



GIFT OF THE GAB
HOW TO WRITE AN AWESOME ARTIST STATEMENT
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NERAM

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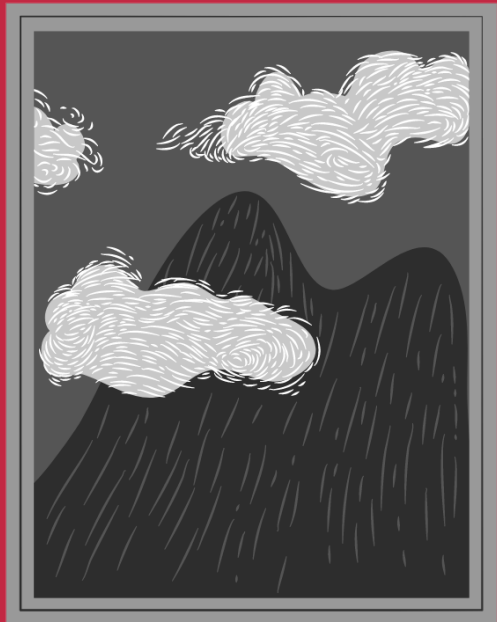
NERAM



The content of this workbook has been compiled by New England
Regional Art Museum (NERAM) Director,
Rachael Parsons.

Rachael is an Australian curator, educator and academic and for
over 12 years, has worked as an independent and institutional
curator within university, commercial, public and
artists run spaces.





WHAT IS AN ARTIST STATEMENT?

An artist statement is a brief statement which tells us about your artwork. A good artist statement will increase a viewer's understanding of your work and facilitate deeper engagement with your concept and creative intentions.

An artist statement is...

- It's about your art, not about you
- It describes your approach to making art
- It's about the current direction of your work, not a history of your practice
- An explanation of your style, approach, philosophy, subject and/or theme
- A statement of your intention through your work
- A testament to your creativity and integrity
- Allows the audience to grasp what is essential about your work
- It can be for a particular artwork, a particular exhibition of work or an overall statement about your body of work in general
- The purpose and audience for your statement should determine its content and tone

THE PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT IS TO CLARIFY AND ADD TO OUR UNDERSTANDING. IT SHOULD BE WRITTEN IN THE 1ST PERSON AND CAN BE SCALED FOR IT'S INTENDED PURPOSE.



GIFT OF THE GAB

WHY IS A GOOD ARTIST STATEMENT IMPORTANT?

BECAUSE BAD ARTIST STATEMENTS CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO YOUR SUCCESS.

"I don't allow statements in the rooms where exhibitions take place," Ivan Karp, director of New York City's O.K. Harris gallery, stated. "They are generally cryptic, esoteric, ungrammatical and besides the point."

"Most artist statements, 99 out of 100, are not useful, and they're often ludicrous," Philadelphia Inquirer art critic Edward Sozanski said. "A poorly written statement has turned me off an artist's work. Being a literary person, I am influenced by the way people speak and write. A badly written or poorly conceived statement pushes me in the wrong direction. It shouldn't, be a bad statement makes me say, 'To hell with it. That person doesn't know what he's talking about.'"

"What they say about the work often totally destroys my interest," David Cohen, director of the Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland, Oregon, said. "If the artist is inarticulate or doesn't sound confident about what he or she is doing, I become very reluctant to make an investment in that artist." He added that "we are rarely interested in artists we don't already know about, so the statement doesn't matter much."

"Grandiose statements about the nature of man or how the artist is at one with God or why the world needs peace should be eliminated completely," Stephen Rosenberg said. "A lot of the artist statements I read sound as though they came from the Miss America contest."

