaw  
*La-la land* 2013 (detail)  
Acrylic and resin on board  
30 x 70 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

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# FOREWORD

## ROBERT HEATHER

BLINDSIDE occupies a unique niche in Victoria’s cultural ecology, providing opportunities for artists and curators to experiment with their work, creating new experiences and intriguing synergies across artforms.

It is a delight to see that BLINDSIDE and NETS Victoria are partnering together on this touring exhibition *Synthetica*. Curator, Claire Anna Watson, has invited seven artists—Boe-lin Bastian, Simon Finn, Bonnie Lane, Kristin McIver, Kate Shaw, Alice Wormald and Paul Yore—who were all part of BLINDSIDE’s recent exhibition programming.

Selected for their visually charged and hypnotic imagery, pulsing machines and courageous forms brimming with life and wonder, the artists incorporate humorous, performative and theatrical devices to interrogate the role of nature and culture in the world around us. Their dramatic and oftentimes absurdist explorations, reveal how a synthetic reality has been created through a collision between the creative mind and the material world.

The artists in *Synthetica* have all taken a similar leap to that which the co-founders of BLINDSIDE undertook in 2004—they have had a vision, a new idea and nurtured it. The work that is left to show for their courage is brave and inspiring.

Importantly, this project also launches the parallel platform *Here in the Undergrowth*, whereby in each regional venue, a local regional artist will showcase a mini-exhibition of their work alongside *Synthetica*. This initiative provides the opportunity for meaningful exchange between the artists, curator, the gallery staff and their respective communities.

I warmly thank the writers in this publication for their unique perspectives. Dan Rule provides a compelling overview of the artist-run initiative sector in Australia and BLINDSIDE’s place within this fertile environment, while Jane O’Neill interrogates the meaning of the works within *Synthetica*, providing critical insights into their development and their unique relationship to our contemporary culture.

NETS Victoria’s touring exhibitions enrich the experiences of arts practitioners and audiences alike extending throughout regional Victoria and beyond. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Georgia Cribb, Director, and Emily Jones, Exhibitions Manager of NETS Victoria for fostering this rewarding partnership with BLINDSIDE. I extend my gratitude to Arts Victoria for providing critical support to this project and acknowledge the role of the City of Melbourne for their continued support of BLINDSIDE and its activities more broadly.

Finally, I thank members of the BLINDSIDE Board of Directors, Advisors and Associates—both past and present— for their voluntary commitment to presenting fresh talent and experimentation in the arts has ensured a thriving arts scene within Australia and embodies innovation.

**Robert Heather** is a former Board member and current Advisor of BLINDSIDE as well as the Manager, Collections Interpretation at the State Library of Victoria.

# INTRODUCTION

## CLAIRE ANNA WATSON

*Synthetica* is an unfixated state. It transmits the intensity of technological and biological dualism whereby non-human bodies are entangled with the mechanics and desires of our own. The artists in *Synthetica* propose that our contemporary world is full of wonder, dynamism and is forever open to contingency. They suggest that cultural processes and objects themselves are fertile testing grounds—sites of expansion and creativity—that they are ultimately, generative.

The distinctions between organic and inorganic matter are becoming increasingly blurred. Imbued with life-giving forces, many of the inanimate objects and environments presented, adopted or interrogated in *Synthetica* appear charged with the ability to either self-propagate or alternatively, exist in a state of becoming or dissolution.

Flux is, after all, the only truth in our universe—we float in space, subject to planetary motions beyond our control—never giving a moment's thought to this constant change and the invisible forces such as gravitational pull that affect us. Artists Boe-lin Bastian, Simon Finn, Bonnie Lane, Kristin McIver, Kate Shaw, Alice Wormald and Paul Yore draw attention to aspects of life that often go unnoticed. They transpose cultural ideas or scientific knowledge into their practice in ways that are theatrical, and teetering on the absurd. Their works seduce us toward a greater understanding of the world around us as one giant cosmic aberration. It is all an exercise in serious play and inane discovery—of looking where we've looked before, but differently and with more focus.

Technology is infiltrating every sphere of our lives; nothing can escape its grip. Our world is becoming more and more synthetic—from the clothes that we wear, to our experience of nature. Human experience is mediated through synthetic technologies and plastic realities. Our worlds are more and more mediated through gadgets, radio waves and satellite beams; we are living in a hologram that is deceptively real. Many explore these technologies, these realities and the new horizons they bring, with great zeal; the artists in *Synthetica* are no exception.

**Claire Anna Watson** is the exhibition curator and current Chair and Program Curator of BLINDSIDE, as well as Curator at Hatch Contemporary Arts Space, Banyule Council.

# HUMAN PRODUCT

## JANE O'NEILL

*Synthetica*, the term invented for this exhibition, might be defined as the collective stronghold of the plastic or fake in consumer society. Curator, Claire Anna Watson introduces the idea of artificiality to probe the material and cerebral concerns of each of the artists: Boe-lin Bastian, Simon Finn, Bonnie Lane, Kristin McIver, Kate Shaw, Alice Wormald and Paul Yore. It is a timely and playful investigation into the way we navigate a world of ersatz experiences—where the concept of Nature recedes beyond a hall of mirrors. Through a diversity of materials and a kaleidoscopic range of world views, these artists demonstrate how the distinctions between natural and unnatural, and between artificial and authentic, can easily unravel.

The starting point for the exhibition was to bring together a selection of artists who had recently exhibited at BLINDSIDE, an artist-run-initiative opened in 2004.<sup>1</sup> The term 'blind side' refers to a hit or attack on someone without them realising—this is their 'blind side'. As a name for a gallery, we might interpret this in as an indication of the way that art can provoke a viewer with challenging or surprising themes. The space has undergone a number of changes over the years; studios moved; windows covered; offices built and unbuilt. As an artist-run space, it offers the opportunity for emerging artists to exhibit in the centre of Melbourne. With the strong resource of a diligent board, the gallery has successfully launched the careers of numerous emerging artists, including many of the artists shown here. Accolades awarded to BLINDSIDE alumni include prizes, commercial representation at well-respected galleries, international residencies and countless reviews and articles. At this rate, we might be forgiven for thinking that BLINDSIDE is something of a silver bullet for emerging artists.

The gallery is a constant on my itinerary of walking art tours for visitors to Melbourne. In contrast to the sleeker operations of large commercial galleries, the atmosphere at BLINDSIDE reveals something of the self-motivation and hard work required to mount a show in an artist-run initiative. The gallery maintains an emphasis on shared dialogue and so offers visitors the opportunity to engage directly with the work through conversation. In doing so, the audience is introduced at an early stage to artists who will most likely proceed to exhibit in larger institutional and commercial shows. And there is such a mind-boggling diversity to the range of exhibitions that you're never sure what you're going to encounter.

