

Tricking the eye— contemporary trompe l'oeil

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Installation view: John R Neeson, Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore
Photographer: Andrew Curtis

Lisa Sullivan

'... a painter, whose task is to trick the eye, must understand both the essence of the objects as well as the means by which the eye can be deceived.'¹

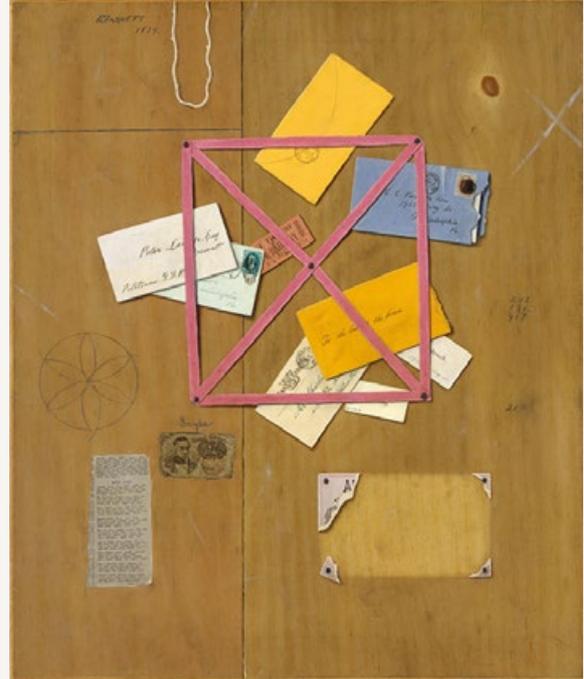
—Dutch artist, Samuel van Hoogstraten, 1678

'To deceive the eye also means to open it.'²

The French phrase *trompe l'oeil*, which translates as 'deceive the eye', has long been associated with painting that intentionally sought to trick the viewer—if only momentarily—into mistaking a two-dimensional representation for the real object.

French artist Louis-Léopold Boilly is attributed with first using the phrase (in an art context) when he titled a work for exhibition in 1800, however, the intent of artists to trick the eye dates back centuries before Boilly's application. In the first century AD, Roman author Pliny the Elder recounted the story of a competition between two ancient Greek artists, Zeuxis and Parrhasios: Zeuxis painted grapes so realistically that a bird attempted to peck at them, while Parrhasios was asked by Zeuxis to draw back the curtain covering his painting, a curtain that was in fact a painted illusion. Parrhasios was deemed the competition's winner, having tricked the eye of a trained artist, rather than merely tricking Nature.

The popularity of this story in the 16th and 17th centuries is said to have inspired Dutch and Flemish artists to achieve great levels of realism in their still-life easel paintings, while their Baroque-era counterparts in other European countries painted illusionistic frescoes that gave the impression of church ceilings opening to the sky. Before that, Renaissance artists of the 15th century created the illusion of three-dimensionality through the development and application of one-point perspective, foreshortening and *chiaroscuro*.



William Harnett
The artist's letter rack 1879
oil on canvas
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

American painters of the mid-to-late 19th century interpreted the traditions of 17th century European *trompe l'oeil*, popularising the genre at a time that coincided with the rise of the newly-invented medium of photography: a process that achieved a level of realism that ultimately led to *trompe l'oeil* painting's decline. Surrealist artists of the 20th century—such as René Magritte and Salvador Dali—and Pop artist Andy Warhol adopted elements of the tradition, applying its principles to a variety of mediums and artistic concerns, as did photo-realist painters and hyper-real sculptors working at the close of the century.

Tricking the eye—contemporary trompe l'oeil brings together the work of twelve artists who draw on the traditions of *trompe l'oeil* painting and engage with its intellectual concerns. While the majority of exhibited works are firmly based in the medium of painting, with artists working variously on walls, stretched canvas and three-dimensional forms, the

concept of tricking the eye is extended to various mediums including sculpture, photography and video. Created and viewed at a time in which our access to images and our levels of visual literacy are vastly different than that of centuries ago when trompe l'oeil was at the height of its popularity, these contemporary works nonetheless endeavour to trick our eye, and invite us to engage with issues of perception, representation and reality.

In their large-scale wall painting *FauxMoCo*, 2016 [Cat. no. 1], collaborating artists Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore have taken inspiration from the works of 19th century American trompe l'oeil painter William Harnett and 20th century Pop artist Andy Warhol to interpret recent developments in the manufacturing history of Geelong.

In response to the closure of the city's Ford factory in October 2016, Ahern and Moore have painted the timber structure beneath a wall's outer plasterboard—including struts, noggins and plaster joins—alluding to the dismantling of a work space, and at a socially complex level, the structural 'foundation' that a company such as Ford provided its workers and Geelong's wider community since it commenced local manufacturing in 1925. Additional painted elements positioned in front of the trompe l'oeil mural include a promotional poster for a 1970s Ford Falcon wrapped in plastic and awaiting shipment to storage, and a series of three-dimensional boxes for Ford Motor Company (FoMoCo) spare parts.

Harnett was one of the most popular and influential trompe l'oeil painters of his era: he drew on the traditions of Dutch still-life and letter rack paintings, skilfully creating works in which everyday items such as handwritten envelopes, musical instruments, horseshoes, pipes and dollar bills were realistically depicted.³ He was particularly adept at simulating a variety of finishes including paper, wood-grain, cloth, fur and metal.

While Ahern and Moore draw on these aspects of Harnett's practice—depicting modest items such as packaging boxes, a poster, building materials and a beer coaster, as well as simulating wood-grain, plaster, cardboard, clear plastic wrap and tape—it is also the American artist's following that resonates strongly with their focus on local manufacturing. Harnett was extremely popular amongst the working class—one of his best-known works *After the hunt*, 1885, hung at a New York bar where the male clientele extensively debated which of the life-size objects in the composition were real—and his paintings were widely collected by self-made businessmen, many from retail backgrounds, for whom the paintings 'seemed proof of what could be wrought by hard work ...'⁴

Warhol's packaging boxes from the 1960s—for products such as Brillo soap pads, Heinz tomato ketchup, and Del Monte peach halves—are a clear antecedent for Ahern and Moore's Ford Motor Company boxes. That these are labelled 'spare parts' is intended as a respectful acknowledgment of the impact of the factory's closure on the workers, a scenario that resonates for both of the artists having grown up in manufacturing towns in New South Wales where industry closures greatly affected their respective communities.

