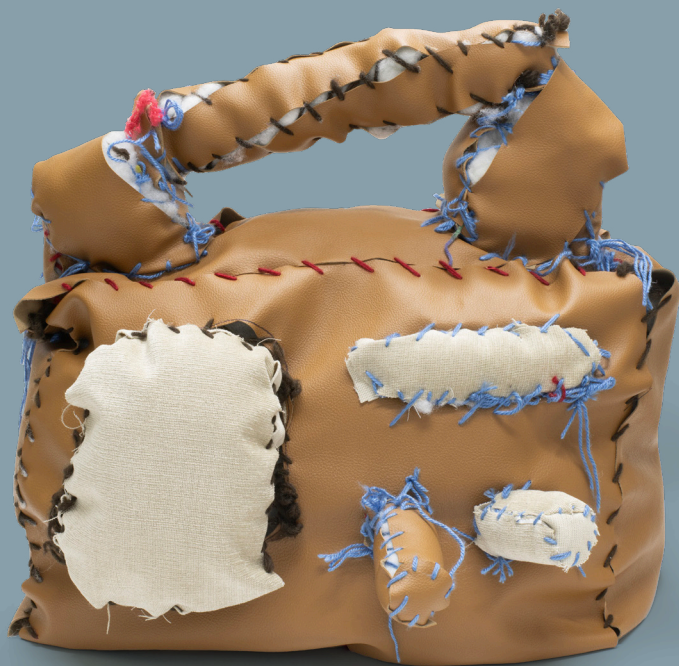


ARTS
PROJECT
AUSTRALIA | 50
YEARS

BENDABLE REALITIES



BENDABLE REALITIES

**13 July –
24 August
2024**

CURATORS

**Vincent Alessi
Alex Baker
Charlotte Day
Geoff Newton
Patrice Sharkey**

ARTISTS

**Terry Williams
Tiger Yaltangki**

**Julian Martin
Roger Walker**

**Adrian Lazzaro
Clare Milledge**

**Rebecca Scibilia
Jan Lucas**

**Bronwyn Hack
Katherine Botten**

As part of Arts Project Australia's (APA) annual creative program, prominent curators are invited to create an exhibition that places APA artists alongside their peers; leading national and international contemporary artists.

This initiative seeks to make broader connections with curators, artists, galleries and museums, making visible the calibre of the work produced by APA artists, and exemplifying their place within the contemporary art landscape. Since its inception, the initiative has resulted in a long list of remarkable exhibitions that have served to generate new partnerships and develop and strengthen relationships.

Bendable Realities pays tribute to this initiative in APA's 50th year. Past curators have been invited to select artworks by both APA artists and external artists, creating a dialogue between them. This exhibition celebrates the power of collaboration and meaningful connections, highlighting the gradual re-imagining of the art world as a more open, adaptive, and inclusive space for diverse perspectives, experiences and identities.

**Jo Salt
Curator & Gallery Manager
Arts Project Australia**

Terry Williams and Tiger Yaltangki

Just play it loud, ok



In the last quarter of the 20th century, it seemed everything was getting bigger. Trump Tower opened, Airbus began designing its A380 plane, 4WDs became family cars and block-like shoulder pads were the fashion of the day. Music was also big. AC/DC played in front of 1.6 million people in Moscow, and everyone seemed to be carrying a boulder-size ghetto blaster. Robin Williams's iconic cry, *just play it loud, ok*, never seemed more apt, as is the pairing of works by Terry Williams and Tiger Yaltangki.

Tiger Yaltangki is a Yankunytjatjara artist from Indulkana Community on the APY Lands in the remote north-west of South Australia. He has a deep love of music: from Country to Desert Reggae to Americana Rock. However, this is all trumped by the

power-chords of AC/DC, a constant soundtrack in the studio where he spends his days painting. Terry Williams is a stalwart of Arts Project Australia, joining the program in 1989. The studio, and his environment, is the soundtrack to his work. Objects in his space, things he sees on his walks to and from the studio, and work made by his colleagues, are all prompts for the endless soft sculptures which he creates.

