

19 Jan - 17 Feb 2008  
Devonport Regional Gallery



**SWEET OBSERVATIONS OF AN  
SEVEN TASMANIAN WOMEN A  
IN A DIVERSITY OF BACKGR  
SCULPTURE, PRINTMAKING,  
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USING UNORTHODOX MATERIAL  
AND FAMILIAR ENVIRONMEN  
A VITAL PART IN THE MEANING**

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**Fig 1**  
Phiona Lee, *Teard rainwater*, 2008. Pink fabric, approx 90 x 30 x 10cm

**Fig 2**  
Phiona Lee, *Stress*, 2006. Living wallpaper, photography, and DVD recordings, 20 x 30cm

**Fig 3**  
Lorna Campbell, *Don't smile at me*, 2007. Artificial floral flowers and timber slats, 100cm

**Fig 4**  
Lorna Campbell, *Soaked*, 2007. Recycled aluminium cans, 95 x 90cm

**Fig 5**  
Sara Meehan, *Electric Lines*, 2007. Aluminium and steel tape, cast sculpture, 50 x 80 x 40cm

**Fig 6**  
Sara Meehan, *Interrogated Thoughts*, 2007. Aluminium and steel tape sculpture, 100 x 100 x 10cm

**Fig 7**  
Ticky Webb, *Beacon*, 2004. Timber, paper, fabric and fabric, 95 x 90 x 100cm

**Fig 8**  
Ticky Webb, *Downing Road*, (detail), 2007. Timber, paper, fabric, DVD and projection, 70 x 70 x 100cm

**Fig 9**  
Toby Rogers, *July*, 2005. Super colour, 20 x 20cm

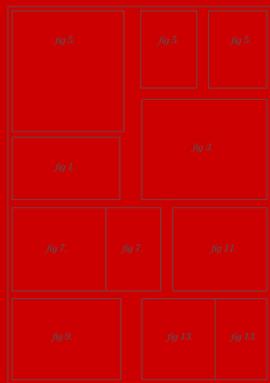
**Fig 10**  
Toby Rogers, *My portrait*, 2005. Photocopy on cardboard, 100 x 100cm

**Fig 11**  
Lucy Brown, *April Love*, 2007. Yellow fabric, quilt book, cast polymer and Tasmanian oak, 20 x 170 x 10cm

**Fig 12**  
Lucy Brown, *Business Prayers*, 2007. Business card, ink, embroidery, recycled glass, photo and Tasmanian oak frame, 5 works each, 30 x 10cm

**Fig 13**  
Trudi Brackman, *Belonging Time*, 2006. General purpose worktop, felt, soap, paint and other recycled items, 110cm, 80cm x 80cm

**Fig 14**  
Trudi Brackman, *Experiments of domestic power and care*, 2007. Cotton and mixed media, Various dimensions



Devonport Regional Gallery  
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www.devonportgallery.com.au



**SWEET OBSERVATIONS OF AN INTERIOR WORLD FEATURES SEVEN TASMANIAN WOMEN ARTISTS. ALTHOUGH TRAINED IN A DIVERSITY OF BACKGROUNDS – ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE, PRINTMAKING, PAINTING AND DRAWING – THEY HAVE INDEPENDENTLY MOVED INTO INSTALLATION. ALL ART WORKS IN THIS EXHIBITION ARE CONSTRUCTED USING UNORTHODOX MATERIALS SOURCED FROM DOMESTIC AND FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENTS. THESE MATERIALS PLAY A VITAL PART IN THE MEANING AND INTENT OF EACH PIECE.**



**FIGONA LEE**

The point at which art and culture cross into our homes is integral to Fiona Lee's practice. Previous works have questioned the act of purchasing labels for decoration, the omnipresence of huge retail chains such as Harvey Norman, the utilitarian potential for visual art and consequently, the cultural status of home improvement. Lee is currently researching methods to permanently install artworks directly into the very structure and fabric of houses.