Continuing her long-standing interest in trompe l'oeil and the 'anatomy' of painting—specifically, the relationship between the two-dimensional canvas and the wall on which it hangs—Jan Murray paints air vent grilles, faithfully modelled on examples from various buildings: vents located in a Berlin building with a history of Russian and Stasi occupation; the public spaces of that city's grand Pergamon Museum; an Ikea store; and commercial businesses in Melbourne [Cat. nos 19–27].

Seemingly unworthy as an artistic subject, these often non-descript, overlooked, functional architectural elements enable the circulation of air through a building.

Of Murray's nine panels, six form pairs: an allusion to the possibility that grilles may take on human physical traits, acting as sets of eyes and ears privy to a building's comings and goings, or lungs supporting the inward and outward movement of air.

In the context of trompe l'oeil traditions, the subject of vents makes an important link with the historical siting of paintings within architectural settings. Realised at 1:1 scale, unframed, installed in unexpected locations throughout the Gallery, hung at unconventional heights without accompanying texts identifying them as exhibits, Murray's paintings effectively become part of the architecture. As painted deceptions, their success lies in both the artist's skill at simulacrum and their placement corresponding with normal expectations of where an air vent might be positioned. Far more than mere quotation, they encourage us to re-think our engagement with the architecture of spaces, to notice essential functional elements and to question what's real and what's a 'trick of the eye'.

John R Neeson worked in-situ to engage with the Gallery's architecture as part of his ongoing series of site-specific projects: *Foyer mirror*, 2016 [Cat. no. 28], and *Johnstone Park mirror*, 2016 [Cat. no. 29], are painted reflected vistas of the Gallery's internal and external architecture—a terrazzo-style column in the foyer, and the volute adorning the top of an Ionic column at what was the original entry to the Gallery in 1915—and trees in the adjacent park setting.

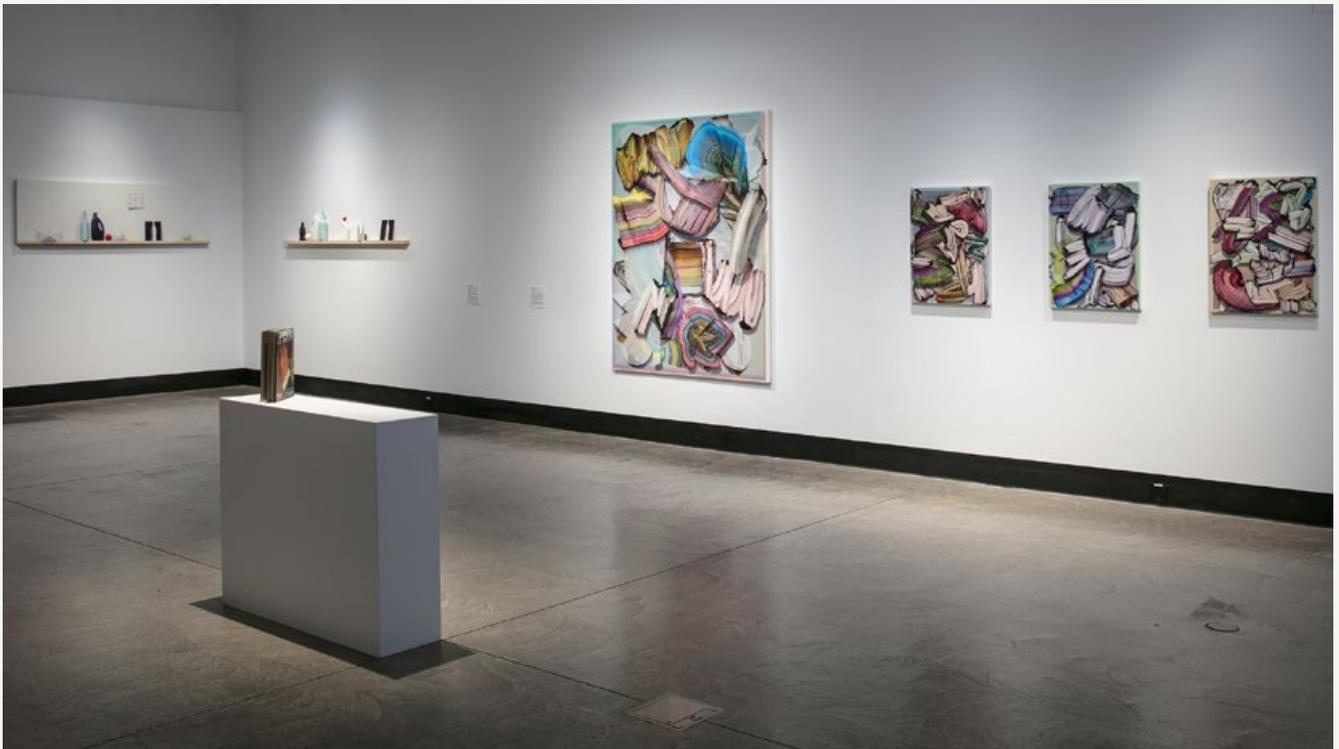
Presented in the Gallery's foyer and on the rear internal landing, Neeson's commissioned works comprise an installation of easels on which mirrors and the correspondingly-sized painted vistas are positioned. The works challenge our perceptions: the mirrors reflect a scene in which light and weather conditions are constantly changing. In contrast the painted vista remains static. The mirrors also reflect the viewer in the act of looking.

Neeson's works echo the paintings of 20th century Belgian artist René Magritte in which the distinction between reality and illusion is often blurred, such as *La condition humaine*, 1933: a representation of a painted canvas of the view through a window sits on an easel in front of the window itself (effectively a painting within a painting).

An additional work by Neeson, *Shelf life*, 2016 [Cat. no. 30], reflects the artist's enduring interest in the tradition of still-life painting and its meticulous construction of space through light and shadow. Largely created in-situ, Neeson has assembled a variety of everyday objects on a wooden shelf. On an adjacent wall, a trompe l'oeil painting on a stretched canvas appears to mirror the three-dimensional arrangement, incorporating shadows cast by the shelf and the objects it houses. Almost a true representation, Neeson's puzzle-like installation confounds the eye with its ambiguities.



Installation view: John R Neeson
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Installation view: John R Neeson, Chris Bond, Gregory Hodge
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Andrea Pozzo
The trompe l'oeil ceiling of Saint Ignazio 1674
 fresco on stucco
 Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome
 Photographer: Steven Zucker

Similarly interested in space, light and shadow, Gregory Hodge references the traditions of Baroque trompe l'oeil paintings. His study of the illusionistic devices used in centuries' old still-life paintings as well as elaborate fresco ceilings—such as those by 17th century artists Giovanni Battista Gaulli and Andrea Pozzo—inform his contemporary abstract compositions [Cat. nos 14–17].