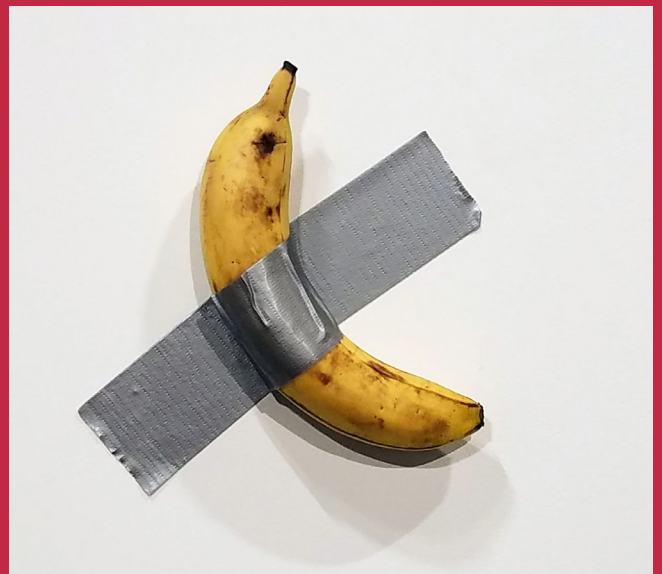
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/are-artists-statements-re_b_701604

WHY IS A GOOD ARTIST STATEMENT IMPORTANT?

- For emerging and mid-career artists they are an introduction to the artworld, its key players and their audience
- They can help the viewer understand what you as an artist is doing and why you are doing it that way
- You will need to provide artists statements when you
 1. Apply for grants/ fellowships/ exhibitions/ tertiary study/ residencies/ work placements/ any competitive opportunities
 2. You will often be required to provide an artist statement if you are included in an exhibition/ publication/ event
 3. Self promotion is important in today's art world/ market – you need to be able to confidently speak about your work and should have a version of your statement for your website/ social media platforms and for media enquiries

Marcel Duchamp Fountain 1917. Readymade.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573>

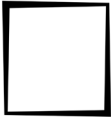


Maurizio Cattelan Comedian 2020. Banana and tape.

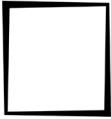
Sold for \$120,000

Sometimes art requires an explanation

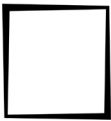
PIECES OF WRITING ALL ARTISTS SHOULD HAVE (prepared and on-hand!)



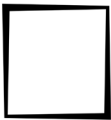
Bio (short and long)



CV (1 page, 2 page, full)



General artist statement (short and long)

