

HANNAH GARTSIDE
BIO

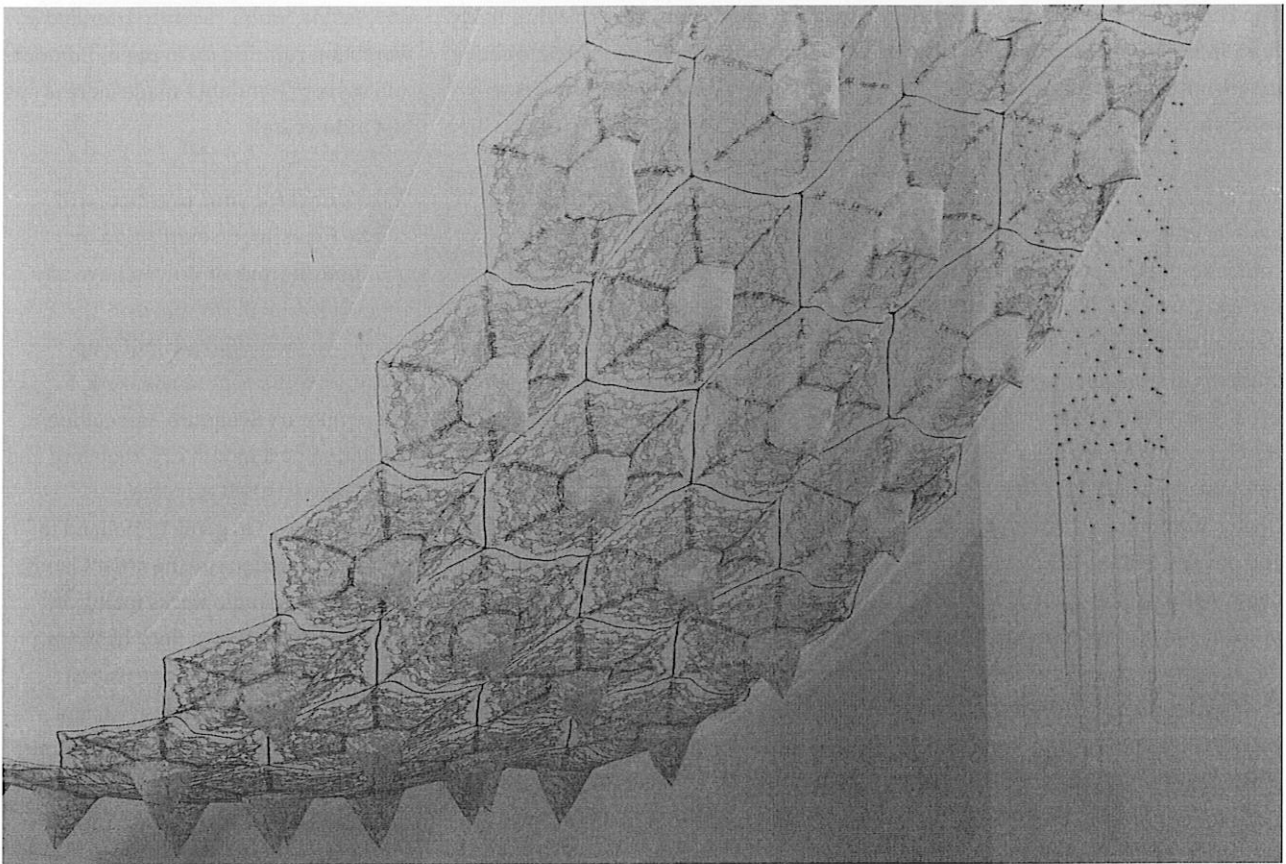
Hannah Gartside (b. London, 1987) is a textile artist and costume designer/maker based in Melbourne. In 2016 she completed a Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture and Spatial Practice at the Victorian College of the Arts, and was the recipient of the Lou & Mary Senini Student Art Award, and a National Gallery of Victoria Women's Association prize. For five years Gartside worked as a costume-maker for classical ballet, theatre and opera. She also holds a BFA (Hons) in Fashion Design from Queensland University of Technology. Gartside uses processes including sewing, quilting and wet-felting to reveal the sculptural, emotive and interactive capacities of her materials. Her work examines desire, intimacy, and the female gaze.

STATEMENT

Hannah Gartside
*New Terrain (The
Fantasies)*, 2016, petticoat
lace trim, tulle, thread,
garter belt clips, 165cm x
560cm x 12cm

New Terrain (of The Fantasies) is a suspended textile sculpture made from found 1960's petticoat lace trim, tulle, thread and garter belt clips. New Terrain is made from 92 metres of lace, cut into trapezium shapes and stitched back together to create 46 hexagons. The hexagons are tessellated in the style of a patchwork quilt. Cones of the same lace protrude from the centre of each hexagon.