Hodge collages a variety of images and materials including abstract gestural marks, drafting film and coloured paper to create complex compositions that he renders in paint, skilfully manipulating the translucent and opaque qualities of the medium. Cast shadows create the illusion of three-dimensionality with multiple layers of paint appearing to build on—and project from—the two-dimensional surface.

A shift in scale also occurs in the transition from collage to painted canvas, resulting in exaggerated painterly marks that take on the appearance of magnified brushstrokes. Thus, the act of painting effectively becomes

the subject of the work. In amplifying the materiality of paint and the painterly mark, Hodge interprets trompe l'oeil in an utterly contemporary way, challenging one of its historical conventions: to successfully deceive, painting had to be 'invisible' as a technique.

Trompe l'oeils must expunge the individual features of artistic style such as brushstrokes and other marks left by paint application; in order to be convincing, painting must truly transform itself by mimicry into the material it represents.⁵

Trompe l'oeil painting and the process of collage are central to Stephen Bowers' practice. A diverse array of pictorial references, or 'fragments of history', inform and populate the painted surfaces of his wheel-thrown ceramic bowls [Cat. nos 3–8, 10]. In this series of works, he continues his long-standing interest in 'shards'—segments of broken pottery representing various cultures, and the history of ceramic manufactory and trade—as well as the decorative schemes of historical fabric designs.



Installation view: Stephen Bowers, Jan Murray
Photographer: Andrew Curtis

The titles of the works reveal that Bowers' source material is geographically and historically broad, including Ming Dynasty porcelain (1368–1644), the Chinoiserie pattern of Blue Willow ware (highly popular in England in the late-18th century), Napoleonic-era printed cotton fabric known as toile, and the textiles of 19th century English designer William Morris. These fragments of history come together on Bowers' forms as trompe l'oeil illusions of ceramic shards and fabric swatches floating over marbled surfaces.

Bowers extends the visual deception in *Spill*, 2016 [Cat. no. 9]. Painted directly onto the surface of the display plinth where a three-dimensional bowl may have once been positioned, the work takes the form of a shadow, replicating the tonal range cast by the real bowls, as well as scattered glass beads. According to the artist, *Spill* is either the footprint of a work that doesn't exist, the shadow of an invisible bowl, or perhaps, the shadow of a bowl that has just been removed (with glass beads spilling from the bowl's surface in the process).

Chris Bond's interest lies in painting 'things he'd like to exist, but don't'.⁶ *Vogue Hommes*, September 1986, mirror, 2014 [Cat. no. 2], is a mirror-image version of a 1986 French fashion magazine, with Bond recasting its imagery—a portrait of Sylvester Stallone and a male fashion model, text on the spine, front and back covers—in reverse.⁷

The illusion Bond creates is two-fold: the reversal deceives the viewer (most obviously the texts), as does the artist's mimetic ability whereby oil paint on linen appears to be a mass-produced printed publication.

In achieving this illusion, Bond draws on two elements of trompe l'oeil painting that were considered to be important in successfully 'deceiving the eye': realism in scale and the absence of the artist's hand. The effectiveness of trompe l'oeil is diminished when the depicted object is significantly reduced or

enlarged in scale, and here Bond accurately replicates the dimensions of the original magazine. Similarly, fine, smooth brushstrokes that left no visible trace of the painting process also aided the viewer's perception that an object painted on a two-dimensional plane was in fact real.⁸

Beyond painting—and in the context of this exhibition—the concept of 'deceiving the eye' is one that many artists have explored in diverse mediums such as sculpture, installation, photography and moving images.

Ricky Swallow casts a faux magnifying glass to suggest a shift in the scale of everyday objects in his playful patinated bronze sculptures. In *Magnifying glass with pipe*, 2011 [Cat. no. 31], and *Magnifying glass with rope no. 5*, 2014 [Cat. no. 32], a lens appears to enlarge a cardboard tube and a looped length of rope respectively. Close inspection reveals the illusion of magnification is, in fact, created by the artist's manipulation of scale not the presence of a glass lens.

In addition to their humour, Swallow's visual conundrums are steeped in art history, particularly in the work of 20th century artists who extended the concerns of earlier trompe l'oeil painters.

Expanding on notions of the real and the non-real, and of representation and visual perception, René Magritte 'tricked the eye' in works such as *The treachery of images*, 1928–29, in which the image of a smoking pipe is positioned above the text *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe). Magritte's work 'reminds us that word and image—and all the linguistic and aesthetic assumptions upon which they rest—cannot be trusted.'⁹

Roy Lichtenstein employed a shift in scale in his 1963 painting *Magnifying glass* in which Ben-Day dots, associated with commercial printing, are enlarged beneath a magnifying lens. Lichtenstein's reference to a mechanised printing method—as well as his flat painting



Samuel van Hoogstraten
A peepshow with views of the interior of a Dutch house (detail) 1655–60
 oil and egg tempera on wood
 National Gallery, London

technique—also links to one of the key characteristics of successful trompe l’oeil painting: the removal of any sign of the artist’s hand as a means of deceiving viewers.¹⁰

For Swallow, realistic scale is important: ‘Inherent in sculpture is an expectation of monumentality. Working smaller provides a concentration of looking.’¹¹ The act of looking, and the invitation to look, is reinforced by Swallow’s choice of an object that aids close inspection in the form of the magnifying glass.

Georgina Cue’s sculptural installation *The Necker cube*, 2010 [Cat. no. 12], references a number of historical optical techniques: 17th century Dutch painted perspective boxes, or ‘peepshows’ (rectangular boxes in which the interior walls were painted to suggest three-dimensional rooms); an optical illusion in the form of an ambiguous line drawing devised by Louis Albert Necker in 1832 (known as the Necker cube); and anamorphosis, whereby an image is intentionally distorted and only assumes its correct proportions when viewed from a certain position (most notably employed in Hans Holbein the Younger’s 1533 painting *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* (*The Ambassadors*)).¹²

Drawing on these precedents and using early 20th century New York domestic crime scene photographs as source material, Cue’s embroidered installation suggests a three-dimensional interior, albeit a darker, more sinister scene than those of 17th century Dutch domestic life depicted in perspective boxes such as Samuel van Hoogstraten’s *A peepshow with views of the Interior of a Dutch house*, c. 1655–60. On the far wall of Cue’s film-like set, a framed ‘painting’ of a skull makes reference to Holbein’s anamorphic imagery while also acting as a symbolic reminder of the life lost at the documented crime scene, in the long-standing tradition of memento mori.