In 2011, Paul Yore filled the gallery space with a flurry of kinetic sculptures and floor paintings. The entry became a portal to rotating objects placed amongst swirls of rainbow coloured mats. There is a heady

Bollywood aesthetic to Yore's work, which manifests with fungal-like insistence. The artist describes the current work as:

*a kinetic junk sculpture of sorts, a giddy and sarcastic thing designed to initially delight and then eventually induce a state of mild nausea. The bells create a repetitive, cyclical jingle, the twinkling of which may at first evoke the bells of ecclesiastic or temple-based ritual—but then eventually worm their way into the head of the beholder like annoying background music at a shopping centre<sup>2</sup>*

The experience of Yore's work generally unfolds in two stages: an epiphany of colour and sweetness followed by the darker realisation that such work is borne from the detritus of super-size consumerism.

In *These things happen* by Boe-lin Bastian, large helium balloons are weighed down by bricks. It is an absurd gesture that chimes with the overcompensations of a risk-averse society. The work comprises both playful and dangerous objects, leading us on a narrative arc of safety appraisal. In this way, it elicits the anxious wonderings of so-called helicopter parents.

Bastian further explores the relationship between chance and control in *Jellies. Coupling Series*, where two pots of jelly cling to the top of a washing machine during a washing cycle. There is suspense in the potential for the jelly to slide from the washing machine, made all the more heart-wrenching by the implication that the jellies are mating. When thinking about these tableaux of potential mayhem, we might use the word *zemblanity*—a phrase coined by William Boyd to describe the opposite of serendipity.

In Bonnie Lane's work there is a slippage between natural and unnatural. Footage of two goldfish in a tank, hyperbolically titled *The Pain of Existence*, might be seen as a meditation on the failure of human attempts to re-create natural environments such as water. A fish tank is framed by the green—the wisp of an unhealthy looking water plant and the contrasting stem of the plastic water filter. There is a temptation to project all manner of modern symptoms (isolation, boredom, anxiety) on the goldfish that swim aimlessly for our entertainment. Ultimately, the work speaks of the degraded, often pathetic ways in which humans contain and engage with other species.

*Make Believe*, on the other hand, transforms the female body into a series of kaleidoscopic patterns. The subject assumes the appearance of a Barbie doll: long blond hair, pink sequins and bobby socks. The spins and swirls of the patterns elude our ability to see the entire figure, and so the human body is no longer a thing of Nature, but a series of abstracted patterns.

Simon Finn proposes a hyper-Futurist aesthetic in a series of animations, sculptures and drawings. Partly informed by the artist's professional experience in game engine mechanics and special effects, the works resist the use of such technology as a gimmick unto itself. Instead, there is a bombastic quality to the subjects, each based on a forceful movement of some kind: a falling object, a rising wave, an exploding planet. These moments, often described as 'surges' or 'descents', are variously suspended in time or elongated. The audience is gently led on a path of destruction, to apprehend the enormity of a disaster in slow motion. *Stages of Descent*, for example, is a meticulously rendered charcoal drawing which traces the fall of the NASA Mars Rover camera under the ocean. The downward spiral of the falling object speaks of the futility of human striving.

Kate Shaw's practice refers both to the evanescent beauty of Nature and the contrasting human drive to conquer and colonise other planets. The artist uses a distinctive technique of pouring, then collaging paint to create landscapes which are at once vivid and toxic. These paintings present a conundrum: the paint patterns echo natural rock formations; and the bright hues of light echo those to be found in particularly cold environments. In these ways, they appear 'natural', particularly in the context of the traditional landscape format. Yet they are unlike any natural landscape we are likely to have seen.

Shaw extends the use of collage in *The Spectator*, a video which combines footage of natural disasters with layers of swirling paint. The artist draws our attention not only to the visual connections between pouring paint and the large scale movements of natural forces, but to the way that our engagement with Nature is increasingly mediated by the technology of the mobile phone.

Alice Wormald's studio boasts a library of books bearing titles like 'Scenic Wonders of the World', 'House Plants' or 'The Auduba Society Book of Wildflowers'. Such books provide the source material for photographic collages which are then rendered in painterly form. The paintings are carefully layered juxtapositions of the patterns to be found in Nature. There is a disorienting sense in the way the artist

combines patterns regardless of scale, so that in *Rock Stack*, for example, diminutive carnivorous plants engulf cacti and rock faces. Wormald's paintings are not merely a celebration of natural textures and palettes, but an exploration into the way Nature is manipulated through photography and printing. For the Romantics, the pre-occupation was how to apprehend the sublime in Nature. For Wormald, the question is how to perceive the mutant realm of Nature in mediated form.

Kristin McIver employs neon signage to address the dubious values of digitally-saturated society. The material signifies both consumer culture and warning sign. In *Thought Piece (What's Going On?)*, bricks are inscribed with the kinds of banalities that define the one-dimensional tone of much online communication. In a circular form that echoes Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return, *Life Unlimited* presents a number of readings. On one hand, it echoes the buoyant promises of capitalism, forever imploring consumers to 'live life to our full potential'. It is also a symptom of 'end time' mentality, the awareness that the world's resources are quickly reaching a point of depletion.

But it's not all bad news. There is one further derivative of the exhibition title, synthesis, which extends our ability to grasp these different elements as a whole. Above all, *Synthetica* reveals an abiding resistance to the distinction between natural and unnatural. What emerges is that no matter how plastic or fake these creations may appear there is an inevitable organic momentum to each work, whether through concept or form. And it makes sense—if humans are natural, it follows that human product is too.

**Jane O'Neill** is a freelance curator, writer, tour guide and artist based in Melbourne.  
September 2014

<sup>1</sup> BLINDSIDE was formed in 2004 by Renai Grace, Pip Haydon, Simon Koger and Christine Morrow.

<sup>2</sup> Email correspondence with the artist September 2014.

Image on following page:

Simon Finn

*Synthetic Surge* 2012

Charcoal on paper, 85 x 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne



# MAKING, TALKING, DOING

## A POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARI

### DAN RULE

It's all too easy to overlay one's hand in an endeavour to ascribe meaning to the peculiar, nebulous beast that is the artist-run initiative (ARI). For all its salient roles, functions and historical precedents, attempting to embed the ARI in any kind of formal discourse is fraught with limitations.

