



COOL CHANGE CONTEMPORARY

MEDIA RELEASE | JULY 2019 EXHIBITION PROGRAM

ANDREW NICHOLLS AND SION PRIOR: *HYMN*
Gallery 1

NATHAN BEARD: *WHITE GILT*
Gallery 2

GRACE WOOD: *ERSATZ*
Gallery 3

OPENING NIGHT FRIDAY 5 JULY 6-8PM
EXHIBITION CONTINUES 6 - 27 JULY
WED - SUN 11AM - 5PM

In Gallery 1, Andrew Nicholls and Sion Prior will present *Hymn*, a collaborative exhibition by two queer-identifying artists raised within fervently Christian contexts (Catholic and Protestant, respectively). The show pays tribute to the different sensibilities of their religious upbringings, while referencing the homoeroticism implicit to Christianity, with its sole male deity.

White Gilt is a solo exhibition of work by Nathan Beard, which aims to deftly unpack the associations and idiosyncrasies of hand gestures in traditional Thai culture. This new series of drawings and photographs, housed in Gallery 2, navigates the anxious terrain of cultural authenticity and expression through a variety of symbolic and personal references.

Grace Wood will be presenting her exhibition *Ersatz* in Gallery 3. The exhibition is a large scale collage installation, involving a series of digital fabric prints featuring found images, archival photographs, iPhone pictures and scanned documents, presenting a new representation of female artists in art history.

For more information on any of the exhibitions or events included in this media release please contact Paul Boyé hello@coolchange.net.au | 0498 393 088

Cool Change Contemporary acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional and rightful custodians of the land on which we operate.

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Supported By:





ANDREW NICHOLLS AND SION PRIOR

Hymn

Gallery 1 | 6 - 27 July

Hymn is a collaborative exhibition by Andrew Nicholls and Sion Prior, two queer-identifying, Perth-based artists raised within fervently Christian contexts.

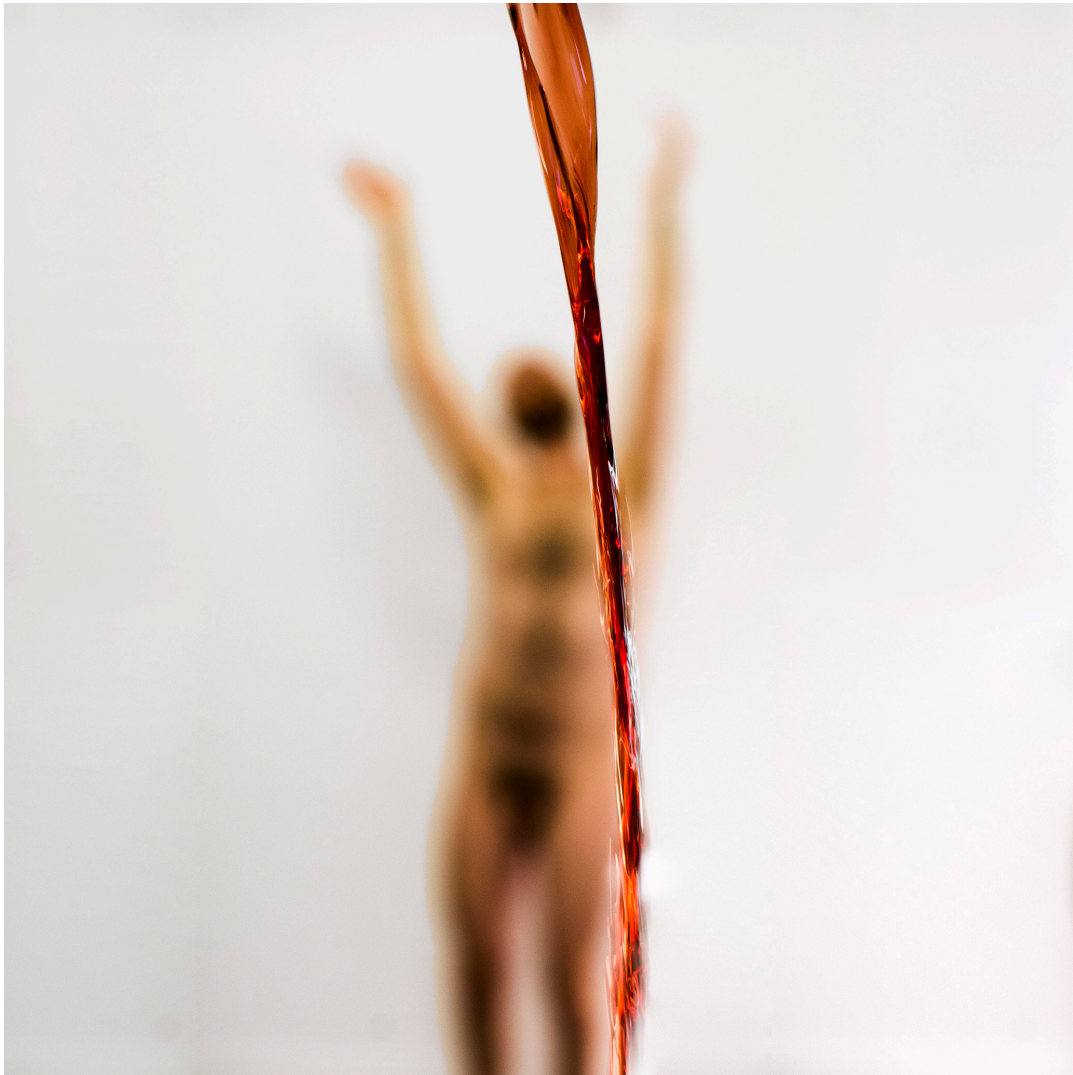
Nicholls was raised a strict Catholic, was an altar server, sang in his church choir, lead prayer gatherings during school recess, was read the Bible nightly, made to recite the rosary daily on his way to school, and received a personal blessing from Pope John Paul II.

