

firstdraft

Gallery 1&2
2-25 Oct 2019

Opening,
Wed 2 Oct, 6-8pm

Artist Talks
Thu 24 Oct, 6-7pm

and on the eyes, black sleep of night

Curated by Sarah Brasier

About the work

“and on the eyes, black sleep of night” brings together artists who have experienced the death of a parent. Each of the artists explore their shared incidents of loss in a variety of ways. Themes of childhood are common amongst Brahmony McCrossin, Michael Kennedy, Jemi Gale and Sarah Brasier. They utilise imagery that appeals to a childlike sensibility; toing and froing between melancholy and playfulness, their works explore the complexity of life and death. For Beth Caird, her work has a focus on grief processes and life-after-death experiences, self-made myths and the truth buried under fabrications. Katie Foster’s text work and drawings capture the feeling of fear that you might never recover from such grief. In Robyn Doherty’s zine “The wonderful colours reminds me of the memories I had of Dad” she memorialises her father in a sincere and sanguine nature. Rosie O’Brien’s records the still and simple beauty of flowers before they wither and die, reminding us that life is ephemeral. Artworks presented in the exhibition intermingle new work with historic and personal artefacts, across the disciplines of painting, video and installation. Together the artists present a series of thoughtful offerings that pay homage to their departed loved ones.

The artists would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country where we work, the Wurundjeri and neighbours Boonwurrung people, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present.

Please be aware that this exhibition includes potentially triggering material: discussion of death, trauma and grief

If you or someone you know needs help or support, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14

Gallery 3
Kōhanga
Chevron Hassett and Robert Laking

Gallery 4
Push it, push it (real good)
Bruno Booth

Firstdraft acknowledges and pays respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which Firstdraft is built and operates.

**13-17 riley st,
woolloomooloo nsw, 2011
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THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



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About the Curator

Sarah Brasier (b. 1990, Ballarat, Australia) is an emerging artist and curator who is invested in working towards creating accessible spaces for emerging artists to show free of charge. In 2016 she founded the Winter1706 art fair, which presented a series of exhibitions by emerging artists across a suite of vacated apartments on St Kilda Rd in Melbourne. This was followed by two more shows in the 'Winter' exhibition series: WNTR Echo Location ; 170 Russell Car Park, Melbourne, Australia (2016) and WNTR x Gertrude; Became; Becoming; Becomes ; Gertrude Contemporary, Studio 12 (2017). She is interested in friendship as a creative motivator and aims to build a supportive community of people in the art world.

In her own artistic practice Brasier paints anthropomorphised versions of her fears and anxieties. Each painting might be viewed as a still frame from a life-long feminist revenge tale, punctuated by moments of despair, happiness and simple pleasures. Brasier's work employs an exaggerated and faux naïve form of representation to convey her intensely personal views of the world. These psychodramatic scenes incorporate astute observations, absurdist thoughts and draw on personal histories. She employs bright colours and humour to offset the work's often dark origins.

List of works

Gallery one (rectangle room) from Left to right:

Apple Pie Seppaku, 2019

Sarah Brasier

Acrylic on board

46 x 61 cm

The night is black,

And the stars are bright,

And the sea is dark and deep

And someone I know is safe

And snug, and the're drifting

Off to sleep

Round and round, a little boat no bigger

Than you're hand, out on the ocean, far away from land.

Take the little sail down,

Light the little light.

This is the way to the

Garden of the night

Sarah Brasier

2019

Acrylic on board

46 x 61 cm

Gallery 3

Kōhanga

Chevron Hassett and Robert Laking

yay!... to the mesosphere... finally we can die.,

2019

Sarah Brasier

Acrylic on board

46 x 61 cm

Wow, well done! (still pretty raw),

Brahmony McCrossin, 2019

Inkjet print on archival paper

85 x 65 cm

Into my arms, thanks Nick, 2019

Brahmony McCrossin

Inkjet print on archival paper

85 x 123 cm

Empathy bears, 2019

Brahmony McCrossin

Inkjet print on archival paper

85 x 123 cm

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Ten days alone in Denmark, 2019
Brahmony McCrossin
Inkjet print on archival paper
85 x 123 cm

