

# COOL CHANGE CONTEMPORARY

7 - 28 SEPTEMBER, 2019

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CURTIN UNIVERSITY GRADUATION FUNDRAISER

TIM MEAKINS

EMILY MURCH



# **CURTIN UNIVERSITY GRADUATION FUNDRAISER: PAY ME**

GALLERY 1

This exhibition plays host to over 36 artist's contributions and around 70 works in differing mediums and styles. Each work has been carefully selected and curated to give an honest overview of the projects happening within the school.

Within the art school the main specialities are Print Media, Painting and Sculpture; the emerging artists learn how to combine mediums, extend their knowledge within each speciality and create artworks that push the boundaries.

It is a vital element of the art school that the technicians and tutors are knowledgeable, practicing artists. This ensures the information passed on to students is relevant and comes from experienced, reliable sources. This also enables students to flourish, creating their own methodologies and methods to work in, hence creating such diversity between the works on show.

Works in this show will be available for purchase, with the aim of raising funds for the Graduation Exhibition occurring later this year.

Participating artists:

Felice Anderson  
Halley Argue  
Leah Chidlow  
Shilo Beckwith  
Olivia Biasin  
Tylo Broadhurst  
Louis Everall  
Jen Datu  
Sandra Donovan  
Mia Drake  
Brent John Ekholm  
Jessica Gray  
Abby Kendall  
Zainub Khan  
Samatha Laird  
Eden Lennox  
Greg Molloy  
Anna Nazzari  
Isabelle Otto  
Mark Parfaitt  
Debra Perkins  
Annette Peterson  
Sheng Ping Bai  
Robert Pitman  
Tarin Porter  
Stephanie Price  
Oliver Ragen  
Elena Rayner  
Joanne Richardson  
Siane Rogers  
Ciara Sewell  
Monisha Sharif  
Clair Shenton

Ella Steiner  
Ailsa Waddell  
Rae Walter  
Nikita Wynne



Leah Chidlow, 2018, *Curtin Gothic Study #21*, Oil on Masonite, 25x19cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

## TIM MEAKINS: LOW ENERGY

GALLERY 2

### Conversation between Tim Meakins and Ben Bannan

**Ben Bannan:** How does your graphic design practice influence the way you make work for a gallery context; do you see them as separate things?

**Tim Meakins:** My background in graphic design has taught me that every visual choice needs logical reasoning but making art has almost worked in the opposite way for me. I'm making all these things that have a loose concept and share motifs, but I'm only just starting to formulate the conversations between them, I guess I'm figuring out all of that as I make.

I developed a style that centred around shapes while I was studying. I didn't know how to use any programs, and the only available tools I could use were shapes. I started to restructure things; like how do you use curves to create something that isn't a circle? This is also the heart of my art practice, creating objects out of shapes that are immediately familiar. There's something really humorous about simplifying the body into basic forms.

**BB:** Your work is really formal in that way. It seems like you're refining and building upon your design sensibility with every body of work.

**TM:** Repetition is a real common thread within my work. The same shapes, stances, view point; a body lifting something. I've drawn that figure so many times, but every time I'm trying to do something different, it shifts, or it expands. This exhibition is probably the



Samantha Laird, *Banksia High*, 2018. Embossed, lithograph and woodblock on paper, 27x27cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

clearest example of that where I've got the same kind of painting I've been doing for a while now but I'm starting to push my aesthetic within the framework of 3D rendering.