To define is often to crystallise and to coagulate—and the loose clustering of ideas, structures, signposts and outcomes that make the ARI such an important and amorphous being necessarily resist attempts to classify. Perhaps one commonly cited idea is that of the ARI's position adjacent—and often in opposition—to patterns and expectations of the mainstream art milieu and market. While the idea of a testing ground or space for experimentation and expanding practices, free of market forces and institutional expectations has become something of well-worn trope, it still has resonance. But even within such a notion, there are plenty of trials, twists and turns. To speak colloquially, the experiences, engagements and general goings on at the summit of TCB's notoriously crusty staircase in Melbourne's Chinatown possess a fundamentally different funk to those at West Space's expansive Bourke Street galleries or BLINDSIDE's perch on level seven of the iconic Nicholas Building.

My perspective on the ARI comes largely from my occupation as an art critic, writer and editor. It is a particular privilege to spend my Friday or Saturday afternoons traipsing around the galleries by bicycle, following a route that long included the likes of Seventh and Conical in Fitzroy; Platform, BLINDSIDE and Kings Artist Run in the Melbourne CBD; Bus Projects' various sites over the years; and countless others. In an earlier stage of my life, the Tuesday night openings at the first incarnation of Bus Projects (then Bus Studios) on Little Lonsdale Street in 2001 and 2002 were a vital (and more importantly, cheap) date on my social calendar. But I'll speak more to the intrinsic value of inexpensive beer and a dusty stoop a little later.

No matter how we're to preface or frame specific contributions to the wider Australian art schema, the proliferation and indeed significance of the ARI is unavoidable. Each city has its precedents. While Sydney's Central Street (founded in 1966) and Inhibodress—founded by Mike Parr, Peter Kennedy and Tim Johnson and operated as a kind of outpost for early conceptual art between 1971 and 1972—are largely considered two of the formative artist-run spaces, other key early examples include John Nixon's Art Projects in Melbourne (1979–1984), Sydney's First Draft (founded in 1986 and still running today) and Melbourne's Store 5 (1989–1993), which was founded by Gary Wilson and became a central conduit

for the early careers of a generation of artists whose works revolved around ideas stemming out of post-minimalism, from Stephen Bram and Kathy Temin, to Rose Nolan, Tony Clark, Constanze Zikos, Marco Fusinato and others. Another Melbourne initiative, 1st Floor Artists and Writers Space—which was founded by David Rosetzky and operated between 1994 and 2002—played a key role in further aligning the practices of art making and writing, forging an environment that looked to both expand upon and offer different access points to the wider discursive and presentational context at the time. The likes of Guy Benfield, Mira Gojak, Eliza Hutchison, Raafat Ishak, Brendan Lee, Andrew McQualter, John Spiteri, Lyndal Walker, Callum Morton and David Noonan were all vital members of the wider 1st Floor collective.

The present environment is one characterised by a kind of infrastructural, philosophical and presentational slipperiness, with scores of spaces and initiatives operating via various means and in varying contexts. It's a dynamic that is reactive, informed and at times enforced by a string of shifting auxiliary factors, from institutional relationships and the necessity to adhere to frameworks consistent with government funding programs, to the parameters of space and survival within the context of a constrictive real estate market. Indeed, whether in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or other cities, ARIs' purported philosophical and conceptual underpinnings can only really be read within a wider context of reactivity, resourcefulness, professionalisation and survival instincts. The ARI's role as a site for alternative and exploratory endeavour is tempered by its necessary alignments with the very bureaucratic and institutional scaffolds that help keep it afloat. The dance of the ARI might be read as an allegory for the creative and financial tête-à-tête of the artist; her or himself.

Indeed, each space has its own set of particular nuances. Though a relatively new endeavour, Boxcopy Contemporary Art Space has emerged as one of Brisbane's key artist-run organisations. Since 2007, it has built a name on its particularly critical and discursive approach to presenting experimental practices, events and discussions. Assorted models are at play within the current Sydney landscape. Where Firstdraft has been one of Sydney's most prominent ARIs since its establishment in the mid 1980s, with a studio facility and a host of career-focused programming, such as artist and writer residencies and emerging curator exhibitions, the Sydney scene is marked by a number of incredibly active spaces and initiatives, from China Heights and Chalkhorse through to MOP Projects, which now shares its space with small commercial operation Galerie Pompom. A relatively new initiative to have made a huge impact on the

Sydney and wider Australian scene is Alaska Projects, which was founded by Sebastian Goldspink in 2011 and is situated in the disused basement of a Kings Cross car park. With a more informal, accessible and multidisciplinary focus, Alaska programs exhibitions, musical performances, events, film screenings and happenings, essentially playing the role of a happily unceremonious gallery, music venue and community hub.

While Melbourne has lost some key ARIs in recent years, including Conical, the landscape is as active as ever, with suburban spaces like Trocadero offsetting inner city operations like Seventh, Kings Artist Run, BLINDSIDE, TCB and Platform—not to mention spaces that occupy a role somewhere between the artist-run and commercial endeavour, such as c3 at the Abbotsford Convent, not-for-profit window gallery Chapter House Lane and project space Slopes. Both founded more than 10 years ago, TCB and Seventh might be read as slightly more organic, purely artist-led models, which essentially operate as an expanded communities of like-minded practitioners. TCB in particular—whose committee includes practicing artists and curators—is a context where different generations meet, mingle and experiment in a lo-fi environment.

Kings Artist Run has its own set of more academic and thematic parameters, positions and programs, while West Space (founded in 1993), is today the epitome of the professionalised ARI. Alongside an active exhibition schedule spanning all manner of mediums and drawing upon local, national and international artists, the gallery's five permanent staff manage a diverse range of educational, career developmental, publishing and cross-cultural endeavours. Managed by a seven-strong board and nine-strong program committee, West Space's presentation of various lectures, industry and academic discussions, and yearly fundraising exhibition has made it a significant career-building context for young arts managers and curators as well as artists. Bus Projects, likewise, has become a rigorous entity in the development not just of experimental practices, but professional contexts and opportunities for career development.

Founded in 2004, BLINDSIDE holds a crucial position within this wider clutch of parameters and contexts. Located in the historically and artistically significant Nicholas Building in the centre of Melbourne, the humbly scaled space has carved a unique place in the wider art landscape in terms

of its organisational structures, varied artistic and curatorial focuses, presentational modes and commitment to education, which sees BLINDSIDE run thorough programs for both VCE and tertiary students.

