

VERGE AWARDS

EXHIBITION OPENS ON OCTOBER 11 AND CONTINUES TO OCTOBER 22

Shortlisted artworks by :: Anna Shen, Safari Lee, Jack Godfrey-Baxter, Xan Hardman, Jacques Chevrant-Breton, Mariia Zhuchenko, Jiamei Liu, Michael Sun, Janine Bailey, Andrew Simms, Stephen Burstow

Shortlisted musical compositions by :: Anna Shen, Sarah Gaul, Alexis Weaver

Shortlisted literature by :: Jess Zlotnick, Tom St John, Edward Furst, Samantha Jonsher, James Holloway, Michael Sun, Katrina Kemp, Jeremy Blum, Izabella Antoniou, Daniel Gunstveit, Sophie Wakefield, Alcina Giang, Shaun Colnan, Nicola Cayless, William Poulos

List of works (clockwise from left):

1. Andrew Simms, *Pinopticon*. Photographic paper, 2016.

Pinopticon explores the concept of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, and the modern surveillance state within the setting of Callan Park's Kirkbride buildings at Sydney College of the Arts. The cylindrical photos were created with a handmade pinhole camera that captured light from a three hundred and sixty-degree angle to represent both the impossibility of escape from CCTV, mobile phones, opal cards, facial recognition and meta data profiling, and the Australian population internalising a continual watch in turn controlling their own behavior.

2. Safari Lee, *Passing Through*. HD Video, 2016.

"Power passes through individuals. It incites, it induces, it seduces" Foucault

Passing Through references power in place. The power we surrender, we take, is given to us, and taken from us in our private lives, and also by the institutions we live with each day.

Peering through the peep hole reveals a BDSM scene with the sandstone-faced slave. This references the vulnerabilities of Callan Park, both in its former life as a psychiatric institute and our current uncertainties around the future use of the buildings. Its crumbling sandstone has relegated it undesired by the university and state government who deem it too expensive to preserve.

3. Michael Sun, *Spectres*. Photographs. 2016.

Travelling in foreign lands is often romanticised as a catalyst for self-exploration. Societal expectations demand that one is constantly "on the go", abound with endless energy, all the while forgetting that this self-exploration, more often than not, blooms out of periods of quiet respite founded in the in-betweens, the liminal moments of travel. 'Spectres' is a triptych of film photographs taken while visiting Malaysia that examines the beauty of transience. This concept is twofold: the images depict not only the unique reflexivity afforded by a hotel setting where one is suspended between the self and the foreign environment, but also the experience of companionship while overseas and the shared knowledge that this companionship has a limited lifespan. Contemplating on the ephemerality of travel incites a delicate nostalgia that shrouds our memories.

4. Music listening station including compositions by Anna Shen, Sarah Gaul and Alexis Weaver.

5. Jacques Chevrant-Breton, Tomorrow. Photographic print, 2016.

Consumed by the digital realm, we continue to ignore the changing landscape of our environment, and the effect we are having on it. Our future is what we make it to be.

6. Jack Godfrey-Baxter, Subject to Change. HD Video loop, 2015.

Subject to Change manipulates time to animate traditional photographic scenes. Looking at the boundaries between the real and constructed, the uncanny nature of the work ruptures the viewing as the shifting subjects become characters in a performance of the photograph.

7. Safari Lee, LOSER. Photographic print, 2016.

The photographic work Loser references the negative self-talk often engaged by those of us living with mental illness. Matches were burnt and assembled to form the letters of the word. The charcoal remnants reflect the history of the act of striking the match, the flame that existed and is now extinguished. Just like the intensity of the words, the initial power can be lessened over time. This piece was shot on the well-worn upper platform of the SCA library stairwell. This is part of the location of the former The Callan Park Hospital for the Insane (1878 – 1914).

8. Stephen Burstow, In and Out. HD Video, 2:57, 2016.

Breathing is usually understood as an anonymous, automatic process. Instead, this work proposes the breath as a visceral, individual communication that precedes speech and gesture.

