NEWCASTLE ARTSPACE MENTORSHIP P R O G R A M EXHIBITION LOCUS FOCUS 26 NOV - 6 DEC 2020



Newcastle Art Space 91 Chinchen Street, Islington Newcastle NSW 2296 www.newcastleartspace.org.au

Chair's message

On behalf of the Board and members of Newcastle Art Space, I am proud to present this collection of strong and exuberant work by some of the Hunter Region's most talented and dedicated artists. *Locus Focus* is the culmination of the Newcastle Art Space Mentorship Program, which we ran for the first time in 2020, and which we hope to be able to offer again in 2021 and beyond.

Our goal is to provide our most promising emerging artists in the Hunter Region the opportunity to further their creative and professional development through access to mentoring with exceptional local arts practitioners.

As part of the 2020 program, we paired emerging curator Catherine Tempest with Dr Annmarie Murland and set them the task of bringing together an exhibition that would explore and present the program outcomes. We are delighted with the result. Catherine's thoughtful approach, which zeros in on the concept of growth as practice, has proven fertile ground for exploring the value of mentoring.

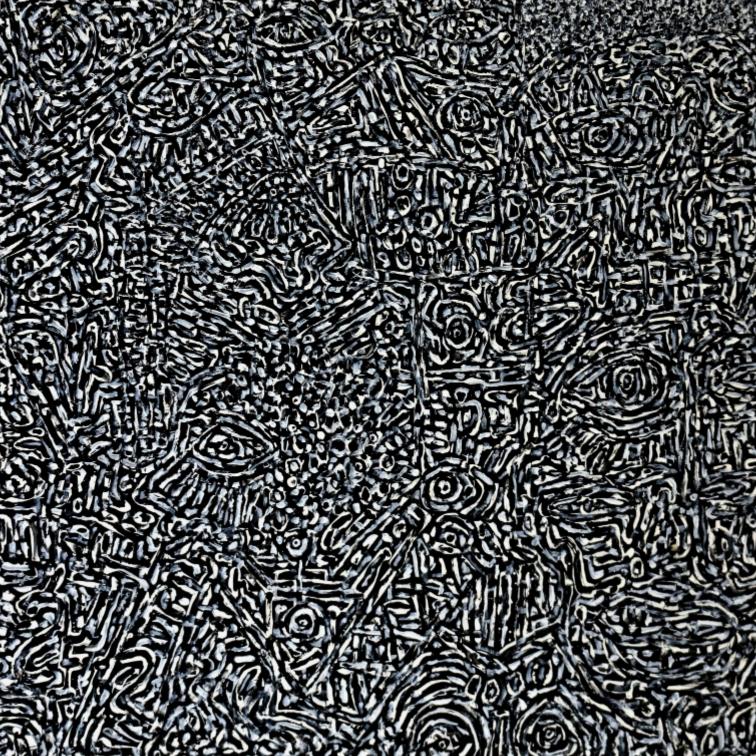
It is wonderful to see the outcomes of this program in the work presented, and to read the statements of the participants, which give insight into the creative process and highlight the benefits of the mentoring relationship.

On behalf of the organisation, I would like to thank everyone who has helped make the 2020 program a success. I would especially like to acknowledge Melinda McMillan, who conceived this exciting new program and made it happen for Newcastle Art Space. I would also like to thank Michelle Turvey, our selection panel, John Barnes and Lisa Who, and our mentors who have given so generously of their time and expertise. Thanks to our generous event sponsor, SHAC Architects, with whom we are very proud to partner. Thanks also to our amazing 2020 mentees. We wish them well as they take their next steps in their creative careers.

I hope you enjoy *Locus Focus*, a show of strength and promise that comes at the end of such a challenging year.

Kara Wood

Chair



Introduction

"I see a curator as a catalyst, generator and motivator - a sparring partner, accompanying the artist while they build a show, and a bridge builder, creating a bridge to the public."

Hans-Ulrich Obrist

The 2020 inaugural Mentorship Program at Newcastle Art Space concludes on 27 November when the exhibition titled *Locus Focus* officially opens to the public.