Inspired by Alfred Hitchcock’s 1954 cinematic thriller *Rear Window*, Cue’s *Light works*, 2012 [Cat. no. 13], tricks the eye into perceiving a light source emanates from a domestic window affixed to the gallery wall, illuminating a rug in the foreground. An additional level of optical trickery is achieved through materials and technique: working in embroidery, which she likens to painting, Cue simulates the detailed patterning of a carpet and panes of glass in a window with threads and tapestry canvas.

She achieves subtle tonal gradations suggesting variations in light across the simulated carpet surface while the panes of the window—one of the longest-standing and most significant tropes of illusionistic painting—are subtly embroidered in an ambiguous pattern suggestive of dappled light.

Just as trompe l’oeil artists have painted representations of real objects on a two-dimensional plane in such a way that the painted depictions appear to be real or three-dimensional, so too, Anne Zahalka’s photographs of the dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History in New York shift between the real and the non-real [Cat. nos 33–38].

Just as trompe l'oeil artists have painted representations of real objects on a two-dimensional plane in such a way that the painted depictions appear to be real or three-dimensional, so too, Anne Zahalka's photographs of the dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History in New York shift between the real and the non-real [Cat. nos 33–38].

Staged museum dioramas also blur the line between authenticity and artifice. Combining extraordinarily realistic backdrops painted in a trompe l'oeil manner on curved walls and ceilings, with taxidermied animals and plant specimens, the dioramas provide the basis for Zahalka's critique of museum display practices at a time when the natural environments they represent and 'preserve' are being compromised in the real world through tourism, ecological destruction and climate change.

Zahalka's photographs of these 'windows on the world' represent one of trompe l'oeil's key ambitions: to create a fascinating shift in perceptions of two and three-dimensional space. Here we see two-dimensional painted backdrops simulating the three-dimensional world, displayed alongside three-dimensional specimens, photographed and printed in a two-dimensional format.

Although photography is not a medium often linked with trompe l'oeil (other than in respect of photography's invention hastening the decline in popularity of trompe l'oeil painting, due to the realism it could achieve), it has been suggested that 'the closest approximation to a perfect trompe l'oeil should be a high quality photographic print, because the rules that govern translation of three-dimensional images are the same for the camera and the eye.'¹³

Photography, trompe l'oeil and dioramas are further linked, with the inventor of the daguerreotype—one of the earliest photographic processes dating to 1839—

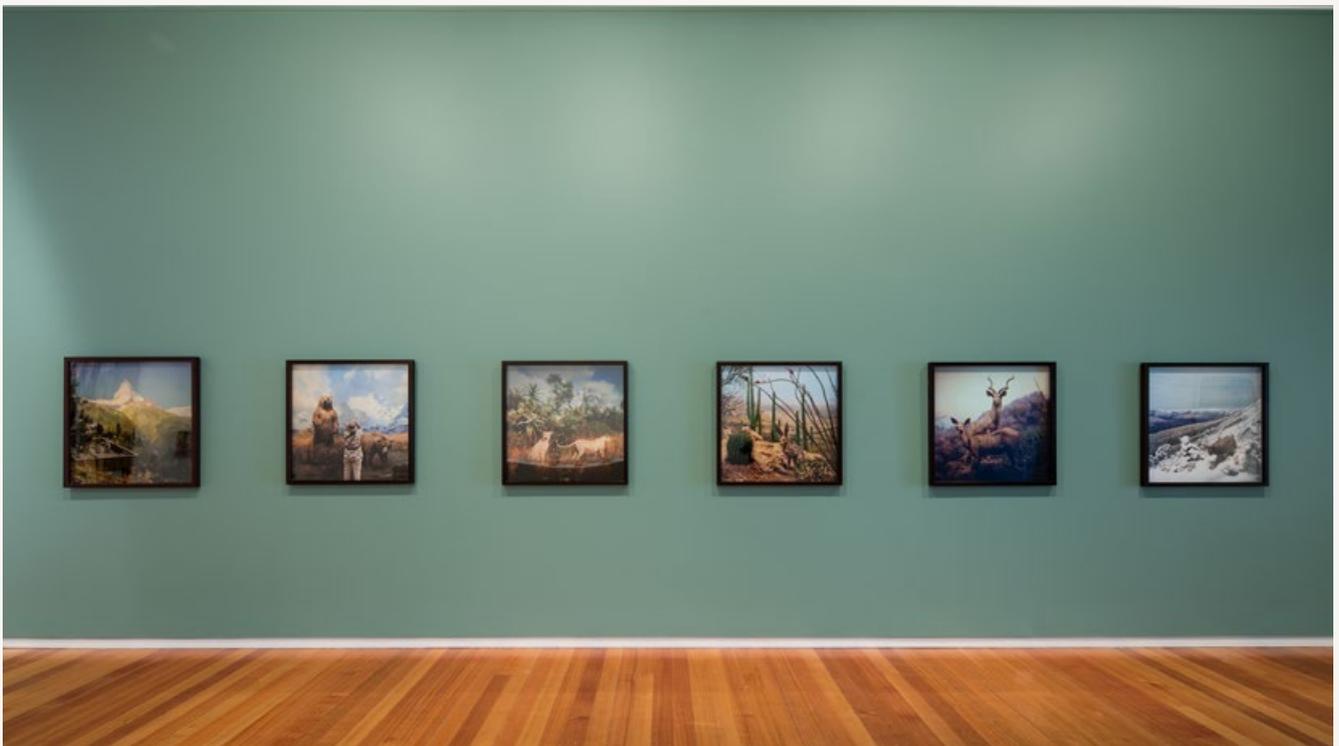
Louis Daguerre, also being credited as the inventor of the painted diorama in 1822: his was a large-scale, double-sided semi-transparent canvas, painted with trompe l'oeil scenes, that was animated by light to create the illusion of moving images.¹⁴

Daniel Crooks' large-scale projection, *An embroidery of voids*, 2013 [Cat. no. 11], brings some of the concerns of historical trompe l'oeil painting into a 21st century format. Crooks' seamlessly collaged imagery leads us through a series of seemingly connected Melbourne laneways, confounding our sense of proximity and perceptions of space.

As the work's title suggests, further to the notion of a sequence of 'embroidered' images, the laneways and streetscapes depicted reveal the 'fabric' of the urban environment: the wood, concrete, tin, bluestone, grass, vines, trees, signage, rubbish bins, graffiti and people from which it is made. Each of the diverse laneways or passages represents an in-between space—between city buildings, urban fences, and industrial premises—or a void, suggesting emptiness, however in Crooks' work they are spaces rich with texture and character.