The organisation's eight-strong Board of Directors and four-strong Advisory Board—which includes artists, curators, educators and administrators of varied generations—is reflective of its considered and multigenerational approach. While it has long fostered emerging talent via its annual *Debut* exhibition featuring the works of recent graduates, perhaps BLINDSIDE's most incisive role has been that of providing a space for experimentation and marginal practices—be they at the hand of emerging, mid-career or even senior artists. Indeed, BLINDSIDE's programming and exhibition history—including *Vertigo*, a touring exhibition presented in collaboration with Asialink, which brought together leading artists whose works wrangle notions of dislocation and rupture in a hastily changing world—is littered with countless rigorous shows and works skirting and expanding the speculative peripheries of various practices. BLINDSIDE's commitment to writing has contributed to its distinctive place in the art landscape, with the organisation commissioning and developing a critical text to accompany and expand upon each and every exhibition in the program. In addition, the organisation has looked to expand exhibition environments and settings, founding Australia's first continuously programmed online gallery *PLAY*, which has helped make video art accessible to audiences throughout Australia and the world.

The recently developed exhibition, *Synthetica*—toured by NETS Victoria and curated by BLINDSIDE Chair Claire Anna Watson—might be read as an allegory for BLINDSIDE's broader activities. Featuring exploratory works spanning practices and forms (from artists including Boe-lin Bastian, Simon Finn, Bonnie Lane, Kristin McIver, Kate Shaw, Alice Wormald and Paul Yore) the exhibition questions, extends and re-animates perceptions of reality in a time in which our sense of actuality is more pluralised, problematised and technology-centric than ever before. Bringing together drawing and painting practices with video, neon and immersive, kinetic sculptural works—from early and more established mid-career artists—*Synthetica* represents something akin to a trans-generation and formal melting pot.

And this is where we come back to dusty stoops and cheap drinks. For all BLINDSIDE and indeed the wider network of ARIs' provision of contexts and infrastructure for lateral artistic endeavours, professional experience, career stepping-stones or career revitalisation, the artist-led organisation's real

potency and value comes down to something far less immediately tangible or quantifiable. Community may be something of a hackneyed term, but it's also a notion that has been central to the history of art making, its discourse, its collaborations and what might be phrased as its support structures—that being the simple act of artists hanging out and seeing one another's shows.

The artist-run endeavour provides the lubrication and the milieu for all these aspects—one step removed from the social expectations, finer wines and formal introductions of the commercial gallery setting. While our ARIs may take different forms, assume different functions and perpetuate different fallacies, their continuing strength and diversity lies in the fact that they are sites for artists to come together, to make and discuss art (or whatever else they damn well please) with each other and their immediate community. The business of art can wait for another time and another place. The ARI is for the making, the talking, the debating and the doing.

**Dan Rule** is a writer, critic, editor and publisher, based in Melbourne.  
September 2014

# BOE-LIN BASTIAN

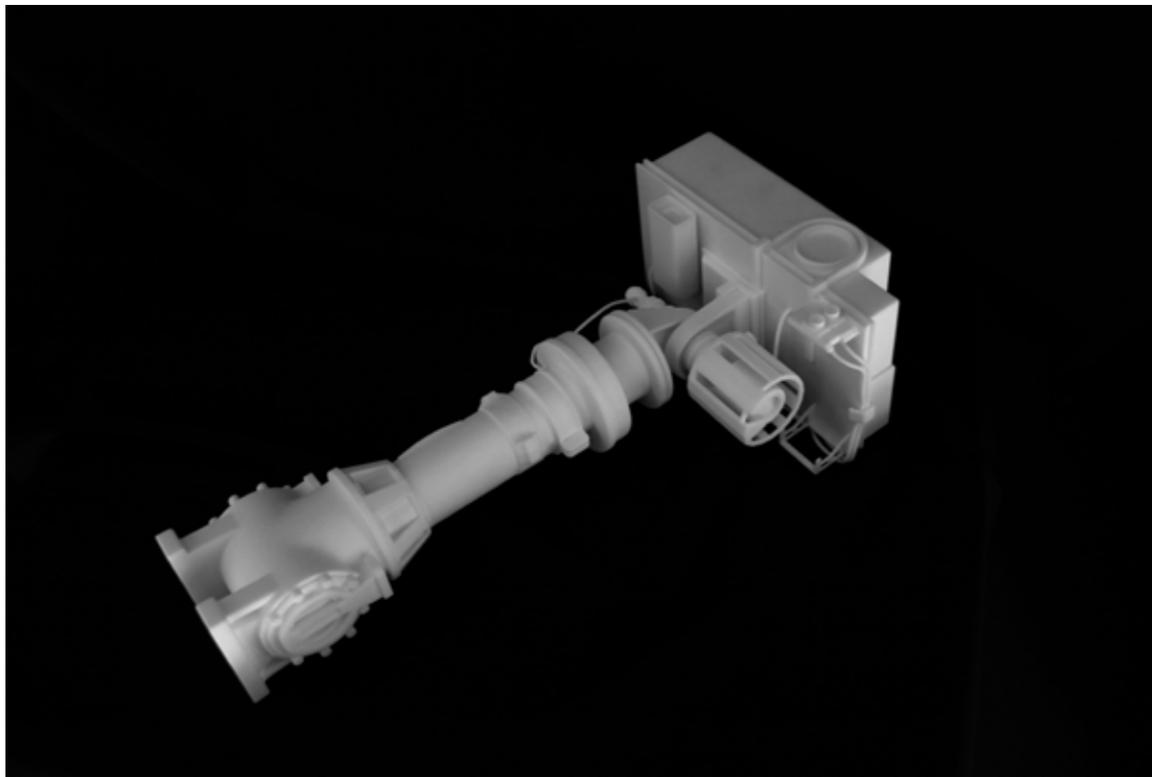


*Jellies. Coupling Series 2010*  
HD Video (still), 4.13 minutes  
Image courtesy of the artist



*These Things Happen 2012*  
Astro turf, helium balloons, nylon, tacks and found bricks  
Image courtesy of the artist