Curator, mentee and exhibition maker Catherine Tempest has built her curatorial ambition around the concept and context of 'growth as practice'. Communicating meaning and purpose behind this idea found form in not only the works of art produced, but in the close contact and mutually beneficial collaborative relationships that developed between the participating artists, the curator and the NAS team, led by Leah Fawthrop.

The exhibition invites the viewer to consider the role and interpretation of its title, *Locus Focus* as a metaphor for looking and as a guide to finding meaning and understanding in the staged hang and use of gallery space. The notion of the gaze, synonymous with Western Art's history of modernism, influenced the spatial arrangement of the works of art on display alongside the overall aesthetics and content of the artworks.

A central tenet of the program was to develop individual creativity and to enhance knowledge by building professional practice relationships between the mentor and mentee. The mentorship program connected artists to share their respective ideas on visuality, to stimulate creativity and upskill material and technical knowledge that, in turn, would help shape their art practice, ways of seeing, doing and thinking.

The overall success of the exhibition is in the works of art themselves. Look slow, look long and experience the visual, read the creative and textual dialogue of the curator and the supporting essays. But more importantly, I would like you to think about the on-going personal and creative relationships that have emerged through the mentorship program.

Dr Annemarie Murland

Mentor Curator

Curatorial statement

My intent was to foster the idea of growing an art practice that prioritises learning over success and staying committed to practicing. The idea of 'growth as practice' considers the self not as complete and perfect, but open to the expertise, ideas, and contributions of others. These ideas seemed to be critical for both mentees and mentors and something they could interpret individually.

Locus Focus builds on the idea of a location (locus) where both mentee and mentor can focus their attention to enable growth. Their focus may be a process or an outcome, an area of practice or the location of that practice, a mindset or a vision, a cognitive space or a task.

Locus Focus is the embodiment of the ideas mentors and mentees developed during the program, giving form to their mentoring journey. Their ingenuity and vitality of the mentors and mentees provides a conversation with new questions and ways of thinking about their practices. They have achieved this by being playful, serious, formal, conceptual, daring, engaging and most of all energising. The artists' statements reveal how the mentees and mentors relate the concept of 'growth as practice' to the work they have contributed to Locus Focus.

Melinda McMillian, previous General Manager at Newcastle Art Space, was instrumental in my own involvement in the mentoring program. Mel encouraged me to follow through with a request to include curatorial practice as a category in the program.

The benefits of the mentoring program will open up future opportunities for me in many areas. I am looking forward to taking on new projects in 2021 and continuing to locate a focus for my practice. Thank you to Leah Fawthrop for her invaluable assistance. Thank you to Jamie Bastoli, Ash Campbell, Leah Poi and Alessia Sakoff for their installation expertise. Thank you to Dan Nelson for her support and guidance. Most of all thank you to Dr Annemarie Murland, my mentor, for steering me through the process, listening, giving me her time and sharing her wisdom. The concept of 'growth as practice' continues to be resolved in my mind as a shift in priority from growing my practice to practicing my growth

Catherine Tempest

Mentee Curator

MENTORS MENTEES

Dino Consalvo Katrina Holden

Lottie Consalvo Gillian Adamson

Virginia Cuppaidge Michelle Teear

Jen Denzin Hannah Allen Frances Johnston

Tom Ireland Nicole Wilson

Ben Kenning Matthew Hargrave

Rob Connell

Jane Lander Alessia Sakoff

Dan Nelson Judith Hill

Nigel Milsom

Pablo Tapia Liss Finney
Justin Hamilton

Gavin Vitullo Jamie Bastoli

Kara Wood Emma Wilks

Mentor Curator Mentee Curator

Annemarie Murland Catherine Tempest

DINO CONSALVO

Sandstone bush (en plein air), gouache on ply, 390 x 550mm framed

When I had been placed with Katrina Holden as my mentee, it seemed right. I was curious about her work and process. Katrina and I discussed finding one's own visual language. We talked about the importance of composition and contrast in reference to Katrina's use of fundamental design elements. We visited the uncomfortable feelings of doubt and how to work through it.