9. Anna Shen, Kuranda. Water mixable oil paint on canvas, 2015.

Kuranda is a reflection of self. It depicts a moment in time eight years ago – a family summer holiday to Queensland. A souvenir frozen in time, I wonder at how much I've grown since when I was 11. The memory remains fresh, yet I am not the same me I once was. I paint the vivid colours embedded in my mind as if what happened was not long ago. Holidays are very much detached from reality, a rare time where we are allowed to forget our day to day worries and relax – just like this painting and the process of its creation.

10. Reading station for shortlisted literature including works by:

Jess Zlotnick, Tom St John, Edward Furst, Samantha Jonsher, James Holloway, Michael Sun, Katrina Kemp, Jeremy Blum, Izabella Antoniou, Daniel Gunstveit, Sophie Wakefield, Alcina Giang, Shaun Colnan, Nicola Cayless, William Poulos

11. Janine Bailey, Under The Line. Drawing on cotton rag paper, 2016.

Under the Line is a drawing made from walking with technology in a gendered landscape. The work forms part of an autobiographical installation that creates an ongoing conversation about the intersection of art and life. Inspired by the Flanuer and the pursuit to understand the contemporary landscape, the work raises questions about contemporary women artists and the phallogocentric frame that continues to shape constructions of gender in the urban and digital landscape.

12. Music listening station including compositions by Anna Shen, Sarah Gaul and Alexis Weaver.

13. Jack Godfrey-Baxter, Sleeping Beauty. Photograph print, 2016.

Sleeping Beauty is an exploration of the inherent voyeurism of photography and its somewhat cyclical relationship with idealism. Particularly in this case idealised standards of feminine beauty. The image uses the gaze, lighting, position and image manipulation to reference tropes of contemporary image culture and film together and conjure a sense of these themes.

14. Jiamei Liu, Memory. Watercolour on paper, 2016.

The human vision is clear, involving objects of distinct purpose and ideas. However, memories of these visions are only known by introspective observation, as they are inevitably influenced by subjective will, imagination and perception. Hence, memories are prone to change; fading and warping into impressions, feelings and thoughts with the passage of time. They often become “lighter” and “blurry” with age, inevitably becoming intertwined and confused with each other. Through methods of seepage, staining, and imprinting, I have attempted to capture the fluidity of memory, which merge and join with each other in the becoming of and incomplete impressions, suggestive of certain sceneries, landmarks, gateways and visions of the everyday.

15. XanHardman, Self Portrait. Photographic print, 2016.

When an artist captures the perfect portrait of their subject, how much of that subject's essence is really in the image and how much the artist's? Does the photograph that is carefully selected, retouched, printed and hung really expose the truth of the subject, or rather, is it just what the artists believes that truth should look like? How much of the subject can be captured under direction, harsh lights, and in an unfamiliar environment? Dressed in the artist's clothing, makeup, jewelry, glasses, under her direction, and caught in her search for their essence, how much of these subjects do we really see? To what extent are these images simply self portraits of the artist?

16. Mariia Zhuchenko, Unknown Composition. Acrylics, clay, gesso on canvas, 2016.

Unknown Composition is an abstract painting that explores issues around ecology and waste pollution in the Anthropocene. Through the use of viscous paint and organic material such as clay, the artist creates a sense of decomposition, a key element of the life cycle. Man-made pollution is a grand issue that affects the biodiversity of nature and will influence how we live in the near future. The work is engaging the audience in a conversation about decentering of man and about re-establishing the connection between ecology and humans. Unknown Composition communicates these themes in a new medium of work. The work is provoking and elegant. It is an abstract painting with 3-dimensional features. The key element of the work is paint because it absorbs the clay sculptures and transgresses the limits of a flat canvas. The work questions the boundaries between painting and sculpture via bringing together two historically traditional mediums, such as acrylic paint and clay, and using them to discuss contemporary issues in the Anthropocene.

Huge congrats to all students who were shortlisted for the Verge Awards!

Special thanks to judges of USYD Alumni and industry professionals including Dr Peter Kirkpatrick, Dr Beth Yahp, Associate Professor Geotz Richter, Ms Katrina Liberiou, Ms Kate Beckingham, Dr Daniel Rojas and Mr Paul Stanhope.