The works of both artists are aesthetically defined by a sense of fun and whimsicality. Yaltangki incorporates traditional mark-making, text, and painting over existing rock posters and photographs. These hyper-coloured compositions are animated, oozing with a sense of electricity, while paying a cheeky homage to

the humorous defacing of billboards and posters. In *Kitar Rock n Roll* (2023), Yaltangki stands centrally, his face adorned with painted uber-cool, yellow-rimmed sunglasses, and graced on either side by large human-scale guitars. Vibrating lines generate from and around the instruments, a visual representation of the sound made through a rock-n-roll fuzz pedal. While restrained in colour, William's ghetto blasters have an over-riding sense of joy and fun. Simplified to their essential elements – a full width handle, full face speakers, a CD tray, and the all-important sound dial – they are spirited and lively, the booming tunes audible.

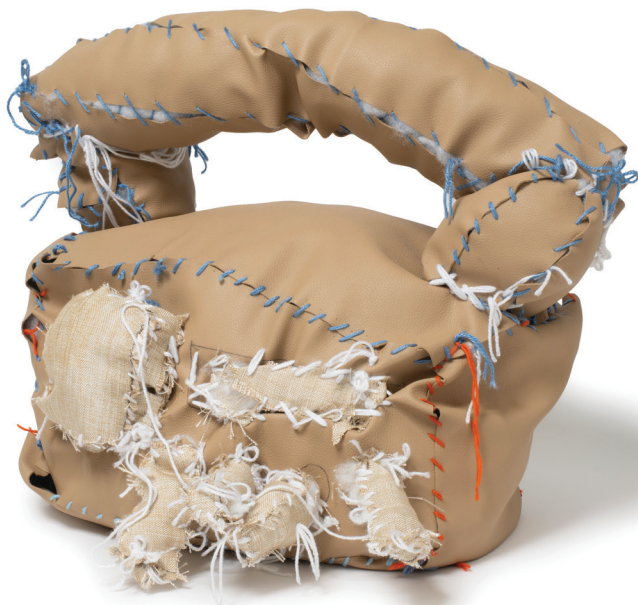
The works of both artists are defined by their unique self-expression, which articulate and celebrate personal interests, curiosities and ideas about the world. They are representative

of each artist, self-portraits in the broadest possible terms. Paired together they give voice to the other: Williams's ghetto blaster amplifies Yaltangki's AC/DC soundtrack, Yaltangki's AC/DC soundtrack animates Williams's ghetto blaster. While these prolific artists could comfortably sit within the pantheon of pop-art, they are much better placed in the cannon of punk-rock, where everyone shouts *just play it loud, ok*.

Dr Vincent Alessi
Director + CEO
Linden New Art

LEFT Tiger Yaltangki *Kitar Rock n Roll* 2023
76 x 112 cm (90 x 124 cm framed)
synthetic polymer paint on digital print
Courtesy of the artist, Iwantja Arts,
South Australia and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne

BELOW Terry Williams *Radio* 2024
material, stuffing, wool 51 x 59 x 35 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia



Julian Martin and Roger Walker

In Resonance



Despite my over ten-year working relationship with Julian Martin, I was not well acquainted with his more gestural, colourfield pastels, the work featured in *Bendable Realities*. In making selections for past exhibitions, I have favoured his drawings of precise and delineated abstract forms of distilled images and objects. Either I was not aware of Martin's all-over, bordering on monochromatic abstractions, or I was blind to them having become pre-disposed to what I had always been attracted

to. While the drawings which I am most familiar share kinship with the pictographic and biomorphic abstraction of the American 1930s, the drawings on view here resonate with other abstract contexts in art history. The subtle atmospheric fog of color that Martin blends on paper recalls Mark Rothko's painted colour levitations and, reaching back to the 19th century, J.M.W Turner's landscapes that anticipate modernist abstraction.