I suggested she join me 'en plein air' and use her own abstract language. She took it on with positive results. It has inspired me to try extending my own vocabulary. I found the mentorship worked both ways, sometimes Katrina became the mentor and I became the mentee. As artists we can always learn, no matter what age or stage of our art careers. It has made me think about the things I rely on in my art practice that we often take for granted. Like any relationship, the one we have with art is no different, we have to constantly work on it.

KATRINA HOLDEN

Untitled, mixed media on rag paper on board, 450 x 670mm Untitled, mixed media on rag paper on board, 2 x each 145 x 210mm

Katrina Holden completed her Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) at the University of Newcastle in 2017 after spending a month in Rome at the Institute of European Design. She is particularly interested in the application of paint and expressive mark making for its ability to



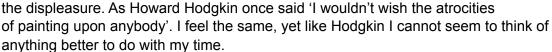
capture the feeling of the landscape rather then creating an exact representation of it.

During the mentoring program Katrina joined her mentor, Dino Consalvo, to paint en plein air to extend her regular practice of painting in the studio to painting outdoors.

LOTTIE CONSALVO

In falling, 2020, acrylic on linen, 1830 x 1220mm

How do we push on and renew the act of making in the 21st century with so much baggage and history in our wake? Is the past both eternal and unavoidable in our work or is there still new ground to cover? I believe so. The more I make art the less I know, especially painting. The very moment I begin to feel any kind of command is the same moment I know it is time to move on to a territory where I am unanchored again. It's not a nice process but one I encourage. I don't know if I even like painting, it hurts me too much, I am constantly disappointed and yet I keep doing it. Perhaps I take a satisfaction in the displaceure. As Howard Hodgkin once said it wouldn't wish the atre



GILLIAN ADAMSON

42 John St, acrylic on linen, 400 x 600mm

Beryl, wardrobe and belongings, 1300 x 700 x 400mm

I was drawn to capture and emulate a certain kind of life - a simple house with plain possessions, not adhering to any current trends. Objects that had had their place for 50 years. In the midst of the havoc in the world, I was ultimately drawn to images of scenes of life that were not extraordinary, but rather a simple life, a well lived life. At times this exploration felt like an





intrusion into the most intimate part of a person's life but it also felt like an exploration of something universal. Most of us have to face getting old and all that it entails. Eventually the life we know is stripped away, not just of our loved ones and possessions but also of times and values we understood innately as our own. I found myself feeling somewhat melancholic, not just for an era that reminded me of my grandparents and personal loss, but for something we may have lost from that era.

VIRGINIA CUPPAIDGE

Spring wisteria, acrylic on canvas, 610 x 910mm

Having moved to Newcastle from New York three years ago, the main influence on my work is the trees and the flowers appearing in inner city homes and gardens. The flowers with the sea air create an exquisite perfume unique to Newcastle. Always influenced by my immediate environment, this painting *Spring Wisteria* is



one in a series titled *Flowers*. The geometry of fractals is the underlying element in my work. I still refer to Giotto's first understanding of perspective. Lee Krasner's work is an influence as she tried to achieve an allover concept while remaining totally abstract. Seeing Janet Dawson's abstract paintings in Gallery A Sydney during the 1960s is still a great inspiration.

MICHELLE TEEAR

Mum, egg tempera paint on birch plywood, 600 x 400mm

I learnt how to talk about art. The mentorship with Virginia Cuppaidge taught me how to see art and the world from different perspectives, to try new things. It also confirmed for me that as artists we never stop learning, and we never stop doubting ourselves, it's a continual challenge that we rise to every day. We're all the same in that, no matter what career stage we're in.

Virginia suggested trying a different subject from my love of landscape, a portrait.



This is a portrait of my mother, Judy Teear, born on Thursday Island in 1953, to two light house keepers. Her childhood was remote and her adult life one of making her own way in the world without the guidance of a mother whom she'd left back home. It is alo a portrait of my love for her, of the tensions that exist between generations and familial bonds, and the frustrations of witnessing ageing in those you love.

JEN DENZIN

Mentoring passes the baton. It connects artistic heritage and influence from artist greats like Del Kathryn Barton, Louise Bourgeois, Chris Ofili, Yayoi Kusama, and design duet, Romance Was Born, to us. 'Maman', a giant spider mother, is one of Bourgeois' best known works. Our mentorship is fundamentally based on growing strengths and one hundred percent indulgence in whatever interests us as artists.'Bonne Maman' loosely translates as 'grandmother', suggesting cocoons or metamorphosis and even spiderlings emerging, spinning a dragline and ballooning away.



