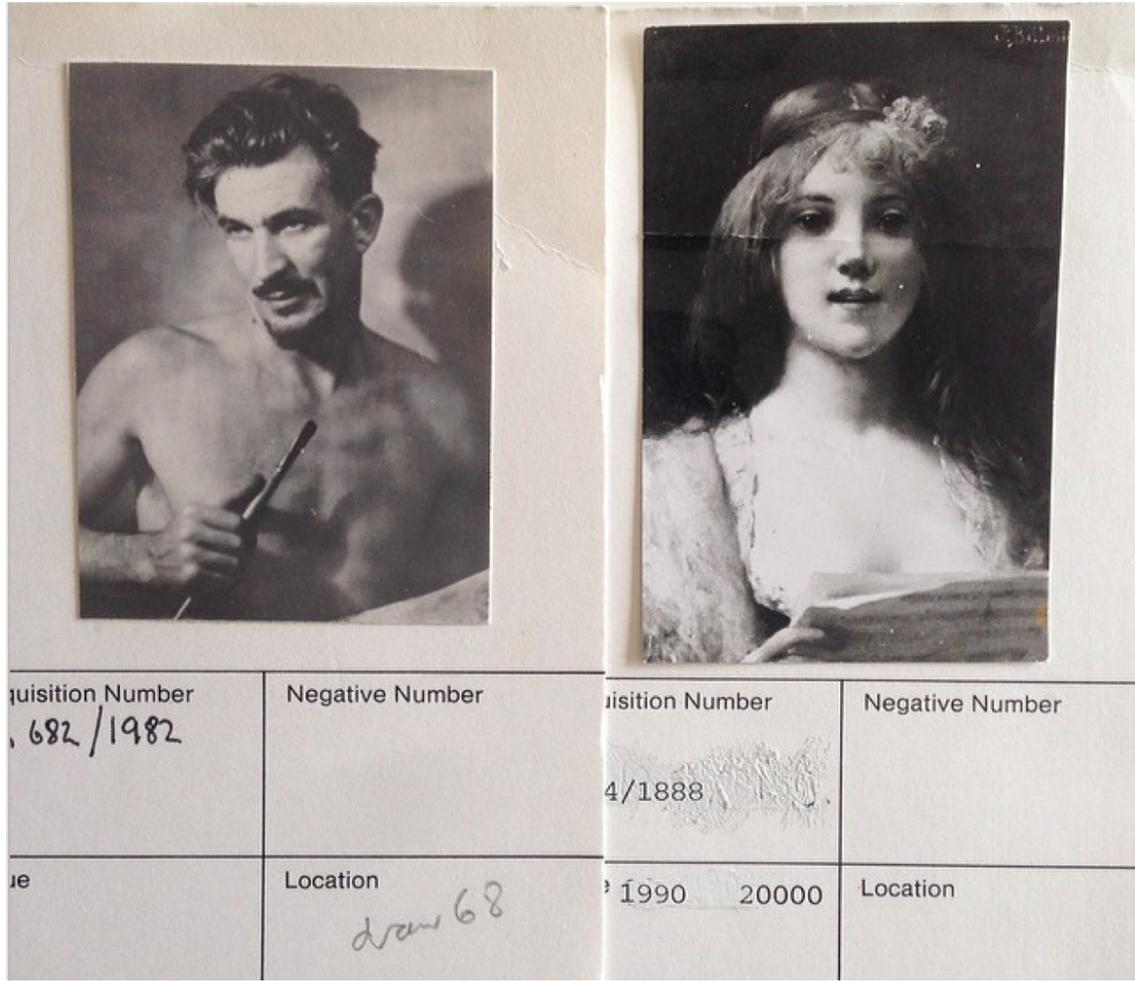


# GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY

## MEDIA RELEASE



### FROM THE COLLECTION: GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL RESIDENCIES

EXHIBITION DATES: 4 APRIL – 11 JUNE 2015

*From the Collection: Chapter One*  
Warrnambool Art Gallery  
26 Liebig Street, Warrnambool VIC 3280

Gertrude Contemporary and the Warrnambool Art Gallery (WAG) are pleased to present *From the Collection: Chapter One*, a new collaborative exhibition that bravely places the WAG collection in the hands of four leading contemporary artists.

For this innovative project, artists Patrick Pound, Richard Lewer, The Telepathy Project and Noriko Nakamura have been invited to create major new commissions in response to the gallery's collection. Curated by Emily Cormack, this exhibition is the first of three exhibitions Gertrude Contemporary will be presenting across Victoria under the aegis of *From The Collection: Gertrude Regional Residencies* in 2015.

