

Deborah Breckenridge (she/her)

Urram (Spirit)

2023

Acrylic on canvas

Sarah Tomasetti's *Kailash North Face IV 2019* is the piece I have chosen to respond to, '*It depicts the landscape along the pilgrimage route at the base of this most sacred of peaks on the Tibetan Plateau.*'

Bleak, daunting, rigid, and uninviting is what came to mind, yet I was intrigued by its beauty and found myself exploring the ridge face and appreciating the work Sarah had done to create *Kailash North Face IV*.

Urram – A homage to my Ancestors and to the 78ers.

Urram depicts our beautiful landscape which energises me spiritually. It represents the strength, knowledge, and the influence of my ancestors, and I also pay tribute to those who have fought for our rights.

The female figure: one of us always stands out in a crowd, while other people blend into the background. The circles represent our ancestors, family, friends, and community members who are no longer here but are watching over us.

I have chosen to do my version of the Rainbow flag to bring the viewer peace and happiness.

Courtesy of the artist

Blake Lawrence (they/them)

Versus Kingii

2023

Archival pigment print on semi-metallic gloss

Made with support from Leen Rieth

Versus Kingii imagines queer practices of "dressing up" as strategies for becoming close with our earthly cohabitants. The work was inspired by the immaculate and realistic water-colours of the Clarence Valley's O'Grady sisters—works that serve as heartfelt observations of, and that shape our perceptions of, the biological world and our place within it. But what is it like to behave animal? To *feel* animal? *Versus Kingii* imagines efforts to become lizard-like. Grounded in punk, queer night-club practices of drag performance and go-go dancing and their relationship to photography—studio walls, textiles and lighting become a stage or podium for hybrid stories. Heels and nails are replaced by prosthetic reptile feet and claws. In contrast to the Romantic appeal of painting, *Versus Kingii* positions adornment and performance practice as a means of shifting our relationship to other species, re-implicating human flesh in more-than-human worlds.

Courtesy of the artist

Jana Moser (they/them)

Spiral (one)

2023

Oil on paper

Jan Hynes' 1990 artwork titled *Challenge* evokes a sense of magic, mythology and the surreal. Hynes imbeds Christian theology into much of her work. Whilst our belief systems are considerably different, I see in her work a reverence for the spiritual in nature. It is not only her representation of a unicorn (known today as a queer icon) that initially drew me in, but her playful animation of nature and scale is where I find deep interest, as my own practice explores the micro and macro of the natural world.

Walking home one warm night I spotted a nocturnal animal, identifiable by its yellow banded shell. Looking closely I saw the wet creature moving ever so slowly as if underwater, the shell spiralling upwards like a crown and its body deep blue-black glimmered in contrast.

spiral (one), is based on this rare and unique mollusc, the Mitchell's Rainforest Snail (Bangam: *Bundjalung*, Thersites *mitchellae*: Latin) and the spiral they carry with them. Endemic to Bundjalung Country they are scattered from the Richmond River to the Tweed River. A signifier of the health of our ecosystem, this large land snail is now critically endangered. For me this creature's yellow spiral inspires a world of references to the micro and macro structures within our universe. Imbedded into rag paper, abstracted under layers of oil and revealed by etching back into the surface, this spiral form signifies the distinct markings of a snail's shell and too the spiralling of our galaxy.

Courtesy of the artist

Kim Leutwyler (they/them)

Abstract after Southern Figbird

2023

Oil on canvas

Abstract after Red Cloth

2023

Oil on canvas

Giddyup II

2023

Oil on canvas

This series reflects colours and compositions from Grafton Regional Gallery's collection. I was particularly drawn to the work of the O'Grady sisters, who dedicated their artistic practice to painting watercolour botanical studies and bird life from the region. My oil paintings are an abstract interpretation from two works in particular, and I've also painted a figurative self portrait that incorporates imagery from the O'Grady Collection. This project was an incredible opportunity to break outside of my comfort zone and lean into new mark-making and artistic choices.

Courtesy of the artist

Travis Paterson (he/him)

Shearers' smoko

2023

Polaroid photographs

When I was around 14 years old I spent some time during my school holidays in a town south of Perth called Kojonup working as an offsider during shearing season: a roustabout of sorts. My father was wool pressing and had brought me down to help – perhaps so we could spend time together or perhaps so he could try to toughen up the soft, quiet boy I was at the time. In the shearing shed I found myself surrounded by this group of men, shearers whose masculinity I was unfamiliar with. They were boisterous, humorous and crude. I found them fascinating, intimidating and attractive. I was an observer to their homosocial bonding through their work and their stories. I was starkly aware of my difference. Upon encountering Bernie McDonald's *Shearer's Smoko* I was reminded of this time: something I hadn't thought about in many years.

By working with Polaroid film I am able to subvert the spatial and temporal logic usually associated with the medium. There is a displacement between the found images being used and the known cultural rules and behaviours of the medium. Drawing from the archive of Australian homoerotica I am able to construct events, realities and memories that have never occurred outside of my fantasies.

My version of *Shearer's Smoko* is a world imagined beyond the borders of Bernie McDonald's canvas. It is a suffix, an alternate possibility. It is a lament for lost opportunities and a celebration of hidden stories and encounters.

Courtesy of the artist

Alun Rhys Jones (he/him)

STRAIGHT

2023

Neon

The heteronormative telling of history with a linear, resolute idea to the future forms a narrative that doesn't allow for deviation from its ordered trajectory of procreation, progress, growth and continuity. Other readings of history until recently have been sidelined, erased or completely hidden.

In conjunction with this reconfiguring of the way histories have been told and recorded, the gender binary itself has come under scrutiny.

The work "STRAIGHT" is comprised of a white Neon, 100 cm in diameter. The word "STRAIGHT" however is spelt in a circular form, indicating that the perception of heteronormativity has shifted irrevocably away from being the centre to which all other gender identities are othered, to being itself an identity on a diverse spectrum. The work represents visually the seismic shift in gender identity and expression occurring today.

Courtesy of the artist

Alun Rhys Jones (he/him)

SUIT

2023

Charcoal, pencil, hanger

After researching the Gallery collection, it became apparent that the depiction of masculinity has followed a very traditional, heteronormative approach with images of men displayed adhering to notions of power, toughness and mateship.

In *Secret Men's Business* by Michael Zavros, traditional masculine ideals of toughness, emotional disconnection and bravado are portrayed, reinforcing tropes of acceptable masculinity within the gender binary.

Conversely within the gay community these homoerotic, masculine archetypes are often portrayed as akin to fetishized identities. Associated with power and masculine ideals, the gay community often elevates these identities as sexualised objects of desire.

For the 'Re-figuring Ground' exhibition at Grafton Regional Gallery, *Suit*, a small, tonal charcoal drawing has been created depicting a scene of connection and intimacy between two men but drawn on a fragile paper roll, unframed and hanging in the gallery space. Rather than being a highly sexualised image, it depicts a moment of emotional intimacy and vulnerability, subverting traditional notions of masculinity both from within and out of the gay community.

Courtesy of the artist