HANNAH ALLEN

A comfort blanket for childhood dreaming, graphite an inkjet on paper, rhinestones, glue, silk thread, leaf skeleton, sequins, organza and dye, 1200, 1100mm

This work is my first on fabric as well as my first non-figurative piece. It is a series of departures and marks me stepping outside my comfort zone - so it is ironic that its first initial beat began as a comfort blanket. A tactile journey to wrap around the world and soak up all the tears. The beauty of doing this is that it flows directly from the relationship Jen has gifted me with.



She is unfailing generous, compassionate and a firm believer of moving forward fearlessly. Through this partnership, she has helped renew my childlike sense of wonder and excitement for adventure. So Jen, I thank you, and as I leave this work - I tread lightly - reciting to myself 'No Fear'.

FRANCES JOHNSTON

My works for *Locus Focus* act as signposts or moments of the year and my journey to embrace change. They are love letters, maps, never-ending lists made up of grief, anger, frustration, and passion. They are the cocoon exploding like the big bang and finally, the moment you have emerged from the cocoon...your new shiny self, only to realise that there are more changes to come. It is inevitable and you find yourself in another cocoon ready for the next round of growth.



The emerging artist mentorship through Newcastle Art Space gave me an invaluable opportunity to create works that pushed and stretched me in exciting new directions. It helped me develop my own language as an artist. My mentor Jen Denzin encouraged and guided me to experiment with new ideas and to trust my instincts as an artist. I am incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity. Without it I would not be heading in the direction I am today.

Denzin J., Allen H., Johnston F., Bonne maman, mixed media installation, various dimensions

TOM IRELAND

Prelude to flight III, corten steel, various dimensions

A commission for seven pelicans several years ago afforded me the opportunity to further explore the form and character of these incredible creatures.

Living perched on a cliff at the Cowrie Hole for six years allowed for up close examination, a daily diary that was an invaluable resource for a commission a decade in the future.



Stylised to create gracious lines and complimentary negative space, my interpretation of snap shot moments, from various states of being a pelican, are intended to capture mood rather than realism.

This was the main focus of my practice when Nicole came to be mentored, so followed her introduction to these forms and medium, as well as my methodology.

NICOLE WILSON

The divine flows freely through me. corten steel, stainless steel, copper, pharmaceuticals. various dimensions

For this piece I have moved away from the feminine malleable properties of copper, to a piece of corten steel to represent a rusty outdated pyramid. Like a metronome in the tempo rubato this year my rhythm was off. A year of expansion turned into one of contraction. The figurative graph was inspired by Kurt Vonnegut and his research The Lie That Every Story



Has In Common. My energy was zapped by the hazy mask of pharmaceuticals, time was unravelling and reshuffling. Growth I expected in practice had to take place elsewhere, while I found room for change. Is growth a straight line, always uphill?

BEN KENNING

This goes with that, acrylic on canvas, 480 x 580mm Disintegration, synthetic polymer on board, 550 x 550mm

Ben Kenning is a painter and mixed media artist from Newcastle whose work focuses on drawing, painting, assemblage, installation and live artworks. Kenning

completed his Bachelor of Fine Art, Honours at the University of Newcastle in 2016.





Kenning has developed his own visual vocabulary complete with recurring motifs, signs, and symbols which give meaning to the dichotomy of the everyday and the absolute. The surfaces of Kennings paintings can vary from patterned, rhythmic colour field paintings embedded with imagery in colour or black and white, to abstract and expressive paintings of the figure. The process by which Kenning paints, and the symbols and the codes embedded within, infuse meaning in the artworks. The artist's conceptualisation concerns a synthesis of opposites involving philosophical, spiritual and existential ideas. The artist attempts to articulate a balance between motion and rest; matter and void; chaos and order, whilst redefining conventional notions of mental, physical and spiritual realities.

