

An abstract artwork featuring a dense, textured mass of blue threads or fibers that dominates the upper and left portions of the frame. These threads hang down, creating a sense of depth and movement. The background is a dark, mottled green, with patches of white and a small area of red visible in the lower right. The overall effect is one of organic complexity and materiality.

HERE&NOW19

MATERIAL CULTURE

LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY
31 AUGUST — 7 DECEMBER 2019



MATERIAL CULTURE

HERE&NOW19: Material Culture brings together a wide range of dedicated local artists working with textiles, each differing in experience, media and technique. The term textile, or fibre, can refer to a myriad of natural and manufactured materials including fabric, thread, rope, yarn, paper and plastic. Seemingly underrepresented in the gallery context, textiles can be seen in many artists' practices throughout the state, through knitting, embroidery, loom and latch-hook weaving, or incorporating garments or found objects.

The artists in *Material Culture* each work with a distinct interpretation of textile, using divergent materials and techniques to create unique representations within the subject. A persistent thread featured in this exhibition includes a visual language created by a repetitive mark, the stitch. This industrious, intimate process signifies the relationship between the maker and the material, embodying time and meaning into the work. Production and labour are reiterated in each of the works through the use of methods varying from tedious age-old techniques of sewing and knitting, to modern commercial treatments of digital printing and laser-cutting.

Ómra Caoimhe uses hand spun yarn as line to create a narrative by knitting or gathering wool and silk. This visual language manifests itself through the act of making, by the connection between the hand, tool and material. *The Sum of the Parts* combines found objects such as loom parts and wooden spools with thread and cloth made from hand-spun wool and silk. Caoimhe incorporates devices used in the production of textiles in her installation to open a discourse around the creation of cloth and the importance that each individual part plays to form the various components required to fabricate the humble substance we know as textile.

Teelah George's characteristic large scale embroidery *Blue Biro* refers to notions of both time and language through countless repetitive marks of varying shades of blue thread, completely encasing the fabric underneath. The sea of indigo coloured stitching is reminiscent of the titular blue biro, the typical tool associated with marking paper, writing, recording time and histories. The individual stitches, alluding to letters, bring together pieces of linen in an instinctive approach, forming lines and symbols that themselves may be suggestive of text, that has either been reconfigured or unable to be translated in the literal sense. These elements meet to form a terraneous surface, echoing aerial landscapes of mountainous ranges or waves of the ocean.



The voluminous installation *(un) / fold* by Susan Roux easily deceives the eye as the folds and drapery of the material mimic fabric, when in fact the artist has heavily manipulated Canson paper to create this effect. Stained with ink then laboriously stitched with a sewing machine, paradoxically tearing the paper while repairing it, Roux creates a continuous tension between creation and destruction. The material is then further altered through traditional fashion techniques, either tediously smocking, or pleating on the only hand-powered press still left in Australia, which exists here in Leederville. The labour and techniques employed transform the nature of the thick, rigid paper as we know it, replicating the texture and treatment of cloth, yet the work is still undeniably a (very large) drawing, mere marks made on paper.

Holly Story has created an enveloping experience in her immersive installation *The Embrace*, referencing the local endangered landscape of the Banksia Woodlands. This important ecological community holds a unique collection of plants and animals that are only found together around the Swan Coastal Plain of Western Australia. Story has employed modern digital printing processes to display imagery of the Banksia canopy on sheer lengths of cotton and silk, accompanied by a looped soundtrack of field recordings. The installation transports audiences via sight and sound to an environment she holds a deep connection to, an unparalleled, expansive ecosystem at threat due to Perth's continuing urban sprawl.

In *Geometrisation of bodies (suspended animation)*, Marzena Topka unpicks and reimagines recycled office clothing into structures evocative of departmental cubicles, repurposing one type of intimate, bodily vessel (garment), into another form of personal space, this time an architectural structure. In undoing garments, Topka gains an understanding of how these pieces have been constructed, revealing the pattern that went into their making. Each piece is released from its designed confinement, recovering its autonomy before being refashioned into another configuration. The threads accumulating from this release are captured in the video *Unpicked*, now concertinaed in shape, retaining the memory of how it held things together.

The five artists in *Material Culture* apply new technologies and reimagine traditional techniques, demonstrating the fluidity of this process-driven medium and the future possibilities it may hold for contemporary art.