# SIMON FINN

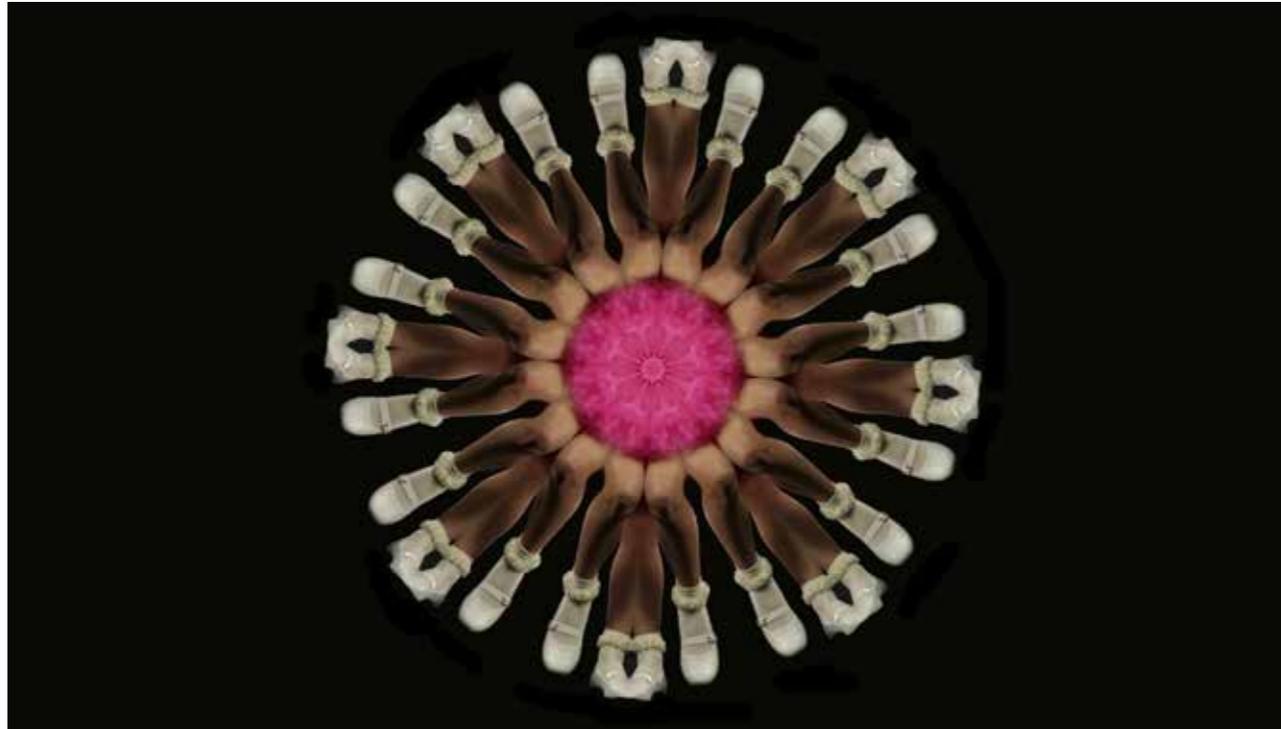


*Simulant* 2012  
Synthetic polymer  
8 x 15 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

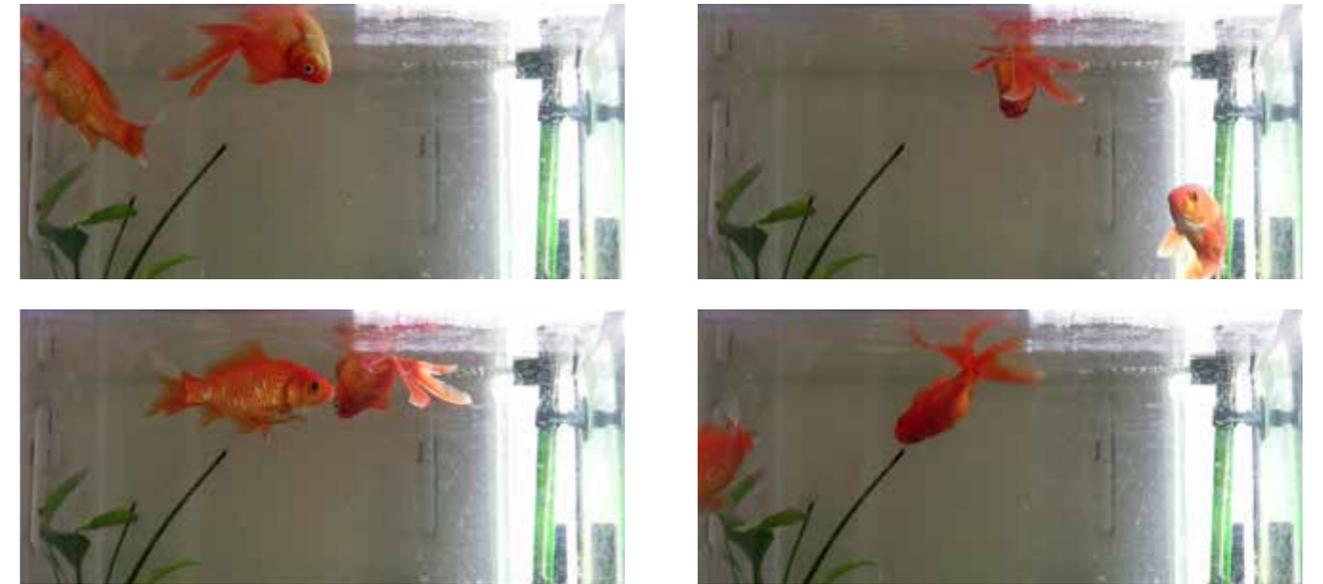


*Stages of Descent* 2013  
Charcoal on paper  
85 x 70 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

# BONNIE LANE



*Make Believe* 2012  
Single channel HD video (still), 1 hour 5 minutes  
Image courtesy of the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne



*Life is Pain* 2010  
Single channel HD video (still), 7 minutes 9 seconds (silent)  
Image courtesy of the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

# KRISTIN MCIVER

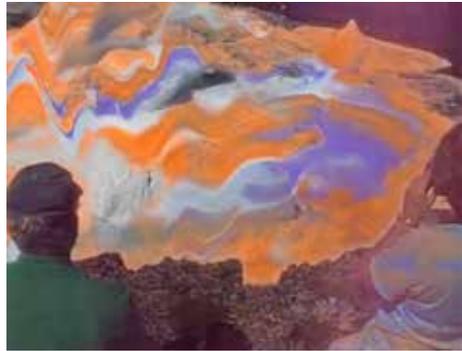


*Thought Piece (What's Going On?)* 2013  
Neon, steel, concrete, motion sensors, vinyl, neurons, electrical impulses  
Dimensions variable  
Image courtesy of the artist and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne and  
Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney



*Divine Intervention* 2011  
Neon, light, metal, artificial plants  
180 x 150 x 150 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and James  
Makin Gallery, Melbourne and Liverpool  
Street Gallery, Sydney  
Photography: Christian Capurro

# KATE SHAW



*La-la land* 2013  
Acrylic and resin on board, 30 x 70 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

Image on previous page:  
*The Spectator* 2012  
Single channel HD video (still), 4 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

## ALICE WORMALD



*Giddy Heights* 2012  
Oil on linen  
122 x 89 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Daine Singer, Melbourne



*Reeds Japan* 2013  
Oil on linen  
85 x 85 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Daine Singer, Melbourne