Crooks employs one-point perspective to illusionistic effect: a central vanishing point remains constant throughout much of the work, with each of the collaged environments appearing to come towards the viewer (just as the imagery of trompe l'oeil painting appeared to project out from the two-dimensional plane), effectively creating the sense that we travel into the scene despite remaining in our fixed viewing position. Our eye is tricked as we read this sequence as one long, slowly unfolding continuum.

The use of a centrally-positioned square or rectangular 'portal'—shifting between the two geometric formats as laneways open out or narrow—links to the visual tropes of picture frames, doors and windows that were used in many historical trompe l'oeil paintings.



Installation view: Anne Zahalka
Photographer: Andrew Curtis

Fifteenth-century author, artist, architect and philosopher Leon Battista Alberti is attributed with formulating the idea that paintings are windows 'through which we observe the scene represented beyond the frame', that can present 'a true picture of the world through a rigorous use of perspective.'¹⁵ Centuries later, Alberti's theory applies to the contemporary format of a projected image on a two-dimensional plane.

Jess Johnson employs a circular 'portal' or 'door' through which the narrative of her video work *Mnemonic pulse*, 2014 [Cat. no. 18], plays out. Made in collaboration with animator Simon Ward and sound designer Andrew Clarke, Johnson's intricate two-dimensional drawings of a parallel universe are activated and made to appear three-dimensional.



Charles Willson Peale
Staircase group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale I) 1795
oil on canvas
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Viewed from a first-person perspective, a sense of moving through Johnson's fictional world is achieved: a world of mosaic floors, geometrically-patterned pyramids, columns, arches and temple-like buildings, populated by balancing humanoids and animals, alien-like masks, and eye-shaped saucers that float across the sky in great numbers.

The work's title is sourced from Frank Herbert's 1965 science fiction novel *Dune* in which a 'mnemonic pulse' was the means by which images were imprinted onto the mind of the main character. The concept of embedding visuals, thoughts or memories is reinforced by Clarke's penetrating soundtrack.

Mnemonic pulse was a precursor to Johnson and Ward's collaborative work *Ixian gate*, 2015, using Virtual Reality technology: arguably a format that brings the principles of trompe l'oeil painting very much into the 21st century, and one that visual artists are increasingly engaging with.

Whether working with contemporary technology or the long-standing traditions of painting and sculpture, referencing art historical precedents or addressing issues specific to their time, each of the artists in *Tricking the eye—contemporary trompe l'oeil* draws on elements of this established genre. Through their diverse works, each invites a level of engagement from the viewer as did the paintings of historical artists working in what has been described as 'among the most extroverted of all artistic genres to the extent that without the reaction of a viewer [trompe l'oeils] lose their raison d'être.'¹⁶ The works invite us to look, engage and question what is real and what's a trick of the eye.

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1. Eckhard Hollmann & Jürgen Tesch, *A Trick of the Eye. Trompe l’Oeil Masterpieces*, Prestel, Munich, 2004, p. 38.

2. Hollmann & Tesch, p. 7.

3. ‘Letter rack’ paintings were a popular style of trompe l’oeil (from the Renaissance to the 19th century) in which a flat board was depicted with ribbons or leather straps holding an assortment of generally flat items such as letters, printed images, stamps or dollar bills.

4. Paul Staiti, ‘Con artists: Harnett, Haberle, and their American accomplices’, in Sybille Ebert-Schifferer et al., *Deceptions and Illusions: Five Centuries of Trompe l’Oeil Painting*, ex. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, 2002, p. 97.

5. Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, ‘Trompe l’oeil: the underestimated trick’, in Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 28.

6. Chris Bond, artist interview, 23 November 2016.

7. Bond’s work was made in response to Christian Capurro’s *Another misspent portrait of Etienne de Silhouette* (1999–2014), a durational project in which Capurro invited numerous individuals to erase a page of a 1986 *Vogue Hommes* fashion magazine, record the time dedicated to the task, and assign a monetary value to their action based on their hourly rate of pay. With the exception of the cover which became worn over the course of the project, the internal pages were erased and a total value, far exceeding the original cover price, was assigned.

8. It should be noted that at certain times in the history of trompe l’oeil painting, the importance of technical ability was levelled as a criticism of the genre, and it was considered a ‘mere handicraft’. Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 18.

9. Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 336.

10. Lichtenstein’s interest in trompe l’oeil is also evident in *Stretcher frame with cross bars III*, 1968, a painting of the back of a stretched canvas. This was a popular motif used by artists such as Cornelis Gijsbrechts in the seventeenth century. Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 348.

11. Leah Ollman, ‘In the studio’, *Art in America*, May 2014, <http://www.rickyswallow.com/texts/>

12. For the distinction between anamorphosis and trompe l’oeil see ‘Anamorphic art: a special instance of perspective’, 23 April 2010, <https://anamorphicart.wordpress.com/>, viewed 15 December 2016.

13. Wolf Singer, ‘The misperception of reality’, in Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 46.

14. ‘The Louis Daguerre Diorama is reborn in Bry-sur-Marne’, 26 May 2010, <http://www.thearttribune.com/The-Louis-Daguerre-Diorama-is>, viewed 8 November 2016; ‘Resurrecting an illusion: last surviving Daguerre diorama restored’, 14 November 2013, <http://hyperallergic.com/93569/resurrecting-an-illusion-last-surviving-daguerre-diorama-restored/>, viewed 8 November 2016.

15. Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 21.

16. Ebert-Schifferer et al., p. 24.

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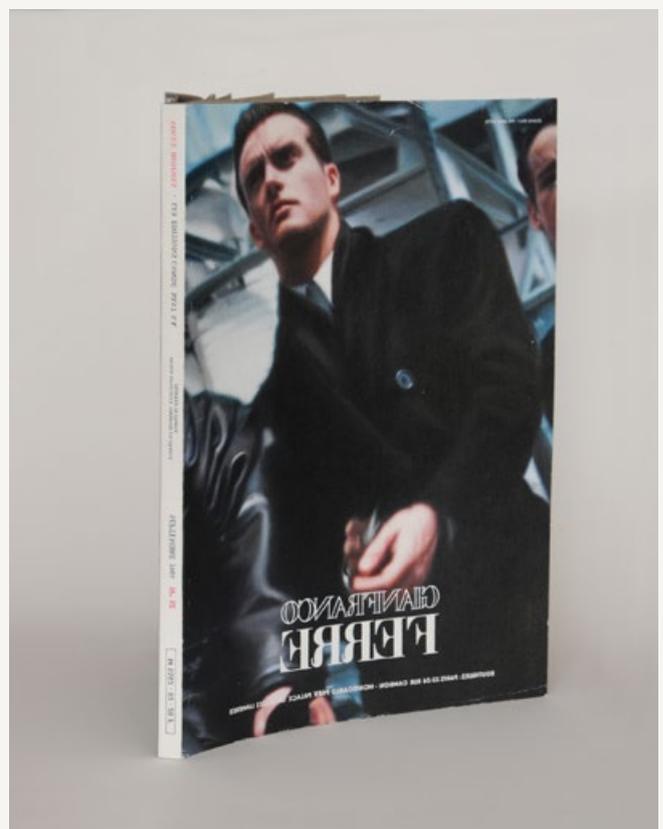
Selected images



