

Fresh!

1 - 25 Jun 2022



Notes on early-career art practice

/Hannah Gartside

I write this text for the eight exhibitors of *Fresh! 2022*: Erin Bussell, Jill Stevenson, Julian Leigh May, Nae Tanakorn, Hira Tanao, Narelle White, Ruth Hazell and Zipei 'Summer' Huang. Exhibiting in *Fresh!* is an acknowledgement of your creativity, diligence, artisanship, and ability to problem-solve. Congratulations!

Now in its twenty-ninth year, *Fresh!* is an exhibition with a legacy of supporting and uplifting emerging, experimental, highly talented interdisciplinary artists, jewellers, ceramicists, furniture makers and fashion designers with craft-based approaches to practice. I think Craft Victoria's significance as a Melbourne institution lies in its ability to both showcase and communicate to a broad audience the intrinsic value in handmade, crafted work. I hope that you embrace and enjoy showing your work in this context.

Fresh! was the first exhibition that I was curated into after graduating from a sculpture degree at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2016. I recall being overjoyed on reading the email. During that early phase of exhibiting

work publicly, I would always be shocked when I saw someone photographing my work. I would tug a friend's sleeve and say: 'Look at that!' That whole post-uni period of hungry-naive-determinedness involved many discoveries: exploring which ideas I was brave enough to share and skilled enough to realise, learning how to work with the particularities of a physical space (each with their own complexities), learning how to present my ideas and communicate with a curator, and then how to communicate with installers to realise my ambition. Most significantly, this period was about building confidence in what I was saying in a work and how I was saying it. Through my *Fresh!* experience, I witnessed first-hand how my sculptures could hold a space, and their potential for meaningful connection with a viewer.

As a *Fresh!* alumnus, I'm honoured to share with you some insights drawn from my own experience.

Put your energy into realising exactly what you need to make and trust in your vision. People will come along to support it in time. I trust that if I look after (making) the work, the work looks after me. Waste no time worrying if your work is good enough or comparing it to the work of others. Draw out or write down all your ideas and keep all your journals



or notes online (sometimes it takes years to realise a project and those ideas are precious). Back yourself – if you have the idea then you are capable of realising it. As makers with a penchant for working with our hands, one learns through action... so just keep going! Whenever possible, sit in a space of pleasure and joy with your physical and mental enquiries, with handling and transforming your materials. Believe in your ideas and have faith that they and you are worthy.

Taking the time to collectively celebrate achievements with friends and artistic colleagues is something that has kept me going as an independent artist. Whenever something wonderful happens to one of us, my close studio friends and I will pop a bottle of champagne and clink our glasses. Remember that there are plenty of opportunities to go around and more than enough room for everyone to flourish. The support and understanding of like-minded artist friends is deeply nourishing, and an art career is a very long game – you need your people around! Enjoy the moments of public-facing external validation and celebration too; they tend to come in a rush and then it's back to you being quiet in your studio (or bedroom/shed) again.

For me, craft-based work involves finding

solutions with my own hands. I like to think that viewers can feel the energy involved in a work's creation. As the late Australian sculptor Bronwyn Oliver put it: "It takes a long time [to make the work], but that's okay, I enjoy it. It's like a meditation, I can get lost in it. And when [the sculptures] succeed, I think someone can get lost in seeing them too ... I don't really go for all that mystical stuff, but I think there might be something there. I think people can feel what goes into [the sculptures] when they see them." I hope Oliver's words resonate with you as they do with me, bringing attention to the act of making crucial to craft practice.

Being an artist feels like a calling rather than a profession, one that requires honesty, vulnerability, sensitivity and care. I wish you all the best with realising your wildest daydreams, hopes and ambitions. Chip away, a little bit each day in the right direction. What we do in a day over time becomes what we do in life.

—

Hannah Gartside is a sculpture and installation artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. She is represented by Tolarno Galleries.

ABOVE Erin Bussell
Babble, Scatter and Squall, 2021.
Photographer: Janelle Low.

Finalists



Jill Stevenson
BAHAG, 2021.
Photography: Annika Kafcaloudis.



/Erin Bussell

Babble, Scatter and Squall, 2021

porcelain, glaze
dimensions variable

Babble \$1,400

Scatter \$1,600

Squall \$1,750

Babble, Scatter and Squall are a group of porcelain sculptures developed from extensive material and process research and experimentation. The works investigate the potential for traditional ceramic material to transform into evocative forms with complex surfaces, expressing the visceral experience of threshold tension. Glazes burst from porcelain shells, oozing and puffing forth, consuming the forms in a grotesque manner. These abstract creatures serve as a material manifestation of the psyche, embodying emotions of fear and anticipation. Inescapably speaking to the uncertain landscape of a global pandemic.