When I was asked by Arts Project Australia to consider pairing Martin with an artist from Fleisher/Ollman for this exhibition, I initially drew a blank as I was only considering the Martin I knew well. But then I recalled his lesser-known body of work and an artist's drawings that Fleisher/Ollman had exhibited two decades ago (and for which we still had work in inventory) came immediately to mind—those by Roger Walker. Walker (b. 1930), a homeless artist who sought refuge in a Missoula, Montana public library where he would create small graphite and ball point pen drawings, came to the attention of a fellow Missou-

lian artist, Wes Mills, who showed Walker at his gallery in the early 2000s. Mills introduced Walker to Fleisher/Ollman resulting in a solo exhibition there in 2004. Mills left Montana around this time, Walker's artistic career dissipated as a result, and his whereabouts are unknown today.

While using different media, both Martin and Walker approach drawing with similar energy, applying their chosen medium with such intensity that paper nearly vanishes and becomes pure pastel or ink, as if medium and support are fused into one. As a result of such vigor, scarring, abrasions, and gestures are visible, and in the case of Walker's drawings, the paper becomes rippled and indented from his pen's force on the page. Both favor a totalizing approach to drawing in which the entire surface is covered (in Walker's case, he does allow for a small unfilled margin that frames the composition). Martin and Walker are keenly attuned to the relationship of gesture to the scale of the page. Martin's sweeping application of color, drawing with his arm and

upper body on a chest-size paper support stands in interesting contrast to Walker's much smaller, more repetitive and structured pen strokes, which seem tailored to the hand-sized scale of the paper.

Alex Baker
Director
Fleisher/Ollman, Philadelphia

LEFT Julian Martin *Untitled* 2023
pastel on paper 38 x 28 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia

BELOW Roger Walker *880-03* 2003
graphite and ink on paper 20.3 x 20.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Fleisher/Ollman



Adrian Lazzaro and Clare Milledge

Colour My World

We aren't meant to have favourites ... pets, children, friends, artists or even art organisations ... but I do have a soft spot for Arts Project Australia. What most impresses me about Arts Project is its incredible service and support of its community of artists and practitioners, its ability to scaffold broader communities around it, along with its outstanding social and creative ambition and achievement. Consistency is not always top of my value list but in terms of Arts Project it is, with every Arts Project meeting or conversation I have been part of being similarly open to opportunity: 'we could try that', 'let's do it' or 'how do we make that happen?' It is, without a doubt, the people across all layers of the Arts Project organisation – in the studio, gallery, on the board, and so on – that make it what it is, and to sustain its remarkable culture over a 50-year period is a tremendous achievement and deserving of celebration.

I am thrilled to be invited back, as a curatorial alumnus, to participate in *Bendable Realities*. This exhibition perfectly demonstrates how Arts Project engages, connects and invites dialogue. Productive relationships build over time, and while I've worked at various art museums and now at the University of Melbourne, we have continued to collaborate in different ways: through gallery visits and workshops,

bringing Arts Project artists' works into public collections, educational initiatives here and internationally. Most recently, the art collective the Northcote Penguins (APA's professional development program) was awarded a Miegunyah Fellowship at the University of Melbourne, which gives the group access to our Grimwade Collection and the opportunity to respond to it with new commissioned works. The results of this residency will be shown in a pop-up exhibition later in the year at Buxton Contemporary.