Cat. no. 1
Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore
FauxMoCo (detail, installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 2
 Chris Bond
Vogue Hommes, September 1986, mirror (detail, front and spine) 2014
 Photographer: Joanne Moloney



Cat. no. 2
 Chris Bond
Vogue Hommes, September 1986, mirror (detail, rear and spine) 2014
 Photographer: Joanne Moloney



Installation view: Stephen Bowers

Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 8
Stephen Bowers
Morris fragment 2 2016
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 11
Daniel Crooks
An embroidery of voids (still) 2013



Cat. no. 11
Daniel Crooks
An embroidery of voids (still) 2013



Cat. no. 12
Georgina Cue
The Necker cube (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2010
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 13
Georgina Cue
Light works (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2012
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 14
Gregory Hodge
Mood swings 2016
Photographer: David Corbett



Cat. no. 16
Gregory Hodge
Ritual dance 2016
Photographer: David Corbett



Cat. no. 17
Gregory Hodge
Transition 2016
Photographer: Nicholas Shearer



Cat. no. 18
Jess Johnson
Mnemonic pulse (still) 2014



Cat. no. 18
Jess Johnson
Mnemonic pulse (stills) 2014



Cat. nos 23–24

Jan Murray

IKEA – Litchenberg #1, IKEA – Litchenberg #2 (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016

Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. nos 19–20

Jan Murray

Adroit – Richmond #1, Adroit – Richmond #2 (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016

Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 28
John R Neeson
Foyer mirror (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 29

John R Neeson

Johnstone Park mirror (detail, installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016

[with Studio Summers, *Figure of Ruth, seated on a rock* 1890]

Photographer: John R Neeson



Cat. no. 30
John R Neeson
Shelf life (installation view, Geelong Gallery) 2016
Photographer: Andrew Curtis



Cat. no. 31
Ricky Swallow
Magnifying glass with pipe 2011
Photographer: Fredrik Nilsen



Cat. no. 32
Ricky Swallow
Magnifying glass with rope no. 5 2014
Photographer: Fredrik Nilsen



Cat. no. 37
Anne Zahalka
Lost Lynx 2006
© Anne Zahalka
Licensed by Viscopy, 2017

List of works

dimensions: height x width x depth in cm (unless otherwise stated)

Colleen AHERN and Tully MOORE

born Leeton, NSW, 1971; lives and works in Melbourne

born Orange, NSW, 1981; lives and works in Melbourne

Cat. no. 1

FauxMoCo 2016

oil and synthetic polymer paint on wall and wood

475.0 x 791.0 (wall painting); 241.6 x 122.0 (panel); 14.5 x 20.0 x 6.0, 18.0 x 24.0 x 8.0, 40.0 x 67.7 x 19.7 (boxes)

Courtesy of the artists

Colleen Ahern is represented by Neon Parc, Melbourne

Chris BOND

born Melbourne 1975; lives and works in Melbourne

Cat. no. 2

Vogue Hommes, September 1986, mirror 2014

oil on linen

30.0 x 22.0 x 1.0

Courtesy of the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne

Stephen BOWERS

born Katoomba, NSW, 1952; lives and works in Adelaide

Cat. no. 3

Border incursion (Ming) 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

21.5 x 4.5 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 4

Border insecurities (Blue Willow) 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

19.0 x 5.2 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 5

Broken border (Ming) 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

18.5 x 6.5 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 6

French toile and Ming fragment 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

19.0 x 6.3 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 7

Morris fragment 1 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

19.0 x 5.0 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 8

Morris fragment 2 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

20.0 x 4.0 (diameter x height)

Cat. no. 9

Spill 2016

watercolour on synthetic polymer paint on plinth

dimensions variable

Cat. no. 10

The illusion of progress (frog-leap) 2016

wheel-thrown earthenware, underglaze colour, clear glaze, enamel

18.0 x 4.0 (diameter x height)

Courtesy of the artist, Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney, Ann Linnemann Gallery, Copenhagen, and Ferrin Contemporary, Massachusetts

Daniel CROOKS

born Hastings, New Zealand, 1973; lives and works in Melbourne

Cat. no. 11

An embroidery of voids 2013

single-channel colour high-definition Blu-ray, stereo sound; 16:9, 19 minutes, 23 seconds

Courtesy of the artist, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, and Starkwhite, Auckland

Georgina CUE

born Melbourne 1987; lives and works in Melbourne

Cat. no. 12

The Necker cube 2010

acrylic yarn, tapestry canvas, pine wood
190.0 x 185.0 x 119.0

Courtesy of the artist

Cat. no. 13

Light works 2012

acrylic yarn on tapestry canvas, hard wood
218.0 x 159.2 (carpet); 134.4 x 74.0 x 9.5
(window)

Courtesy of the artist

Gregory HODGE

born Sydney 1982; lives and works in Wollongong

Cat. no. 14

Mood swings 2016

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
76.0 x 56.0

Cat. no. 15

Out of the body 2016

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
76.0 x 56.0

Cat. no. 16

Ritual dance 2016

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
76.0 x 56.0

Cat. no. 17

Transition 2016

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
198.0 x 152.0

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf,
Sydney

Jess JOHNSON

born Tauranga, New Zealand, 1979; lives and works in New York

Simon WARD (animation)

Andrew CLARKE (soundtrack)

Cat. no. 18

Mnemonic pulse 2014

single-channel high definition digital video with audio; 16:9, 5 minutes, 32 seconds
Courtesy of the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Ivan Anthony, Auckland, and Jack Hanley Gallery, New York