*Tidal customer satiationism*, 2008, invests household insulation batts with aesthetic value. Although their manufactured function is immediately recognisable to the viewer, Lee has stripped them of this original role. Instead, in the batts' metamorphosis into objects of art, Lee has removed all utilitarian purpose, transforming them into pseudo pillars. Their 'pretty' colour and fluffy texture, reminiscent of fuzzy fluff, soft toys and gilly carpets, is completely at odds with their basic insulating function. Decorative floral patterns are carved into the surface of the batts which are then glued together to create a column alienated from the wall. But even this pillar is stripped of structural purpose, suspended in the centre of the Gallery, existing purely as decoration – or art.



**LUCIA USMAN**

Lucia Usman's intuitive use of found materials is key to her investigation of the relationships between the high and low practices of art and craft and spiritual and material worlds. In *Sooted and Soused*, 2007, recycled aluminium cans are cut and woven into detailed, decorative patterns, appearing from a distance to shimmer with kaleidoscopic intensity. However, on closer inspection the crude material and recognisable logos of beer and soft drinks sit uncomfortably with the reference to spiritually aligned Islamic patterns. At this moment of discovery the initial impression of magnificence is shattered.

Usman crafts a similar tension in *Don't make me cry*, 2007, a large wreath of cloth flowers shaped into the words 'bye bye baby'. The flowers have been collected over many years, gathered from a walking track that circles Debra's largest cemetery. The artist has carefully washed the weather-beaten flowers for use in the wreath, giving them a new life. There's a communion between the pairing of the parish, almost there away line 'bye bye baby' and the kitschy cloth flowers with a subject as poignant as death. But the wreath is extraordinarily beautiful in its wildly colourful intricacies and creative intensity. From its place on the Gallery wall it emanates warmth and humanity, elevating the homely, heart-driven object into the world of art.



**ANNE MESTITZ**

Anne Mestitz relies on imagination and intuition to give form to patterns of thought. Both *Electric Love* and *Interrupted Thought*, 2007, visualise the arbitrary connections that occur in associative thought. Although static, the striped layers of vinyl tape seem to pulsate with synaptic energy. As the viewer moves around *Electric Love*, the symbols x (kiss) and o (bug) appear and disappear in neon-sign fashion, alluding to the intangible, exciting and often elusive nature of love. Mestitz refers to these works as 'concrete sensations'. They are not planned from beginning to end but their evolution is testament to the interconnected processes of thought and construction. The use of ubiquitous, brightly coloured vinyl tape suggests a kind of note-taking – as if she is picking up a material close at hand and jotting down a thought. However, the playful nature of these works belies a conscious analysis of human thought, memory and association, in a sophisticated fusion of the tactile and the intangible.



**TRICKY WALSH**

Cognition is also central to the work of Tricky Walsh, who creates model diagrams of memories and conversation, requiring a dark environment for display. The works are constructed from perapes, holes and light, each piece glowing and flickering like an over-sized, electrically-charged brain that is storing, manipulating and recreating the artist's past. The models draw from Walsh's architectural background, demonstrating her long interest in interior environments and our place within them.

In *Memory Bank*, 2007, fragmented text and miniature figures replay six events from the artist's past. The flicker effect of projected photographs subtly reveals and conceals aspects of the narrative, denying a linear form and replicating the disjointed way in which we recall events. *Beacon*, 2004, compresses a model world contained within a public phone booth where Lilliputian figures enact conversations within multi-story hotels buildings. Each work has the energy of an artist's nest – lives of flawed activity that exemplify Walsh's personal investigation into the human mind – an imaginative, time-consuming process of recreating this unseen internal world.



**MISCH MEIJERS**

Further exploration of the self is found in Misch Meijers' *Self Portrait*, 2005, a 'flat packed', life-size image of the artist at her desk. Here, the artist articulates her relationship with the home environment. The one-dimensionality of the cut-out image means that the viewer can only see the artist's back, denying an ability to engage with an actual person. Instead, the desk is invested with a personality as it becomes an extension of Meijers' self and a repository for her notations and treasured objects. The desk and its paraphernalia serve as a face – a means of expression and identity.