Prior was raised an evangelical Christian, and as a teenager was entangled in cult-like offshoots of the Charismatic movement. He is a five-time recipient of the Christian Endeavour Award from his high school, and helped found a church and ministry at eighteen.

Both artists' emergent queer sexuality and broadening intellectual inquiry during their late teenage years triggered a break from the religion/s they had been committed to, a spiritual and ideological shift that continues to inform their life and work. *Hymn* was conceived to allow both artists to explore and pay tribute to the very different Christian aesthetics they have been strongly influenced by, while referencing the homoeroticism implicit to Christianity, with its sole male deity.



Andrew Nicholls and Sion Prior, *Lake of Fire* (detail), 2019. Production still from digital video, 6 minutes. Image courtesy of the artists.



Andrew Nicholls and Sion Prior, *Hymn 1*, 2019. Giclée print, dimensions variable.
Image courtesy of the artists.

Andrew Nicholls is an Australian-British artist, writer and curator whose practice explores how power has been expressed through aesthetics, historically. He is interested in tracing the historical recurrence of particular aesthetic motifs, and with exploring periods of cultural transition during which Western civilization's stoic aspirations were undone by base desires, fears or compulsions. Nicholls has undertaken residencies and exhibited work across Australia, in China, England, Italy, Southeast Asia, and the United States, and undertaken commissions for institutions including Artbank, Brookfield Multiplex, the City of Perth, Curtin University, and Duke University Press. His work is represented in collections including Artbank, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the City of Perth, and the Kedumba Collection of Australian Drawings, and is familiar to Perth audiences via his ceiling mural at the City of Perth Library, and his recent solo exhibition, *Hyperkulturemia*, at The Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Sion Prior is an emerging Australian artist and writer. His multimedia practice primarily consists of photography, video and poetry. For several years both Sion's written and visual practices have been driven by a humorous, transcendent and confronting exploration of masculinity, sexuality, religion and mysticism. It is through art that Sion tries to extract from his circumstances and experiences all that is comic, magic and poetic, and to induce in his audience a striking, elaborate sense of otherworldliness.