# PAUL YORE



*Ideological Landscape* 2012  
Plasticine on wood  
117 x 142 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne



*WHEN WILL IT END* 2014  
Mechanised parts and mixed media, Dimensions variable  
Image courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne  
Photography: Andrew Curtis



## BOE-LIN BASTIAN

**BORN IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA 1986. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE.**

*I make videos and rudimentary sculptures in order to better comprehend the strangeness of motion, gravity and momentum. My works operate at the juncture of object and action, drawing from a post-minimalist aesthetic and increasingly mixing old and new technologies. Critiques on humour, accident and the nature of impermanence inform the way that I think about my work.*

*The investigation of the innate qualities of materials and their relative scale is an ongoing interest. Equally important is the tendency of the viewer to project meaning and narrative onto existing sculptural forms. This tension between implied and projected meaning is key to my practice.*

*When working with objects, I liken the force of gravity to a punch line and enjoy exploring the changing states between balance and imbalance. By using ephemeral materials, I hope to give form to the passing of time, implying an idea of beauty as unexpected and immediate in contrast to an idea of beauty as rarefied.*

Boe-lin Bastian works across video and installation and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts with First Class Honours from RMIT University. She studied spatial practice in the School of Sculpture and Environmental Art at the Glasgow School of Art. Her practice revolves around her interests in gravity, humour and the nature of impermanence.

Bastian has exhibited throughout Australia as well as in Greece, Indonesia, Taiwan, Scotland and South Korea. Major projects include site-specific works at Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, the Palace of Art, Centre for Sporting Excellence, Glasgow and a Queensland Government commission for *Kick Off Contemporary Video Art Program* at Metricon Stadium. Bastian has received grants from the Australia Council, the National Association for the Visual Arts and Asialink Arts. Her solo exhibitions include *Built*, 2014, at Grass Mountain, Taipei, *Goal*, 2013 at Platform, Melbourne, *A matter of when*, 2012 at Firstdraft, Sydney and *These things happen*, 2011 at Kings Artist Run, Melbourne.

In 2014, Bastian was the artist-in-residence for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei as part of the touring exhibition *Vertigo*, curated by Claire Anna Watson.

**BOE-LINBASTIAN.COM**

## SIMON FINN

**BORN IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 1976. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE.**

*My studio practice generates artworks that are an exploration of temporal representations and the variable syntheses between artist, environment and technology. The works investigate the boundaries of sight, experience and scientific visualisation by de-centring the human in networks of artistic production.*

*Computation effectively provides highly complex processes, from which a series of sequential images are derived for further analysis. Through these technologies I employ precision geometry, accurate lighting systems and exact surface definitions for generating believable subject matter for drawing. The range of static imagery generated by computation is staged and then re-imagined through the hand, using traditional drawing processes. Using technology to observe an otherwise unattainable rupturing of time facilitates a faceted network of production. This approach to moving image construction offers a framework for considering the validity of artistic experimentation with motion-based subject matter as it disperses into the static. The works are a re-linking of the corporeal with the machine, in order to re-colonize the image.*

Simon Finn's practice is an exploration into static and movement-based representations through drawing, sculpture and simulation technology. He freezes single moments in time before extrapolating them in to intricate charcoal drawings and synthetic sculptures.

Finn's studies include a Master of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts, First Class Honours in Fine Art from RMIT University and Electronic Design and Interactive Media at Swinburne University. He is a Lecturer in Animation and Games Design within a Bachelor of Interactive Entertainment.

His recent solo exhibitions include *Vertex Vortex*, Fehily Contemporary, 2013 and *Synthetic Surge*, Beam Contemporary Art Space, 2012. Recent group exhibitions include *Vertigo*, Galeri Soemardja, Indonesia, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taiwan and POSCO Art Museum, South Korea, 2014; *Surge*, Plymouth College of Art, England, 2014 and *Down to the Line*, Bett Gallery, 2013. He was a finalist in the *Linden Art Prize*, 2014; *Substation Art Prize*, 2013; *Paul Guest Drawing Prize*, 2012; *Dobell Drawing Prize*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2011; and winner of the Howard Arkley Award and the Kedumba Drawing Award, 2012. Simon Finn is represented by Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne.

**SIMONFINN.INFO**

# BONNIE LANE

**BORN IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 1986. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE AND NEW YORK.**

*By exploring emotional responses to the world in which we live, my predominantly video-based practice focuses on universal human experience, often from an existential perspective. My video pieces utilise the atmosphere and history of existing architectural spaces to create immersive environments to be 'stepped into'.*

*Though somewhat contradictory I utilise new technologies and media to capture sentiment and nostalgia with an aim to create a purely human dialogue from artwork to viewer; viewer to artwork. Through visual techniques such as masking and unusual methods of video projection, I aim to escape the 'flat rectangle screen' and explore video as a means of recreating memory and sensorial experience. My works often result in sculptural forms with videos projected onto objects and unusual surfaces in an attempt to make the inanimate come alive.*

*My artworks are often wholly or partly autobiographical, an amalgamation of experiences and memories, dreams and nightmares, fears and fantasies.*

Bonnie Lane is a video installation artist. Her work commonly reveals a distorted romanticisation of childhood, fluctuating at times between the sinister and transcendental. Lane's studies include a Bachelor of Fine Art at Victorian College of the Arts and a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at Monash University.

Lane has been the recipient of grants and awards from organisations including the Australia Council for the Arts, National Association for the Visual Arts, and the City of Melbourne. She has participated in artist-in-residence programs in Norway, Portugal, South Korea and the USA. Her video installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally including in solo exhibitions *Make Believe*, Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne, 2012; *Present Memory*, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne, 2012; *Sleepless*, Art Currents Institute, New York, 2012; and *Into the Dark*, BUS Projects, Melbourne, 2011.

Lane has also exhibited works at the Seoul Museum of Art, Nanji Gallery, Art-Athina, Athens; MoCA, Taipei; Atelier 35, Bucharest, Romania; 91mq Project Space, Berlin; YouYou Gallery, Guangzhou, China; Harvestworks Digital Media Arts Center, New York; Folken Space, Stavanger, Norway; Out in the Sticks Cultural Centre, Ontario; Kudos Gallery, Sydney; as well as the following galleries in Melbourne: Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Michael Koro Galleries, BLINDSIDE, Seventh and The Substation. Bonnie Lane is represented by Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne.

