

## Postworld Audio Descriptions.

### Curatorial Rationale:

POSTWORLD is an exhibition that attempts to engage the viewer in experiences that alter their perceptions of reality or create imaginary new worlds. The artworks in this exhibition focus on the power of objects—especially those conventionally used in various commercial industries—which can act as portals or gateways into otherworldly experiences. Objects are empowered do this by tapping into their own unique material qualities and symbolic contexts, thereby leading us into explorations and questions regarding society’s views on a range of environmental, social, political, and economic issues.

The curators of POSTWORLD, Kate O’Hara and Daniel Qualischefski of Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, have brought together artists from diverse locations across the country as a means of surveying a range of artistic practices and ideas that have recently been circulating with regards to the concepts of this exhibition. The artworks and artists involved in POSTWORLD ultimately attempt to represent new ways of thinking about and finding purpose in the past, present, and future of humankind and our place in the world.

### Jason Sims, *Tunnel Vision*, 2017.

*Tunnel Vision* is a sculpture created in 2017 by the artist Jason Sims. It is made of steel, acrylic, plywood, MDF, LED lighting, and electronics. *Tunnel Vision* was made to closely resemble the standard dimensions of a domestic door. It is effectively a lightbox that exploits the viewer’s intimate familiarity with doorways as passageways that delineate between two spaces—for instance in the way that doorways express the inside of a home from the outside. Within *Tunnel Vision*’s rectangular frame, the artwork contains a convincing illusion of a long and featureless corridor, which terminates in what appears to be another doorway. This other doorway glows with a light that continuously changes in colour, tone, and intensity, giving the viewer the sense that the illusory corridor leads to a fantastical yet ambiguous space that is just out of reach.

Standing before *Tunnel Vision* is intended to provoke a bodily response from the viewer by giving them the sense that they stand at the threshold of another world—one which is deeply ambivalent. The intent of the artwork is to invite the viewer to reconsider the very nature and mutability of perception. In doing so, Jason Sims is inviting, or even daring the viewer, to open themselves up to new ways of seeing the world.

Alison Bennett, *vegetal/digital*, 2021.

*vegetal/digital* is an interactive installation completed in 2021 by the artist Alison Bennett. Innovative in its use of technology, each of the five individual artwork in *vegetal/digital* uses a gesture-controlled interface to manipulate 3D models displayed on a screen. Each interactive model is itself composed of many photographs taken from all angles of native Australian flowers floating in a pitch-black void. Gallery patrons are invited to manipulate the intricate 3D displays from a distance in order to examine the unique forms, colours, and textures of native Australian flora. This playful exploration is enabled by a sensor that can detect through movements of the hand if the user wishes to rotate, expand, contract, or otherwise move each of the 3D models as they appear on the screen. *vegetal/digital's* novel and innovative use of technology, combined with the innately unusual yet familiar nature of Australian flowers and the black void of the 3D displays culminates in an almost alien experience.

Alison Bennett's work aims to position this technological exploration of Australian flowers as "celestial encounters." In other words, *vegetal/digital* focuses the viewer's attention on the sometimes-strange nature of natural forms and structures, which can often resemble those similarly seen in microscopic or cosmological scales, such as in microbial organisms or nebulae. Collapsing these vast orders of magnitude onto much-loved Australian flowers, the artist emphasises the repeating structures of the universe and, conversely, humanity's very subjective and often detached vision of that structure.

K. Verell (Blue Screen of Death), *Pandani4Life*, 2021.

*Pandani4Life* is a high-definition video artwork created in 2021 by the artist K. Verell, who also operates under the pseudonym "Blue Screen of Death." The slow-motion video has a running time of 13 minutes and 40 seconds, and is set in a Tasmanian forest. Dense and lush, the damp foliage of the forest vegetation features a large variety of familiar Australian plant species including the pandani or giant grass tree after which the artwork is named. A human figure moves cautiously and slowly through the vegetation, examining branches and leaves in the manner one might expect from someone encountering plants for the first time. The strangeness of the figure moving through the forest is accentuated by their costume. On one hand the figure seems excessively protected, as though they fear a biohazard contamination. The figure wears gloves, goggles, noise-cancelling earmuffs, a head covering, gumboots tucked into utility overalls, and a gas mask. On the other hand, the figure is quite exposed because underneath the overalls they wear nothing at all, their exposed hairless white skin contrasting with the vivid colours and textures of the forest floor. This contradiction creates visual tension.

