

the  
churchie



**EMERGING ART PRIZE 2020**



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churchie

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ART PRIZE  
2020**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where the IMA now stands. We pay our respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

04	Foreword
06	<i>A CRACK IN THE SURFACE</i> by Talia Smith
10	Nathan Beard
12	Tom Blake
14	Jess Bradford
16	Martin George
18	Yasbelle Kerkow
20	Guy Louden
22	Lachlan McKee
24	Georgia Morgan
26	Nabilah Nordin
28	James Nguyen
30	Emily Parsons-Lord
32	Marina Pumani Brown
34	Athena Thebus
36	Artwork Details
39	Sponsors

# Foreword

The Institute of Modern Art is proud to partner once again with the churchie emerging art prize to present and celebrate the work of thirteen emerging artists. Despite a year filled with setbacks, including the postponement of the prize, the finalists' exhibition is a beacon in the dark, showcasing the continuing strength and diversity of emerging art practices in Australia.

Since its inception in 1987 the prize has adapted and grown with the changing world of contemporary art. After outgrowing its original home at the Anglican Church Grammar School, the prize partnered with some of Brisbane's leading university art museums to present its finalists' exhibition, before making the IMA its home in 2019.

With the IMA in 2020 'the churchie' adopted a new modus operandi, seeking to take a holistic and sustainable approach to supporting emerging artists. Finalists were selected based on their practice as a whole rather than single works, and a smaller number of finalists ensured curator Talia Smith could work closely with each to put their best work forward. Over several months of conversations and many (virtual) studio visits the exhibition you see in the gallery came together.

This year's finalists' exhibition takes the form of a group show in which individual artworks pick up threads from one another and cumulatively provide a considered and layered perspective on our current moment. Talia Smith frames the show as demonstrating the potential of failure in a somewhat failed year, "...looking at it as a driving force, to question and rethink the way we interact with each other and the world."

The prize is intended to give public recognition, encouragement, and provide financial support to artists. The IMA and 'the churchie' each recognise the precarious state that emerging artists exist in—an example being the competitive and often unrewarding nature of prizes—and in an effort to create a more sustainable career for artists industry standard artist fees and freighting support was provided to all finalists.

'the churchie' represents an important part of the IMA's mission to champion contemporary art and artists at all stages of their careers. The exhibition process provides an opportunity for artists to develop and professionalise their practice, work with a curator peer, and reach new audiences through the exhibition.

The IMA and 'the churchie' committee congratulate and thank the finalists and acknowledge the assistance of curator Talia Smith, whose role has been generously supported by Armitstead ART Consulting. The exhibition is testimony to the continued support of our sponsors and in particular our immense thanks must go to long-time sponsor BSPN Architecture for their support and investment in an emerging artists' practice with their generous major prize donation.

A Special Commendation Prize donated by Fardoulys Constructions and two Commendation Prizes by Maddison Cleaning Services provide three additional prizes for finalists. A People's Choice Award, also sponsored by Madison Cleaning Services, will be awarded at the end of the exhibition—IMA visitors are invited to lodge their votes at the gallery. We also thank Tarun Nagesh, Curator of Asian Art, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art for his time as judge and selecting the prize winners.

**'the churchie' committee and the Institute of Modern Art**

*A CRACK  
IN THE  
SURFACE*

by

Talia Smith



Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land in which I write this text, where I live and where this exhibition takes place. I also would like to pay my respects to elders past, present, and emerging.

"But failure is always in the here and now. Failure is absolute this-worldliness. And this is its chance."<sup>1</sup>

2020 has been *A Time*.

We have had bushfires ravage the landscape, there was what felt like a momentary respite, and then COVID-19 changed everything. Simmering underneath these collective disasters has been the continued oppression and violence towards First Nations Australians, people of colour, those that rely on welfare support, and those who live with disability. This discourse has been urgent and reactionary, reflective of important civil and socio-political concerns. However what mainly hit the international newsstands was the fires and the virus. You could say 2020 has been a bit of a failure, an 'unprecedented' year that has exposed the harsh truths of the society we live in.