Tuesday June 21 2011, 2019
Brahmony McCrossin
Inkjet print on archival paper
85 x 65 cm

will you stay with me?, 2019
Michael Kennedy
Acrylic and pen ink on canvas
66 x 63cm

Every time you said some thing deeply and untechnical: HYPER TROPICAL TRAUMA-CORE DYSPRAXIA EDITION, 2019

Beth Caird
HD Video (7:28)
This video work was made on Larrakia Country, specifically in and around the area of Nakara, who were the first peoples in the area meeting the Arafura Sea. Respect is given to all Larrakia First Nations People's, who are the traditional custodians of the unseeded Larrakia Lands.

Chinese Mountain, 2019
Felt
Rosie O'Brien
Dimensions variable

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Gallery two (triangle room) from Left to right:

Not titled, 2018
Robyn Doherty
fine liner and paint pen on paper
26 x 18 cm

The Wonderful Colours Reminds Me of the Memories I had of Dad, 2017
Robyn Doherty
digital print zine, edition of 30
21 x 14.5 cm

Not titled, 2018
Katie Foster
gouache and pastel on paper
38 x 28 cm

Not titled, 2014
Katie Foster
ink and pencil on paper
24 x 28 cm

Not titled, 2017
Katie Foster
gouache and ink on paper
18.5 x 14 cm

Anthony John Foster, 2018
Katie Foster
greylead pencil on paper
38 x 28 cm

yellow was my mums favourite colour (i don't know what it looks like or angels painting), 2019
Jemi Gale
acrylic paint on canvas
91 x 71 cm

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yellow was my mums favourite colour (drawings painting), 2019

Jemi Gale, acrylic paint, ink and drawings from 2017 on tablecloth from my childhood home
91 x 71 cm

yellow was my mums favourite colour (kasey chambers fan art painting), 2019

Jemi Gale
acrylic paint and ink on silk
91 x 71 cm

Not titled x 9, 2017-2019

Rosie O'Brien
gouache, greylead pencil and ink on paper
dimensions variable

Video at top of stairwell:

dry your tears with love, dry your tears with love, loneliness your silent whisper fills a river of tears through the night', 2019

Michael Kennedy
HD Video, 6:36

Works in corridor:

Taken in Tassie

Brahmony McCrossin
2019
found photo, found frame
15 x 20 cm

Untitled

Brahmony McCrossin
2019
found object
20 x 25cm

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and on the eyes,

black sleep of night

exhibition essay by Lisa Radford

- Bullet points
 - I started this as a letter but it soon became bullet points. A relatively recent phrasing, the bullet point is a list demarcated by dots, or boulette a small ball or cannonball. Bullet points might avoid categorical numbering, a definitive order but the name implies a finality. This seemed to fit the context of a text sitting alongside an exhibition including the work of eight artists all whom have different relationship to death, in particular to that of a parent. Whilst the letter might always arrive at its destination, I assume the dead don't read. Regardless, we still write to them, about them, accumulate social media memorials, contribute a death notice, read a eulogy, inscribe a tomb.
 - We are writing death all the time — text as a corpus.
 - We associate corpus with body, as we also say “body of text”. A text corpus is a large and structured set of texts. Death, although happening all the time, rarely feels ordered or structured. The Brown Corpus of Standard American English was one of the first and consists of one million words of American English texts printed in 1961. These texts are records of a past, a death. A book is born when it is written, lives while being read and lies dormant until it is read again — dead perhaps, waiting for regeneration, rebirth or simply general use. The text is always there, even if your are not reading it.
 - The ongoing project of mourning, is an unfinished or not-yet-abolished corpse. Walid Sadek writes about this in reference to the attempts of Nation States to acknowledge war and genocide as buildings, and, as he suggests, more effectively in ruins. We live in ruins, and so I guess we live in death.
 - In popular culture unfinished corpses return as zombies, ghosts, as mediums in our dreams. For us it could be a colour we chose for a painting, a text we write, a story we a willing to share, a choice in clothing, jewellery or food, and why we might be attracted (sexually or otherwise) to particular people. A few years after my mother died, someone welcomed me to the “dead parents” club. I didn't know there was one.
 - We have very few collective rituals related to death in our culture, so we invent them. Mostly, these rituals are about us, so that the dead can come with us, or be with us. In some societies , these rituals are about banishing the dead to a different space. In Japan the three day festival Obon does both – welcomes the dead back, and then with the guidance of fire / lanterns, the dead are sent back to their permanent dwelling place, where ever that may be. Hundreds of people as lakes in the early evening in Kyoto with lanterns Is quite a sight. Perhaps seeing that was about me also...
 - Todd May has claimed that the fact that we die is the most important fact about us. He is not talking about other people dying, but our own deaths. When our parents die, our mortality can be seen. The death of another does something to our own experience of the world, sharpening it. Our contact with the other atoms in the world and our own skin seem touch. There is a simultaneity of experience — that being both asleep and awake — a coma I used to call it. Mourning as coma state.

