

The Fall of Icarus

Curated by Liz Nowell

10 May - 21 June

At the heart of *The Fall of Icarus* is a blazing, ominous, and ever-present sun. It is the same sun that has loomed over us for millennia: the one that lit the path for the ancient Greek gods, fuelled the rise and fall of empires, and now bears down on a planet on the brink of collapse.

Commissioned by Arts Project Australia (APA) for its Collingwood Yards Gallery, this site-specific installation is the latest body of work by mid-career APA studio artist Michael Camakaris. Inspired by and rendered with the same cinematic grandeur as Danny Boyle's aptly titled sci-fi thriller 'Sunshine', the exhibition similarly presents the sun as far more than a celestial orb. Here, it becomes a constant, unblinking witness across time and space, and most importantly, a possible harbinger of doom.

After nurturing these ideas for over a decade, Camakaris's first major solo exhibition draws on the Greek myth of Icarus to explore contemporary themes of ambition, collapse, greed, and hubris. It tells the story of a young man who, given wings made of feathers and wax by his father Daedalus, ignores warnings not to fly too close to the sun. Overcome by arrogance, Icarus ascends too high, the blazing heat melts the wax, and he falls into the sea and to his death. It's a cautionary tale about overreaching—and the perils of excess and pride.

Camakaris reimagines this myth through a contemporary lens. Realised as an immersive installation incorporating video, sound, objects, and text, *The Fall of Icarus* places viewers in the role of Icarus himself. Floating at the centre of the gallery are a pair of wings, rendered in ceramic and dripping with golden lustre. We are invited to step into them, both literally and metaphorically, and experience the boy's descent. But rather than falling into the sea, we tumble headlong into the present: a foreboding montage of megacities, razed forests, climate disaster, and collapsing infrastructure. The myth is no longer allegorical. It is now.

Camakaris' creative practice has long drawn from a wide range of scientific, philosophical, cultural, and artistic influences. *The Fall of Icarus* reflects this breadth, referencing the work of Danny Boyle, Sylvia Plath, Greek mythology, the Baroque period, and the Wall Street stock exchange, to name a few. This is especially evident in *The Fall of Icarus #1* (2025), a video work that combines found and stock footage to construct an abstracted timeline where humanity's greed and hubris are laid bare. From the Roman Empire to the Industrial Revolution to the fiery explosion of Elon Musk's SpaceX Starship, the piece underscores our persistent failure to learn from history.

Here, stock footage plays both a practical (after all, how does one film the sun?) and conceptual role, reflecting the algorithmic repetition and visual homogenisation of everyday life. The result is a cinematic yet depersonalised image-world, where even catastrophe becomes consumable: packaged, made aesthetically pleasing, and easy to scroll past.

Overlaying the video is an all-enveloping soundscape by fellow APA studio artist Max Cheevers. Incorporating recordings from solar panels, low frequencies, and ambient mechanical tones, Cheevers' score builds an ominous pressure that never quite overwhelms, mirroring the slow, inevitable trajectory of collapse unfolding on screen.

Offering a poetic counterpoint to the exhibition's central installation is Sylvia Plath's 'Doom of Exiles', subtly silhouetted on the gallery's darkened walls. It serves as a reminder that artists have long foreseen the end of civilisation. At the opposite end of the space, two LED screens mimic the endless scroll of financial markets and the 24-hour news cycle. But instead of stock updates, *The Fall of Icarus #3* (2025) displays Camakaris' own meditations: 'Falling without a parachute, crashing without an airbag, sinking without a lifeboat.' These lines—part prophecy, part lament—chart the slow-motion disintegration of society in the artist's own voice. Alongside these aphorisms, the names of fallen and falling civilisations scroll in an algorithmic churn, offering a stark reminder that power, like Icarus' makeshift wings, often leads to failure.

Ultimately, *The Fall of Icarus* is an urgent work that draws ancient myth into the present with cinematic clarity and poetic contemplation. Through a richly layered installation, Michael Camakaris invites us to consider the consequences of unchecked ambition, the fragility of civilisation, and the thin line between ambition and collapse. In stepping into Icarus's wings, we are asked not only to witness the fall—but to question how far we've already fallen.

Words by Liz Nowell



Michael Camakaris

The Fall of Icarus #1 2025

HD, Single-channel video

05'47"

Edition 1 of 3

MICAV25-0001

\$1800



Michael Camakaris

The Fall of Icarus #2 2025

glaze, earthenware

57 x 81 x 52cm

MICAC25-0001

\$3200



Michael Camakaris

The Fall of Icarus #3 2025

Customised programmed LED
screens

39 x 199 x 11 cm

MICAC25-0003

\$2500

About the artist



Michael Camakaris is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice spans drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, ceramics, and new media. His work is defined by bold graphic composition, layered mark-making, and a dynamic engagement with materials. Drawing on classical mythology - particularly Greek stories and symbolism - Camakaris explores enduring themes of power, identity, and transformation through richly narrative works.

Mythological figures and motifs recur throughout his practice, often referencing cyclical narratives of light and darkness. This symbolic thread, woven across media, offers poetic reflections on human ambition, collapse, and resilience. Camakaris straddles the line between figuration and abstraction; his works are vivid, immersive, and rich in symbolic detail. They are both contemporary and timeless, bridging classical mythology with the visual language of modern art.

An artist at Arts Project Australia (APA) since 2010, Camakaris has presented solo exhibitions including *Five Bulls, No Bull* (Shepparton Art Museum Drawing Wall, 2013), *It's Very Nearly All Greek To Me...* (Leonard Joel, Melbourne, 2023), and *The Fall of Icarus* (APA, Melbourne, 2025), curated by Liz Nowell. Group exhibitions include *Metropolis* (APA, Melbourne, 2025), curated by Amelia Winata, and *Symbiosis* at Buxton Contemporary as part of the Miegunyah Creative Fellowship (Melbourne, 2024). His work is held in the University of Melbourne Collection and private collections throughout Australia and internationally.

About the curator

Liz Nowell is a curator whose work centres care ethics, collaboration, and relationality. Currently Executive Director of Arts Project Australia, she has curated major exhibitions of contemporary art for institutions including the Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Australian Centre of Contemporary Art (ACCA), City Gallery Wellington, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) and others. Liz is an experienced editor and writer, having contributed to more than 20 publications throughout her career. In 2023 she was awarded an Australian Progress Fellowship and was also a resident at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York.



Exhibition credits

Michael would like to acknowledge the following people who collaborated on the exhibition:

Helen Camakaris – for advice and support

Max Cheevers – Sound design

Marcel Cooper and Nick Megchelse – Ceramic assistants

Dale Gorfinkel – Sound assistance

Shell Odgers – Exhibition graphics

Lesley Pinder – Video editor

Leon van de Graaf – Exhibition design and installation

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