The tension that exists between protection and vulnerability was created by the artist in order to draw attention to the fragility of Tasmanian ecosystems and humankind's need to coexist within the land. By highlighting the interconnectedness of humanity and nature, the artist conjures questions regarding the future of not only the forest but of humankind itself, humans being fragile creatures that rely on the health and protection of the natural world for our own survival.

### [K. Verell \(Blue Screen of Death\), Surface Tension, 2016.](#)

*Surface Tension* a sculptural wall-hanging completed in 2016 by the artist K. Verell, who also operates under the pseudonym “Blue Screen of Death.” The wall hanging is a metre wide by approximately half a metre long and is made of a compressed concrete slab. The surface of the concrete panel is etched with an ambiguous arrangement of Latin lettering and punctuation marks that create a linear yet incomplete frame around a central component. The central component, which is similarly etched into the concrete panel, appears to be the visualisation of a waveform, possibly representing sound. Appearing much like a plaque one might observe on a public monument, the waveform and the arrangement of letters and punctuation that encircle it are encoded as information to which the viewer has no access.

The endurance of this artwork’s mystery is directly involved in its meaning, as the artist Keith Deverell states that the work seeks to question what it means to be human—alluding to questions regarding humankind’s explorative nature, inquisitiveness, communication, and documentation of historical and current events. A possible point of entry into the meaning of the encrypted information lies in the artist’s contentions regarding the artwork’s relationship to “female history.” On the artist’s web page, a link is provided to a table which presents a particular collection of deceased female figures from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century before the common era to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the common era. The date of birth and death for each woman is codified using the same Latin lettering and punctuation marks as those that appear on the concrete panel.

### [Rhonda Stevens, Reflections at the Touchstone, 2022.](#)

*Reflections at the Touchstone* is a floor based sculptural artwork created in 2022 by the artist Rhonda Stevens. The three-dimensional sculpture is made of polystyrene, cement, resin, and a mirror. It is 80cm high by 55cm wide by 70cm in depth. As suggested in the title, *Reflections at the Touchstone* is a sculpture that closely resembles a rock positioned upright on top of a rectangular mirror. Albeit irregular and textured, with earthy, mottled, and powdery black and white undulations, the sculpture possesses an overarchingly wedge-shaped form. It is reminiscent of roughly quarried rocks used for architectural structures or ancient rituals. In sharp contrast to the rich surface qualities of the touchstone, the rectangular mirror at the base of the sculpture is sleek and flawless, reflecting everything that comes into its view, including the viewer.

The mirror’s reflectiveness and the invocation of touchstones inform the viewer of the artist’s intent. Originally used to determine the authenticity of gold, touchstones symbolically refer to the tangible means through which something can be verified as being either true or false. In this artwork, the use of the touchstone betrays the artist’s desire to find a reliable point of reference from which to make sense of the world—a desire she wishes to extend to the viewer. *Reflections at the Touchstone* can therefore be understood as a monument to the greatest questions of our existence, it is an invitation to see oneself reflected in the mirror and contemplate how one might even begin to fathom the vast mysteries of the world around us.

Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier, *Cosmic Witness: series 1-48*, 2010-2022.

*Cosmic Witness series 1-48* is a set of artworks created between the years 2010 and 2022 by the artists Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier. Each of the series' 48 individual artworks, which are displayed in a linear grid format, was made using mixed media on 20cm x 20cm pieces of paper. Working collaboratively, the three artists that created the *Cosmic Witness series* posted the artworks between their dwellings in Toowoomba, Townsville, and on Magnetic Island over the course of twelve years. Given that each artist has a distinct style, favourite media, and artistic influences, each of the 48 intuitively created artworks is playful and richly layered. The marks made on each artwork range from representational to abstract, some are cryptically symbolic and cosmological while others are colourfully and joyously deskilled.