Erin Bussell (she/her) is a visual artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. Her practice investigates ceramics as a medium, including its material properties, potential applications in sculpture, and how it can be used as a tool for expression. She approaches her practice as a collaboration where material and process play an active role in the making of objects. Erin completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Ceramics) at RMIT in 2021, and is currently undertaking an Honours year.



/Hira Tanao

I am some ONE. I am no ONE., 2020

paper, acrylic paint, modelling paste, sand,
ground glass, ground coffee, magnets
dimensions variable
NFS

Courtesy the W.E. McMillan Collection, RMIT.

“Experiencing isolation and lockdown in 2020-2021 expanded my ongoing curiosity towards the concept of ‘self’. It is obscure, very intimate yet distant. *I am some ONE. I am no ONE.* portrays shifting selves and spontaneous absurdities. It suggests a playful chaos and the contradictions within, and I am interested in oscillating the perception of what is real, what lies in the mundane and what lies in the imagination.” - Hira Tanao

Hira Tanao (she/her) is an artist and contemporary jeweller based in Naarm/Melbourne. She approaches the ‘self’ as a mutable and elusive component that forms relationships with something larger. She explores questions of identity and subjective truth while working within object making and imagery. Her practice seeks to communicate a poetic sense of detachment from self - something strange and ambiguous. Hira completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Gold and Silversmithing) at RMIT in 2021.



/ **Jill** Stevenson

BAGHAG, 2021

Tasmanian blackwood, sheep leather, kangaroo leather, SCOBY leather, heat treated mild steel rod
500 × 300 × 630 mm
NFS

STOCKPILE Stool, 2021

sand cast aluminium, used foundry sand, polypropylene bag
330 × 330 × 420 mm
NFS

Material scarcity stirs and a scramble to secure sustainable material impels. *STOCKPILE Stool* is a rudimentary stack topped with a sandbag seat. The knockdown form is sand cast from gathered post-industrial aluminium scrap, ready to be recycled. The work ponders a dystopic future. *BAGHAG* is a take on the classic foolscap file. This piece was developed out of a need to store more stuff. It is a vessel for the ever-growing materials library and is a material exploration into leather alternatives. This piece has spurred the cultivation and growth of SCOBY 'leather' as an ongoing project.

Jill Stevenson (she/her) is an emerging multidisciplinary designer and artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. Jill's creative interests lie in speculative and experimental design, focusing on the intrinsic qualities of materials and their place in our landscape - natural and built. Her work is research driven and adopts a constant questioning of matter, shape and context. The resulting musings are often articulated into detailed pieces with a playful approach to both theme and form. Jill completed an Associate Degree in Furniture Design at RMIT in 2021.



/ **Julian** Leigh May

Malachite Wall Lamps, 2021

hammered aluminium, blown glass, LED
700 × 360 mm
\$8,400 for pair

Goethite Table Lamp, 2021

hammered aluminium, LED
330 × 500 mm
\$1,200

These works are inspired by organic forms with a sci-fi twist. The *Malachite Wall Lamps* reference the monolithic mineral, Malachite, while the distinct colour palette and forms reference classic sci-fi films. Custom glass-blown globes ooze green from hammered aluminium shells, allowing for an unsettling light to catch and reflect the shell's surface. The *Goethite Table Lamp* looks to the iron oxide mineral, Goethite. The mineral is found in clusters at low temperatures, and can sometimes be found as a crystallised form.

Julian Leigh May (they/them) is a Naarm/Melbourne-based experimental designer embracing a spectrum of disciplines and mediums. Their work transcends barriers between art and design, and spans furniture, lighting and object design. Central to their practice is an interest in redefining everyday objects through new narratives, material experimentations and forms. Julian is also one half of the creative duo behind misc objet, a curatorial partnership that aims to create safe spaces and equal opportunities for emerging designers. Julian completed an Associate Degree in Furniture Design at RMIT in 2021.



/Nae Tanakorn

Five Lounge chair, 2021

plywood, American white oak veneer, foam cushion, heavy commercial fabric
1000 × 950 × 800 mm
\$8,950

Haute Nested Table, 2021

American walnut veneer, plywood, marble
390 × 390 × 600 mm
\$4,500

The *Five Lounge Chair* is inspired by the features of sea anemones. The chair's form is comprised of a flexible, tubular cushion and a discreet timber support-frame. Painstakingly made by hand using a plywood lamination technique, the frame consists of compressed plywood and two layers of American white oak veneer. The *Haute Nested Table* maximises usability while ensuring a small footprint. Two tables nest within one another. Making reference to the maidenhair leaf in colour and form, the table is made from walnut veneer, paired with marble.