**BONNIELANE.NET**

# KRISTIN MCIVER

**BORN IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 1974. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE AND NEW YORK.**

*The works in Synthetica continue my investigation into art and identity in the age of hyper-capitalism. 'Thought Piece (What's Going On?)' is part of an installation series which explores the notion of identity as commodity. The work transposes digital subject matter into physical objects to highlight the tangible economic value placed on our thoughts and desires. 'Thought Piece' appropriates language from the seemingly innocuous status prompts of applications such as Facebook; the viewer encounters a mass of concrete paving stones, inscribed with my thoughts, both public and private.*

*'Divine Intervention' proposes that the media and digital age have created a perpetual desiring machine, resulting in a global culture obsessed with material consumption. As corporations expand their markets into remote corners of the globe, the environment becomes subject to commodification. Natural habitats are destroyed in order to make way for newer, better environments—seemingly an improvement on that provided by nature.*

Kristin McIver's practice includes sculpture, painting and installation. Utilising devices such as text and neon, McIver's works explore the themes of desire and aspiration prevalent in our hyper-consumer culture. McIver's studies include a Master of Visual Art at the Victorian College of the Arts and a Bachelor of Arts (Graphic Design) at Monash University.

McIver's work has been a finalist in a number of awards, including the Melbourne Sculpture Prize (winner), Keith & Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship, Melbourne; Montalto Sculpture Prize, 2009/2010; City of Whyalla Art Prize, Substation Contemporary Art Award, 2011; and 3rd Ward's Summer Open Call, New York, 2010. Her work is held in public and private collections in Australia, Singapore, USA and the UK.

Solo exhibitions include *Ways of Reading*, Court Tree Gallery, New York; *Lifeless III*, Royale Projects, Palm Springs, California, 2013; *Your Imminent Arrival, Platform*, Melbourne 2012; *Statement Pieces*, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne, 2011; and *Divine Intervention*, BLINDSIDE, 2010. Group exhibitions include *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2013; *Sculpture by the Sea*, Sydney, 2012; *Negotiating Space*, ACGA Gallery, Melbourne, 2009; and *Debut V*, BLINDSIDE, Melbourne, 2009. In 2013 McIver was an artist-in-residence at OMI International Arts Centre in New York. Kristin McIver is represented by James Makin Gallery, Melbourne; Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney; and Royale Projects Contemporary Art, California.

**KRISTINMCIVER.COM**

# KATE SHAW

**BORN IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA 1969. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE AND NEW YORK.**

*My practice aims to convey ideas of nature, alchemy and cycles of creation/destruction. The paintings and video works deal with the tensions and dichotomies in the depiction of the natural world and our relationship to it. I am concurrently exploring the sublime in nature whilst imbuing a sense of toxicity and artificiality in this depiction. The intention is to reflect upon the contradiction between our inherent connection to the natural world and continual distancing from it.*

*The video 'The Spectator' combines footage of natural disasters from YouTube and video of the poured paint. I am seeking to draw out the ambiguities of how technology has distanced our relationship to the natural world whilst creating more immediate access to spectacular and disastrous natural events.*

Kate Shaw holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours from RMIT University and a Diploma of Museum Studies from Deakin University. She has held solo exhibitions in Australia, New York and Hong Kong and has presented work in group exhibitions in Auckland, Beijing, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Reykjavik, San Francisco, Seoul and Tokyo.

Shaw has received grants from Arts Victoria and the Australia Council and undertaken residencies at 24hrArtspace, Darwin; Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne; Point B, New York; Flux Factory, New York; and SIM, Reykjavik. She has been a finalist in numerous art prizes including The Arthur Guy Prize, 2013; The Gold Award, 2012; John Fries Memorial Prize, 2012; John Leslie Art Prize, 2012, 2003; Wynne Prize, 2010-2012; Substation Contemporary Art Prize, 2012; and Royal Bank of Scotland Art Award, 2010. Shaw was the winner (painting category) of Artists Wanted, Scope, New York, 2012.

Shaw's work is in collections including the University of Queensland, Macquarie Bank, Westpac Bank, RACV, and Artbank. She has received commissions from Urban Art Projects and the Museum of Brisbane. Recently her work was included in 'Landscape and its Psyche' published by University of NSW, 2013. Kate Shaw is represented by Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne; Sullivan and Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney; Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane; and Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, New York.

**KATESHAW.ORG**

# ALICE WORMALD

**BORN IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND 1987. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE.**

*I create paintings that depict impossible spaces where surface and depth, representation and abstraction and naturalism and artifice, converge. My paintings are based on collages using found images of natural and geological formations, vegetation, rocks and landscapes. The assembled imagery bypasses narrative in order to concentrate on the surfaces of the paper objects that are depicted, and the formal elements of the painting itself. This creates a compelling encounter between the physical depth of the images that have been represented and the abrupt white edges that hint at their origin as printed pieces of paper. The natural elements are not presented as pristine objects, but are instead cut, reassembled and carefully reconfigured to mimic the format of a landscape, exposing an unsettling hybrid which locates itself in the psychological rather than the physical and reflects upon the contested distinction between what is natural and what is real. This is suggestive of a secluded and sensual space where distance is concealed and danger lurks.*

Alice Wormald holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts with first class honours from the Victorian College of the Arts. Solo exhibitions include *Ordinary Picture*, Daine Singer, 2014; *In the Unreal Air*, BLINDSIDE, 2012; and *Wayside & Hedgerow*, Shifted Gallery, 2010. Her work was presented in the art fair *Spring 1883*; and *Vertigo*, an Asialink/BLINDSIDE touring exhibition curated by Claire Anna Watson. She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including *New Horizons* at Gippsland Art Gallery, 2013; *VCA Graduates*, Alliance Française, 2012; *Debut VII*, BLINDSIDE; *High Definition*, Paradise Hills, 2011; and *Recent Work*, George Paton Gallery, 2010.

Wormald has received awards including the Fiona Myer Award, the Casama Group Award and the National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association Award. She has been a finalist in awards such as *The Geelong Contemporary Art Prize*, 2014; *John Leslie Art Prize*, 2014, 2012; and the *Banyule Award for Works on Paper*, 2013. Her work is held in collections including the Fiona Myer Collection, the Joyce Nissan Collection and private collections in Australia and internationally. Alice Wormald is represented by Daine Singer, Melbourne.

**ALICEWORMALD.COM**

## PAUL YORE

**BORN IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND 1987. LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE.**

*At the heart of my practice is the notion that the things around us are not what they may first appear to be. This could be a 'slippage', an everyday material standing in for something sublime or unspeakable, an unexplainable juxtaposition, or just a silly pun. In a broader sense, I want my work to pose an epistemological question of sorts, something like: "what the hell are we even doing here?". I feel art, (if it has any use beyond mere decoration), should be able to pose uncomfortable questions, or at least point to the absurdity of the human situation, even if it cannot endeavour to resolve any specific problem we might face as a doomed species, as a dysfunctional nation-state or as alienated individuals.*

Interdisciplinary artist Paul Yore studied painting, ancient history, archaeology and anthropology before undertaking full-time work as an art practitioner. He works in large-scale installation, sound, video, drawing and textiles. Yore has exhibited works in a range of galleries and museum including Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, Heide Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Victoria, Gertrude Contemporary, Federation Square and Seoul Art Space Guemcheon.

