

ANTECEDENT

MIRANDA HINE • JENNA LEE • COL MAC

3 FEBRUARY - 9 MARCH 2024

At Nudgee Beach during low tide, there are hard ridges in the sand known as 'wave ripples.' These undulations arrive through rolling currents which carve directions where water has flowed, leaving behind the skeleton of a wave. Their patterns evoke a sense of antecedence. They precede each-other, tapestry-like and continuous. This natural phenomenon is a visual imprint of time, yet parallels the way we capture sand in the form of an hourglass to find logic and measurement. A pattern of its own kind repeats: why must we force order where there is fluidity?

In Antecedent, three Meanjin-connected artists come together in recognition of the threads bind their work. Together, in their singular styles, they investigate meaning, authorship, presentations of history, and subjectivity. Considering the past was written with bias, so too are the ways in which information has been categorised, contained and retold. History is an unreliable narrator.

Taking language as a starting point, Jenna Lee looks to acts of faux-categorisation. She draws on a text presented as a 'dictionary' titled Aboriginal Words and Place Names by A.W. Reed, still widely in circulation. Reed's attempt to document First Nations language misinterprets the enormous variances in language groups across so-called Australia. As Lee explains, 'there's no such thing as "Aboriginal language." There are hundreds of languages. The text presents words with no reference to where they came from. It was specifically published by collating compendiums from the 1920s, 30s and 40s with the purpose to give [non-Indigenous] people pleasant-sounding Aboriginal words to name children, houses and boats. Yet, the first things taken from us were our language, children, land and water.'

Lee alchemises the paper of this book to create meaningful forms. Here, she presents a grass tree which she wove from the book's pages to recreate this flourishing species that 'thrives under elemental forces of deconstruction and reconstruction.' Working with fire, Lee also presents two related series. One is an installation titled article-particle (Guyu-Gwa) made up of pigment jars labelled with the Gulumerridjin word for fire, in which the ashes of Reed's text are contained. The other presents pages of Reed's book on which Lee has scorched Gulumerridjin language. As she tells, 'In this context, fire becomes a tool of rejuvenation and rebirth, breathing new life into the previously dislocated words.' Lee's engagement with materiality always intersects with ancestry. A Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman and Karra-Jarri Saltwater woman with mixed Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Anglo-Australian heritage, Lee reflects her identity across disciplines with exquisite skill.

Meaning attributed to the Australian landscape has often evolved from European mythology and culture; its characterisation mostly tied to experiences of the uncanny, of mystery, disappearance and dread. Think of the unfortunate tale in Waltzing Matilda, or the melancholy film Picnic at Hanging Rock. In his installation somewhere inside the vanishing point, Col Mac challenges these miscastings. Here, Mac queries the European technique of the 'vanishing point', where parallel lines intersect to mark the location of the horizon. While applied in many colonial paintings, the vanishing point misjudged the Australian bush in all its density, scrub and abundance.

In his suspended artwork, Mac depicts the icon of a ghost as a motif for the bush's supernatural characterisation. The artwork's mirrored surface shatters light within the gallery space and, by creating a sensory experience of the dappled light which filters through leaves, Mac draws us into the landscape and through the trees. Inviting us closer, Mac's paintings focus on several detailed views of two trees he encountered in the bush. He observed that the trees had grown so closely together that their branches were entwined. Revealing this limited view, we focus on the branches that delineate the paintings and create shapes for light to shine through, like stained glass windows throwing shadows on the forest floor. In shifting representations of the bush towards that of physical experience, Mac ensures his depictions reflect an environment that is growing and interactive. Mac is an artist of remarkable range. From design to painting, sculpture, installation and text-based practice, he continues to disarm with each approach.