Joanna Sulkowski
Curator
August 2019



ARTISTS

Images left to right:

Ómra Caoimhe, *The Sum of the Parts* (detail), 2019, hand-spun tussah silk thread and wool thread, wool cloth, wooden beads, nails, bees wax and oil on curved wooden panel, loom parts and wooden spool, dimensions variable

Susan Roux, *(un) / fold* (detail), 2019, Canson paper, ink, thread, and polish, dimensions variable

Ómra Caoimhe, *The Sum of the Parts* (detail), 2019, hand-spun tussah silk thread and wool thread, wool cloth, wooden beads, nails, bees wax and oil on curved wooden panel, loom parts and wooden spool, dimensions variable

Images overleaf left to right:

Marzena Topka, *Geometrisation of bodies (suspended animation)*, 2014-19, deconstructed office clothing, dimensions variable

Holly Story, *The Embrace* (detail), 2019, Inkjet print on silk and cotton, steel rod, looped soundtrack, dimensions variable

ÓMRA CAOIMHE

Ómra Caoimhe is an emerging artist working in Western Australia. She received an Associate Degree from North Metropolitan TAFE and in 2018 graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Edith Cowan University. Most recently Caoimhe has become interested in the synthesis of the limit and the unlimited. In the writing of Simone Weil, an image of a cloth tethered to the polar axis of the world is symbolic of this synthesis and of a 'dynamic principle of becoming'. Rendered through the act of knitting cloth and the use of perspective that marries tension and line, Caoimhe's art-making processes endeavour to visually articulate this dynamic.



TEELAH GEORGE

Teelah George is a Perth-based artist working primarily in embroidery and painting. She employs archives and collections as a point of departure and questioning within her practice, drawing on the parallel ambiguities between historical record and visual art. Recent exhibitions include *No Second Thoughts*, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery WA; *World of Wounds*, Artbank, NSW; *Primavera 2017: Young Australian Artists*, Museum of Contemporary Art, NSW; and *A Soft Gap*, Gallery 9, NSW. Teelah has been a finalist in the 2017 Ramsay Art Prize and winner of the 2016 Fremantle Print Award.

SUSAN ROUX

Susan Roux is a South African born, Western Australian artist. She attained her Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts and Honours in Drawing from the University of Stellenbosch. She further acquired a Master's in Fine Arts from the University of Stellenbosch. In 2015 she completed an Advance Diploma in Visual Arts at the North Metropolitan TAFE in Perth. Her Masters thesis explored Lacan's theory on the Mirror Phase. This informed Roux's use of her inherited history and to work in the post-colonial tradition. Her work analyses and responds to the cultural legacies of colonialism. The work often refers to specific historical events as her points of departure.



HOLLY STORY

Holly Story is a visual artist based in Fremantle, Western Australia. Over the past two decades her art practice has included printmaking, embroidery, installation and sculpture. She works predominantly with craft based materials and techniques, particularly textile traditions. Her work engages with their deep history in human civilization in order to develop new meanings for this century's material culture. Her work is concerned with human perception, with lived experience and the interdependence of the human and natural world. At the heart of her practice is a 30-year relationship with her research site on the Deep River on the south coast of Western Australia.

MARZENA TOPKA

Originally from Poland, Marzena Topka has lived in Perth since 1985. She works as an Associate Lecturer for Art Open Universities Australia (OUA) Studies at Curtin University School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry (MCASI). Earlier employment as a receptionist and a clerk in small businesses and larger departments triggered her interest in the bureaucratic. Recycled office clothing and paperwork provide a malleable material for tampering and contemplating structures. Her work is characterised by versatility of media and processes often combining film, drawing, two-dimensional and three-dimensional works.



LIST OF WORKS

Ómra Caoimhe

The Sum of the Parts, 2019, hand-spun tussah silk thread and wool thread, wool cloth, wooden beads, nails, bees wax and oil on curved wooden panel, loom parts and wooden spool, dimensions variable

Teelah George

Blue Biro, 2018-2019, thread, linen and bronze, 220 x 190cm

Susan Roux

(un) / fold, 2019, Canson paper, ink, thread, and polish, dimensions variable

Holly Story

The Embrace, 2019, Inkjet print on silk and cotton, steel rod, looped soundtrack, dimensions variable

Marzena Topka

Geometrisation of bodies (suspended animation), 2014-19, deconstructed office clothing, dimensions variable

Unpicked, 2019, video of unpicked threads from deconstructed office clothing, 8:57 minutes

Networking, 2019, fused fabric modules, dimensions variable

CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover image: Teelah George, *Blue Bird* (detail), 2018-2019, thread, linen and bronze, 220 x 190 cm.
Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Thomas Rowe.



LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY
OPEN TUES - SAT 11AM - 5PM
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