COVID-19 has also presented yet another challenge for the arts industry which in recent years has been hit with closures, restructures, job losses, and loss of income. There was the failed Catalyst fund in 2015, the year-on-year budget cuts, the competitive nature of funding rounds, and the resulting lack of permanent employment opportunities. Even the process of bringing together this exhibition has had its challenges due to COVID-related restrictions. Failure is not something unknown to the arts, but in many ways we thrive when something doesn't work. In Lisa Le Feuvre's introduction for the *Failure* edition of *Documents of Contemporary Art* she comments "Failure, by definition, takes us beyond assumptions and what we think we know. Artists have long turned their attention to the unrealisability of the quest for perfection, or the open-endedness of experiment, using both dissatisfaction and error as means to rethink how we understand our place in the world."<sup>2</sup> Finding the potential in failure is about removing negative connotations from the word and looking at it as a driving force, to question and rethink the way we interact with each other and the world.

The curation of this exhibition has largely taken place via digital mediums—with lockdowns and travel restrictions I have conducted online studio visits and been privy to the inside of artist's homes and studios. Exemplifying the adaptability of art, the postponement of the prize meant that a number of artists were able to produce or present new work. Georgia Morgan has produced a site-specific recreation of her mother's *kampong*<sup>3</sup>, drawing on conversations with and memories recalled by her mother. Emily Parsons-Lord presents a new video work that explores the spectacle of environmental collapse, implicating the viewer in the crumbling and cleaving of a wall and our inability to look away or to take action. Tom Blake brings together a series of mirrored and cyanotype works that delicately draw our attention to quiet moments which remind me of small, shallow breaths. Athena Thebus reimagines the biblical tale of Lot and his wife, creating an image dripping with desire.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Lot's wife didn't want to leave after all?

It seems that in a year when the failures of society are weighing heavily, the revitalising potentiality of this moment can be a thread to weave between the works. The finalists in the exhibition explore many different facets of what failure can mean in terms of the economy, culture, translation, materials, environment, and language; they explore failure as a speculative future, as a possibility, or as a point of departure. Finalists Nathan Beard and Jessica Bradford look to challenge preconceived ideas of what it means to be authentic in terms of culture. Beard uses staged, found, and archival family imagery of Thai gestures, movements, and artefacts to interrogate his own relationship to cultural authenticity while living in Perth, far from his ancestral homelands. In a similar vein Jessica Bradford uses the representations of Chinese culture seen at the Singaporean theme park Tiger Balm Gardens as a way to explore her own complex relationship to her Singaporean-Chinese lineage.

The inherent failures of art mediums have also been used as a starting point for a number of the finalists in the exhibition. Sculptor Nabilah Nordin's *Anti-Poem*, a collection of objects presented on a drop sheet, are unctuous, oozing blobs of plaster and clay precariously joined together and liable to fall and thus fail at any given moment. This self-determination is at the heart of Nordin's practice: the way materials can take on their own personalities despite our efforts to control them. Painters Martin George and Lachlan McKee also look to the medium they use and its potential failures as a generative tool. From afar George's painting *Bubble* appears as an abstracted image consisting of small squares, however closer inspection reveals flaws in each individual square owing to the imprecise nature of his technique of applying diluted paint to the canvas. McKee on the other hand, chooses to push the boundaries of the pictorial plane of painting—watered down splotches of colour clash with drawings to create images in which the foreground and background are flattened with an explosion of marks, colours, and figures all fighting for attention.

History, whether cultural or familial, plays a large part in how we shape ourselves, and as artists, our art making. James Nguyen references the history of painting through his use of commonly found skin whitening creams, commenting on the whitewashing of art history and culture. Marina Punami Brown and Yasbelle Kerkow also draw inspiration from their family and cultural histories. Kerkow sits with her aunties, learning the traditions of making vakadivilivili<sup>5</sup>, displaying the woven mats created and the conversations with family in the gallery. In her paintings Punami Brown explores her Country, the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands on which her ancestors, community, and family have walked for generations. These artists navigate connections to culture which are perpetually under threat from institutions and the colonial structures that so often fail them.

The idea of failure in our society cannot be addressed without considering economic systems. Finalist Guy Loudon takes on the financial world in his remake of the classic videogame *Snake*, combining live data from major tech companies with news headlines from the start-up world. As the game loads, text appears on screen: "You are the snake. Eat to Grow. Grow until you crash." A sentiment echoed in the financial world to a damaging degree.

“Does an artist achieve success—and therefore perhaps eventual progress—when they reach through to a spectator? Or is artistic success measured in terms of marketability or amount of money earned per year based on sales?”<sup>6</sup> If we are to talk about failure, then you have to mention its opposite—success. Another subjective term that we, as artists and as people in general are told to strive for. We turn away from failure and try to embrace success. But what does it really mean and how is it measured? For artists the tension between these two opposing notions and the resulting conversations or possibilities is where we test ourselves and learn.