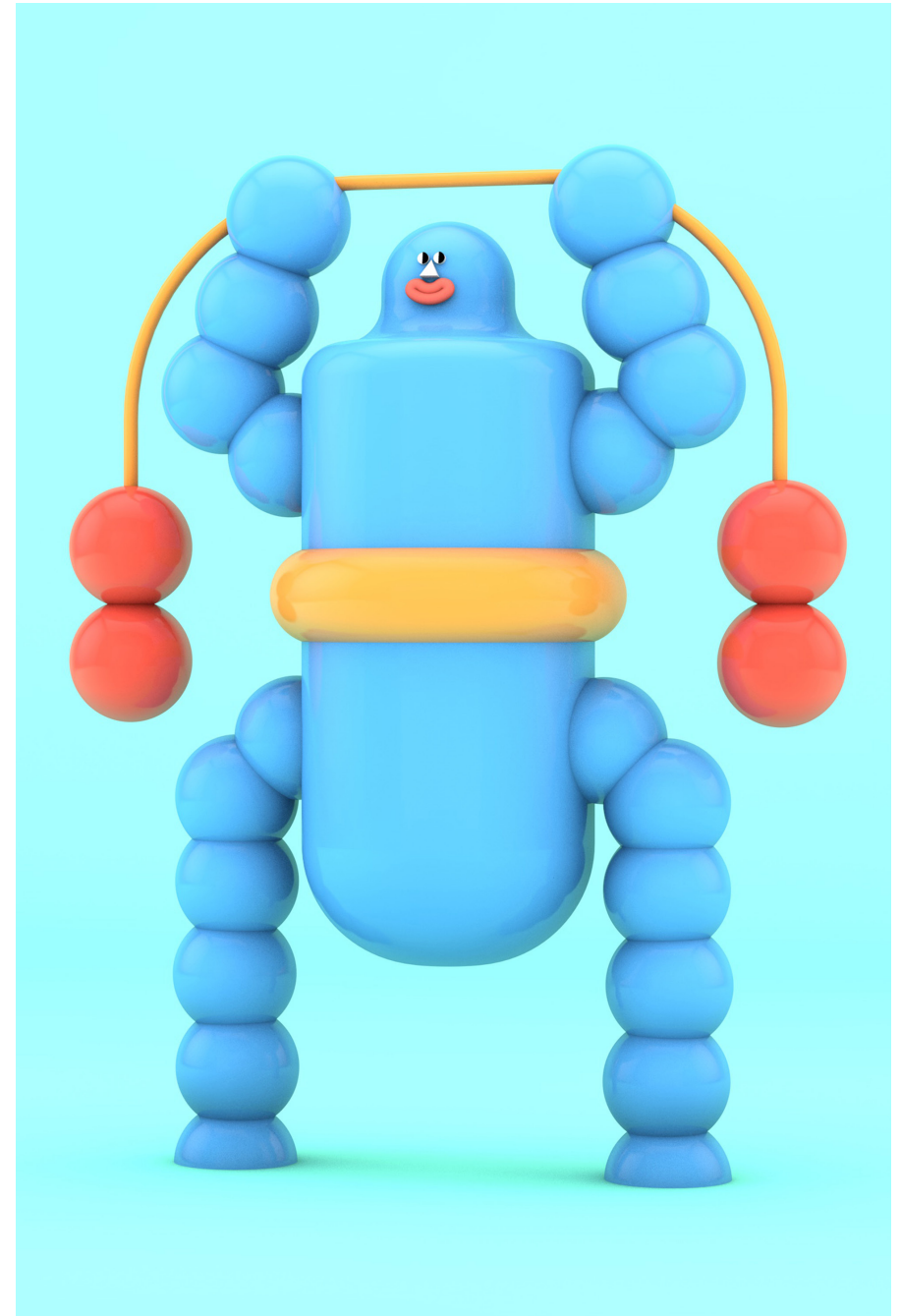
**BB:** This is the first time I've seen you experiment with 3D rendering and fabrication processes. The paintings seem like you're reproducing things you already know, but this new direction is pushing your aesthetic and your material language. It seems like the production possibilities for these digital works are quite endless.

**TM:** At first, coming from graphic design, there was an insecurity about what an art object was meant to be, and look like. This is probably the first exhibition where I've specifically thought about how people might encounter the works in the space, while in the process of making the work. Usually with design, or a painting, I'm approaching everything in relation to a 2D grid.

Thinking about scale and relationships between objects has been a big challenge for me in this new body of work. I want to push it to the point where it almost breaks; experiment with fabrication and take some more chances with the outcomes.

**BB:** You mentioned graphic design forces you to work to a brief that you've been given but making for an art context often means the work is conceptually driven by the artist. Clearly you have a formal framework, does personal experience play a part in influencing your work? There are obvious hypermasculine tropes, like the weightlifting and the exaggerated muscles; everything seems to reference pressure or build-up.

**TM:** I was very physically active growing up and there was time when sport was a significant part of my life.



Tim Meakins, *Low Energy*, 2019. 3D Render. Image courtesy of the artist.



Tim Meakins, *Material #1 – Rock*, 2019. 3D Render. Image courtesy of the artist.