All this is background to considering the pairing of works by Arts Project artist Adrian Lazzaro and one by Clare Milledge. I chose Milledge's work *Theoretical Headspeople* 2015/2023 for several reasons, including the idea that an artist can keep coming back to a painting, or work on it over a long period. The word 'headspeople' reminded me of the expressions 'let's put our heads together' and 'two heads are better than one'. I hope Adrian and some other Arts Projects artists might enjoy Milledge's expressive brushstrokes and embrace of colour but especially her technique of painting on the back of the glass – which is a bit of a mind-bender itself. In *Headspeople* we view a couple from behind, with the focus on their body language and an articulation of the emotions and energy forces surround-

ing and between them. Similarly, in Lazzaro's portraits, we have a degree of access to his subjects through an evocation of their qualities through line and colour rather than a literal representation. Lazzaro provides just enough detail in his faces to evoke his subjects without being naturalistic. He uses colour in a related way to Milledge, drawing our attention to the psychological dimensions of his subjects, such as in the lovely portrait *Sarah No 2 and Not Chuck* 2023.

Charlotte Day
Associate Director,
Art Museums
University of Melbourne

TOP Clare Milledge
Theoretical Headspeople 2015/2023
oil on tempered glass, reclaimed
timber frame (Grevillea robusta)
124 x 124 x 6.5 cm framed
Courtesy of the artist, STATION
and MECCA collection

BOTTOM Adrian Lazzaro
Sarah No 2 and Not Chuck 2023
acrylic, paint pen on paper
34.5 x 24 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Arts Project Australia



Rebecca Scibilia and Jan Lucas

Beverly Hills Chihuahua and No Title (Piss Off)



I was first taken with Rebecca Scibilia's work when visiting Arts Project in the early 2000s and loved the way she translated well known film posters to plain wonky letters, piled up on top of one another like green beans in a salad, listing the film title, the director, the producers, the actors, etc. They seemed to reduce the size of Hollywood to just a mound of busy text on one black page with silver and gold paints, so on different angles one could make out shimmering fragments of an impossible pyramid against a matte backdrop. I've looked at Rebecca's work a lot over the last few decades, not intensely or routinely but just as a kind of reminder how assured and straightforward it is. There have been works which are detailed patchworks of pure joyous abstraction, held together with fine texta and pencil and acrylic; then there's funny, loose renderings of

DVD covers like *The Saddle Club* where the title of the DVD merges with the background colour yet is eloquently refined in it's restraint. Each medium she incorporates has its own sensibility, by that I mean there is a controlled accident to each mark and drip and chiselled out sheer block of colour which gives its subject a quiet force.

Beverly Hills Chihuahua 2009 is a joyous work which has the poise and tension of a much larger painting, crammed into 28.5 x 8 cm and almost spilling off the page. I love how the pale green paper makes each colour change when the page is saturated with pigment, pinks and greens becoming intense and when each colour touches, they produce a new jagged trippy colour, like zippers connecting all the built up layers. On the left of the page is maybe a kind of dog, but a working dog all dressed up in a feather boa and sitting very still.

Like Jan Lucas, Rebecca's work is not driven by trends or style or even peers. They are each driven to see each image clearer and more alive than the last, sometimes repeating motifs like *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* and *Piss Off*.

Jan's work was mostly collage, then embroidery, and also paintings and also ceramics. The ceramics might look as though they are the most 'resolved' but I think the idea of

resolution doesn't really sit with Jan's works as a whole, more about how the works sit together and letting the ideas come through whenever they wanted to. Thinking about Jan's free-wheeling embroideries from the 1990s and early 2000s they were really like blankets, images squeezing in and around each other and mostly on top with a similar busy patchwork cross hatching up down up down sideways sideways kind of rhythm. There's no horizon line, no defined border of when the picture starts or stops it just keeps going. In the work hanging at her son Clay's house, there is a real beaut with Y2K and Rosebud Rosebud and flags and figures and heads and Mike and 911 planes and trees and instruments and it's exhausting to sift through, a detailed Jungle of Love.

