

# COPPICE

EXHIBITION OPENS ON MARCH 3 AND CONTINUES TO APRIL 2

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DOUBLE VISION AND LIQUID ARCHITECTURE PRESENT: ISLAJA :: THURSDAY MARCH 17, 6-8:30 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION :: CULTIVATING CONVERSATION :: SATURDAY MARCH 19, 1-3 PM

READING ROOM POP UP EXHIBITION :: ELSEWHERE ARTS PRESENTS :: THURSDAY MARCH 31, 11-1 PM

COLLECTIVE CLUB ART CRIT :: SATURDAY APRIL 2, 1-3 PM

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## COPPICE

Bonita Bub, Consuelo Cavaniglia, Aideen Doran, Deb Mansfield, Lena Nyadbi.

With collection works by George Duncan, John Drummond Moore, David Stephenson and The Macleay Museum. Curated by Katrina Liberiou and Siân McIntyre.

Coppicing is an early forestry process that involves the cutting back or removing of part of a tree, shrub or plant in order to stimulate growth. This action of disrupting and interrupting natural growth in order to increase productivity is an English approach to agriculture, and could be used as a conceptual tool to discuss land, site, history, colonisation, consumerism, memory and trauma as well as growth, fertility and the resilience of nature.

With this exhibition, curators Katrina Liberiou (University Art Gallery) and Siân McIntyre (Verge Gallery) create a landscape where in-between and sometimes contradictory spaces can arise and be explored. Titled Coppice, (understood as the site where the practice of coppicing takes place) this exhibition presents artists who engage with the reconstruction and retelling of history, place, object and practice, stripping back and rebuilding content to create alternate readings.

Coppice presents works from contemporary artists Bonita Bub, Consuelo Cavaniglia, Aideen Doran, Deb Mansfield and Lena Nyadbi, each exploring these conceptual readings of coppice. These works are positioned alongside selected works from the University of Sydney Union's art collection and early Fungi models from the collection of the Macleay Museum that speak literally to the practice of coppicing. This gathering of contemporary and historical objects and artworks aims to cultivate a dialogue between literal and conceptual representations of coppice, opening spaces and creating narratives while interrupting the natural order of the exhibition.

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Bonita Bub reinterprets everyday industrial materials by creating abstracted forms that navigate in and out of prescribed modes of painting, sculpture and architecture. Bub's work challenges the real and imagined by creating formalist yet playful works that seem familiarly abstract.

As Bub explains 'I am very interested in the structure and graphic line-work of industrial machines and work equipment such as trolleys, a-frame glass carriers and trays. I usually collect images (online as well as from warehouse stockists) and translate dimensions from spec sheets. Then I build, edit and rebuild until an object is formally distilled – relating directly to the premise of "Coppice". This process of editing and translating is in keeping with other work, as is an ongoing interest in scale, proportion and weight distribution. I try to make objects hover gently off the ground and appear light. In the case of actual work equipment it is often clunky, brutish and made to certain specifications to account for forces, weight and function.'

Lena Nyadbi (born c.1936) is a Gija artist from the Warmun Community (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley, Western Australia. The country depicted in Lena's painting is Nyadbi's father's country - Jimbirla (Spearhead) country. It lies north of Warmun, towards Doon Doon Station. The land is sharp and stony. Gija people used to wrap their feet in paperbark or calico when hunting kangaroos in the hills, to stop the sharp stones from cutting their feet. In her painting Nyadbi depicts two of her principal Dreamings, Dayiwul (the barramundi) and Jimbirla Ngarrangkarni (barramundi Dreaming). Nyadbi positions the work from the stars down, mapping country, beautifully narrating Jimbirla country in ochre and charcoal. The white ochre (mandu) used in this painting is sourced from the riverbed in the dry season and the black pigment is charcoal burnt from snappy gum trees. Traditionally these pigments would have been bound using gum from the eucalyptus trees that appear at the end of the wet season. Here, the rocks of Nyadbi's land are ground into a paste and transferred onto the canvas to create an image that speaks back to her country and her Dreaming.

Consuelo Cavaniglia is an interdisciplinary artist whose work focuses on how we see and understand space. Taking its cues from film, photography and architecture the work employs technically simple visual effects to distort perception and unsettle the relationship between viewer and space. The spaces alluded to in the work are illusory and imaginary—spaces of the psyche rather than the concrete world.

