

IMITATION OF LIFE

**MEMORY
AND
MIMICRY
IN CANBERRA
REGION ART**

**CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY
25 JUNE — 16 OCTOBER 2011**

CURATOR'S ESSAY



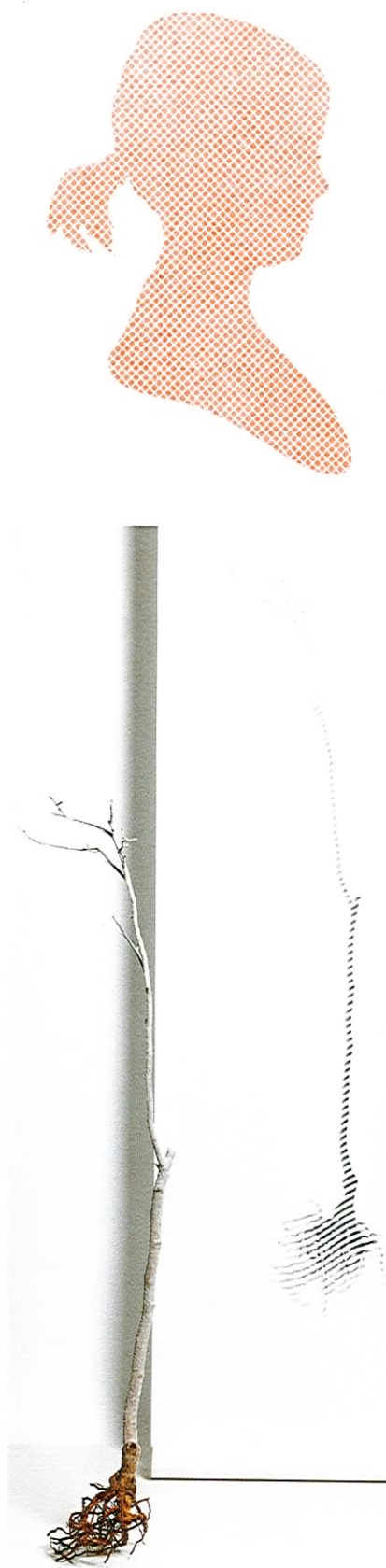
The work in this exhibition is concerned with representation, not in a traditional sense of representing what is seen but at a kind of distance: the representation of things remembered, and the re-presentation of existing imagery. *Memory and mimicry*.

The 27 artists included in *Imitation of life* give form to things copied and remembered in work that variously mines art history, archives, illustrated encyclopaedias, science and nature journals, maps, newspapers, advertising, bodice rippers, children's books, comics, toys, tools and appliances, furniture, signage and more, in its production.

The historical art practices that have informed the work in this exhibition include pop art, dada, surrealism and conceptual art, as well as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European scientific and natural history illustration. Modern traditions of socially and politically committed art resonate in *Imitation of life*, as do post-modern practices of the 1980s and 1990s that copied and quoted from existing imagery in the service of political satire.

In this exhibition representation is given form through various filters, including the act of remembering. The original source material is transformed through layers of selection, fragmentation, distortion, embellishment, and by significant shifts in scale and materials.

Danie Mellor. *Aussie Aussie Aussie* 2009 (detail)
7 parts; part 7: three taxidermied birds: Scarlet chested parrot; Varied lorikeet; and Musk lorikeet cross/mutant; wearing miniature crowns and costume jewellery pins, on silver-painted branch, fixed to painted wall mount;
83.5 x 42.5 x 9.0 cm (irreg.)
Collection of the artist, proposed donation to the Canberra Museum and Gallery
Photo: Rob Little Digital Images



(above)
Stephanie Jones, *Magnolia stellata rosea* 1996 2006/ 2011
 magnolia sapling, synthetic polymer paint, white sugar, pencil
 on textured wallpaper
 dimensions variable
 Collection of the artist
 Photo: Rob Little Digital Images



(top, left and middle)
Stephanie Jones, *Angel*; and *Baby* [both] 2008
 from the series *The shadow of love*
 colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on rag board
 50 x 40.5 cm
 Collection of the artist
 Photo: Brenton McGeachie



Stephanie Jones's art practice focuses on domestic space, both physical and psychological: house and home. In her *1 km from home* prints the key compositional elements are drawn from domestic patterns, the simple decorative elements of mid-twentieth century fences, gates and patio railings observed on Jones's regular walks with family and the family dog. The everyday experience of walking in her neighbourhood streets is traced in the lines of the prints, which also inscribe the lives of the original objects, now mostly overlooked but redolent of history. Their quaint decorative elements – Australian suburban art nouveau and art deco – are familiar, but exist for us now like traces of things once known but forgotten; in these prints they are brought back to us as the focus of our attention in subtle and elusive ways.