For a while I considered going to America and playing college baseball and I had all these opportunities to have a very different life. I also had some pretty significant injuries because of sport. I've had knee surgery, dislocated my shoulder and recently I've injured both my hands training Muay Thai, which put me out for six months.

**BB:** It's really interesting that you bring up injury because for me so much of your work is about failure. Things warp and droop in ways they shouldn't, and the title of the exhibition speaks to a kind of underachievement. Have you ever thought of your work as self-portraiture; that the figures, are you?

**TM:** I think I've only recently come to terms with how self-referential my work is. That it's my experience of masculinity and failure and pressure. Injury gave me a kind of distance from sport which put into perspective the culture of 'soldiering on' and being 'courageous'. I measured my successes through a lot of those moments. When you get an injury, it feels like you might have your chance at success taken away from you, which is completely not true and comical in a way. I guess that's where all those references to failure come from. At times I had slight issues with body-image, and I think indirectly the works are part of coming to terms with my physicality. I've found funniness in the performativity of that world I'd been conditioned in. I think that's why I play with humour and my aesthetic is quite juvenile, it helps me laugh at myself... Is that a good answer?

**BB:** That's a good answer, yeah.

**TM:** Okay, cool.

Low Energy, is a collection of new works that explore masculinity as a social construct. The exhibition aims to initiate open dialogue about social pressures and the repercussions our embedded desire to conform has on both our physical and mental state.

Through the works, the artist reflects on his experiences with masculine social codes and utilises large-scale 3D printing, alongside print and paint mediums to create a space for self-reflection.

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**Tim Meakins** is a Graphic Designer and Visual Artist. Graduating from North Metropolitan TAFE Perth in 2013 with an Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design, Tim then furthered his study at Curtin University in 2014, receiving his Bachelor of Humanities with Majors in Graphic Design and Advertising. Solo exhibitions include Bivouac Canteen 2017 and Smart Casual 2018. Various Group shows include Outre Gallery 2017, City Arts Space 2017, Nude Design Studio 2017, Smart Casual 2018 and Chicho Gelato 2019.

This project has been supported by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

## EMILY MURCH: FEAR & COMFORT

GALLERY 3

Emily Murch Q&A with Cool Change Contemporary

**Cool Change Contemporary:** Thinking about the initial experience of being given a calico doll in response to your classmate's surgery, and the obvious impact this event had upon your practice, was this your first exposure to the concept of mortality? Do you remember your response to the event at the time?

**Emily Murch:** I was too young at the time to be able to grasp how serious open-heart surgery was, or that there was even a chance that my friend might die. I hadn't experienced the death of any one I knew. At five years old, I remember being far more upset about how her surgery was more exciting than the minor surgery I had had a few years earlier. I was mostly concerned about how much cooler her scar would be. I don't think I could really grasp how dangerous or traumatic the surgery would be.

**CC:** The dolls were intended to allow children to experience difficult events through play and imagination. Is this something you hope adults can experience as well? Do you see your own act of making as a way to process your adult emotions?

**EM:** The act of making, and creativity in general can be an extremely useful way to process emotion, for adults just as much as children. Art, music and storytelling have always been key in humanity's way of processing and sharing emotion.

The dolls aren't about me processing specific emotions other than that for me all art making is a way of

engaging with the world and processing what I think and feel. The dolls do not each represent specific situations. Some serve as a blank canvas for an image or text. Others develop out of the sculptural properties of the material and the basic form.

I aim to trigger emotion in the viewer by starting from a personal impulse while creating ambiguity which suggests rather than dictates a response and so people can project their own emotions onto the forms.

**CC:** There's a particular kind of comfort associated with textiles, dolls, and embroidery that is typically associated with feminised domesticity. How do you place your work within this tradition?

**EM:** Dolls are presumed to be only for girl children, to act out female roles of mother and homemaker. Embroidery is considered superficial. Since industrialisation, having the textile skills of making and mending has become associated with poverty and low status. In western modernity, femininity and the domestic space has been reduced to 'less than' or a low-status subset of human space, a space of 'the other.' Yet it has still been the place of safety and survival produced entirely by the hands of the homemaker and her labour.