- When Sarah asked me to write this, I was going to say no. The subject line read “exhibition text”. The second line in her email read “Colloquially in my mind it’s known as the “dead parents show” but it’s actually called and on the eyes, black sleep of night. When I Googled her real title, the result produced a series of images depicting black black coloured eye masks for sleeping. This seems appropriate. I remember reading Darian Leader saying something like ““What stops us from sleeping is thus also what will wake us up.” The real of death is often unseeable, like the black sleep of night. The experience of death is unimage-able, be it our own, or that of another.
- I have a friend Sophie who used to send me images and links to different caskets and urns — Ghana Fantasy Coffins, inflatable pink coffins for the beach. One of my favourite links, was “Turn yourself into a Gummy Bear”. A jelly mould of one’s self for all the guests at your funeral to eat while they mourn.
- Freud suggests that as humans we resist mourning. Darian Leader suggests some of us may not even mourn at all. Death is unimageable, and so we work around it in innumerable ways : humour, sentiment, excess monumentalism, naming rituals, masochism, torture, inflicting pain on others, self harm, love, sex, read Harry Potter, paint paintings etc. We misassociate, misplace, disassociate, displace, as individuals and as groups. I am pretty sure the Peaches song “Fuck the pain away” has to be about death.
- As Freud aged, his views on his concept of the Death Drive changed. Your death drive can be awakened by the death of another. Death structures our lives, but often do not realise this or take the time to reflect on it. Todd May quotes Heidegger when he writes, most people conduct their lives most of the time through a denial of death.
- My mother died not long after Tampa and 9/11. All three are related in my head. This is a logical fallacy. While she was sick, she said in reference to 9/11 “I am glad I am not going to be around to see what happens with this”. There did not seem to be much denial in that¹
- The other week at the end of another essay I referenced Joost De Bloois and his discussion of Judith Butler and the politics of mourning. She suggests that this might involve a politics of retreat, of loss. The politics of mourning can be an affirmation of the subject’s/our continued presence.² It is in this mourning where a re-articulation of the social bond, an escape from contemporary melancholic narcissism. In mourning, withdrawal does not mean taking one’s revenge on the world, but to re-affirm one’s attachment to it, and to reorient oneself in it differently³. I am thinking about Sarah’s exhibition this way.

Sourced texts:

Darian Leader, *The New Black: mourning, melancholia and depression*

Todd May, *Death*

De Bloois, Joost, *Melancholic Retreat: Narratives of Retreat in Contemporary Political Theory*,

1 Todd May, *Death.*, p. 79

2 Todd May, *Death.*, p. 18

3 Judith Butler in De Bloois, Joost, *Melancholic Retreat: Narratives of Retreat in Contemporary Political Theory*, conference paper delivered at Towards a Politics of Withdrawal?, Leiden University, Copenhagen, May 26, 2018.