

# **IMITATION OF LIFE**

**MEMORY  
AND  
MIMICRY  
IN CANBERRA  
REGION ART**

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

# CURATOR'S ESSAY



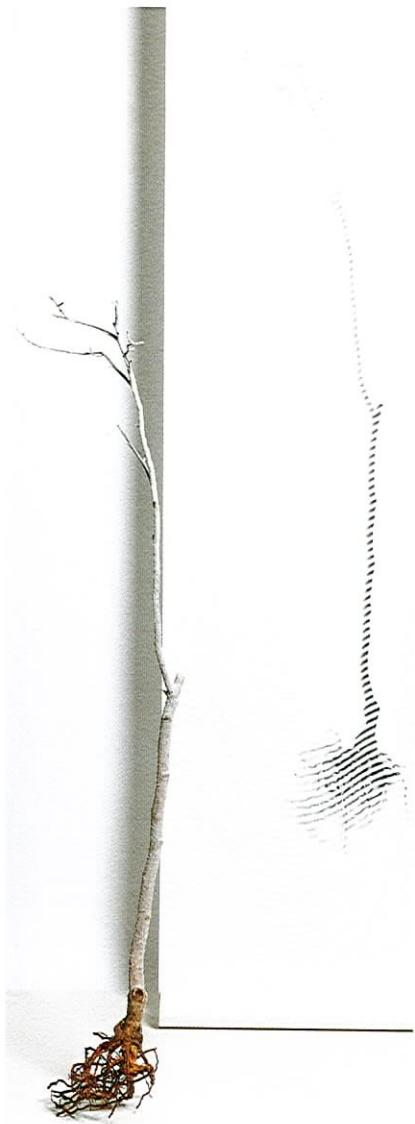
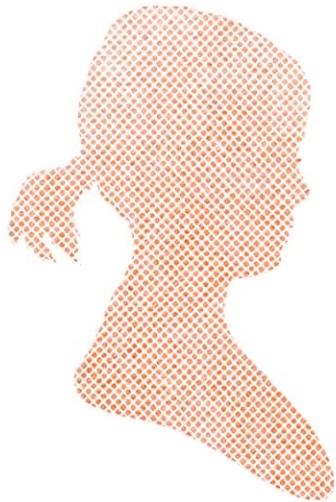
The work in this exhibition is concerned with representation, not in a traditional sense of representing what is seen but at a kind of distance: the representation of things remembered, and the re-presentation of existing imagery. *Memory and mimicry*.

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



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.<sup>15</sup>

(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 McGechie

(top, right)  
**Stephanie Jones.** *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  
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 *Alphabética*  
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 *Alphabética*  
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 *Alphabética*  
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 *Alphabética*  
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 *Alphabética*  
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 Desgenetez  
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 KOCHEL**  
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

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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 Zaraftis, 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 Danya 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



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### CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

Cnr London Circuit & Civic Square, Canberra City

[www.museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au](http://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.