Jones's *Magnolia stellata rosea* 1996 2006/2011 is an intimate work incorporating time and personal memory. The desiccated magnolia sapling, now tenderly preserved and coated in white sugar, was originally planted in the artist's garden to commemorate the birth of her daughter in 1996, but did not thrive; ten years later this remnant, positioned in front of its own subtly-drawn shadow, is transfigured in a quiet but eloquent meditation on the traces of memory. *The shadow of love* series employs the same humble domestic materials of wallpapers and colour pencils in silhouettes of family and friends that reference Pliny the Elder's story of the origin of drawing – the tracing of the beloved's profile on a wall – and the silhouette portraits popularised in eighteenth century Europe, at the time the simplest and cheapest method of achieving a likeness.¹⁵

(top, right)
Stephanie Jones, *1 km from home (around the corner)* 2002
 linocut on Stonehenge paper, 3/6
 printed by Barbara McConchie
 26 x 31.5 cm (sheet size)
 Collection of the artist
 Photo: Rob Little Digital Images

KIRSTEN FARRELL

born 1971, Sydney
lives and works in Canberra
1995 Bachelor of Japanese Studies (Hons),
Australian National University, Canberra
2001 BA (Visual) (Hons), ANU School of Art,
Canberra

*Bohemian Rhapsody, Castlebury, Chili Bean, Colonial
Rose, Cool Trim, Da Blues, Dark Secret* 2002
from the series *Alphabetica*
2 parts, colour fibre-tipped pens on acrylic sheet
38 x 41 cm; 25 x 27 cm
Collection of the artist

*Accord, Answers, Anticipation, Attitude, Charity,
Classic Calm, Coalition, Déjà Vu, Determination* 2011
from the series *Alphabetica*
colour fibre-tipped pens on acrylic sheet
75 x 90 cm (approx.)
Collection of the artist

*Favoured, Drive Time, Energy Peak, Grid, Free Love,
Happy Days, Hello, Hindsight, Infinity* 2011
from the series *Alphabetica*
colour fibre-tipped pens on acrylic sheet
75 x 90 cm (approx.)
Collection of the artist

*Imposter, Knowing, Lexicon, Mastermind, Memento,
Mysteria, Party Plan, Perplex, Pertinent* 2011
from the series *Alphabetica*
colour fibre-tipped pens on acrylic sheet
75 x 90 cm (approx.)
Collection of the artist

*Philander, Rare Desire, Trendy, Sentimental, Signature,
Soft Suggestion, Trespass, Twice Shy, Witness* 2011
from the series *Alphabetica*
colour fibre-tipped pens on acrylic sheet
75 x 90 cm (approx.)
Collection of the artist

PATSY HELY

born 1947, Sydney
lives and works in Canberra
1978 Ceramics Certificate, East Sydney Technical
College
1979 Post-Ceramics Certificate, East Sydney
Technical College
1995 MA (Fine Arts), Southern Cross University,
Lismore, NSW
2007 PhD (Visual Arts), ANU School of Art, Canberra
since 2003 has lectured at the ANU School of Art,
Canberra

Cup and saucer: Deakin house for sale 2009
porcelain with under and overglaze colours
5.7 x 12.3 x 7.8 cm
wooden saucer by Peter Filmer
2.9 x 14.3 cm diameter
Collection of Harris & Hobbs, Canberra

Cup and saucer: Ian Chubb 2009
porcelain with under and overglaze colours
5.7 x 12.3 x 8.2 cm
wooden saucer by Peter Filmer
2.9 x 14.3 cm diameter
Collection of the artist

