



HOMEGROWN; A Critical Past

28 March – 21 April 2024
ART SPACE ON THE CONCOURSE

HOMEGROWN; A Critical Past

Exploring how artists respond to the past to inform the future.

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–
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ARTISTS

Geoffrey Adams

Katrina Beissel

Jennifer Brady

Seong Cho

Rena Czaplinska-Archer

Sarah Fitzgerald

Terhi Hakola

Anne Levitch

Alison Locke

Auntie Jeanie Moran

Jennifer Mullen

Kathie Najjar

Fangmin Wu

Tym Yee

Sairi Yoshizawa

A Willoughby City Council exhibition

COVER IMAGE: Kathie Najjar, *A Whisper of Hope* (detail),
2024, watercolour and pencil on paper



HOMEGROWN; A Critical Past

Exploring how artists respond to the past to inform the future.

A Willoughby City Council group exhibition exploring how artists respond to the past to inform the future. We know the future poses many challenges, but what can we take from the past into the future? Similarly, what should we leave behind to better inform future decision-making?

Reality collapse, global tensions, climate change, increased loneliness, social unrest and events that will necessitate migration are but a few current and impending affairs that make our sense of the future seem uncertain. **HOMEGROWN; A Critical Past** seeks to synthesise what matters to Willoughby City's artists and the role they play in giving voice to community concerns, with a special perspective of looking at the past to find solutions for the future.

The **HOMEGROWN** series of exhibitions showcases local artists and those with a significant connection to the City of Willoughby.

OPPOSITE: Rena Czaplinska-Archer, *Whispers*, 2022-23, linocut print on Hahnemühle paper



GEOFFREY ADAMS

Imaginary Atmospheres

2023–24, watercolour and ink on paper

About the artwork

My watercolour studies are inspired by the landscape around Flat Rock Gully. It's an area I've explored over many years. Some of the panels show an untouched view without the creep of human occupation and settlement. Other panels are reminiscent of the many cliff-top villages of Europe, but instead of the ancient stone structures, my floating village is directly linked to the modern architecture of the unit blocks under construction around Willoughby. Studying the successes and failures of the past can offer valuable lessons and we must recognise that the impact of human activities on the environment is vital. Sustainable practices and a commitment to environmental stewardship are essential for a resilient and equitable future.

ABOVE: Geoffrey Adams, *Imaginary Atmospheres*, 2024, watercolour on paper



ABOVE: Katrina Beissel, *Lifeline*, 2024, oil and acrylic on canvas

KATRINA BEISSEL

Light on the situation

2023, oil and acrylic on linen

Lifeline

2024, oil and acrylic on canvas

About the artwork

Light on the situation depicts the oil bunkering facilities at Gore Cove that dominate an otherwise leafy outlook. On this day I felt a sense of foreboding at the way nature was highlighting these structures. Although the operation has been downscaled, questions remain about the pace of transition to renewable energy sources. Extreme weather events of the recent past may indicate increased urgency.

Empirical research, recent anecdotal reports and my personal experience have demonstrated the mental health-sustaining properties of connecting with nature. This was never truer than during the darkest hours of the COVID pandemic. In ***Lifeline***, I have painted the view upstream from one of my favourite local walks to highlight the importance of future-proofing this beautiful lifeline on our doorstep.



ABOVE: Jennifer Brady, *thinking back to then looking forward to now*, 2023, graphite on Hahnemühle paper

JENNIFER BRADY

in the comfort of bed

2023, graphite on Hahnemühle paper

thinking back to then looking forward to now

2023, graphite on Hahnemühle paper

wishing for the people I know

2023, graphite on Hahnemühle paper

I think it's time for something

2023, graphite on Hahnemühle paper

About the artwork

These drawings utilise language and mark making to gently ruminate and reflect on past experiences from a new perspective. Positioned within the liminal moments before entering sleep, the works present a poem-like structure of words, articulating the experience of laying in bed, making connections with your own thoughts—thinking about where you have been, where you are now, and where you could be going. Each drawing captures a string of vague thoughts cushioned by repetitive abstract scribbles, archiving what would have otherwise been a fleeting moment or cognitive 'blip' before sleep.