The cone shape references breasts and spikes; it is both generous and aggressive. The soft malleability of the lace is contradicted by its presence in space. Gartside's series The Fantasies presents her queer erotic vision of an expansive and fecund femininity.



Interview with Hannah Gartside

Please tell us about a little about yourself and what prompted you to study a Bachelor of Fine Art at VCA.

I moved to Melbourne because I was getting really bored in Brisbane, things felt easy and I needed them to be new and difficult again. I decided to study at VCA in part because I wanted the validation and legitimacy as an artist that university training can foster. Many of my friends are trained artists and I wondered what they knew that I didn't. Originally I studied a BFA in Fashion Design and even then, my work was always about the story of the outfit, the craft of making it, or the performance of dressing a body in cloth and I never felt like I quite fitted in. Mostly though, I wanted to make more/ "better" art, and I thought having specific training might facilitate that.

Your main material in *New Terrain (of The Fantasies)* was found lace from the 1960s. Do you always incorporate materials that have had a past life into your work?

Yes. For me, objects and materials have an energetic presence. This comes from their construction, base material, usage, and context. It is a strategy and conceptual decision that operates in three main ways: 1) we live in a capitalist, patriarchal society, which broadly privileges working and buying as pathways to fulfilment. Giving attention and care to discarded and devalued materials disrupts commodity fetishism. I wish for my practice to place no more pressure on the environment and our resources than is absolutely necessary. 2) I work with textiles and the first world has a particularly fraught relationship with clothing production. Most of our clothes are still made in third world countries in conditions where people are treated inhumanely, their environment and

personhood suffering for our vanity. I prefer to re-use materials which are already around, so I am not directly supporting that practice. Obviously it's more complicated than that.

3) I have a feminist practice, and use domestic, known materials (with their particular references and usages) to (amongst other things) address my experience of female-ness.

For five years you worked as a costume-maker for classical ballet, theatre and opera. Can you tell us what it has been like to bring your experience and knowledge into sculptural and spatial practice?

I mainly worked at Queensland Ballet, the state company directed by Lee Cunxin, as well as running the wardrobe and designing for a university dance course. Working in costume-making encouraged my perfectionism, ability to concentrate for long periods of time, do repetitive tasks, work closely with others, plan time-lines, problem solve under pressure and complete projects quickly. Looking back, it has been great training! Broadly, working in sculpture and spatial practice is another way of telling stories involving bodies and textiles: through-lines of my career thus far.

Also, I'm being a bit of a joker here, but visual art is different to theatre in that you generally don't pay to see it, don't dress up and don't look at it for 2 hours! I like how close you can get to artwork, and am particularly keen on making work that people can touch and engage with. I remember getting into trouble for touching the edge of the set of *Cats* when I was a child. It was kind of a wall of trash.

Which artists influence or inspire you?

I am inspired by the honesty and attention to materials of Louise Bourgeois (in particular her hand-stitched textile works using striped fabric from 2002-2005 were a major influence on my work with two colour optical patterns, and use of hexagons),

the scale and community making of Judy Chicago, the integrity and consistent vision of Yayoi Kusama, the playfulness and aggression of Valie EXPORT and the angular, choreographed video worlds created by Daria Martin. Locally I am drawn to and connect with the work of Sandra Selig, Claire Lambe, Julie Rrap, Mirka Mora Fiona Hall and many more.

If you could collaborate with any artist, designer, craftsperson, or even company who would it be and what would your dream project be?

Here is one: Collaborating with an organisation like Vinnie's or Salvos, and a multi-storey public gallery like GOMA to create a large scale installation using recycled textiles. Running anti-consumerist workshops teaching sewing and other forms of material making to children, and in the process building the work together.

I taught workshops with the Brisbane City Council for many years and my favourite memory is a child of 7, Isolde, who'd recently attended a workshop running up to me in Lincraft and saying "Hannah! I made a dress out of a pillowcase!"

What's next for your practice, will you be focusing on exhibition or production work or do you have any specific projects coming up?

I have two more shows coming up which present my graduate work, a Contemporary Sculpture Association exhibition next month in Abbotsford and then *Hatched* at PICA in May. Later this year I'm going to Holland to work for a fabulous textile artist Claudy Jongstra. The studio works mainly in felt, and has their own flock of sheep and garden of botanical dye plants. I am also learning photography, and will continue to do occasional costume collaborations with fabulous female musicians. Currently I'm working with Kalyani from Willow Beats and V (Berlin/Melbourne). I'm also hoping to attend a residency on a house-boat in California!