Cavaniglia explains her works for *Coppice* 'are about presence and absence, positive and negative spaces. I've been working on taking an element from one half of the drawing, inverting it and placing it in the opposite half, so things that are missing (or in the negative) in one section are present in the other, etc. The forms are repeated, they appear and disappear, they generate and obliterate each other.'

Aideen Doran is a Northern Irish artist living and working in Scotland. She has recently completed a practice based PhD in Visual Art at Northumbria University, having previously studied at the Glasgow School of Art and the University of Ulster in Belfast. Her practice centres on a rigorous process of research, through which she investigates contentious historical or political questions - generating artistic responses to the documents, images and impressions that she encounters, collects and orders. Working primarily in moving image media and installation, her works vary in form but share a will to interrogate the image, to question its authenticity and authority through processes of mediation.

As articulated by Doran, 'in *Oblomov's Dream* (2014–15), the narration is adapted from the 1849 novel *Oblomov*, by Ivan Goncharov, a satire on the indolence of the Russian aristocracy. Oblomov is a young nobleman who, although he is good-natured, is incapable of making decisions or undertaking any action. In my reworking of the text into a narration for video, Oblomov is elevated from being the ultimate "superfluous man" to the position of an anti-hero. His refusal to perform any social function and to produce anything of use is reinterpreted as a radical political action, an oppositional stance in a digitally networked world that prizes performativity and proofs.' She continues 'a disembodied narrator reads this adaptation over a shifting backdrop of still images and video that are culled from multiple sources both online and off, a backdrop that at times is entirely abstract, and at others resembles a computer desktop, an online pin-board or a Tumblr dashboard.'

Deb Mansfield's practice looks at liminal geographies and spaces of in-between. Mansfield nods to peripheral spaces such as islands and travel as a way of investigating the nature of boundaries and borders. In choosing spaces that are neither here nor there, and by conflating *truth* and *fiction*, her practice echoes the type of exploratory travel that first inspired it. She makes use of these sites as stop-overs, moments of respite in her navigation across a contemporary cultural landscape. Through her photography, tapestry, sculptural and installation works, the precarious nature of in-between-ness is explored by re-imagining appropriated narratives and forms. Drawing on stories and materialities that are at once familiar but functionally alienating to Mansfield, she uses her novice-perspective to work her personal experiences into more infamous tales.

In 2005, Mansfield (with her friend, and fellow artist, Siân McIntyre) flew from Niigata to Vladivostok to spend a month travelling Russia on the Trans Siberian Railway. The journey was fraught from the beginning. The plane's engine cut out for a short period over the Sea of Japan, and when the plane did manage to arrive safely in Vladivostok, the winter luggage that the women had packed, was elsewhere in the world. Keeping with the 'failed mechanics' theme of the trip, the train also had several breakdowns on the journey, which meant that Mansfield and McIntyre were able to experience a variety of winter greys and broken architecture in abandoned outposts that they hadn't actually anticipated. Eleven years later, the memory of the journey still looms large, as do the greys and architectural fractures of Russia's remote landscape.

### University of Sydney Union collection works

**John D Moore** (1888–1958) was a painter and architect. After spending some time working as an architect in the United States and then London, he entered WWI serving with the Royal Engineers in France. Upon returning to Australia he continued practicing as an architect as well as an active artist in Sydney's interwar modernist movement.

**George Duncan** (1904–1974) studied at the Royal Art Society under Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo. During WWII he worked as a camouflage artist and became an active member of the Contemporary Art Society. With his partner Alison Rehfisch, they exhibited regularly together at Macquarie Galleries, Sydney, their last joint exhibition held in 1958. In 1953 he became the director of the David Jones' Art Gallery.

**David Stephenson** (1955–) studied at the University of Colorado and then the University of New Mexico, completing an MFA in 1982. He moved to Australia in 1982 to take up a teaching position at the University of Tasmania School of Art, heading-up the photography program from 1984–2013. The Tasmanian landscape has had a profound effect on Stephenson; his work exploring the aesthetics of the sublime. In his work *Mount Wedge* /he is concerned with the contested human value systems associated with wilderness and natural environments. His love of travel has taken him to places of natural and man-made beauty such as Antarctica, night skies, sacred architecture, hydroelectric developments, and the modern city at night.