White Gilt is an exhibition by Nathan Beard which aims to deftly unpack the cultural associations and idiosyncrasies of various hand gestures in traditional Thai culture; filtered through the cultural anxieties and self-consciousness of the artist's Thai-Australian heritage.

The exhibition takes the symbolism and associations of the *wai* as its main source of inspiration. The *wai* is a prayer-like gesture where your hands are clasped in front of you, and as a customary greeting in Thailand has its roots in the 12th Century as a way of indicating that you weren't armed.

Complicating the work is a tangle of personal associations between the artist and the *wai*, namely a sense of cultural inauthenticity which has been harboured through its ritualised performance in social and familial contexts. Works in the exhibition process this cultural inadequacy through a range of influences including images of celebrities awkwardly performing the *wai* when visiting Thailand, the symbolism of extended hand positions in traditional Thai dance, and galleries of Westerners who upon being arrested in Thailand are subsequently photographed performing the *wai* as an act of contrition.



Research details of wall murals from the Lacquer Pavillion in Suan Pakkad Palace, Bangkok (2017)

Images by Nathan Beard



Research details of wall murals from
the Lacquer Pavillion in Suan Pakkad
Palace, Bangkok (2017)

Images by Nathan Beard

Nathan Beard (b.1987) is Perth-based interdisciplinary artist who explores his Thai-Australian heritage in order to process the complex ways a sense of heritage and identity is negotiated.

Beard holds a Bachelor of Arts (Art) with First Class Honours from Curtin University. Exhibitions include *A dense intimacy*, Bus Projects, VIC (2019), *Siamese Smize*, Turner Galleries, WA (2018), *Transcendence*, Firstdraft, NSW (2018), *WA Focus*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, WA (2017), *Always there and always a part*, BLINDSIDE, VIC (2017), *Radical Ecologies*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, WA (2016), *Ad Matres*, Arterial Gallery, NSW (2015), *Future Archaeology*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, NSW (2015), *Memento Mori*, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, WA (2014), and *Obitus*, Moana Project Space, WA (2014).

In 2017 Beard was selected for the 4A Beijing Studio Program, shortlisted as a finalist for the John Stringer Prize, and Highly Commended as a finalist in the Fremantle Art Centre Print Award.

In her seminal 1971 essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, Linda Nochlin tells the story of Thomas Eakins’ life-class at the Pennsylvania Academy in the middle of the nineteenth century – instead of using a nude man for a women’s still life class, a live cow was placed in the middle of the room and served as the model for the female students.

The female image in art history as it relates to the female artist is a counterfeit reality of representation. Women are represented in art history not as makers or creators, but as reclining, nude figures endlessly enduring the male painterly gaze.

The collaged fabric in *Ersatz* is a new representation of female artists in art history, a simulacrum, an ersatz reality. The forms used in this work are taken from paintings, sculptures and photographs, turned into digitalised pictures, items and images and ultimately become giant illustrative collages on pieces of fabric. These things are transformed from heavy to hard to soft, making the final product something wholly removed from the original.



Grace Wood, *Lay Down*, 2019. Digital print on cotton canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

Grace Wood is an artist from Narm (Melbourne), Australia. She received her Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2014. Grace creates collage-based installations that anatomise eccentricities of the internet archive, sybaritic notions of elitist art history, and anachronistic displays of the contemporary photographic document. Grace has exhibited extensively in Australia and her work is held in public and private collections nationally. Some recent exhibitions include *Looking but not seeing*, Benalla Art Gallery, VIC, 2018; *There is a pain - so utter*, Gertrude Glasshouse, VIC, 2018; *Last Drinks*, LON Gallery, VIC, 2018; *SATURATED: SATURATION*, Sister Gallery, SA, 2017; *Is this necessary?*, Cut Thumb Laundry QLD, 2017 and *Like a Hasselblad on the moon*, West Space, VIC, 2017.