Jan MURRAY

born Ballarat 1957; lives and works in Melbourne

Cat. no. 19

Adroit – Richmond #1 2016

oil on linen
30.0 x 30.0

Cat. no. 20

Adroit – Richmond #2 2016

oil on linen
30.0 x 30.0

Cat. no. 21

Ganzfeld – VCA #1 2016

oil on linen
25.5 x 25.5

Cat. no. 22

Ganzfeld – VCA #2 2016

oil on linen
25.5 x 25.5

Cat. no. 23

IKEA – Litchenberg #1 2016

oil on linen
40.0 x 30.0

Cat. no. 24

IKEA – Litchenberg #2 2016

oil on linen
40.0 x 30.0

Cat. no. 25

Sarah Scout – Melbourne 2016

oil on linen
31.0 x 46.0

Cat. no. 26
Pergamon – Berlin #1 2016
oil on linen
66.0 x 51.0

Cat. no. 27
Pergamon – Berlin #2 2016
oil on linen
132.0 x 76.5
Courtesy of the artist and Charles Nodrum
Gallery, Melbourne

John R NEESON

born Melbourne 1946; lives and works in
Melbourne

Cat. no. 28
Foyer mirror 2016
synthetic polymer paint on board, easels,
mirror
dimensions variable (installation); 25.0 x 20.5
(panel)

Cat. no. 29
Johnstone Park mirror 2016
oil and synthetic polymer paint on board,
easels, mirror
dimensions variable (installation); 25.0 x 20.5
(panels)

Cat. no. 30
Shelf life 2016
oil on canvas, wood, oil on board, various
objects
61.0 x 198.0 (canvas); 3.0 x 198.0 x 7.0
(shelf); dimensions variable (objects)
Courtesy of the artist and blackartprojects,
Melbourne/Milan

Ricky SWALLOW

born San Remo, VIC, 1974; lives and works in
Los Angeles

Cat. no. 31
Magnifying glass with pipe 2011
patinated bronze; edition of 3 + 1 AP
23.0 x 18.0 x 9.0
Kleimeyer Stuart Collection

Cat. no. 32
Magnifying glass with rope no. 5 2014
unique state, patinated bronze and oil paint
37.5 x 10.2 x 11.4
Monash University Collection
Purchased by the Faculty of Science 2015

Ricky Swallow is represented by Darren Knight Gallery,
Sydney, Modern Art, London, David Kordansky Gallery,
Los Angeles, and Maccarone, New York

Anne ZAHALKA

born Sydney 1957; lives and works in Sydney

Cat. no. 33
Big Cats 2006
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0

Cat. no. 34
Brown Bears 2006
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0

Cat. no. 35
Jack Rabbit 2006
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0

Cat. no. 36
Kudu Hunter 2006
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0

Cat. no. 37
Lost Lynx 2006
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0

Cat. no. 38
Alpinists 2007
type C photograph; edition of 10 + 2 A/Ps
80.0 x 80.0
[installation includes an audio component]
Courtesy of the artist and Arc One Gallery,
Melbourne

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Artist biographies

Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore

Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore have worked collaboratively since 2010, and also maintain independent practices

Colleen Ahern

born Leeton, NSW, 1971; lives and works in Melbourne

Colleen Ahern completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne in 1999. Ahern has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions including *Tonight*, TCB, Melbourne, 2016; *Cortez the Killer*, Neon Parc, Melbourne, 2013; *A Way of Calling*, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne, 2011; and *Photocopier*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2010. Colleen Ahern's work can be found in private collections throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Colleen Ahern is represented by Neon Parc, Melbourne

Tully Moore

born Orange, NSW, 1981; lives and works in Melbourne

Tully Moore completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2008. Recent exhibitions include *Deep Water*, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, 2016; *What Noise does a Pig Make*, Gertrude Glasshouse, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, 2015; *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2014–15; *Fools Gold*, MOP Projects, Sydney, 2013; and *Denimism* with Tony Garifalakis, West Space, Melbourne, 2012. From 2011–12 Moore undertook the Australia Council residency in Liverpool, UK, and from 2014–16 he was a Gertrude Contemporary studio artist.

Chris Bond

born Melbourne 1975; lives and works in Melbourne

Chris Bond completed a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (Honours) at RMIT, Melbourne, in 1997. He is currently a Doctor of Philosophy candidate in Fine Arts (Visual Art) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Bond's solo exhibitions include *A Stranger in the Mirror*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, 2016; *Tormentor*, La Trobe University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2016; *Material*, THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne, 2016; *Kraken: Sixty Six Emails, a Face and a Gesture*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2015; *The Language of Fracture*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, 2014; *The Last Days of Painting*, Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane, 2012; *White*, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne, 2008 and *Retrospective 2000–2004*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2004. Bond was included in the *2016 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Magic Object*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; *Ex Libris—the Book in Contemporary Art*, Geelong Gallery, 2014; and in 2013 he was awarded the Bendigo Art Gallery's *Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize*.

Chris Bond is represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne, and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Stephen Bowers

born Katoomba, NSW, 1952; lives and works in Adelaide

Stephen Bowers completed a Diploma of Art, at the National Art School, Sydney, in 1976. During 2014–15 the JamFactory, Adelaide, developed a major survey exhibition *Beyond Bravura*, which toured nationally (including to Geelong Gallery). Bowers has exhibited in group exhibitions throughout Australia and overseas, at institutions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Museum of International Ceramic Art, Denmark; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles. Throughout his career, Bowers

has received a range of awards and has been the recipient of numerous artist residencies and fellowships. He is represented in public and private collections including Geelong Gallery; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Museum of International Ceramic Art, Denmark; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; National Museum of History, Taipei; Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra; and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

Stephen Bowers is represented by Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney, Ann Linnemann Gallery, Copenhagen, and Ferrin Contemporary, Massachusetts

Daniel Crooks

born Hastings, New Zealand, 1973; lives and works in Melbourne

Daniel Crooks completed a Bachelor of Design at the Auckland Institute of Technology, New Zealand, in 1993 and a Postgraduate Diploma of Animation at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1994. Recent solo exhibitions include *Daniel Crooks: Phantom Ride*, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, 2016; *Everywhere Instantly*, Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand, 2008; *Remapping*, Two Rooms Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand, and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, 2012; *Daniel Crooks*, Samstag Museum, Adelaide, 2013; and *A Garden of Parallel Paths*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2013. Major group exhibitions include *Move on Asia*, Tate Modern, London, 2010; *Marking Time*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and *Parallel Collisions: 2012 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia. In 2008 Crooks was the recipient of the inaugural *Basil Sellers Art Prize*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne. Crooks is represented in various public and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Daniel Crooks is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, and Starkwhite, Auckland