Nae Tanakorn Pongpaew (he/him) is a multidisciplinary designer and maker based in Naarm/Melbourne. His designs consider ergonomics, functionality, and the environment, and offer a harmony between form, function, and sustainability. His long-standing career in 3D visualisation and digital animation has influenced his approach to design practice, whereby his pieces are distinctly ambitious and bold. He holds a Bachelor in Multimedia and Digital Arts, Monash University and an Associate Degree in Furniture Design, RMIT.



/Narelle White

Affectionate Creatures, 2021

artist's clay blends, glaze
dimensions variable
NFS

Affectionate Creatures is an alluring amalgam of biomorphic and geologic references. Each of the works' porous walls are breathable; a sense of movement is distilled in their creaturely contours. Their subtle, textural palette is derived from an artist's blend of granular aggregates in porcelain – they are imbued with an experimental quality.

"I like to think of them as visitors whose dynamism invites us to see ourselves in the material stuff of this world ... Placed together as a 'herd' or 'mingle', they become lively, relational entities who speak of curiosity and care." - Narelle White

Narelle White (she/her) is an early-career artist living and working on Wurundjeri and Bunurong lands. Working primarily in ceramics, Narelle embraces experimentation and material poetics to consider the ways we relate to matter and to the ecologies that sustain us. Her works propose an ethic of recognition and empathy, made legible in the organic and animistic qualities of porous, lively things. Narelle is a recent graduate of the Honours program at the Victorian College of the Arts.



Ruth Hazell
VIBRATIONS, 2021.
Photographer: Steph Reid.



Nae Tanakorn
Haute Nested Table, 2021.
Image courtesy the artist.



/ **Ruth** Hazell

VIBRATIONS, 2021

polyester, spandex, merino wool, millinery straw
 dimensions variable
 NFS

VIBRATIONS explores undulating movement of material combinations around the body. In the collection, unusual and exaggerated silhouettes are created from upcycled, found, and recycled materials. The hero material is repurposed millinery straw sourced from op shop hats. The layering of the straw on two-way stretch Lycra and hand-knitted material gives exaggerated bouncing and undulating movement. Bold colours and prints offer sensations of play and happiness, similarly reflected in the silhouettes and archetypes. The collection is seen as an antidote to the difficult times we recently experienced and offers a sense of joy and hope. The work is also grounded in sustainable fashion practice and inclusivity.

Ruth Hazell (she/her) is a Fashion Designer based in Naarm/Melbourne. Throughout her practice, she has taken on roles such as designer, stylist, creative director, photographer and filmmaker. Working mainly in womenswear, her practice considers deconstruction through fabric manipulation and transparency. Ruth holds a Certificate III in Fashion Design and Technology from TasTAFE, Tasmania, and completed a Bachelor of Fashion Design (Honours) at RMIT in 2021.



/ **Zipei** ‘Summer’ Huang

Live this way until, 2021

mild steel, cotton thread, sterling silver
 dimension variable
 NFS

Live this way until is an interactive installation exploring place as a living thing. The series includes architectural forms that suggest buildings on the verge of collapse. Forms feature mechanical components or are held together with cotton thread. Some pieces are wearable, while others invite curiosity and interaction and reveal unexpected offerings. For the artist, the narratives of hometown located in urbanisation are accompanied by destruction. Through interacting with the installation, one holds the power to direct the narrative, whilst also becoming faced with its consequences.

Zipei ‘Summer’ Huang (she/her) is a Naarm/Melbourne-based contemporary jeweller. Her practice investigates place and the relationships between individual and object, and the spaces they inhabit. Recurring themes of exploration include the reconstruction of familiar spaces and the romanticised melancholy for lost place or misplaced identity. Her practice is grounded in the Chinese aesthetic *liu bai* (meaning “to leave blank”) and privileges the relational and the untold. Summer completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at RMIT in 2021.

Fresh! celebrates the next wave of Victorian graduates in contemporary craft and design. Presented annually since 1993, *Fresh!* showcases the energy, skill and innovation of some of the best graduating students from craft, design and fine art disciplines throughout the state.

Fresh! provides an important opportunity for graduates beginning their career as makers. The exhibition fosters the potential of graduating students and provides an insight into new directions of contemporary craft.

SELECTION PANEL

Each year, Craft Victoria and an invited team of craft and design professionals view graduate exhibitions across Victoria to search for the freshest emerging makers. The 2022 *Fresh!* selection panel included: Alexandra Pontonio, James Lemon, Yu-Fang Chi, Zaiba Khan, Louise Meuwissen and Craft Victoria's Curatorial and Programs Manager, Eliza Tiernan.