Yore has partaken in studio residencies nationally and internationally including: Artspace, Gertrude Contemporary, Australian Tapestry Workshop and Seoul Art Space, Guemcheon. He is represented in public and private collections including Heide Museum of Modern Art, Wangaratta Art Gallery and Artbank. Paul Yore is represented by Neon Parc, Melbourne.

**PAULYORE.COM**

## CLAIRE ANNA WATSON

Claire Anna Watson is a curator, artist and arts writer. She is Chair of BLINDSIDE's Board of Directors and Art Curator at Banyule City Council managing their art collection and coordinating exhibitions for Hatch Contemporary Arts Space. Prior to this she was the Visual Arts Program Coordinator at Asialink and Curator at Gippsland Art Gallery.

She has developed major curatorial projects including the Asialink/BLINDSIDE exhibition *Vertigo*, touring to MoCA Taipei, Galeri Soemardja, Bandung, Indonesia and POSCO Art Museum, Seoul, 2014; projects for Hatch Contemporary Arts Space including *Seventh Skin*, 2014 and *Home—Reframing Craft and Domesticity*, 2013. She also curated *From Frederick McCubbin to Charles McCubbin*, 2008, for Gippsland Art Gallery, the touring exhibition *Hockey Plot* and the project *Sojourn in White* supported by TransCultural Exchange, Boston, 2008.

Watson's experience includes overseeing the development and delivery of BLINDSIDE's inaugural festival *Everywhere But Here*, 2012 and *End of The World Party*, 2012, as part of the *Curtain Call* series. She writes regularly on Australian contemporary arts practice. She co-edited and co-wrote Asialink publications *Every 23 Days: 20 years Touring Asia and Abundant Australia—Highlights of the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale*. She has also written texts for a variety of organisations and journals including Museums Australia and Next Wave. Watson holds a Master of Fine Art from Monash University and a Graduate Certificate in Public Art from RMIT University. Her multi-disciplinary arts practice has seen her exhibit in Australia, Portugal, Turkey and Finland.

**CLAIREWATSON.COM.AU**

# SCHEDULE OF WORKS

## BOE-LIN BASTIAN

*Jellies. Coupling Series* 2010  
HD Video (still), 4.13 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

*These Things Happen* 2012  
Astro turf, helium balloons, nylon, tacks  
and found bricks  
Courtesy of the artist

## SIMON FINN

*Stages of Descent* 2013  
Charcoal on paper  
85 x 70 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

*Synthetic Surge* 2012  
Charcoal on paper  
85 x 150 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

*Simulant* 2012  
Synthetic polymer  
8 x 15 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

*Surge Sequence* 2012  
HD video (still), 1080p, 1 minute 25 seconds  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

## BONNIE LANE

*Make Believe* 2012  
Single channel HD video (still), 1 hour 5 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

*Life is Pain* 2010  
Single channel HD video (still), 7 minutes 9 seconds (silent)  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

## KRISTIN MCIVER

*Thought Piece (What's Going On?)* 2013  
Neon, steel, concrete, motion sensors, vinyl,  
neurons, electrical impulses  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne  
and Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney

*Divine Intervention* 2011  
Neon, light, metal, artificial plants  
180 x 150 x 150 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne  
and Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney

# SCHEDULE OF WORKS

## KATE SHAW

*La-la land* 2013  
Acrylic and resin on board  
30 x 70 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

*Nadaville* 2013  
Acrylic and resin on board  
30 x 70 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

*The Spectator* 2012  
Single channel HD video (still), 4 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne

## ALICE WORMALD

*Giddy Heights* 2012  
Oil on linen  
122 x 89 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Daine Singer, Melbourne

*Reeds Japan* 2013  
Oil on linen  
85 x 85 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Daine Singer, Melbourne

*Rock Stack* 2013  
Oil on linen  
102 x 71 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Daine Singer, Melbourne

## PAUL YORE

*WHEN WILL IT END* 2014  
Mechanised parts and mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne

*Ideological Landscape* 2012  
Plasticine on wood  
117 x 142 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne

# SYNTHETICA

## A BLINDSIDE AND NETS VICTORIA TOURING EXHIBITION CURATED BY CLAIRE ANNA WATSON

### CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to the brilliant artists for their awe-inspiring work and their commitment to *Synthetica*. It is an honour to work with such incredibly talented artists. A special thanks goes also to their representatives for generously collaborating on the exhibition.

To trusted colleagues Andrew Tetzlaff and Raymonda Rajkowski, both co-Directors and executive members of BLINDSIDE, I extend my thanks for their support of this project since its inception. Thanks to Martina Copley, Gallery Manager at BLINDSIDE for her support and professionalism during the development phase of the exhibition and to BLINDSIDE's Education Program Coordinator Claire Mooney for supporting the educative component of this exhibition.

Thanks to the Board of NETS Victoria and their incredible staff for their unwavering commitment and support of the project, especially Georgia Cribb and Emily Jones.

I am grateful to writers Jane O'Neill and Dan Rule for their original and thoughtful essays. My gratitude warmly extends to Arts Victoria for making this tour possible and the regional gallery Directors for their enthusiastic collaboration on the parallel project *Here in the Undergrowth*. Thanks to City of Melbourne for enabling BLINDSIDE to grow and flourish, particularly staff Michelle Ely and Candy Mitchell. Finally, thanks to Steven Richardson and Creative Partnerships Australia for their support of the project and BLINDSIDE's ongoing development.

### FIRST PUBLISHED 2014

BLINDSIDE  
Level 7, 37 Swanston St  
Melbourne VIC Australia 3000  
[blindside.org.au](http://blindside.org.au)

National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria  
C/- The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia  
Federation Square, PO BOX 7259  
Melbourne VIC Australia 8004  
[netsvictoria.org.au](http://netsvictoria.org.au)

Edition 700  
Design: Eleanor Adams  
Editor: Claire Anna Watson  
978-0-9802977-2-0

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Unless otherwise indicated, all photography is courtesy of the artists and their representatives.

This exhibition was supported by Arts Victoria through the Touring Victoria program



National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria, by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. NETS Victoria also receives significant in-kind support from the National Gallery of Victoria.