Departing from the natural world, the buildings we imbue with academic authority such as galleries, museums and libraries also reveal surprising approaches to the past. In her work as an artist and curator, Miranda Hine agitates methods of presentation to ask whose history institutions present, why and how. Currently based in London, Hine presents ten new paintings which are the result of site visits to historic houses in the UK during late 2023. Many of these houses were the homes of figures celebrated by history, such as John Keats, Charles Dickens and Sigmund Freud. With gentle humour, Hine focuses on idiosyncratic methods of presentation within these public homes. In some cases, chairs were cordoned off or restricted by signage. In others, they were available to be used (you can lay on the couch in John Keats' house) and in one venue, a pine cone was strategically placed on the chair's seat.

Rules around the presentation of objects and artefacts are myriad. While often guided by financial value, there is another type of value-judgement that comes into play of a discretionary nature. In the case of these chairs, we see that degrees of interactivity are fluid and can depend on contrasting levels of trust. This series marks the first in which Hine directly integrates methods of curatorship within her paintings. While presenting in the still life genre, these artworks go further by offering windows into scenes which have been staged from an archival perspective. They are both impressions and documentations. With characteristic brushstrokes that weft, weave and build joyful ambiguity, Hine's skill of capturing the particular tone and palette of a location is intuitively felt and, in the mind of the viewer, re-invented.

In Antecedent, three artists and collaborators meet to harness shared queries about authorship, colonial legacies and logic. As we reckon with the past, their artworks splinter the ways we understand what has come before, and how we communicate today. They show us that chronology is used as a tool for controlling the archive, but whose archive? And whose chronology? These questions are as shifting sands, changing with time and its many lessons.

Emma McLean lives and works on Gadigal land. She is deputy editor of Look magazine.

Miranda Hine

Left to right:

Miranda Hine
Sir John Soane's Museum (attendant's chair)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Freud Museum (roped-off room)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Sambourne House (sign)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
The Wallace Collection (unsigned)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Keats House (lie down and listen)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Sir John Soane's Museum (seed pod)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine Museum of the Home
(fenced room) 30.5 x 23cm Oil on
cradled board (unframed) Courtesy the
artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Leighton House (pine cone)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Dr Johnson's House (unsigned)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Miranda Hine
Charles Dickens Museum (individually roped)
30.5 x 23cm
Oil on cradled board (unframed)
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

For price list and purchase enquiries please email:
andy@marsgallery.com.au

Follow on instagram: Moomhine

Jenna Lee

Jenna Lee Aboriginal words guyu-gwa (fire) 34.8 x 26.5cm framed Page of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', fire Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Aboriginal words irribuk (to light/lighter) 34.8 x 26.5cm framed Page of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', fire Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Jenna Lee article-particle (Guyu-Gwa) Sizes various, 12 x 230cm installed Various pigment jars, pages of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', fire, label Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Aboriginal words belpbela (firestick) 34.8 x 26.5cm framed Page of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', fire Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Jenna Lee Grasstree (at rest) 192 x 32 x 32cm Pages of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', organic cotton thread, bamboo, rice starch glue, bookcover board, stool, fire Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Aboriginal words (cycle) 34.8 x 26.5cm framed Page of 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names', fire Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

For price list and purchase enquiries please email: andy@marsgallery.com.au

Follow on instagram: [Jenna.mlee](https://www.instagram.com/Jenna.mlee)

Col Mac

Col Mac ghost story and other stories 152 x 100cm Oil on canvas

Col Mac through the forest but for the 112.5 x 75cm Oil on canvas

Col Mac somewhere inside the vanishing point 170 x 55 x 3cm Light, mirror, charcoal

Col Mac nothing but air 46 x 10 cm Mirror

inside the vanishing point 55 x 10cm Mirror

a memorial to 55 x 5cm Mirror

For price list and purchase enquiries please email: hello@colmcelwaine.com

Follow on instagram: [Mucho_okay](https://www.instagram.com/Mucho_okay)

Genevieve Trace - Executive Director | Daniel Clifford - Artistic Associate | Annelize Mulder - Curator (Exhibition Program)

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Metro Arts acknowledge the Jagera and Turrbal peoples, as the custodians of the land we work on, recognising their connection to land, waters and community. We honour the story-telling and art-making at the heart of First Nations' cultures, and the enrichment it gives to the lives of all Australians.