There is something ironic about talking of success and failure when ‘the churchie’ is a prize with ultimately one winner. In *Thoughts on Failure, Idealism and Art* (2008) a group of artists and writers talk about the dichotomy between failure and success, commenting “Perhaps artistic success (and failure) is a much more insubstantial, esoteric and flimsy thing that cannot be measured or quantified or which cannot even be related to progress...”<sup>7</sup> At the heart of the prize and the finalists’ exhibition is the opportunity to recognise the breadth of what ‘emerging Australian art’ can mean in 2020. It is to see a range of artists from different backgrounds presenting their practices and the conversations that can happen between works in the gallery. There may not be a concrete measurement of success but that does not matter, what does matter is what the artists in this exhibition represent—the diversity, scope, and strength captured within the practices of emerging artists in Australia.

This year has exposed the cracks in the surface and made visible what has always been lurking below. I do not know what the future holds, I cannot say what even the rest of this year will look like, but what I hope for is a reshaping of this ‘failure’; an acknowledgement that things need to change and steps toward collective action.

**Talia Smith, ‘the churchie’ 2020 curator**

<sup>1</sup> Hans-Joachim Muller, “Failure as a form of art”, 2009, in *Failure*, ed. Lisa Le Feuvre (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 200.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Le Feuvre, “Strive to Fail”, *Failure*, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 12.

<sup>3</sup> A village, in this instance in Malaysian terms where the artists mother is from.

<sup>4</sup> In the bible Lot and his family lived in Sodom, angels urge Lot and family to leave and warns them that they must not look back. At the last minute Lot’s wife disobeys taking one last look back: as punishment she turns into a pillar of salt.

<sup>5</sup> A traditional Fijian mat.

<sup>6</sup> Abaroa, Eduardo, et al. “Thoughts on Failure, Idealism and Art”, 2008, in *Failure*, ed. Lisa Le Feuvre (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 215.

<sup>7</sup> Abaroa, Eduardo, et al.

# Nathan Beard

Nathan Beard's installation *White Gilt 3.0* (2020) unpacks the cultural associations of particular hand gestures in Thai culture, focusing on the artist's relationship to the *wai*; the prayer-like gesture used as a customary greeting in Thailand. This visually extravagant collection of images filters Beard's Thai-Australian heritage through cultural anxieties like his self-conscious reluctance toward performing the *wai* growing up in Australia. Given the historically hybrid notion of an 'authentic' Thai culture, Beard finds creative potential in attempting to define what 'Thainess' entails. He asks what it means to inherit a nuanced relationship to a culture which you are distanced from through biographic and geographic circumstances.

Nathan Beard is a Perth-based interdisciplinary artist whose work addresses the complex interplay of culture and memory in the shaping of identity. Beard's practice situates sincere and intimate exchanges with his Thai family alongside broader cultural signifiers to generate slippages of identity and query 'Thainess.' Within this collision of aesthetic and emotional influences Beard's practice personalises broader perspectives around diasporic identity.

Beard holds a Bachelor of Arts (Arts) with First Class Honours from Curtin University. He has recently exhibited at Firstdraft (2020), Cool Change Contemporary (2019), Bus Projects (2019), Turner Galleries (2018), and Art Gallery of Western Australia (2017). In 2017 Beard was selected for the 4A Beijing Studio Program, shortlisted as a finalist for the John Stringer Prize, and awarded Highly Commended in the Fremantle Art Centre Print Award.



# Tom Blake

Tom Blake's *if the leaves are still there* (2020) and *floating line* (2020) are created by drawing into the back of painted mirrors with etching tools to reveal fragmented loops and streams of golden light. The 'loop' and the 'stream' are both generative elements within Blake's practice, appearing through the arrangement and display of objects in the gallery and via the repetition of imagery and gestures across multiple forms and sites. Objects with a haptic relationship to our hands are also prevalent in Blake's work, bringing our attention to these quiet moments of convergence.

Tom Blake's solo and collaborative practice contemplates the psychological, architectural, and technological frameworks that surround us through fragmented moments, looped imagery, and recurring motifs. Drawing is the starting point for many of Blake's works, over time becoming fragmented, transposed, and re-composed.