ABOVE: Seong Cho, *Terrestrial Symphony VIII*, 2023, multi-woodblock

SEONG CHO

Terrestrial Symphony VIII

2023, multi-woodblock

About the artwork

An abstract expression of sights, sounds, feelings and meditations that appear when immersed in nature, this work reflects the sensory experience of native and ancient Australian Gondwana rainforests—teeming with life, dripping with moisture from years of rain, and filled with green foliage gleaming through grey mist. The artwork's thick lines and flowing textures are inspired by tangled vines, damp green moss, brown undergrowth, thick tree trunks twisting and soaring up into the sky, and wild, crashing waterfalls with white spray cascading over jagged black cliffs and rocks. The work's large scale represents the hypnotising endlessness of the forest, its sense of movement and a symphony of sounds that echo from within, allowing the visitor to escape from reality. I wanted to convey the beauty of our natural environments and the importance of protecting them from commercial, industrial and climate-related destruction. This work invites viewers to ask themselves the question: What kind of world would you like to keep?



ABOVE: Rena Czaplinska-Archer, *Golden Hour*, 2022-23, linocut print on Hahnemühle paper

RENA CZAPLINSKA-ARCHER

Golden Hour

2022–23, linocut print on Hahnemühle paper

Whispers

2022–23, linocut print on Hahnemühle paper

About the artwork

Ancient trees are like ancestors. They know many stories and they have witnessed and seen many changes over many generations.

In a rapidly changing world—with increased loneliness, global tensions, social unrest and events that will necessitate migration—the old trees that have survived more than 100 years can teach us about resilience, kindness and staying grounded in view of uncertain futures.

I would like to offer some linocut prints of Angophora trees facing an uncertain future with us.

We are all in it together.



ABOVE: Sarah Fitzgerald, *Lean on Me*, 2024, timber, wire, papier-mâché and acrylic paint

SARAH FITZGERALD

Lean On Me

2024, timber, wire, papier-mâché and acrylic paint

About the artwork

The place that inspired the work for this exhibition is a bush track at the tip of the Northbridge peninsula. Untouched by development, it reminds us of an ancient past: a pristine, protected place where time stands still.

Two trees of different species accidentally grow side by side. They are intertwined and supporting each other; If one were to fall, they would both fall. Survival is fragile and dependent on the other.

The work is a metaphor for our own interdependent relationships. The networks we see in the natural landscape remind us of the fragile interconnectedness of life. Past, present, and future converge. The place remains the same as it ever was. This work acknowledges the importance of leaning on our past and where we came from, allowing ourselves to be intertwined with what supports us.



TERHI HAKOLA

Tea towels (Astiapyyhkeet)

2023, salvaged tea towels, recycled cotton fabric and cotton thread

About the artwork

As a homage to my maternal ancestors, I patch and join old tea towels, made and monogrammed by my Finnish mother and grandmother. Through this humble act, my hands join to those before me doing women's necessary but invisible work of feeding, cleaning, repairing. Every stitch grounds me and connects me to the present moment. In every stitch, both those who have passed and those who are yet to be gather and become present 'now'.

ABOVE: Terhi Hakola, *Tea towels (Astiapyyhkeet)* (detail) 2023, salvaged tea towels, recycled cotton fabric and cotton thread



ABOVE: Anne Levitch, *On reflection...*, 2024, mirrored acrylic

ANNE LEVITCH

On reflection...

2024, mirrored acrylic

About the artwork

Fairy tales have endured through millennia, evolving through oral, written and cinematic form as reflections of particular circumstances, which occur continually through time. They have been inappropriately designated as stories for children alone. As extant codices of ancient wisdom shrewdly compressing raw and uncomfortable truths into narrative form, they maintain contemporary relevance for all ages. These gems from the past can help us focus on issues and responses that help us to influence and determine our future.

The wicked queen in the tale of *Snow White*—obsessed by what she deems as her flawless reflection—is determined to remove any threat to her supremacy.

Throughout history, wars are fought and millions slaughtered on the basis of a similar obsession with self-righteousness. The superlative of 'fairest' takes on layers of meaning in this work, as the mirror prompts silent reflection.

ALISON LOCKE

Silreq

2024, digital C-Type print

Be

2024, digital C-Type print

Byssi

2024, digital C-Type print

About the artwork

The literal meaning of the phrase “still life” is “a moment frozen in time”. Ironically, many still life artworks are actually about the inevitability of death, such as with memento mori paintings.

The objects we will own often outlive us, decaying in landfill or as litter in the ocean for hundreds or thousands of years after we’ve died.

What should we take from the past to make a better future? Like older generations, we should buy less, recycle and reuse more. We should refuse fast fashion and single-use plastics.

These artworks are created with 3D animation software.