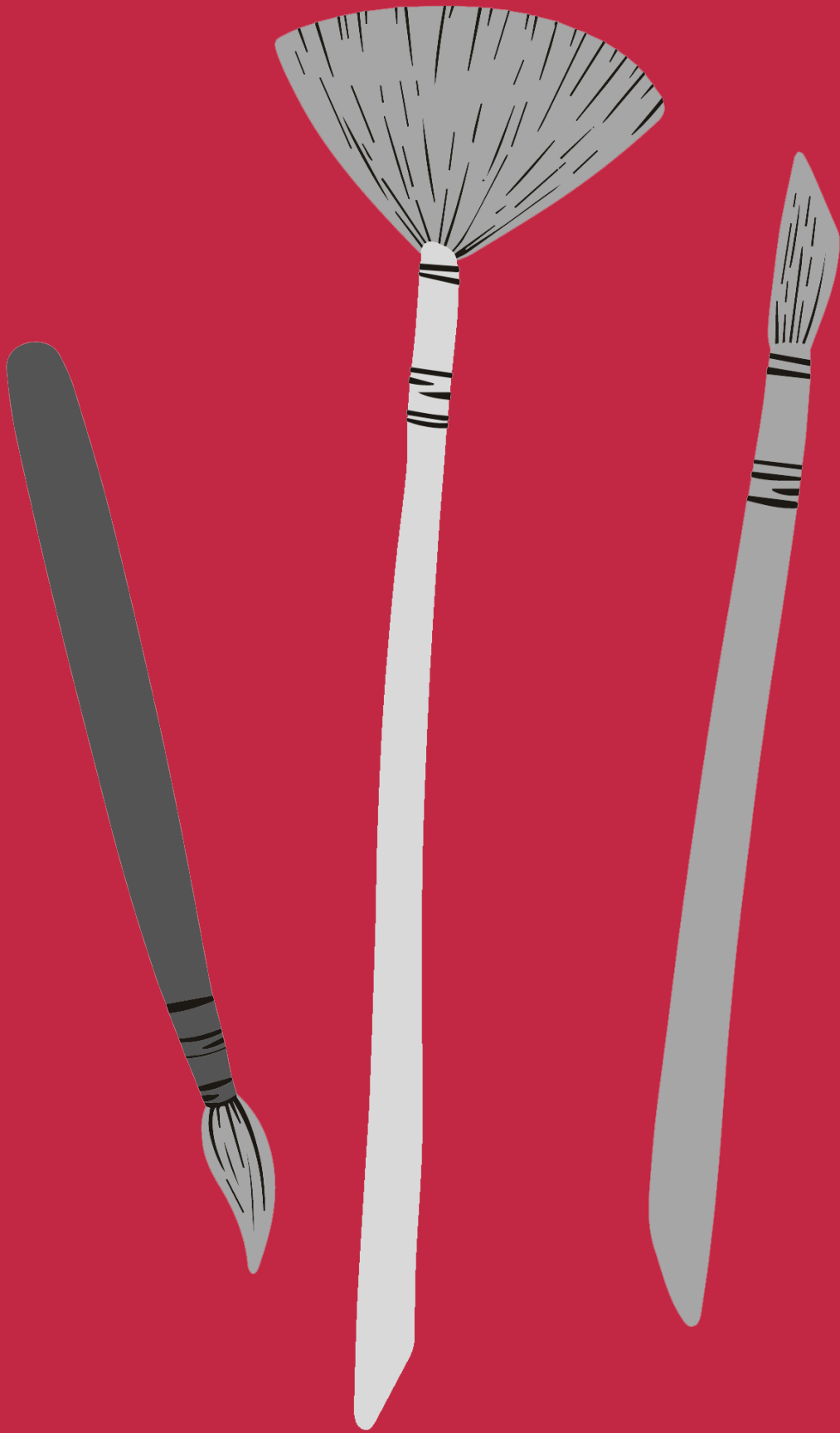


All artists should be able to produce a for purpose artist statement

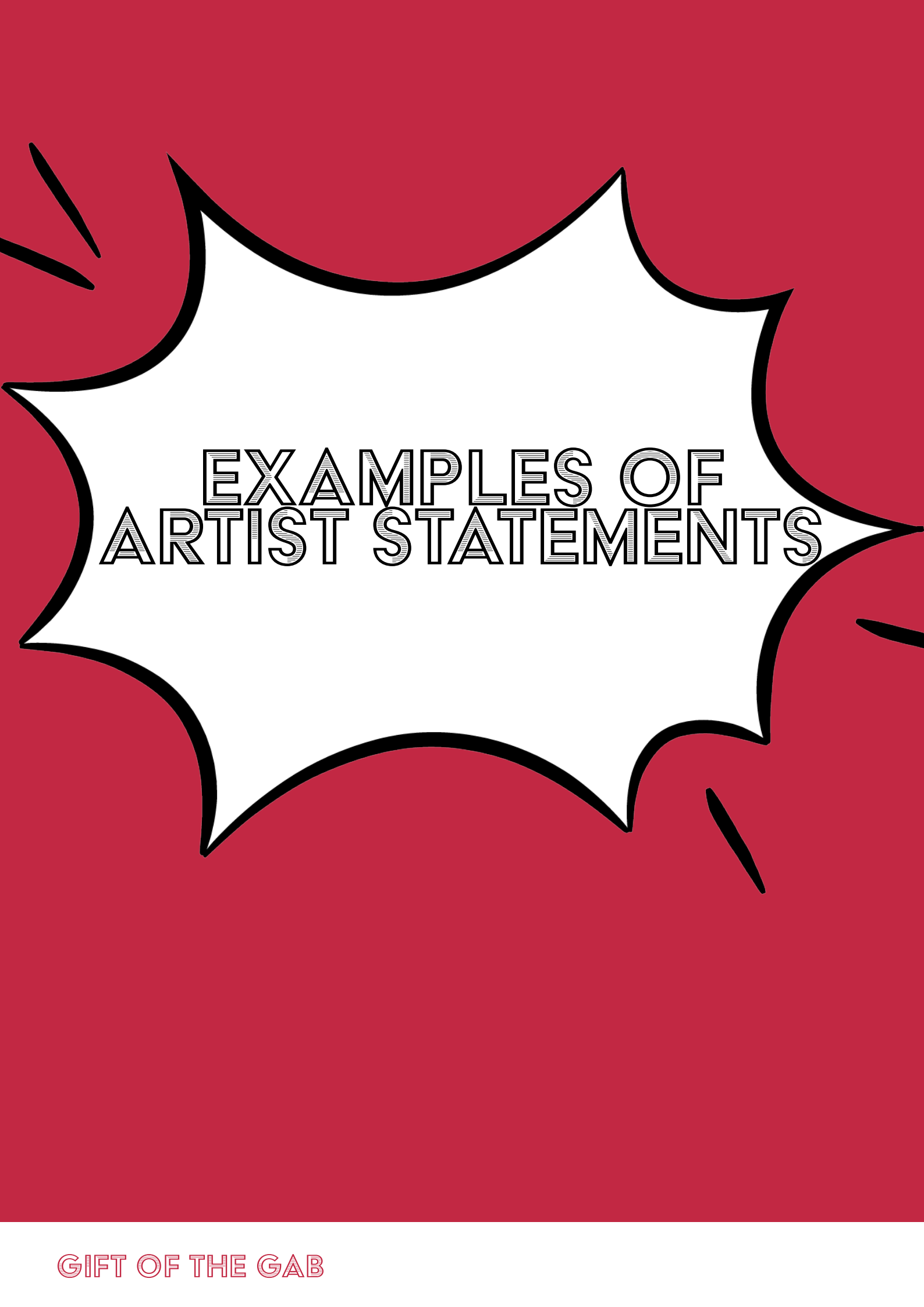


Marina Abramović The Artist Is Present 2010. Performance.

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010/



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EXAMPLES OF ARTIST STATEMENTS



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ANGUS NIVISON

“My work mostly deals with landscape, memory and the human condition. The paintings are really a personal dialogue. I offer the image and a title, it is then up to the viewer to complete the conversation.” Angus Nivison lives and works on ‘Yalgoolygm’, a farm near Walcha, in the northern tablelands of New South Wales. His relationship to the land informs his work and is a constant source of inspiration. Nivison has exhibited regularly since 1982 and has been awarded numerous prizes including the 2002 Wynne prize for landscape painting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 2011, Nivison was the winner of the Eutick Memorial Still Life Award (EMSLA) at Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, and also spent a three-month residency at the AGNSW Cite Studio in Paris. In 2012, Tamworth Regional Gallery curated a survey exhibition of Nivison’s work, which also travelled to Newcastle University Art Gallery and the S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney. His work is represented in many state and regional collections.



Copyright © Angus Nivison 2018 - “Autum Mist “

<http://www.utopiaartsydney.com.au/artworks.php?artistID=1-Angus%20Nivison>

COMPLICIT

The first inkling of the direction my latest show would take began to form in late 2018, as we barreled headlong into another record breaking summer of heat, dry and heartbreak. I began to despair with the inability of our elected governments to show any compassion or duty towards the climate's spiraling gallop towards the uncertain tipping point of the future.

Just before Christmas 2018 we experienced in the midst of an extreme dry period a mostly dry hurricane strength storm, which devastated parts of the Walcha landscape; my niece and her husband, being amongst the worst hit. In just an hour of frenzied winds they lost ninety percent of their property's tree cover.