The *Cosmic Witness series* was led by the broad notion of floating and the attendant sense of being carried or lifted by something greater than oneself—sliding fluidly between feelings of attachment and detachment. The resulting body of work could be characterised as spacey yet mystical or spiritual, with surreal landscapes, figures, structures, animals, and plants that seem equally absurd and mythologically meaningful. One foot in the here and now, and one in worlds beyond our own, the *Cosmic Witness series* evokes dreaming, fantasy, magic, and the realms of the celestial and supernatural.

Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier, *Cosmic Witness: series 49-72*, 2010-2022.

*Cosmic Witness series 49-72* is a set of artworks created between the years 2010 and 2022 by the artists Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier. Each of the series' 24 individual artworks was made using mixed media pieces of paper of varying sizes, the biggest being approximately the size of an A3 sheet of paper. The series is displayed in salon style—that is, the artworks are hung in a haphazard yet aesthetically pleasing arrangement. Working collaboratively, the three artists that created the *Cosmic Witness series* posted the artworks between their dwellings in Toowoomba, Townsville, and on Magnetic Island over the course of twelve years. Given that each artist has a distinct style, favourite media, and artistic influences, each of the intuitively created artworks is playful and richly layered. The marks made on each artwork range from representational to abstract, some are cryptically symbolic and cosmological while others are colourfully and joyously deskilled.

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Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier, *Cosmic Witness: series 73*, 2010-2022.

*Cosmic Witness series 73* is a mixed media artwork created between the years 2010 and 2022 by the artists Ron McBurnie, Catherine Parker, and Stephen Spurrier. Working collaboratively, the three artists that created *Cosmic Witness series 73* posted the artwork between their dwellings in Toowoomba, Townsville, and on Magnetic Island over the course of twelve years. Given that each artist has a distinct style, favourite media, and artistic influences, this intuitively created artwork is playful and richly layered. The marks made on *Cosmic Witness series 73* range from representational to abstract, some are cryptically symbolic and cosmological while others are colourfully and joyously deskilled. A beach chair sits in an ambiguous space, casting a shadow on an orange-red surface with golden yellow and uneven stripes. Everywhere around the chair, the precarious surface gives way to a vacuum-like void, which is filled with colourful nebulous clouds, constellations of points and dots, and strange masses and arrangements of symbols and patterns that seem informational and biological.

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Gail Mabo, *Mamus Wer (King Star)*, 2022.

*Mamus Wer [or] (King Star)* is a sculptural artwork made by the artist Gail Mabo in 2022. The sculpture consists of three voluminous and textured stars made of cast bronze which rest on a deep royal blue velvet cushion with golden twisted rope trimming. *Mamus Wer* sits on a 90cm high plinth covered by a cubic Perspex top which protects the artwork. Each of the five-pointed bronze stars has a domed body and contains irregular bumps that are shiny and golden on the raised parts but darkly patinated on the lower portions, creating contrast. The points of each star are smooth in texture and polished to a high shine. The heft of the bronze stars creates a depression in the plush and luxurious cushion which nestles the stars comfortably in the blue fabric, appearing like bright golden stars against the night sky.

*Mamus Wer* draws on a powerful memory of the artist Gail Mabo. In her memory, Gail's father places sand in her hand on the beach of Mer—the name of their Torres Strait Island Home—and asks her what she can see, encouraging her to look closely. To her amazement, Gail realises that each grain of sand is shaped like a star. The artist explains that her sculpture pays tribute to the uniquely star-shaped sand of Mer, which is significant to Torres Strait Islander astronomical navigation, seasonal planting, hunting practices, and spirituality.