*Cup and saucer: Quentin Bryce, Carla Zampatti,
Government House* 2009
porcelain with under and overglaze colours
5.6 x 12.1 x 8.2 cm
blown glass saucer by Nadege Desgenetex
2.3 x 13.6 cm diameter
Collection of the artist

Jug: Marion Halligan and interviewer 2009
porcelain with under and overglaze colours
15.2 x 8.5 x 5.4 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

Jug: school anniversary, Queanbeyan 2009
porcelain with under and overglaze colours
14.9 x 11.6 x 8.2 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

MARTYN JOLLY

born 1959, Brisbane
lives and works in Canberra
1981 BA (Visual), Sydney College of the Arts
1991 GradDip (Communications), University of
Technology, Sydney
1995 MA (Research), University of Technology,
Sydney
2003 PhD, University of Sydney, Sydney College of
the Arts
1993 – current Head of Photomedia Workshop,
since 2008 Photographic and Media Arts
Workshop, ANU School of Art

Nineteen sixty-three: news and information 1997
28 parts, inkjet prints, from an original installation
of 100 parts
digitally cropped from black and white photographs
taken for the Australian News and Information
Bureau in 1963
each part, 20 x 25 cm & 25 x 20 cm
Collection of the artist

STEPHANIE JONES

born 1968, Perth
lives and works in Queanbeyan, NSW and Canberra
1988 BA (Fine Art), Curtin University of
Technology, Perth
1996 MLitt (Women's Studies) (Hons), Australian
National University, Canberra
2006 MPhil (Visual Arts), ANU School of Art

1km from home (around the corner) 2002
linocut on Stonehenge paper, 3/6
printed by Barbara McConchie
26 x 31.5 cm (sheet size)
Collection of the artist

1km from home (for Toni) 2002
linocut on Stonehenge paper, A/P
printed by Barbara McConchie
26 x 31.5 cm (sheet size)
Collection of the artist

1km from home (1:9) 2002
linocut on Stonehenge paper, A/P
printed by Barbara McConchie
26 x 93 cm (sheet size)
Collection of the artist

Angel 2008
from the series *The shadow of love*
colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on
rag board
50 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Baby 2008
from the series *The shadow of love*
colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on
rag board
50 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Dear 2008
from the series *The shadow of love*
colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on
rag board
50 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Princess 2008
from the series *The shadow of love*
colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on
rag board
50 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Treasure 2008
from the series *The shadow of love*
colour pencil on textured wallpaper, mounted on
rag board
50 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Magnolia stellata rosea 1996/2006/2011
magnolia sapling, synthetic polymer paint, white
sugar, pencil on textured wallpaper
dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

LYNDALL KENNEDY

born 1967, Sydney
lives and works in Canberra
1990 BCom, LLB, University of New South Wales
1995 AssDip (Visual Arts), ANU School of Art,
Canberra
1997 GradDip (Visual Arts), ANU School of Art,
Canberra

Combination plier set: long, short and round 2004
pokerwork, ink on veneer, plywood and gold leaf
(on internal surface)
23 x 51.4 x 10.1 cm
Collection of the artist

Mini lanterns set 2004
pokerwork, ink on veneer, plywood and gold paint
(on internal surface)
59.5 x 59 x 24 cm
Collection of the artist

Nail bag and six tin snips 2004
pokerwork, ink on veneer, plywood and gold paint
(on internal surface)
59.5 x 59 x 24 cm
Collection of the artist

Pest Stoppa: vermin protection for existing weepholes
2004
pokerwork, ink on veneer, plywood and gold leaf
(on internal surface)
23 x 51.4 x 10.1 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

Ding-donger 2005
pokerwork on Huon pine rolling pin
47 x 5 cm diameter
Collection of the artist

You dirty slats 2005
pokerwork on Huon pine rolling pin
47 x 5 cm diameter
Collection of the artist

JAY KOCHER

born 1973, Canberra
lives and works in Canberra
1996 BA, LLB, Australian National University,
Canberra
2002 BA (Visual Arts) (Hons), ANU School of Art,
Canberra

breathe 2009
rotationally and vacuum cast urethane, PVC piping
dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

iPod & breather 2009
rotationally and vacuum cast urethane, PVC piping
dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

two hands, four hands 2009
rotationally cast urethane, PVC piping
dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