Mathew and Rebecca kept saying you must come and look for yourself, it is just unbelievable! Eventually I did, and it was! Nothing could prepare me for what I saw. Everything was unrecognisable, the landscape looked like a war zone, no trees left standing and no birds left alive. Silence- it was another world. Thus the first major work of this show began, with the title "Everything is Broken ". The scene before me though horrific, had an amazing serene and surreal beauty, like an alien world. This is what emboldened me to start painting.

Just after completing "Everything is Broken", the bushfires began, with fires to the east, north, west and south. I began to think about the future unfolding, with our present attitudes to the state of the world. The path for my show was set. How could we not see that, through our actions and the governments we elect, that we are all responsible. Thus the title "Complicit" came into being. Next followed paintings such as "Two Degrees", "Spark", "Shadow of the Future", "Perdition" and "Tilt", all seemed to be pointing to situations where we could find ourselves, if we ignore our predicament.

Then in 2020 Covid 19 hit us. I was stopped in my tracks unable to work. I could not process this unexpected and terrifying event thrown up from overcrowding and climate change. I began to realise that nothing will ever be as it was. Now I had the catalyst for "Different World", a sad beautiful painting depicting a moistly veiled, perhaps clouds, perhaps map of the world where everything is dislocated, indeed, a "Different World".

The last painting I completed, "Herald" is all about hope. Perhaps we shall manage to change direction and become a better, fairer and more equal society and save the World!! I like to think so. What I have tried to give you, the viewer, in these works is beauty, sadness and HOPE. It is above all HOPE, I cling to that we will change the governments and attitudes of our little bubble called Earth. Perhaps art in some small way can help change us after all.

These works are by their nature open ended and mysterious they will reveal much more in the flesh. They are open to a myriad of interpretations. So please come along to Utopia Art Sydney and see for yourself.

Angus Nivison, Walcha NSW

2020

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LEAH BULLEN

Leah Bullen is an Australian artist. She completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) and a Doctor of Philosophy Creative Arts from the School of Art & Design at the Australian National University. Recently, she has been a selected finalist in Splash: McClelland Watercolour Prize (2018), the Wynne Prize (2016), the Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award (2015, 2016, 2018), and the Hazelhurst Art on Paper Award (2015, 2017, 2019). In 2016, she was the winner of the Trustees' Watercolour Prize as part of the Wynne Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She currently lives and works in northern New South Wales.



Image:

Leah Bullen, *The New World (Poales)* 2018. watercolour, gouache and monotype on paper, 95 x 73 cm

<http://www.leahbullen.com/about/>

GIFT OF THE GAB

“My work investigates the garden as a site that approximates the natural world. In Biophilia, the garden acts as a model through which I explore how we visualise, experience and consume the spectacle of nature more broadly within contemporary culture. Gardens also act as ‘theatres of the real,’ echoing the visual and conceptual tropes of representational painting, employing illusion and virtuality to reimagine the world.”



Image:
Leah Bullen, *Memory theatre* 2018, monotype

BIOPHILIA

Biophilia is a body of work built out of my practice-led research PhD. In this exhibition, I explore the relationship between painting and vernacular photography through the process of the painted monotype. This work developed from an ongoing fascination with the visual qualities of photography and what happens when photographs are translated into other material forms, such as painting.

My aim for this exhibition was to develop images that interrogate how painted monotypes could provide a distinctive interpretation of embodied experience through their visual, material and sensory qualities. Today, like no other time in history, photography is embedded in our daily lives through hand-held devices and the interface of the digital screen. My practice examines how this embedded experience of the photographic relates to the processes and visual qualities of the painted monotype.