Georgina Cue

born Melbourne 1987; lives and works in Melbourne

Georgina Cue completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 2011. Recent solo exhibitions include *Living Room*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2016; *The Centre Doesn't Hold*, Utopian Slumps, Project Space, Melbourne 2014; *Indicium*, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne, 2012; *Light Works*, Craft Victoria, Melbourne, 2012; and *On Exactitude in Science*, Kings ARI, Melbourne, 2011. In 2013 she was awarded a mentorship with the Australia Council for the Arts' JUMP Mentoring program and the NAVA Sainsbury Sculpture Grant. Cue is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and in private collections in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. In 2014–15 she was included in *Melbourne Now*, at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Gregory Hodge

born Sydney 1982; lives and works in Wollongong

Gregory Hodge completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at the Australian National University, Canberra, in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include *Motion and Spatiality: Material Illusions in Abstract Painting*, Australian National University, Canberra, 2016; *Paintings*, Bus Projects, Melbourne, 2016; *A Fabled Gesture*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 2015 and *Collages*, Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney, 2015. Hodge has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions within Australia including *Right Here Right Now*, Penrith Regional Gallery, Penrith, 2015; *Mind the Gap*, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney, 2014; and *Word of Mouth*, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Canberra, 2012. In 2015 Hodge was the recipient of the Australia Council Rome Residency and in 2012 undertook a residency at BASSO in Berlin Germany. In 2013 Hodge

was the winner of the *Hazelhurst Art on Paper Emerging Artist Award*. Hodge is represented in public and private collections both in Australia and overseas.

Gregory Hodge is represented by Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney

Jess Johnson

born Tauranga, New Zealand, 1979; lives and works in New York

Jess Johnson completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Canterbury University, New Zealand, in 2001. In 2016 she relocated permanently to New York after ten years of living and working in Melbourne. Jess Johnson has exhibited throughout Australia and internationally, in solo exhibitions such as *Eclectrc Panoptic*, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 2016; *Wurm Haus*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2015; *Mnemonic Pulse*, Gertrude Contemporary, Studio 12, Melbourne, 2014; *Gamma World*, Museum of Contemporary Art Façade, Vivid Festival, Sydney, 2014 and *Wurm Whorl Narthex*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, New Zealand, 2013. Johnson is represented in public collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Monash University Collection, Melbourne; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand; and the James Wallace Arts Trust, New Zealand.

Jess Johnson is represented by Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Ivan Anthony, Auckland, and Jack Hanley Gallery, New York

Jess Johnson's exhibited work has been created in collaboration with animator **Simon Ward** and sound designer **Andrew Clarke**.

Jan Murray

born Ballarat 1957; lives and works in Melbourne

Jan Murray completed a Master of Art in Fine Art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, in 1995. Since 1982 Jan Murray has exhibited regularly in both solo and group exhibitions in public museums, commercial galleries and artist run initiatives. Her work has been included in national and international surveys of contemporary art in Australia, Germany, France, Italy and the United States of America. In 2003, the City of Glen Eira Gallery initiated a major touring exhibition, *Southern Light: the Art of Jan Murray*, a twenty-year survey of her installation and painting practice. Murray is widely represented in significant Australian public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Parliament House Collection, Canberra; as well as international collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Jan Murray is represented by Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne

John R Neeson

born Melbourne 1946; lives and works in Melbourne

John R Neeson completed a Master of Art at Monash University in 1995, undertook post-graduate studies at The Royal College of Art, London, from 1996–97, and received a Doctor of Philosophy from Monash University in 2002. Neeson has completed over 35 venue-specific installations nationally and internationally, such as *Berlin Project*, *Institut für des alles Mögliche*, Berlin, 2015; *Venue Specific 2013*, blackartprojects at Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne, 2013; *Fugitive Light and Northern Light*, AC Institute, New York, 2009; *Available Light*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, 2008 and

Paris Mirrors, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, 2007. Other solo exhibitions include *The Urban Bodegon*, Institut für des alles Mögliche, Berlin, 2015; *The Urban Bodegon*, AC Institute, New York, 2014; *Still Light*, Rework Gallery, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, 2007; and *Small Stills*, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne, 2005. Neeson is represented in the collections of Artbank; Bundanon Trust; Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery; National Gallery of Australia; National Gallery of Victoria; and The University of Melbourne

John R Neeson is represented by blackartprojects, Melbourne/Milan

Ricky Swallow

born San Remo, VIC, 1974; lives and works in Los Angeles

Ricky Swallow completed a Bachelor of Fine Art Major, Drawing, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in 1996. Swallow first came to prominence when he won the Victorian Government's *Contemporas Art Award* in 1999, at the age of 25. In 2005 he represented Australia at the Venice Biennale with *This Time Another Year*. Recent solo exhibitions include */SKEWS/*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, 2015; *Ricky Swallow*, Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, 2013; *Ricky Swallow*, Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles, 2012; *Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2009–10; *Younger Than Yesterday*, Kunsthalle Vienna, Vienna, 2007; and *Ricky Swallow*, PS1/Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2006. Swallow's work is held in many public and private collections in Australia and internationally, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; and Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, USA.

Ricky Swallow is represented by Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Modern Art, London, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, and Maccarone, New York

Anne Zahalka

born Sydney 1957; lives and works in Sydney

Anne Zahalka completed a Master of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, in 1994. From 2007–08 a major retrospective *Hall of Mirrors: Anne Zahalka Portraits 1987–2007* was held at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, which toured nationally. Major exhibitions include *Three Australian Photographers: Bill Henson, Tracey Moffatt and Anne Zahalka*, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands, 2007; *Points of View: Australian Photography 1985–1995*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2006; *Acting the Part: Photography as Theatre*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, 2006; *Supernatural Artificial*, Chulalongkorn Art Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, 2005; *Leopold Godowsky Jr Color Photography Awards*, Photographic Resource Centre, Boston, USA, 2005; *Photographica Australis*, Sala del Canal de Isabel II, Madrid, Spain; and *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968–2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002–03. Zahalka is represented in major national and international collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Deutsche Bank Collection, New York; National Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; Parliament House, Canberra; and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Anne Zahalka is represented by Arc One Gallery, Melbourne

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Tricking the eye—contemporary trompe l'oeil

A Geelong Gallery exhibition
26 November 2016 to 12 February 2017

Exhibiting artists

Colleen Ahern and Tully Moore
Chris Bond
Stephen Bowers
Daniel Crooks
Georgina Cue
Gregory Hodge
Jess Johnson
Jan Murray
John R Neeson
Ricky Swallow
Anne Zahalka

Curator

Lisa Sullivan, Curator, Geelong Gallery

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