ABOVE: Alison Locke, *Silreq*, 2024, computer-generated image



ABOVE: Auntie Jeanie Moran, “Always Was, Always Will Be” *Connected in the Landscape*, 2023, digital photograph

AUNTIE JEANIE MORAN

“Always Was, Always Will Be” Connected in the Landscape

2023, digital photograph

The Next Generation of the Present

2019, digital photograph

About the artwork

It’s only natural that a picture of generational storytelling has a connection to the ‘Big Blue Light Sky’ that envelops all with its heat and yet smiles on the cold deep blue ocean waters. The photograph **“Always Was, Always Will Be” Connected in the Landscape** depicts the Land that captures the moment of golden hot sand under your feet. It’s a place of being, belonging and becoming—and one where I pass down stories of long-ago to my grandchildren.

The Next Generation of the Present depicts dressing up at ‘Nan’s place’, and can symbolise stepping in the footsteps of the Elders. The photograph captures the innocence of children, playfully exploring fashion, colour and design choices. Photographs of childhood moments have become an important long-lasting form of memorabilia which is frequently passed on to the next generation.



ABOVE: Jennifer Mullen, *Home*, 2023, oil on panel

JENNIFER MULLEN

Home

2023, oil on panel

Severed From Root

2024, oil on panel

About the artwork

These nature morte paintings are speaking directly out of my contemporary Australian feminist perspective. I adopt the visual language of 17th-19th century women artists including Rachel Ruysch, Anna Ruysch, Anne Vallayer-Coster and Victoria Fantin-Latour, who were all deliberately omitted from the Canon. In doing so I seek to draw an explicit connection between their experiences as women artists and my own. The very domesticated rose with her severed thorny spine, pruned yet persevering, is a symbol that is particularly important in my work.

Each symbol in these momento mori works was selected based on traditional floriography and ethnobotany, as well as my personal and familial history. Australian native and imported flora and fauna have been integrated into these still life displays and subtly allude to aspects of our colonial/multicultural history and environmental custodianship.

Jennifer Mullen is represented by Project Gallery 90, Sydney



ABOVE: Kathie Najjar, *A Whisper of Hope*, 2024, watercolour and pencil on paper

KATHIE NAJAR

A Whisper of Hope

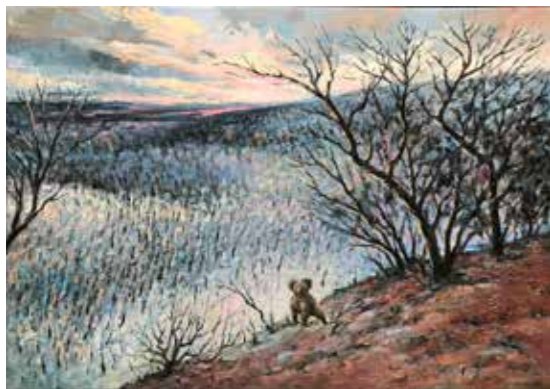
2024, watercolour and pencil on paper

About the artwork

A Whisper of Hope is a reimagining and extension of a rosette carving from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, inspired by a collective drawing and prayer session with Adam Williamson and Ruhiya Rutherford.

Al-Aqsa Mosque compound is an important educational and religious center, not only for the people of Jerusalem, but also for the thousands of visitors who travel to it every year from all parts of the world. It is an enduring symbol of unity and high aspiration for the billions of Muslims inhabiting our planet.

This watercolour artwork with its various cultural and religious references all reside harmoniously together. The original artwork has been repeated and overlaid onto the contemporary architecture of The Concourse as 'a whisper of hope'.