Blake has exhibited in Australia, Japan, and Italy, been a finalist in Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) Print Award, the Fisher's Ghost Art Award, the CLIP Award, The Blake Prize, and has been awarded a Clitheroe Foundation Emerging Sculptor Mentorship. Blake's work has been exhibited at Artspace, AGWA, FAC, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), Murray Art Museum Albury, c3 Contemporary Artspace, Firstdraft, and KNULP. Blake is also part of momo doto, an ongoing collaboration with Dominique Chen.



Tom Blake, *loop (uu)*, 2020, cyanotype, artist-made frame, 30 x 40cm.

# Jess Bradford

Jess Bradford's recent work explores her relationship to her mixed-race heritage through the iconography of a Chinese cultural theme park in Singapore named The Tiger Balm Gardens. The park depicts traditional Chinese folklore, myths, and history with outlandishly painted concrete sculptures and giant dioramas set within fabricated grottos and mountain-scapes. Privately built in the 1930s by the Burmese-Chinese brothers behind the medicated ointment 'Tiger Balm' and publicly bought in the 1980s, the park has been renovated several times by various owners to portray different representations of Chinese culture. Having visited the park as a child, Bradford uses this site to explore her ambivalent connection to Singaporean-Chinese culture, examining how the park relates to broader narratives of cultural inheritance, collective memory, and national identity.

Jess Bradford is a Singaporean-born and Sydney-based artist working across painting, ceramics, video, and installation. Her work explores her mixed-race heritage by examining representations of cultural and national identity. Bradford has exhibited at various institutions and art spaces including Art Gallery of South Australia, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (2019), Bathurst Regional Art Gallery (2015), Fairfield Museum & Gallery (2014), and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest (2013). She has been a finalist in the Ramsay Art Prize, John Fries Memorial Prize, the Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, and the Jenny Birt Award. Bradford is represented by Galerie pompom, Sydney.





Jess Bradford, *An Image of a Tiger*, 2018, plywood, Tasmanian oak, metal, ceramics, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium, dimensions variable. Photo: Docqment. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie pompom.

# Martin George

Martin George's painting *Bubble* (2019) uses abstract painted forms to create a gridded colour-field surface. By using a technique of applying diluted paint in a single layer, George's direct approach creates an immediacy in the work, similar to the direct relationship between material and mark in drawing. The use of the grid as a pictorial constraint allows any subtleties created by the paint medium on the surface of the work to become apparent. The slight variances in mark-making and any small faults of the manually-painted patterning are visible up close, but become less visible from a distance as they merge into a bold colour-field. Inspired by work produced from 'Der Blaue Reiter' group in early 20th century Germany, George addresses aesthetic concerns as primary content.

Martin George is a Sydney-born, Melbourne-based artist who works with painting and drawing. He creates visual conversations between different types of mark-making—impulsive or considered—that depict imaginary environments.

George has recently exhibited at Haydens (2019) and Conners Conners (2020) and has been shortlisted for prizes including the Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize (2020, 2019), Redland Art Awards (2018), and the Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize (2017). He undertook a studio residency at Otis College of Art & Design, USA (2017) and he received a BFA (Hons.) from RMIT University (2016).



# Yasbelle Kerkow

Two of the handwoven mats in Yasbelle Kerkow's *Our Inheritance* feature motifs from Fijian women's tattoo designs. The markings represent a visual language that are indicative of her *mataqali* (clan), the role they play in the *vanua* (community/land), and are influenced by their environment. These motifs have been woven into the mats using *somo* (black pandanus fibre) created using a natural dying process in which the *voivoi* (pandanus) is buried in iron-rich soil of the mangrove swamp for a number of days before being boiled with purple leaves.

The other mat in the series is a *vakadivilivili*, a mat only made by those from the island Batiki and a traditional mat for the *yavusa toranibau* clan. Kerkow collaborated with her Aunty Baki and Aunty Salai who passed on their knowledge and teachings. The sound piece is a conversation between the three family members as they sit together weaving, conveying how these intergenerational conversations become woven into the works themselves.

"I call it a blessings because she's [Yasbelle] here and she really wants to learn something from our family, it's our inheritance from our family it's our identity, this is our identity, our traditional mat and I'm so glad that Yasbelle wants to learn"—Excerpt taken from a conversation with Kerkow's Aunty Baki and Aunty Salai

Yasbelle Kerkow is an Australian-born, Fijian (*vasu Batiki*, *Lomaiviti*) artist. Her work focuses on promoting Pacific communities and their stories in Australia. She is a community arts facilitator and leader of the Kulin Nations (Melbourne) based art collective *New Wayfinders*.