Delving into the wealth of strangeness and wonder that can be found in Victoria's regional art gallery storerooms, *From The Collection* is a platform for contemporary artists to imagine new possibilities for museum objects. This process allows artists to remove the objects from their immediate contexts

and histories, and uncover and extend latent narratives and potentials within each art collection. With the project's parameters being distinctly responsive, each exhibition is first shaped by Cormack's response to the collection, and then furthered by the artists' direct engagement with specific objects and the collection as a whole.

The first in this exhibition series, held at WAG throughout April and May of 2015, is driven by the extraordinarily wide-ranging *wunderkammer*-like assortment of objects that makes up the WAG collection. From x-rays of royal hands, to jars of python eggs and assorted Zulu artefacts, the WAG collection offers an enlightening insight into the aspirations and curiosities of early Warrnambool settlers. The tales embedded here are myriad, the voices and gestures profound, and each of the commissioned artists has unearthed, extrapolated or even imagined some of these stories in their making of new work.

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Patrick Pound's major new work entitled *There not there* brings together a variety of objects from the collection that express the simultaneous co-existence of presence and absence. From a piece of Irish turf long ago transported and long since held in the Warrnambool Museum, to a painting of the unfinished span of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, this work brings to light a vast array of things that are found to stand in for the otherwise absent. A candle snuffer, an empty wig stand, an embossed piece of paper, a miniature boot and a painting of a ship's carcass washed up on the sand all stand-in and speak for things that are no longer fully present. Like remnants or indicators they point to a whole, and yet in themselves, are incomplete in some way.

Richard Lewer takes as his starting point for the exhibition a ripped and slashed nineteenth-century oil on canvas painting entitled *The Land of Streams* by Charles Edward Johnson, which had languished unseen in the WAG collection store for more than thirty years. Known for his large-scale painterly text works, Lewer wished to obtain permission to paint directly onto the damaged canvas (in reversible media), thereby inserting his own narrative onto the compromised artwork.

Lewer's initial proposal was considered by WAG and an external conservator, and whilst the idea was exciting and inviting, the appropriation of an artwork (however damaged) raised ethical questions for a collecting institution. Issues that would require more in-depth research and debate. Johnson's work *The Land of Streams* will be hung for the first time in thirty years as part of this exhibition — complete with its distressed and torn surface. However, it will be hung attributed to Richard Lewer, with its title changed to *Sometimes all I want is your touch* (2015). In doing so, Lewer not only imbues the work with an ulterior narrative, uncovering a tragic love story within the painting's torn surface, but he also shifts its authorship and intention, drawing attention to the mutability of meaning within museum collections.

The Telepathy Project (Sean Peoples and Veronica Kent) is known for its imagining and divination of personalities and narratives involving the characters from paintings. In this new commission at WAG, the artists have drawn on the romance and tragedy of the local love story of Eva and Tom. This rumoured and unlikely love match between a ship's apprentice and the first-class lady — sole survivors of the shipwrecked Loch Ard in 1878 — a significant tragedy that still resonates along the South West coast of Victoria. The Telepathy Project has searched the WAG collection creating unlikely love stories and hopeful flirtations between portraits of those whose paths would otherwise have never crossed.

Noriko Nakamura has sensed a formal nuance to the region and the collection. With an animist's eye she uncovers the buried life forces within inanimate objects and here she has drawn on the swirling updraft at the local waterfall Hopkins Falls. For her large scale sandstone sculpture she has connected its wild and contrary circular motion with the tightly wound balls of fur that are found periodically in a cow's stomach, of which WAG has many in its collection. Nakamura has created a large sandstone totem to these contrasting forces, heaving the weight of hair with the impossible lightness of water, as testament to the mutability of the elements.

Together these four distinct projects repurpose familiar objects from a regional collection, deploying them within new perspectives, imbued with fresh possibilities. This exhibition offers a rare opportunity for audiences to reconsider their own regional collections, opening up new pathways for engagement and exploration, and highlighting the collection as a site of endless possibility and wide open imagining.

Gertrude Contemporary's Studio Program is generously supported by the Danielle and Daniel Besen Foundation.

Gertrude Contemporary's Education Program is generously supported by the Marjorie M. Kingston Trust.

Image: The Telepathy Project (Sean Peoples and Veronica Kent), *Eva and Tom*, 2015.

*From the Collection* is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. This project has also been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. This project also received development funding from the National Exhibitions Touring Service (NETS) Victoria.

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