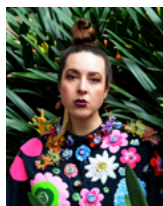
ALEXANDRA
PONTONIO



ELIZA TIERNAN



JAMES
LEMON



LOUISE
MEUWISSEN



YU FANG CHI



ZAIBA KHAN

PRIZES

The John Wardle Architects Craft Prize

Judged by Partners Meaghan Dwyer and James Loder.
Prize of \$1,000



The Future Leaders Award

A philanthropic initiative promoting leadership, achievement and potential among young Australians.

Judged by Dr Helen Sykes AM
Prize of \$1,000



The Annual Lemon Award of Excellence

This award recognises curious and experimental bodies of work.

Judged by James Lemon and his boyfriend.

Prize of \$1,000



Sofitel Melbourne On Collins Prize

An exhibition in their exclusive gallery/foyer space, valued at \$3,000.

Judged by Clive Scott, General Manager, Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, and Lisa Warrener and Donald Williams, Global Art Projects.



MELBOURNE ON COLLINS

The Irene Spillsbury Prize

To develop, conceptualize and present a body of work at Oigáll Projects as part of their 2023 exhibition program.

Judged by Andy Kelly, Director of Oigáll Projects.

OIGÁLL PROJECTS

The Artichoke Emerging Maker Prize

A profile in Artichoke magazine and a 2-year magazine subscription.

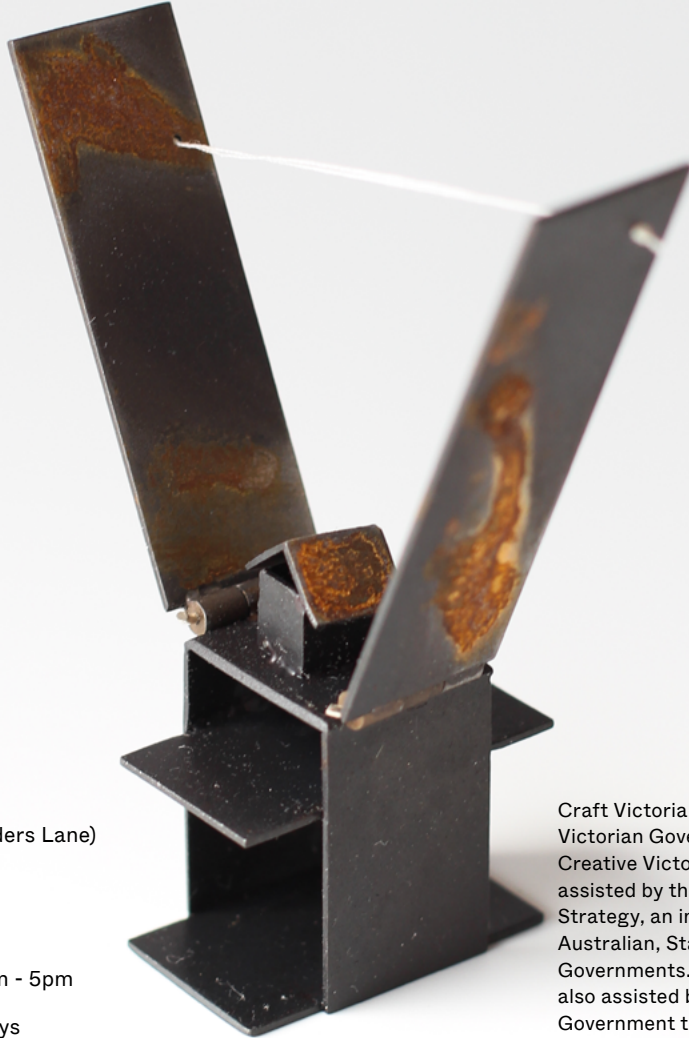
Judged by Cassie Hansen, Editor of Artichoke Magazine.

Artichoke

/CRAFT

COVER Julian Leigh May
Malachite Wall Lamps, 2021.
Image courtesy the artist.

BACK Zipei 'Summer' Huang
Live this way until, 2021.
Image courtesy the artist.



CRAFT VICTORIA
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craft.org.au

HOURS
Tuesday to Friday: 11am - 5pm
Saturday: 11am - 4pm
excluding public holidays
or by appointment

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Craft Victoria respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the place now called Victoria, and all First Peoples living and working on this land. We celebrate the history and contemporary creativity of the world's oldest living culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

CREATIVE VICTORIA

M CITY OF MELBOURNE



Australian Government
Visual Arts and Craft Strategy