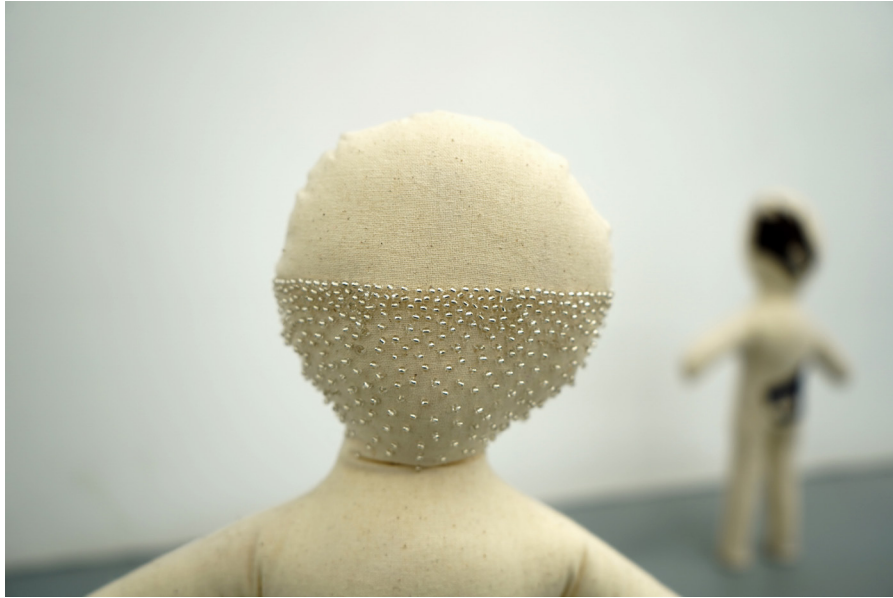
When textiles are solely associated with this false stereotype they are reduced to a superficial idea of comfort, cuteness and the trivial. In reality textiles are pervasive in all areas of life and all status levels, and are prime carriers of culture.

The doll forms are sculptural and the embroidery on them is used for both abstract and pictorial mark making. When you can see the hand of the maker in



Emily Murch, *Fear & Comfort* (dog detail), 2019, cotton, lead, glass, polyester, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.





Emily Murch, *Fear & Comfort* (bead detail), 2019, cotton, lead, glass, polyester, dimensions variable.

the work, the work is more resonant with emotional content. Making the forms out of cloth both refers to the original source and calls on the deep connection between making and using textiles and the entirety of human history.

The quality of cloth, thread, beads, pins and the form of a doll all evoke a haptic response where the viewer has a sense of how they feel even without touching them.

**CC:** You speak of the act of stitching and embroidering as catharsis through tactility. Can you talk a little bit more about the power of making and doing as a way to process emotion, as opposed to the more internal processes of thinking and feeling? What relationship do you see between the two?

**EM:** We often think of the mind as just existing within the brain, but this has increasingly been seen as a limited concept. The idea of extended cognition is that the mind functionally extends beyond the brain, and even the body, to elements in the surrounding environment. For example, if you store information on a piece of paper or in your phone intentionally as a way to retain that information, it is just as much a part of your mind as if it was only in your memory. I don't believe I would remember as much about my friend's surgery if I didn't have the doll. The doll has become an external storage space for the memory of the event. Hands are also an important extension of the brain. For me the physical use of my hands is a way of generating thinking: in doodling, in gesticulating, in stitching.

A blank calico doll the artist received as a child forms the basis of Fear & Comfort. The doll was a gift from the children's hospital, intended as a memento in honour of a friend about to have heart surgery. These featureless dolls were blank canvases on which the child having surgery and their classmates could project their feelings, thereby creating souvenirs of a time and experience that could otherwise be too overwhelming for a child to process.

A group of doll-like forms is presented in the exhibition, recreating, repeating and distorting the form of the original doll. They embroidered symbols and imagery, with the intention that to stitch anxieties becomes a ritual through which unbounded emotions can be entombed within the simple form of the dolls. The act of embroidery provides a further layer of catharsis via the tactile aspects of textile work. The hand of the artist is felt and sensed, establishing a reciprocal exercise in comfort.

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Emily Murch is a Perth raised and Melbourne based artist who works with textiles, text and installation. Since graduating with Bachelor of Fine Art from Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2016 she has exhibited in Melbourne and Western Australia.

Murch's work is simultaneously playful and morbid. By tying abstract sensations to familiar objects she intends to slightly dislodge the viewer's confidence in their own sense of perception.

Cool Change Contemporary acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional and rightful custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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