### List of works

Bonita Bub (floor sculptural work)

*Hilux: Industrial Objects for MacBook Users*, 2015

Stainless steel, powder coated steel, plywood, canvas, webbing, cord, dimensions variable.

Consuelo Cavaniglia (framed works on the walls to the left and right of entry)

*Untitled*, 2016

Pigment on archival paper, 29.7 x 21 cm

Deb Mansfield (hanging work in the right corner of the gallery)

*Increasing levels of collective denial until it's all over*, 2016

Concrete parts, Navy marine rope, Bronze electrics, dimensions variable

Deb Mansfield (work in the side window)

*The main persuasion is from one friend to another*, 2016

Bronze cleat, multi-coloured marine rope, bronze electrics, 200mm deep x 1090mm x 200mm

Lena Nyadbi (canvas work on grey wall)

*Untitled*, 2013

Ochre and pigments on canvas, 90 x 90 cm

Courtesy Warmun Art Centre, Gija Contemporary Art, Western Australia

John Moore (framed work on grey wall)

*Trees in a winter morning*, 1934

Pencil and wash on paper. University of Sydney Union Art Collection, acquired 1961

Aideen Doran (screen work in the centre of the gallery and front window)

*Oblomov's Dream*, 2014–15

Digital video, duration: 17.45 minutes

George Duncan (small framed work on back gallery wall)

*Erecting telegraph poles*, 1940

Watercolour on paper. University of Sydney Union Art Collection, acquired 1958

Deb Mansfield (wall work with tapestry in cement fragment frame)

*Niigata/Vladivostok plummet*, 2016

Photo-tapestry, concrete frame, burnt bronze bridle hook, 60mm deep x 670mm x 590mm

Deb Mansfield (cleat on the edge of the wall)

*Vladivostok knot and grey*, 2016

Concrete cleat, navy marine rope, bronze electrics, 80mm deep x 310mm x 90mm

David Stephenson (large photograph in left side of gallery)

*Mount Wedge I, Tasmania*, 2005

P-type photograph. University of Sydney Union Art Collection, purchased 2005

Bonita Bub (drawings pinned on wall to the left of the gallery)

*Plans for display of fungi* and found German love letter, 2016

Pen and ink on paper, dimensions variable.

Love letter text as interpreted by Bon: *Hi Jode, if you will; have me here, have me near, have me on you*

*Or, under you, next to you or with you.....Call me, Kisses, M.*

Maker unknown (fungi models in the vitrine)

Model of fungi – *Morchella Mitra*, date unknown, late 19th century

Description: edible. Plaster model of fungi; label of base in German; 'Morchella rimósipes. DC./Morchella Mitra. Lenz./Käppchenmorchel.

Macleay Collection, transferred from the School of Biological Sciences, the University of Sydney 2013

Maker unknown (fungi models in the vitrine)

Model of fungi – *Elgaricus procerus*, date unknown, late 19th century

Description: edible. Plaster model of fungi; label of base in German; 'Elgaricus procerus Scop./Lepioda procera Fr./Der grosse Schirmling. Parasol-pils. Schulmeisterpils'

Macleay Collection, transferred from the School of Biological Sciences, the University of Sydney 2013

Maker unknown (fungi models in the vitrine)

Model of fungi – *Russula foetens*, date unknown, late 19th century

Description: inedible. Plaster model of fungi; label of base in German; 'Rüssula foetens, Pers./Stink-Täubling.

Macleay Collection, transferred from the School of Biological Sciences, the University of Sydney 2013

Maker unknown (fungi models in the vitrine)

Model of fungi – *Agaricus muscaria*, date unknown, late 19th century

Description: deadly. Plaster model of fungi; label of base in German; 'Agaricus Muscaria - L./Agaricus muscaria. Schaeff/Fliegenpilz'; deadly

Macleay Collection, transferred from the School of Biological Sciences, the University of Sydney 2013

With thanks to the University of Sydney Museums and Collections team, Warmun Art Centre, exhibiting artists and Verge Gallery volunteers.

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