MATTHEW HARGRAVE

The squatter, mixed media, 600 x 500mm Town bike III, oil on canvas, 900 x 600mm

My art is a struggle to take hold of truth and beauty through a conceptual depiction of the human experience, in essence a non-conscious process. I aim for the soul,





first with aesthetic appeal, originality and then the unpredictable, unintentional, accidental and illusive.

It has been well said that 'none of this is real but it is all true'.

My main influences include Modigliani, Schiele, Roualt, Nolan, Hester and Souza. I might fall into the category of a figurative impressionist who focuses on psychological and emotional themes. I am self taught except for the invaluable help of my mentor in this program.

JANE LANDER

At the close of day, oil on board, 900 x 1800mm

This painting has had a long lead in time and many incarnations. I'm still not sure if it's finished but it talks about living locally, enjoying what I have and seeing the magic.



ALESSIA SAKOFF

Grow till tall no. 2, ink and gouache on canvas. 1420 x 1790mm

Drawing landscapes out of the abstract and chaos, I aim to motivate audiences to protect the beauty and strength of nature. For me, beauty is found in the natural world, in all the unpredictable and uncontrollable forces of nature. From overgrown weeds and vines to the regrowth of new seedlings from the carcass of a fallen tree, every detail should be realised and protected. The balance



between abstraction and representation is also a symbol of our current position on the scales of environmental harmony, and we choose which way we tip.

NIGEL MILSOM

Judo-House Pt 9 birdland, oil on Belgium linen, 500 x 600mm, image courtesy of The Commercial

Nigel Milsom was born in 1975 in the southern New South Wales city of Albury. He completed a Bachelor of Arts (visual arts) at the University of Newcastle in 1998, and then undertook postgraduate studies at the College Of Fine Arts of the University of New South Wales, gaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts (honours) in 1999 and a Master of Fine Arts (by research) in 2002. Milsom has been a finalist



in the Archibald Portrait Prize four times, which he won in 2015 with a portrait of colourful Sydney identity Charles Waterstreet. In 2012 he won the Sir John Sulman Prize for genre painting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. He has also been a finalist in the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize on three occasions, winning it in 2013 with his portrait, Uncle Paddy. His work is held in Public, Corporate and private collections in Australia and overseas.

ROB CONNELL

- 1. Leaving home, oil charcoal ink, 600 x 425mm
- 2. Intuition, oil charcoal ink, 425 x 225mm
- 3. Post sneeze, oil charcoal ink, 425 x 225mm
- 4. 2000 words, oil charcoal ink, 425 x 225mm
- 5. Sun, oil charcoal ink, 425 x 225mm
- 6. Fear not the white canvas, for it fears you, oil charcoal ink. 425 x 225mm
- 7. I will no longer be your model, oil charcoal ink, 425 x 225mm
- 8. Not all Whiskey is good Whiskey, oil charcoal ink, 600 x 425mm

This series captures self-portraits of facial formations that would not usually be subject to painting. As the people attempt to become better versions of themselves aesthetically through social media, this series takes a step back and enjoys the moments that make up one's characteristics and personality, in this case, my own. The face after realising you have ordered a wrong drink, the moment after a sneeze, frowning in contemplative states as well as moments of glee and profound thought. Blended with using scrap boxes used from moving homes this year, creates a personal story. This less precious material allowed me to become open to experimenting with oils/charcoal and ink on cardboard in ways that were familiar and some that challenged me and in the end opened a new style of practice to continue on into the new year.









DAN NELSON

Wanderlust parts 1-4, oil on Arches huile paper on panel, 308 x 408mm (each part)



This work is called *Wanderlust*. It is about the desire to venture into the unknown as a painter. Of course, we artists never do that completely alone. This work makes many references to artists who mentored me directly and whose words are often in my mind as I paint, especially those of Paul Milburn, who would pace around the studio muttering 'lost and found, lost and found'. One of the things I love most about painting is the sense of never being able to stay in the one spot. The process always seems to land me somewhere new, yet strangely familiar.

The panoramic format reflects the shared interest Judy and I have for the long-range view - whether a sweeping horizon or shifting focal point. For me, the format comes from working in sequences that chronicle the process of observing and being in the landscape. Looking back, I can see the incremental steps, side journeys and dead ends that trace my growth.