One of my all-time favourites is the *Piss Off* jug. I don't think it was titled as such but it's hard not to miss the words painted in glaze on the well worn (co-opted?) milk jug from about 2004. The work uses lurid purples, greens, maybe a yellow and a faded yellow and it's a bit like an outpouring (Jan liked a pun or two) of phrases you might hear at the football on a Saturday afternoon. It might also be one of those cherished vessels which are reserved for that special someone, that beloved arsehole who is mostly a good guy but sometimes the prick gets the better of him. I get the feeling that Jan might have been a bit ashamed, but no not ashamed, more like bashful about me showing this work originally, having dug it out of the studio for a group show in 2017 (a year before she passed). But it was in great company with mermaids, a kind of half dragon, and a three sided head planter.



Jan and Rebecca are fearless in their work. And their work each utilises courage, spirit, humour and resilience. All good things which make us better. I am grateful to have worked with Jan and Rebecca and shown their art.

Geoff Newton Director Neon Parc

LEFT Jan Lucas *No title (Piss Off)* c 2010
terracotta, glaze 12 x 8 x 6.5 cm
Private collection

ABOVE Rebecca Scibilia *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*
2009 marker on paper 28.5 x 8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia

Bronwyn Hack and Katherine Botten

Tragic Romance



My curatorial association with Arts Project Australia formally commenced in 2016 when I was the Director of West Space—an independent contemporary arts space, founded in 1993 and also based in Melbourne, known for supporting emerging and under represented artists. Thinking critically about the role of an organisation like West Space, to reflect and support the breadth of creative practice active in its own city, resulted in a dynamic and generative partnership: across three years, West Space's exhibition program featured a number of APA studio artists, specifically placing their work in dialogue with other artists, from different backgrounds, who share similar interests.

The first in this series, *Summer on the blue seat* 2016, presented sculptures by Chris Mason in dialogue with the video work *Community Action Center* 2010 by A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner, as a way to open up questions around

the politics and representation of erotic desire; *They cool him down with cold hisses* 2017 presented recent drawings by Samraing Chea alongside photographs by Kieren Seymour that were connected by the artists' mutual fascination with machines, systems and impending disaster; finally, *The drawing is just not there* 2018 featured Wendy Dawson, Robyn Doherty and Rebecca Scibilia in a 25-person group exhibition looking at the possibilities within and beyond the boundaries of painting.

Building upon this collaborative exchange, in 2018 I was invited by APA to guest-curate *Auto Body Works*; a group exhibition that explored how figurative and representative forms of the human body as a contemporary being can be challenged and broken down in surprising ways. Amongst the large ensemble of works and artists included in *Auto Body Works*, Bronwyn Hack's soft sculptures of female and male genitalia served as a key entry point into the ideas of the exhibition: detailed and explicit, Bronwyn's anatomical-like studies are also exaggerated and larger than life.

For *Bendable Realities*, it has been a pleasure to revisit Bronwyn's practice; alternately selecting works that showcase her ongoing preoccupation with hot water bottles and the 1997 film *Titanic*, as well as shifting inwards to consider the ways she articulates internal organs. I have elected to pair Bronwyn with Katherine Botten, a Melbourne-based artist and writer whose own practice interrogates the conditions of freedom, transcendence, anxiety, trauma, production and capitalism. Katherine has been

inspired to create new work for this exhibition, made in complement to Bronwyn and showcasing their shared approach to material and tactility. Veering between excess and economy, each artist employs an earthy yet vibrant palette of browns, purples and reds to create works that are equal parts dark, playful, romantic, tragic, hopeful and uplifting.

Patrice Sharkey
Head of Exhibitions and Programs
TarraWarra Museum of Art

LEFT Katherine Botten *Hillson* 2022
acrylic and oil on canvas, fabric 45 x 35 cm
(installation detail)
Courtesy of the artist



BELOW Bronwyn Hack *Untitled* 2021
cotton thread, material, mixed media 6 x 21 x 12 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia



COVER: Terry Williams *Untitled* 2023. Material, stuffing, wool 51 x 59 x 35 cm
Courtesy the artist. Represented by Arts Project Australia

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