In contrast, Meijers' installation *Bye*, 2005, is posed together from colourful cubes of sugar that form a pixelated image of three civilians wielding machine guns. As a floor piece, the work narrows the basic elements of the spiritual Tibetan mandalas often created from coloured rice, sand, jewels, stones or flowers. However, Meijers uses dyed sugar as a bait to lure in the viewer with colours and the promises of sweet distraction. The illusion of light-heartedness is destroyed by the realisation that the work speaks of sensory overload in contemporary existence and the parallel between computer games and rigid lifestyle structures. The coloured cubes represent 'bit' sized, easily accessible, digestible media, thus referencing censorship and the daunting downs of information by popular media.



**LUCY BLEACH**

Sugar is also pivotal to *Spirit Level*, 2007, by Lucy Bleach. A spirit level rests on top of bricks made from toffee which lie on a shelf screwed into the Gallery wall. As the bricks melt, toffee spills in a slow, drowsy movement onto the floor and the spirit level slumps accordingly. The work references archaeology and questions the stability of what we live within, what will become history, and the peculiar nature of the here and now. The steady stream of melting toffee is a beautiful metaphor for the unstoppable and ever changing nature of time.

Bleach's *Britannia Pyrites*, 2007, are samples of limestone road, the cracks filled with silt, embankered moss. They are presented as scientific specimens, trapped in a box, as if the artist is attempting to stall further decay. The pyrites also appear as cross-sections of earth, revealing the continents build up of layers evidencing human existence. Bleach communicates a sense of humanity's vulnerability through the materials she uses. Using the built environment as her source, she pays particular attention to the display of objects and material and their ability to communicate powerful observations of our place within time, history and society.



**TRUDI BRINCKMAN**

Trudi Brinckman sources objects and ideas directly from her domestic environment. By removing the functional role of everyday items such as the electric plug, kitchen implements and tools she captures the essence of the object's form. Without its original function, that which was familiar becomes strange. *Redundant Void*, 2008, recycles old power plugs, placing them around a black, painted circle and investing them with new energy that reanimates these passé household appliances. Although no longer connected to power, the plugs seem to have a new lease of life in their circuit grouping. They appear as a vacuum for wayward electric particles, a dangerously live conduit which is redundant in reality.

Similar intentions are discovered in *Implementations of domestic past and time*, 2007, where Brinckman has cut out shadows of kitchen implements and tools naming the items commonly used in workshops to order specific objects. The glossy replicas are labelled with nomenclature detail and placed in the gallery, a reclamation that questions cultural collecting processes and invests the items with new significance. Brinckman's found items represent that which exists beneath visible and ordinary household objects and appliances. She peels back layers to reveal an undercurrent – a spirit – creating a new dimension for each work.

The coming together of works in *Street observations of a material world* emphasises a network of reflected aims and materials between the seven artists. An obvious connection is the 'sweet' quality of the installations. Meijers and Bleach both use sugar as a primary material, confectionary that bears direct relationship to Usman's use of aluminium cans. Lee's marshmallow insulation batts and Mestitz's candy-like stripes. While the word 'sweet' relates to innocence, childhood and play, it is also commonly associated with all that is saccharine and without substance. Hence it is used here with a touch of irony that perhaps also hints at the clear sense of play that further unites each of these artists. There is also a link through the general focus on interior environments – both built and cognitive – that is revealed as each artist moves beyond traditional methods of making art and draws heavily from craft and design to develop strong conceptual installation practices.

The works featured in the exhibition function skilfully on multiple levels – from the exploration of pattern and texture to the series of associations manifest within the materials each artist employs. The resulting observations are founded upon sharp use of intuition and analysis, creating insightful interpretations of the architectural and human frameworks within which we live.