I would like to thank the artists represented in *Imitation of life* for their enthusiastic support of the exhibition and their generosity in lending such marvellous works of art to it. It has been a pleasure to work with you. I am especially grateful to those artists who made or remade works for the show: Jane Barney, Rachel Bowak, Geoff Farquhar-Still, Kirsten Farrell, Martyn Jolly, Stephanie Jones, Julian Laffan, Ann McMahon, Julie Ryder and Erica Seccombe. Thanks also to those artists who helped locate works for the exhibition. The Canberra Museum and Gallery would particularly like to thank Janenne Eaton, Danie Mellor and Ruth Waller for their generous gifts of works of art to our collection, which were all superb and timely inclusions in *Imitation of life*.

I am grateful to the public and private collectors who made their works available for inclusion in *Imitation of life*: Geoffrey Cassidy, Director, Daniel Cunningham and Carrie Kibbler of Artbank; Mia Ching; Mel Douglas; Ingeborg Hansen; Karina Harris & Neil Hobbs; Stephanie Jones, for the Estate of David Watt; Benedict Laffan; Paul McGlew; Kate Murphy; Lorna Shuttlewood and Helen Maxwell; Reg Silvester; Kate Stevens; Mark and Laurie Van Veen; Joy Warren and Andrew Ferguson at Solander Gallery; Lars Wetselaar; and Geoff White of Katoomba Fine Art.

My thanks are due to ACT Museums and Galleries for the opportunity to curate this exhibition, and to Harriet Elvin, CEO of the Cultural Facilities Corporation. I have been warmly supported by my terrific colleagues at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, who work above and beyond the call of duty, in particular Peter Haynes, Director; Graeme Tie, Collections Manager; Gary Smith, Exhibitions Officer; Paul Webb, Marketing Manager; Jan Casson; Meagan Spedding; Claire Conti, Assistant Director, Education and Community Programs; Sophie Chessell, Education and Community Programs Manager; and Amelia Zarafitis, Education and Community Programs Officer. I also owe profound thanks to Allison Bell, Curatorial Assistant, whose warm and capable curatorial support allowed me to concentrate on the complex demands of the show, and to Celine Guertin, our CMAG intern from ANU Art History and Curatorship, who has worked on many aspects of the exhibition and who has been absolutely indispensable. My thanks also to Michael Bailey, Front of House Manager, and our terrific Museum Assistants (especially Danyka Van Buuren, for her help with images).

Iona Walsh, as ever, has done a wonderful job on the design for the catalogue (and the invitation and banners) and Rob Little and Sandie Shaw-Velzen have photographed the works superbly.

I would also like to acknowledge CMAG's fellow art organisations, public and private, in the Canberra region that sustain and support our vibrant art community and where many of the works of art in *Imitation of life* were first exhibited, especially the Canberra Contemporary Art Space; Craft ACT; Megalo Print Studio, ANCA; M16; Helen Maxwell Gallery; The Front Gallery; the ANU Drill Hall Gallery and the ANU School of Art Gallery.

My grateful thanks to my ex-colleague Mark Van Veen for the many stimulating and fruitful conversations about art that provided the genesis for this exhibition and its predecessor, *Something in the air*, which we curated together.

And thanks, as ever, to Gordon Bull, and to Frazer Bull-Clark.

Deborah Clark

Published in association with the exhibition *Imitation of life: memory and mimicry in Canberra region art* at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, 25 June to 16 October 2011.

Exhibition curator: Deborah Clark, Curator of Visual Arts, ACT Museums and Galleries

ISBN 978 0 9807840 2 2

Published: Canberra, Australia 2011

Text: © Canberra Museum and Gallery

Artwork: © the artists

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Design: Iona Walsh Art+Design
Printing: Bluestar Print, Canberra

CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

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www.museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au



Canberra Museum and Gallery is part of the Cultural Facilities Corporation which is an ACT Government Agency

(front dust jacket images, left to right)

Nicola Dickson, *Nouvelle femme* 2009 (detail), synthetic polymer paint, oil on mdf. Photo by Stuart Hay, ANU Photography;

Vivienne Binns, *A surface of leaves* – lino 2001 (detail), synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Photo by Rob Little Digital Images.