### Neil Binnie, *Subdivision #22*, 2022.

*Subdivision #22* is a painting by the artist Neil Binnie which was completed in 2022. The painting, which is framed in white with a white inner border, was made using oil paint on linen fabric and is approximately half a metre tall by 1.2 metres wide. *Subdivision #22* consists of a single geometric yet abstract shape reminiscent of the rooftops of domestic houses as seen from above, which has been repeatedly arranged on the surface of the painting in different sizes and proportional relationships. The individual units—painted in ashy grey, icy blue, and banana yellow colours—are shaded in a basic but effective manner to portray the shape as three dimensional, with a consistent light source which creates highlights on the top of each shape and shadows on the bottom. While the repeating shape fills almost all of the canvas surface, there is an uneven gap between the shapes which steps down and across from the top left of the canvas to the bottom right, appearing like a path between the otherwise tightly packed rooftops.

Neil Binnie's artwork engages with the urban landscape and the way people experience being inside of it. Abstracted by a repeating geometric and largely featureless shape, the artist visualises the dwelling places of most people in a minimal yet strange and unfamiliar way, urging the viewer to second guess the banality of the urban environment and the way it is represented in contemporary art.

### Neil Binnie, *Subdivision #21*, 2022.

*Subdivision #21* is a painting by the artist Neil Binnie which was completed in 2022. The painting, which is framed in white with a white inner border, was made using oil paint on linen fabric and is approximately half a metre tall by a metre wide. *Subdivision #21* consists of a single geometric yet abstract shape reminiscent of the rooftops of domestic houses as seen from above, which has been repeatedly arranged on the surface of the painting in a grid of three rows and 8 columns. The individual units—painted in alternating greyish white and banana yellow colours—are shaded in a basic but effective manner to portray the shape as three dimensional, with a consistent light source which creates highlights on the top of each shape and shadows on the bottom. The geometry of the individual shapes, their arrangement in a grid, and the alternating colour of each shape creates a pattern similar to mosaics or other types of architectural adornments.

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### Jenny Mulcahy, *Plight of the Benthos*, 2023.

*Plight of the Benthos* is an installation consisting of seven sculptures displayed on a custom-made table with lights that illuminate the forms from beneath. Created in 2023 by the artist Jenny Mulcahy, the seven abstract sculptural forms were cast from Blackwood Crystal—a type of glass—using the lost wax casting method. The sculptural forms appear crystalline, rocky, or like partially ruined and miniature architectural structures that are largely transparent or translucent. The seven sculptures vary in colour, spanning white, blue and purple, with various transitional colour transparencies and tones.

As an artist that often explores the Australian environment, Mulcahy's title-reference to the benthos—the group of organisms that dwell at the bottom of bodies of water such as the seas, rivers, and lakes—offers possible insights into the concept of the installation. Often overlooked due to their size and location, the creatures of the benthos are of crucial importance to the survival of the ecosystem and susceptible to changes in the environment. Therefore, a possible interpretation of this artwork work lies in its relationship to the issues of climate change and its effects on flora and fauna that humanity does not immediately recognise as being important. Given that some of the creatures of the benthos are quite strange in their appearance and characteristics, our natural curiosity about them makes them effective ambassadors to introduce the viewer to the broader concerns of climate change.

### David Rowe, *Seasons Change*, 2020.

*Seasons Change* is a framed painting completed in 2020 by the artist David Rowe. The landscape painting is made of oil paint on canvas and is rather conservatively sized at approximately 27cm high x 31cm wide cm. *Seasons Change* is painted in a traditional style derived from the Modernist tradition of Impressionism, with bright colours and fluid, expressive brushstrokes that emphasise the sublime beauty and grandeur of the natural world. It has a similarly traditional wooden frame with gilded decorations. The painting depicts a pastoral and dramatic scene of distant mountains set against a background of turbulent, misty skies in hues of grey, green, and yellow. In the midground, the mountainous terrain slopes down into a rocky but lushly green valley which is cut through by a radiant blue stream of water. In the foreground, the stream snakes down and empties into what appears to be a placid lake of equally vivid blue hues. The lake is flanked on both sides by the rocky walls that descend from the mountains.

Appearing almost too perfect, David Rowe's painting is laced with the suspicion that the depicted landscape is fantasy, and not quite of this world. Evoking questions regarding the real and the imaginary, *Season's Change* aims to complicate and blur the viewer's sense of reality itself, urging the viewer to second guess other entrenched assumptions one might have in relation to art and contemporary society.