My approach combines watercolour painting techniques with a monotype process producing a hybrid monotype/watercolour painting. Using watercolour and gouache, I paint onto a plastic sheet using Gum Arabic as a solvent. I transfer this image onto paper using water and pressure. I then paint back into the image on the paper. Traditionally, monotypes are made quickly producing incidental visual effects due to the transfer process such as image erosion and information drop out. In my approach, I have adapted the monotype process to include a prolonged painting phase, which allows me to paint the image over several weeks.

The compositions for my monotypes are constructed using collage, often a synthesis of my own photographic source material, found images and drawing. Therefore while these compositions remain spaces informed by photographic images, they are ultimately created through a combination of compositional experimentation and painterly invention.

Thematically, my practice explores sites that recreate the natural world. In Biophilia the garden acts as a model through which I explore how people can visualise, experience and consume the spectacle of nature within contemporary culture. Gardens also act as 'theatres of the real,' echoing the visual and conceptual tropes of representational painting, employing illusion and virtuality to reimagine the world.

The title of this exhibition comes from the biophilia hypothesis, developed by American biologist Edward O. Wilson. It proposes that humankind possesses an innate and genetic affinity for the natural world. Wilson argues that this evolutionary bond with nature has allowed humans greater survivability. Simultaneously, this evolutionary interest in other organisms has created a need within us to protect and care for other living things. Gardens are an example of biophilia in action.



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ELIZABETH WILLING

Elizabeth Willing is a Brisbane based visual artist. In 2009 she completed her honours in Fine Arts (Visual Arts) and in 2019 completed a Masters of Fine Art (research) at Queensland University of Technology. In 2014-15 Elizabeth was the recipient of the Australia Council Kunstlerhaus Bethanien one-year residency. Furthermore Elizabeth has undertaken residencies at Helsinki International Art Program HIAP, New England Regional Art Museum Armidale, Museum of Brisbane, and a one year residency at Metro Arts Brisbane. In 2019 Elizabeth partnered with the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) to undertake a three month residency in Adelaide with the Australian Wine Research institute.

Elizabeth has undertaken professional development mentorships in New York with Janine Antoni (2011), with the Experimental Food Society in London (2012) and then with Thomas Rentmeister in Berlin (2014). Exhibitions and concept meals have been held in Australia and overseas at Tolarno Galleries Melbourne, Kunstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin, Trapholt Museum of Art and Design Denmark, Tinguely Museum Basel, and Gallery of Modern Art Brisbane.