JUDITH HILL

Finesterre, mixed media on paper, 400 x 1640mm

My current work is based on how we perceive the horizon



and its effect on how we see ourselves. What happens when one walks towards the horizon? Is there a feeling of anticipation, endlessness, infinity or is it one of completeness? Do we view the horizon as if we are the vertex where geometrical points meet from points at the edge of the earth we see? Or is it the beginning or the end of a circle or sphere?

Working with varied mark making techniques and applications on paper with oil paint, acrylic, charcoal and pure pigment, I began a trial series of six individual works which became one. Slicing the works and piecing them together meant there was an added, less defined dimensional aspect and allowed a disturbed peripheral view. The textures, lines and forms which maintained the common thread now relied on a horizontal line extending through the work.

PABLO TAPIA

Fer, oil on board, 300 x 250mm

Fer (short for Fernanda) is a wonderful little girl who comes to visit my Mum and rules the roost as if she was the queen of a castle. So what better way than to celebrate this magical moment in her life with a direct portrait.

Fine art portraiture has had many functions and connotations over the centuries. For me today it is a way people show their love and care for the unique individuals who are significant in their lives.



This journey has allowed me to give people the possibility to find and express themselves in an unique and heartfelt manner. To give them a way to manifest their deep care for others and their true power. Whether they are my students, clients or sitters we approach from different directions but we meet over common ground; a sharing and magical space where images and emotions are the universal language of the spirit.

LISS FINNEY

Soft Safe James, oil on canvas, 1020 x 760mm Soft Safe Kyle, oil on canvas, 710 x 510mm

Working with Pablo, I was focused on technique and developing and extending my skill set through a series of portraits which explore masculinity, power dynamics and the rejection of femininity in society. Examining the bounds of traditional and often toxic ideas of what defines masculinity and the historical art cannon of the





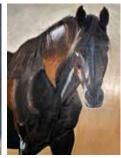
nude, I set out to ask typically 'masculine' presenting men if they could be comfortable in embracing traditionally feminine poses. To capture and give an opportunity to reveal sides of themselves that may not otherwise be celebrated within the confines of social expectations. The series aims to encourage an examination of our own internalized ideas of femininity and the limitations we place on it's acceptance depending on one's gender or sexual orientation. And above all, asking both the sitter and the viewer, can men be soft, and safe?

JUSTIN HAMILTON

Kicking and screaming, oil on canvas, 1220 x 915mm, POA Hamilton J. Dark horse, oil on canvas, 1220 x 915mm, POA

These are my horses. Their energy and presence are inextricably linked to significant stages in my life, so it is in their honour that I undertook their portraits, to celebrate the joy they have given me and the majesty of their grace to allow me into their powerful place.





I have drawn motivation and inspiration from the spirit of my place, my family, my animals, and my architectural training. I have utilised trusted elements of design including geometry, proportion, golden section, and negative space. I have explored different techniques from palette knife to fine brushwork, thick paint to scumbling thin layers. I have made plenty of mistakes and along the way, enjoyed delightful surprises. My love of painting and my love of horses united to ensure my attention to the task over twelve months has been unwavering.

To my mentor and friend, Pablo Tapia (M Phil Fine Arts), thank you.

GAVIN VITULLO

The beholder, wooden sculpture, various dimensions

A cast shadow of fallen procession leads to the progressive form of an awakened beholder, bearing witness to it's own creation right before *The narrow door*. The traversing dialogue of blackened forms explores the eternal questions of passage and perception through universal symbolism.

The Beholder is the mentor's direct response to The narrow door, a sculpture presented by the mentee after a year long philosophical journey of creation and introspection.



JAMIE BASTOLI

The narrow door, India ink and epoxy on recycled mirror panels, reclaimed timbers, varnish, tint and caranuba wax, brass door handles, 1710 x 530 x 100mm

The narrow door stems from an assemblage practice that salvages waste materials into spatial symbols, using architecture as an armature for the human body to incite introspection.