Draw by Anne Mestitz

**FIONA LEE**

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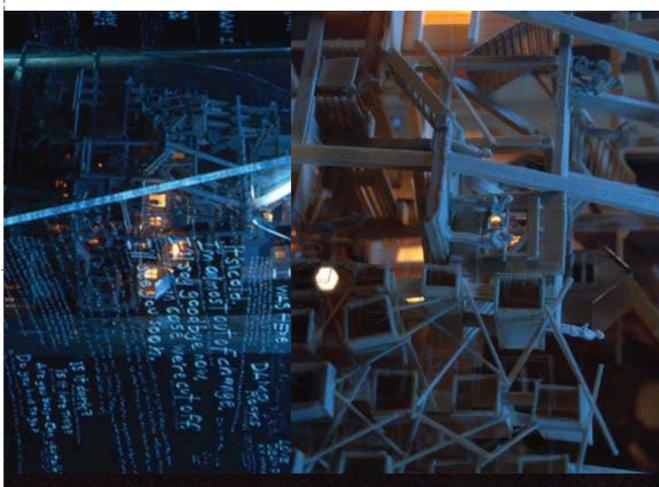
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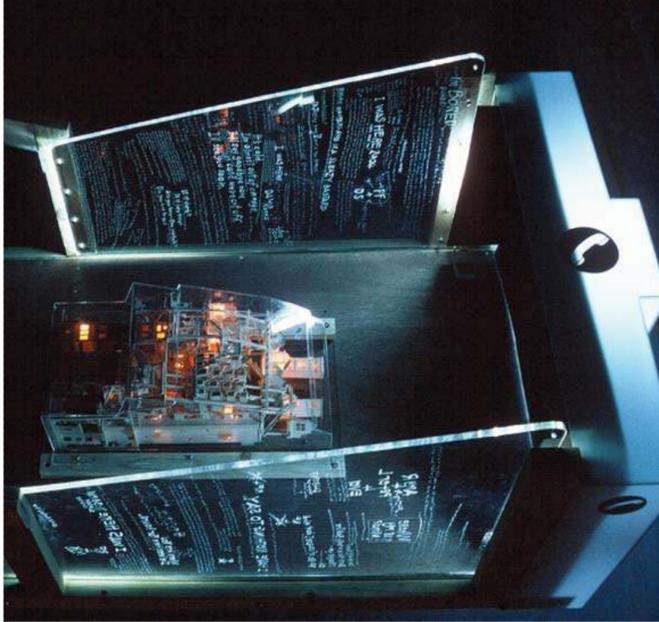
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Fig 9.



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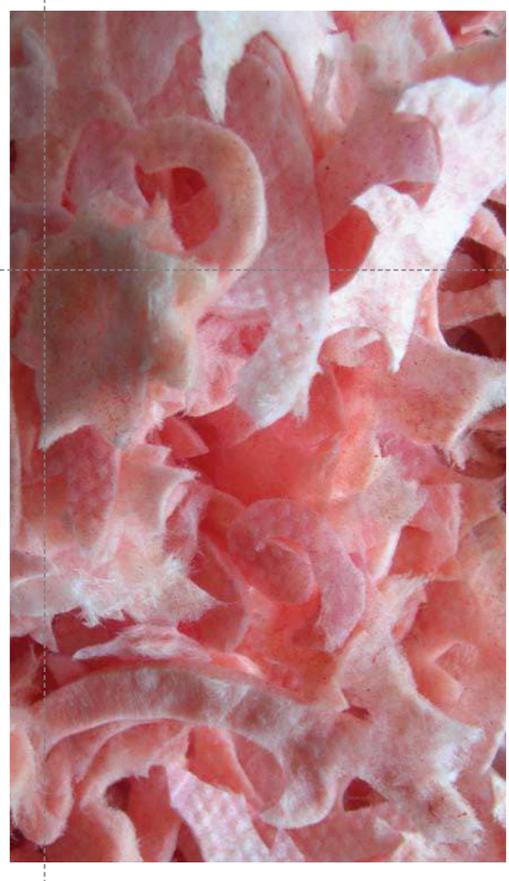


Fig 1.



Fig 5.