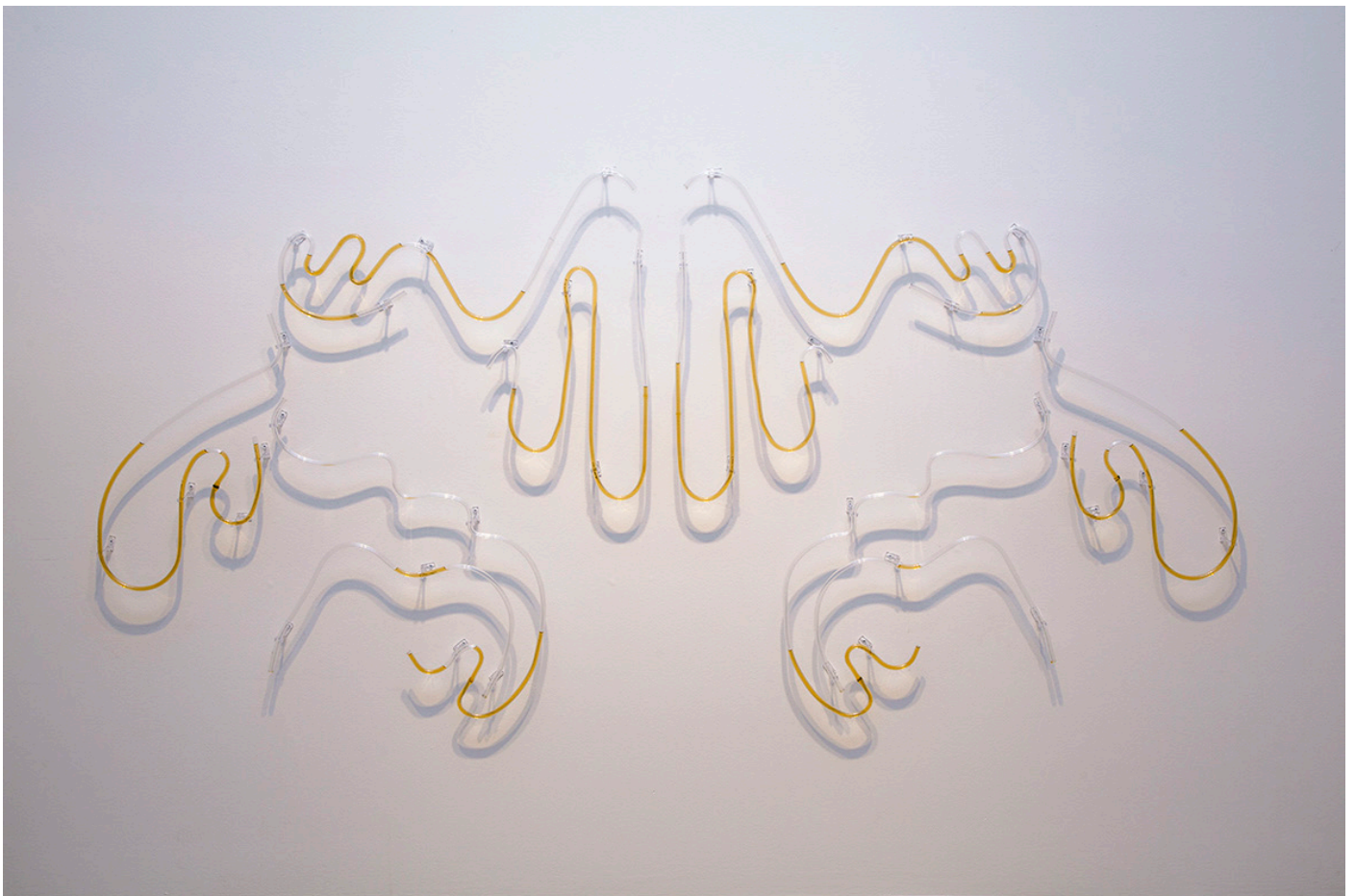
Awards and grants include Australia Council Project funding (2016 and 2017), Arts Queensland Funding (2011 and 2019), the Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship (2013), a JUMP mentoring Scholarship (2010), and the Melville Haysom Scholarship through QAGOMA (2010).

Elizabeth's work has been written about in magazines Eycline, Vault, Art Collector, Appetite, Artlink, Imprint and online forums Art Fridge, Vice, Raven Contemporary and Critical Mass. She was also notably included in recent publications the Oxford companion to Food, EAT ME, and Experimental Eating.

Born 1988, Victoria Australia

Elizabeth is represented by Tolarno Galleries Melbourne

<https://elizabethwilling.com/cvpress/cv/>



GIFT OF THE GAB



“Exploring the sculptural and multisensory potential of food has been a key focus of Elizabeth Willing’s practice. Her work includes sculpture, installation, performance and participatory dining events that engage audiences through sensory dimensions such as smell, taste, and touch. In creating her work Willing is not only an artist, but a cook, designer, engineer and scientist, testing and manipulating the material qualities and limitations of food and applying her highly refined aesthetic sensibility.”

– Rachael Parsons, Director, New England Regional Art Museum 2018

Image: Elizabeth Willing Strawberry Thief 2018
Installation view. Melbourne Art Fair, Tolarno Galleries

<https://tolarnogalleries.com/artists/elizabeth-willing/>

IMPOSSIBLE GUEST

Exploring the sculptural and multisensory potential of food has been a key focus of Elizabeth Willing's practice. Her work includes sculpture, installation, performance and participatory dining events that engage audiences through sensory dimensions such as smell, taste, and touch. In creating her work Willing is not only an artist, but a cook, designer, engineer and scientist, testing and manipulating the material qualities and limitations of food and applying her highly refined aesthetic sensibility.