ABOVE: Fangmin Wu, *After bushfire V1*, 2022, oil on canvas

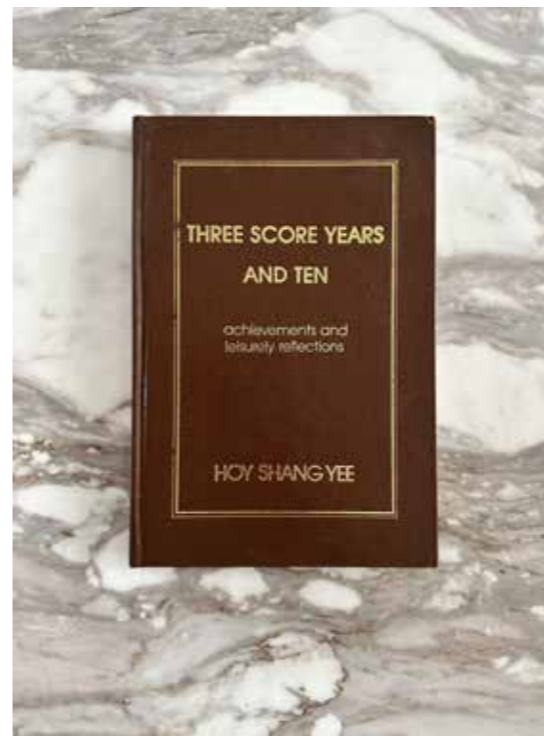
FANGMIN WU

After bushfire V1

2022, oil on canvas

About the artwork

In this work I depict the aftermath of recent bushfires, revealing the devastation of blackened trees, charred landscapes and a lone koala amidst still-smoking mountains. Rooted in global climate concern, this painting conveys the increasing frequency of natural disasters and their transformative effect on the environment. Amidst the desolation, vibrant greens and yellows emerge—symbolising hope and new beginnings. Through this painting, I aim to foster environmental awareness by deepening our understanding of the perils of climate change.



ABOVE: Tym Yee, *Contraction of the Presence*, 2024, single-channel video

TYM YEE

Contraction of the Presence

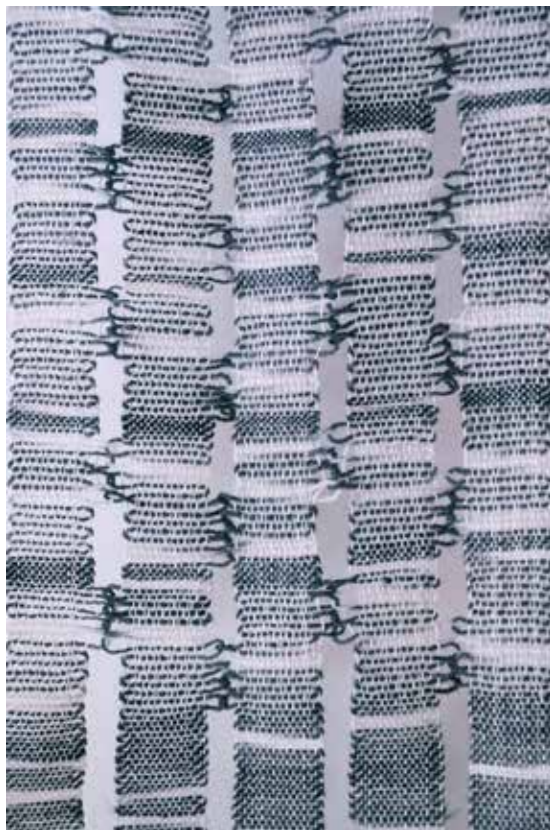
2024, single-channel video

About the artwork

In ***Contraction of the Presence***, Dr Tym Yee explores the complex relationship between ancestors, self, and the future from his point of view as a second generation, Australian-born Chinese person. Drawing on passages from his grandfather's memoir, his education and AI-generated prophecies of the future, Yee brings to light the incredible speed at which social change can occur between generations of migrants and the sense of alienation that can ensue.

The work is inspired by Hartmut Rosa's idea of the 'contraction of the present': a notion asserting that under the rapid technological acceleration of modernity, the past is no longer a reliable indication of the future, resulting in a precarious and unpredictable present.

Applied through the lens of global migration, Yee reflects on the juxtaposition between his own comfortable life in Australia and that of his ancestors, who subsisted through primitive farming in rural China—all the while turning one eye to an inconceivable AI-powered future.



SAIRI YOSHIZAWA

Ode to the grounds beneath

2022, natural dyed, handwoven cotton and wool

About the artwork

This artwork represents an abstract landscape, which expresses its fragility through the material, yet its resilience through repetition; a timeless cycle beyond the frame.

The material is over-dyed through layers of the leaves, bark and the root of a fallen tree. The landscape represents not the vulnerability of the earth's surface, but its process of resilience—both its movement and its stillness—a cycle of motion necessary for it to recover, persist and belong.

ABOVE: Sairi Yoshizawa, *Ode to the grounds beneath* (detail), 2022, natural dyed, handwoven cotton and wool



Seong Cho, *Terrestrial Symphony VIII* (detail), 2023, multi-woodblock



OPPOSITE: Auntie Jeanie Moran, *The Next Generation of the Present*, 2019, digital photograph

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is a Willoughby City Council curated exhibition.

FREE

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Exhibition online:

View the digital exhibition at
www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Events/HOME-GROWN-A-Critical-Past

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please complete this short survey by scanning this QR code or visit: <https://culturecounts.cc/s/3XufX8>

We appreciate your feedback.
Thank you!





www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/arts

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