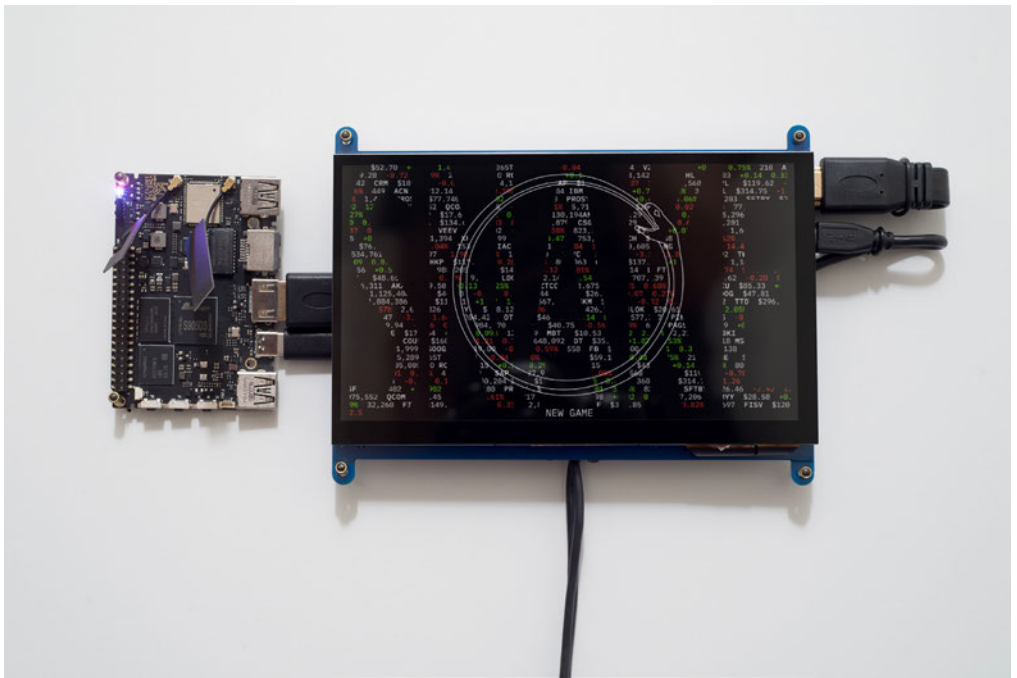
Yasbelle Kerkow, *Our Inheritance*, 2019, Voivoi (pandanus), Mat 1: 150cm x 90cm; Mat 2: 60cm x 150cm; Vakadivilivili (Batiki weave) 50cm x 70cm, sound 00:03:04. Courtesy of the artist and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

# Guy Louden

Guy Louden's *Snake* (2020), a remake of the classic videogame, is a critique of techno-capitalism. It presents the ultra-financialised tech industry as "both totally trivial and dead menacing" (Louden, 2020). The work plays on the game format of the original: the player scores points by 'eating' a dot and the snake grows until it inevitably crashes into itself. During each play-through the game pulls live information into the frame, showing real-time financial data from big tech companies alongside breaking news in the start-up scene. Between them the mythic symbol of the ouroboros (the snake that eats its own tail) slowly revolves. When the game is over, the player is always offered another game, another chance to crash again.

*Snake* is playable online at: [www.guylouden.com/snake](http://www.guylouden.com/snake)

Guy Louden is an Australian artist and curator living in Fremantle/Walyalup and born in Toronto. Louden's practice explores notions of capitalism, technology, and what the distant future may look like in the face of a societal breakdown. He has run and founded experimental galleries and curated major exhibitions. From 2014 to 2016 Louden was a director of Moana Project Space and in 2015 he co-founded and managed Success, a large-scale art space in Fremantle. Louden's artwork has been exhibited in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, and online.



# Lachlan McKee

Lachlan McKee's paintings *Blocks* (2020) and *House* (2020) explore the pleasures and failures of the pictorial plane in painting. McKee plays with the conventions of composition, breaking down the traditional separation between figure and ground to create a more ambient and fluid image-world. This language is composed of plastic colours, meandering contours, and abstract shapes that interact dynamically and dance on the precipice of becoming resolved figures. McKee's works play with the depth of the image, layering forms over each another, forming them to rise and then recede creating a complex visual web that plays with the eye.