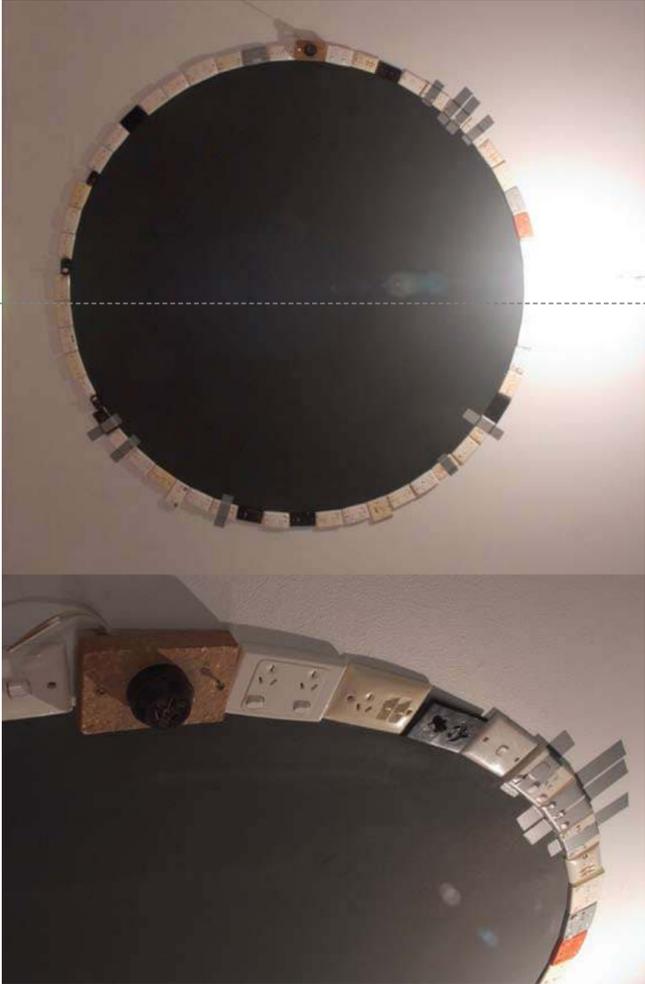


Fig 13.

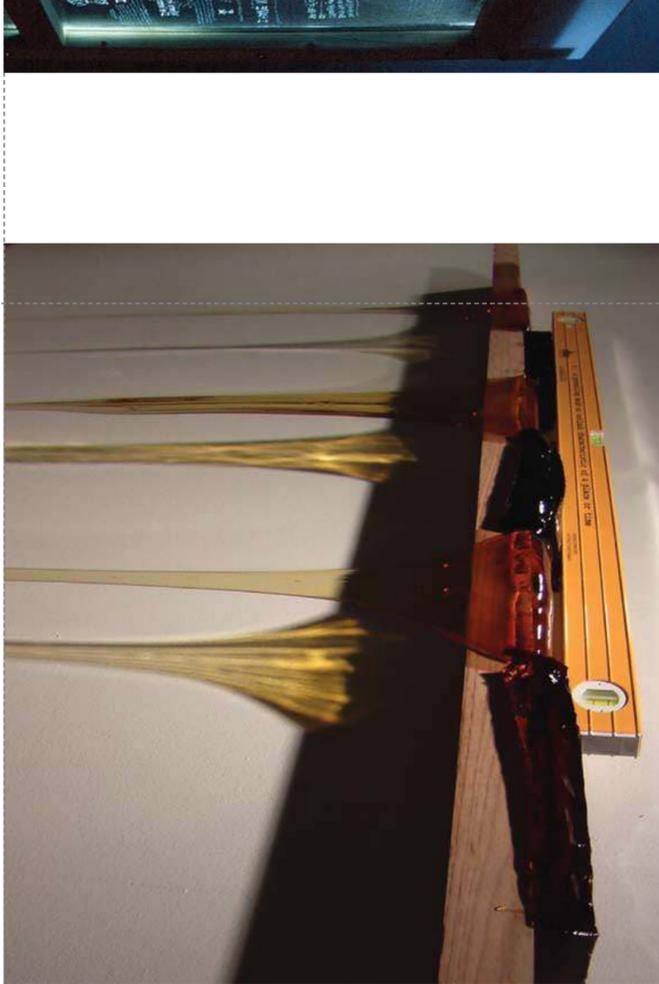


Fig 11



Fig 3.



Fig 5.



Fig 5.