Impossible Guest presents two bodies of work by Willing that were developed during her residency at New England Art Museum in December 2017. During this residency period Willing engaged in broad experimentation, exploring local food culture, a landscape that provides a range of edible and medicinal plant life and various processes to transform plants, confectionary and even alcohol into new aesthetic forms that go far beyond their original, functional context. In some instances, it is almost as if a kind of alchemy has occurred, where cheap, commonly found and banal items find new and heightened value as Willing deconstructs and expands their physical properties.

In Warm light (no. 1 – 5), Willing has designed a series of glass straw sculptures. Their formal shapes are composed by assembling together multiple anatomic forms that are at once symbolic and literal vessels that reflect the physical process of consumption. Contained within each straw are liquors from Dobson's Distillery, an important fixture in New England's foodie culture that celebrates locally made spirits, wine and crafted beers. To fill the vessel Willing sucks at one end of the straw drawing in the liquid, at once performing and disrupting a straw's intended function. Instead of using the straw to drink the alcohol, Willing aborts the action and traps the liquid within the vessel, forward movement stilled and held in place by gravity, creating a visual tension. The colour of the liquors finely shifts, affected by the room's light and casting subtle reflections that interact with the shadows on the wall.

Untitled (orange, red, blue), takes as its source material the MaltoMilk biscuit. The repetition, scale and high production value of the print has a certain quality associated with advertising practices and Pop Art. Made using the biscuit like a printer's stone, Willing uses crayons to create rubbings that capture the texture and in some instances the recognisable branding of the familiar snack food in an abstracted composition. The process of then digitising and increasing the image's scale captures in detail the materiality of the making process, the waxiness of the crayons and texture and placement of the biscuit, whilst also allowing for a production line reproducibility that denies the hands on an imperfect original printing process and aligns instead with the mechanical production used in making a packet of MaltoMilk.

Both bodies of works are ephemeral, Untitled (orange, red, blue) installed using wall paper to ensure a flat and plastic finish will be destroyed in the de-installation process. While the glass vessels of the straws in Warm light (no. 1 – 5), may be re-installed in a new space, the exact configuration of the liquid will always be different in each showing. Their temporary nature mirrors food's ephemeral quality following a similar cycle of making, consumption and destruction.

Elizabeth Willing is a contemporary artist who is currently undertaking a Masters of Fine Art (research) at Queensland University of Technology. She has exhibited at Trapholt Museum of Art and Design (Denmark), Kunstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), and the Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) in Brisbane and undertaken residencies in New York, London, Berlin, Helsinki and Armidale. Willing is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.



ACTIVITIES

WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT

STEP 1

- Take five minutes and think about why you do what you do
- Why do you like to make art?
- What subjects/themes do you prefer? Why?
- What processes and techniques do you use? Why?
- What are your goals and aspirations as an artist?

WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT

STEP 2

Write a three paragraph artist's statement

FIRST PARAGRAPH:

- Who are you
- What is your work about
- Why do you do the work you do

SECOND PARAGRAPH:

- Preferred medium, techniques themes

WRITING AN ARTIST STATEMENT

STEP 2 CONTINUED

THIRD PARAGRAPH:

- What are you exploring, attempting, challenging through your work
Your statement can be personal, it can be your story or experience, it can demonstrate your personal style, your idea and how these things are expressed in your work.



5 TIPS FOR
SUCCESS

1.

Always consider your audience, who are you writing for? A statement for a commercial gallerist may be different to one written for a media statement or for general audiences.

2.

Be clear, concise and genuine – avoid making grandiose statements with convoluted language.

3.

Be confident, your statement should make a claim for your work. That claim should be true and meaningful.

4.

Have someone else proof read your statement – errors and poor communication can be detrimental.

5.

Update your statement as you change directions in your practice & keep all public information up to date.



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