Lachlan McKee's practice boils down the logic of pleasure, desire, and cultural production through painting, collage, and animation. Born in 1998, McKee lives and works in Melbourne. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) with Distinction from the Queensland College of Fine Art and is currently studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts.





Lachlan McKee, *Blocks*, 2020, acrylic on polycotton, 61 x 51cm.

# Georgia Morgan

Georgia Morgan's *This dream is real* (2020) is a site-specific installation that references the Malaysian *kampong* (village) that her mother grew up in. This work looks at intergenerational relationships and the failure inherent in translating memories—there are no photos that exist of her mother's *kampong* and so the artist solely relies on her mother's words and memories via Skype conversations.

"I have been skyping my mum in Sydney from Hobart. We talk about the kampong she grew up in. I try to get a lay of the land. She mainly tells me stories about people; her neighbours fighting with one another; when her dad died suddenly and her mum and twelve siblings moved house; and her Christian friend giving her high heels donated from some British church." (Morgan, 2020). This installation is the result of these conversations. In the artists words: "She is remembering and I am imagining." (Morgan 2020).

Georgia Morgan lives and works in Lutruwita/Tasmania. Her practice explores the assumed hierarchies of materials and places through site-based research, performance/invented ritual, and sculptural installations. She uses photocopies, building materials, and detritus, assembled with ceramics, videos, and paintings that result in a blending of 'high' and 'low'. Morgan graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art in 2019 and was the recipient of the Bett Gallery Award.



Georgia Morgan, *Paradise Utility*, 2019, pine, screws, bugles, cage door, cable ties, corrugated iron, found timber, air conditioning tube, rope, weed mat, staples, pipe cleaner, blue tarp, sindoor, ash, foam, texta, wire fence, basket, yellow waders, orange safety mesh fence, cupboard door, paint, windshield sun shade, electrical conduit, buoy, shade cloth, fibre glass, besser blocks, hot water urn, saree, 250 x 141 x 200cm. Photo: Remi Chauvin.

# Nabilah Nordin

Nabilah Nordin's *Anti-Poem* (2020) "yanks objects from the immediate vicinity and drags them into its orbit" (Nordin, 2020). The sculptural installation encompasses materials like spoons, rocks, wool, hair, globules of plaster and mashed paper, and balls of doughy mulch held together by glue, string, pegs and wire. Threatening to fall apart at any moment, these forms take shape by their own volition with the material qualities dictating their final arrangement. In *Anti-Poem* Nordin resists metaphor, representation, or narrative and instead foregrounds the autonomous life force of these materials which ooze, spill, leak, splatter, fall break, and crumble.

"Maybe *Anti-Poem* speaks about being a sculptor. Maybe it speaks about the childlike joy of babbling incoherently in a spongy, springy vocabulary of studio detritus and overflowing scraps. Maybe it shows the internal organs of a sculptor working." (Nordin, 2020)

Nabilah Nordin is a Singaporean-Australian sculptor. Interested in material invention, her installations embrace a wonky craftsmanship, playfully celebrating the monstrous, visceral, and anthropomorphic qualities of materials.

Nordin's work has been exhibited locally and internationally at galleries, museums, festivals, fairs, and biennales including; Institute of Contemporary Arts, Singapore Biennale, Neon Parc, The Commercial, COMA, LON Gallery, Artbank, Firstdraft, DISINI Festival, Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, and Margaret Lawrence Gallery.



*Anti-Poem*, 2020, wood, cement, sand, gravel, candle, cardboard, clay, plaster, papier mache, paper, magiclay, oven-bake clay, ceramics, fake potato, sponges, liquid nails, copper sheet, styrofoam, polyurethane foam, foam rods, wire, rubber bands, gloves, rope, house paint, spray paint, curly hair, wool, chalk, pigmented cement rocks, chicken wire, aluminium foil, metal rods, fabric, spoons and drop sheet, 103 x 150 x 200cm.

# James Nguyen

*White on White* was painted by Kazimir Malevich in 1918 representing a purity of form severed from reality and relating to sensory feeling alone. A hundred years later, James Nguyen started collecting skin whitening creams to create his work *Monochromes* (2018–ongoing). Each of these paintings represent a skin whitening product designed for treating blemishes and sunspots, lightening complexions and dark areas of skin including the erogenous zones of the genitals and armpits. Each panel is a nod to painters of important white paintings in art history: Kazimir Malevich, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Hunter, Robert Ryman, Robert MacPherson, Mark Tobey, Jasper Johns, Bram Brogart, Joseph Albers, and Ellsworth Kelly. From the institutionalised whiteness of high minimalism to the industrialised and sexualised whiteness of the beauty industry, this series engages with the monochromatic materiality of whiteness as a painterly medium.