In contemplation of eternity and spiritual destruction, the narrow door became an internal wayfinder into my own existential phobias and illusions of self, and would not have reached a finite point without the guidance of another kindred spirit. The challenges posed in the transformation of reclaimed wood and mirror unravelled a cathartic release and an incessant urge to conceal; as I poured layer after layer over my own reflection, I experienced an obliteration of self and subsequent release from definition.

The mentorship process with Gavin has allowed me to reach into deeper aspects of vulnerability and sensitivity in crucial points of the making process, both technically and conceptually. The work is a pivotal transition from assemblage into sculptural object, the first intentional sculptural component in a larger installation.

KARA WOOD

Half the time I don't know what the fuck I'm doing, acrylic on ply 1000 x 1000mm (painting), thrown and altered porcelain, underglaze 1100 x 400 x 400mm (ceramics)

Mentoring Emma was a joyful experience, she was full of such exuberance and enthusiasm. It was exciting to observe her shift from 2D to 3D, to watch her let go of controlling an outcome - a vital skill for anyone who works in clay.

My piece, *Half the time I don't know what the fuck I'm doing,* responds to this skill and way of working. It is autobiographical, it represents me, the mentor/mentee relationship and the crazy new world of 2020. My work playfully questions the arbitrarily assigned

roles of form and function. It is full of contradictions, nothing makes sense, the pieces seem as if they could shift in a moment, the text eludes you, yet there is a feeling of joy, as if perhaps all is not bad in this new nonsensical realm.

EMMA WILKS

Letting go to grow, textiles, multimedia on paper clay, $8 \times 8 \times 450 \times$

Walls down, doors open, mixed media and paper clay, 5 x each 200 x 350 x 350mm

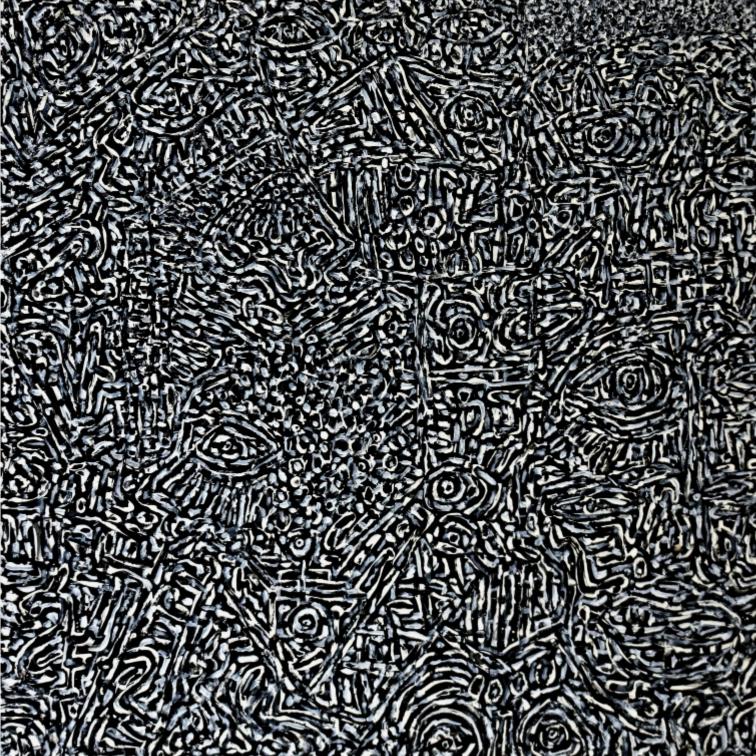
Little lifeboats, mixed media on stoneware clay, 21 x each 40 x 30 x 30mm

My comfort lies with works on paper and printmaking, therefore I wanted to focus on experimentation with form; in particular ceramics and the process of letting go of the control I possess when using paper as a surface. Ceramics allowed me to have to

stand back and go with the tactile and physically nature of working with 3D forms.



These three installations are built around many things: intuition, experimentation, repetition and simplicity. The organic nature of the forms is much different than what was previously visioned. My vision was something angular, very controlled and mathematically challenging (for me anyways) but was so difficult to create that I lost the interest and love that I have in my usual practice. Because of this I learnt many things throughout this mentorship with Kara. I learnt to let go a little, to let things play out on their own and learn to grow as an artist and as a person.





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