James Nguyen uses documentary and performance, working with family and friends, to make work about the politics of art, self-representation, and collective risk. Nguyen was the recipient of the Clitheroe Foundation Scholarship and the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship.



James Nguyen, *Monochromes*, 2018–ongoing, birch panels and mixed media skin lightening products, 10 panels, 40 x 30 x 3cm each.

# Emily

# Parsons-Lord

Emily Parsons-Lord's large-scale video work *Standing Still (with practice, one may learn to accept the feelings of groundlessness)* (2020) explores climate change-induced cleaving and crumbling, and its residue as a site of extreme physical and emotional destruction. The work unmaskes the tenuousness of our foundations, both physically and emotionally, as compounding heat stress buckles infrastructure and the affecting experience of watching the world crumble perturbs the human psyche.

After the visceral spectacle of climate breakdown—flood, fire, and drought—we are often left with lingering disquiet and apprehension. In the aftermath the scale and immediacy of the emergency retracts and cools, allowing apathy to take hold until the next shocking display.

Emily Parsons-Lord's practice is concerned with air and explosions. Recent work has recreated the air from past eras in Earth's evolution, recreated starlight in coloured smoke, and experimented with pheromones, aerogel, and explosions. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally and participated in Primavera (2016), the NSW Visual Arts Fellowship (2017), Liveworks (2017), Bristol Biennial: *In Other Worlds*, (2016), John Fries Award (2018), *A BROKEN LINK*, Central St Martin's, London (2017), Stuttgart Film Winter Festival for Expanded Media, Firstdraft, and Vitalstatistix, amongst others.





Emily Parsons-Lord, *Rubbernecking (the last gasps from underfoot)*, 2018, dimensions variable.  
Commissioned by Performance Space for Sydney Contemporary, 2018. Photo: Jacquie Manning.

# Marina Pumani Brown

*Ngayuku Ngura Kuwari (My Home Now) (2019)* explores Marina Pumani Brown's connection to Country, intergenerational storytelling, and knowledge sharing. Pumani Brown's role in the larger story of cultural continuity is expressed in these paintings, which resemble abstract maps of the landscapes she knows so well. Each work is imbued with ancestral history and a distinct colour palette and design that reflects Pumani Brown's connection and celebration of culture.

Marina Pumani Brown was born in Mimili Community on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the far northwest of South Australia. She comes from a long line of strong female painters and grew up watching these women paint. Her grandmother was Milatjari Pumani, one of the most famous artists in the APY region, her mother is Betty Kuntiwa Pumani, and her aunt was Ngupulya Pumani.

Learning from these women, and beside them, she has since developed her own interpretation of the Tjukurpa passed on to her. In her art practice, Marina shows contemporary ways of seeing her ancestral knowledge, sharing insights into her experience of day-to-day community life. She references her family's homeland around Antara and Victory Well, which lie nestled in the granite hills of the Everard Ranges. Marina often spends the weekends out on country with her mother and daughter, collecting minkulpa (bush tobacco) and maku (witchetty grubs).



Marina Pumani Brown, *Ngayuku Ngura Kuwari (My Home Now)*, 2019, acrylic on linen, 2 panels, 150 x 150 x 3cm each. Courtesy of the artist and Mimili Maku Arts.

# Athena Thebus

Athena Thebus' *Angel's Warning* (2020) is inspired by the biblical story of Lot's wife. In it angels appear to Lot urging him and his family to flee the 'sinful' city of Sodom and that they will be saved if they leave immediately and never look back. Lot's wife takes one last look back at the burning city and is transformed into a pillar of salt. Historically the word Sodom has negative connotations of homosexuality which allows speculation about other, queer interpretations of this story.

*Angel's Warning* suggests that perhaps Sodom sounded like fun to Lot's wife and maybe she didn't really want to leave. Also inspired by the poet Sappho's imagery of burning with desire, this work is rich with fiery symbols—combusting columns frame the central image of Lot's wife with a tattoo of throne angels on her back. Looking at her between the burning columns as she defiantly looks back, our perspective is from Sodom, implicating us to readdress our position.

Athena Thebus uses sculpture, drawing, and writing to explore notions of desire. She has presented solo and collaborative work at Next Wave Festival, Performance Space's Liveworks Festival, Campbelltown Arts Centre, ACE Open, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, and Verge Gallery, among others. She guest edited the Runway Journal's 39th issue (2019) and is a co-director at Firstdraft, Sydney.



Athena Thebus, *Angel's Warning*, 2020, custom wallpaper, 300 x 200cm.

# Artwork Details

## **Nathan Beard**

*White Gilt 3.0*, 2020, installation, archival inkjet prints on Canson Baryta, Swarovski Elements, gold leaf, Fenty Beauty Diamond Bomb, glitter, mounting tape, framed found photograph, vinyl decal, dimensions variable.

## **Tom Blake**

*if the leaves are still there*, 2020, hand etched de-silvered mirror, light box, artist-made frame, 30 x 40cm.

*floating line*, 2020, hand etched de-silvered mirror, light box, artist-made frame, 30 x 40cm.

*loop (uu)*, 2020, cyanotype, artist-made frame, 30 x 40cm.

## **Jess Bradford**

*An Image of a Tiger*, 2018, plywood, Tasmanian oak, metal, ceramics, pastel and liquid pencil on primed aluminium, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie pompom.

## **Martin George**

*Bubble*, 2019, acrylic on cotton canvas, 183 x 152.5cm.

## **Yasbelle Kerkow**

*Our Inheritance*, 2019, Voivoi (pandanus), Mat 1: 150cm x 90cm; Mat 2: 60cm x 150cm; Vakadivilivili (Batiki weave) 50cm x 70cm, sound 00:03:04. Courtesy of the artist and Campbelltown Arts Centre.

## **Guy Louden**

*Snake*, 2020, software, hardware, live financial data and news, 13 x 30 x 3cm.

## **Lachlan McKee**

*Blocks*, 2020, acrylic on polycotton, 61 x 51cm.  
*House*, 2020, acrylic on polycotton, 61 x 51cm.

## **Georgia Morgan**

*This dream is real*, 2020, various materials, dimensions variable.

## **Nabilah Nordin**

*Anti-Poem*, 2020, wood, cement, sand, gravel, candle, cardboard, clay, plaster, papier mache, paper, magiclay, oven-bake clay, ceramics, fake potato, sponges, liquid nails, copper sheet, styrofoam, polyurethane foam, foam rods, wire, rubber bands, gloves, rope, house paint, spray paint, curly hair, wool, chalk, pigmented cement rocks, chicken wire, aluminium foil, metal rods, fabric, spoons and drop sheet, 103 x 150 x 200cm.

## **James Nguyen**

*Monochromes*, 2018–ongoing, birch panels and mixed media skin lightening products, 10 panels, 40 x 30 x 3cm each.

## **Emily Parsons-Lord**

*Standing Still (with practice, one may learn to accept the feelings of groundlessness)*, 2020, HD video, dimensions variable.

## **Marina Pumani Brown**

*Ngayuku Ngura Kuwari (My Home Now)*, 2019, acrylic on linen, 2 panels, 150 x 150 x 3cm each. Courtesy of the artist and Mimili Maku Arts.

## **Athena Thebus**

*Angel's Warning*, 2020, custom wallpaper, 300 x 200cm.





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the churchie emerging art prize was initiated by the Anglican Church Grammar School in 1987.

# Churchie.

Published on the occasion of the churchie emerging art prize  
finalists' exhibition 2020

18 September–19 December 2020

Institute of Modern Art

Judith Wright Arts Centre

420 Brunswick Street

Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006

Exhibition curator: Talia Smith

Judge: Tarun Nagesh

'the churchie' coordinator: Sarah Thomson

### 'the churchie' Committee

Diane Cross (Chair)

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ISBN: 978-1-875744-03-9

Publication date: September 2020

Catalogue designer: Sasha Taylor

Catalogue printed by: Printcraft

Cover image: Nathan Beard, *Floral Arrangement* (detail), 2019, archival inkjet print on Canson Baryta, Swarovski Elements, gold leaf, Fenty Beauty Diamond Bomb, glitter, mounting tape, 75 x 100cm.

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The IMA is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, the Australian Government through Australia Council for the Arts, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Federal, State, and Territory Governments. The IMA is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia.



