



fA1R
gAmE aRt + spOrT



BOOK 1

Sport and art have danced a very attractive cheek-by-jowl rhumba for many many years.

The great equine artist George Stubbs got interested in the back end of the horse years ago. Late Mail Stubbs kicked the caper off in modern times and was quickly followed by Degas who loved fiddling about with jockeys, crayons and the blank page. Francis Bacon chimed in and began punching well above his weight in the boxing ring. Australians like Russell Drysdale and the Sydney bodgie Brett Whiteley had a go at cricket. And this merely scratches the surface of the caper.

All the greats have had a go at sport because it is so bloody easy. Years ago I started strapping humungous texta colours to the night tools of horses and having a look at the tracks they made as they roared around this nation's racecourses. The results were out of this world. Sure, they are large works and can only be appreciated by a helicopter, but they make fascinating viewing in the right light. I thought the racing fraternity, Gay, Lee and Bart, would be a little bit stand-offish about my equine night tool work but they love the results.

It is the colour and the movement caught at the coalface where turf and hoof collide that turns them on.

At other times I have shoved huge tubes of liquid paper up the dates of golfers and traced their paths across the great links layouts of the world – Troon, Carnoustie, Merimbula and Royal Melbourne, I have done all of them. These works are a little too large for the average gallery but Tullamarine Airport has bought four at six figures each to give the passengers something to stare at as they take off and land.

The sport-art nexus encourages everyone to dip the wick and have a go. This magnificent exhibition *Fair Game* confirms this simple thesis, collecting as it does the work of fit Australians who are putting in on and off the park and bringing home all the cheese and bacon on offer.

With this collection, sport and art have waltzed their way into the cot and the horizontal cha cha cha is just about to begin. Congratulations to you all for making the time to take a squiz.

H.G. Nelson





Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.

George Orwell (1903–1950)

Not entirely contrary to Orwell's observations, sport consciously emulates many aspects of our existence. Organised sport has many origins, from the conditioning of warriors for war to the appreciation of the gods as evidenced in the most divine of human forms. Historically, sport has assumed importance as a political tool and ideological indicator (the participation, or not, of various countries in the modern Olympic Games may serve as a ready-made acid test of contemporary world politics). Yet, at the same time, sport has been described as no more than activity that occurs in pastime, a diversion, a lark and just some simple fun.

Kicking off with this exhibition, the National Gallery of Victoria explores various notions about sport - including the celebratory and the critical. Titillating in both a cerebral and physical sense, within the Gallery walls the notion of sport has been interpreted in the broadest sense of the word. The artworks range in scope from literal illustrations of people playing or watching sport, athletes in action, places where sporting events occur or equipment that is used in sport. Other works in the exhibition are metaphorical or address tangential themes such as endurance, or notions of games and play.

'Panem et circenses' (bread and circuses) was a phrase coined in ancient Rome by Juvenal to refer to a system of government designed to keep the populace peaceful, whereby the appetites of the masses were satiated by the dispensing of both food and entertainment. The entertainment came in the form of gladiators, chariot races and sports competitions. 'Glory and honour' is the catchcry of a modern-day Rome-based school for gladiators. For a small sum of Euros, you can be issued with a standard set of garb including a 'tunica' (dress), sandals and 'rudis' (wooden training sword). As is evident in her work *Gladiator*, Julia Gorman has been influenced by a popular television series of the same title from late last century. In the series, scenarios were generated in which participants employed a range of strategic and physical skills to respond to improbable challenges. In her wall drawing, Gorman has celebrated the über-essence of the program as she plays with the heightened colours and logo-laden sensation that constituted the television experience. Thomas Deverall has recreated one of the most famous of all Roman amphitheatres on a reduced scale and from black paper, not stone. The title, *Demopticon 2*, is ambiguous. The distillation of power suggested by the amphitheatre construction is corrupted by the change in scale and context: are we watching or being surveyed? Imagining the activity that may have occurred at the Coliseum we question what about this process is democratic, and for whose ultimate benefit was the activity undertaken? Another historical reference is evident in photographs by Polixeni Papapetrou that juxtapose classical architecture with muscular body builders. In *Neo-classical bod* Papapetrou refers to a history of the ideal body when she compares the notion of strategically building both human form and architectural structures.

Panem et circenses





The hallowed turf

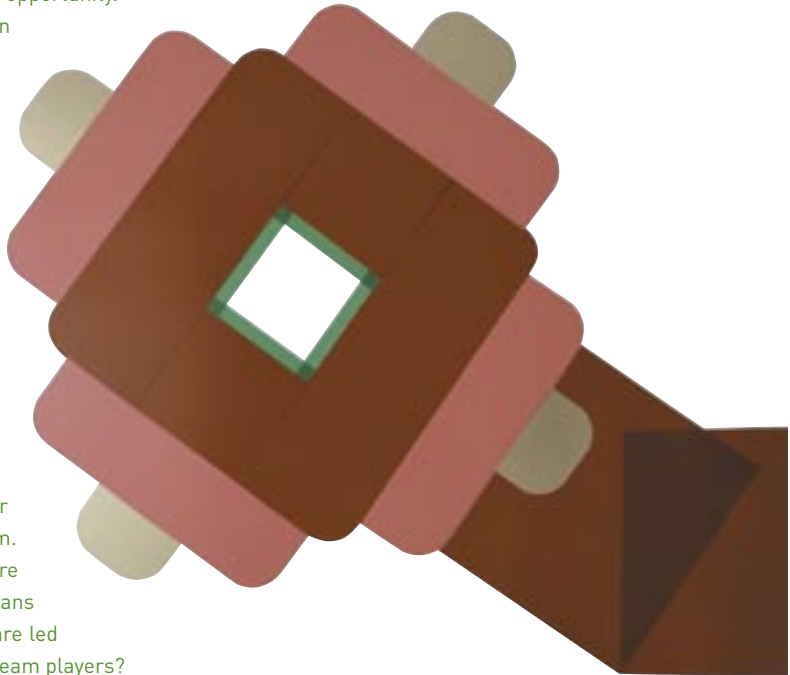
On occasion sport in Australia could be confused with a form of widely patronised secular religion. The ritualistic attendance by spectators to view activity performed by the 'idolised' which is undertaken on hallowed fields and administered by ordained officials cannot help but imitate, and perhaps in some cases even replace, worship. In these instances sport dissolves social hierarchies and provides an opportunity for transitory unity as people mass together with a common desire - that of seeing their favourite sportsperson or team achieve miraculous feats of supremacy in their chosen areas of expertise. In his intricately detailed work *Football in the fog*, Ian Abdulla presents a naïve aerial view of the classical footy field. However, not all sport occurs on playing fields. Photographer Paul Batt has executed clinically graphic pictures of a retro indoor bowling alley and pistol range, devoid of people; they could be stage sets waiting to be animated through habitation. Anne Zahalka has completed a series of works titled *Leisureland* that document the places where people spend their free time. Unlike Batt's spaces, Zahalka's are charged with activity: axes swing at the *Woodchop Stadium* and the sweat is almost palpable. Street sports thrive in unsanctioned urban spaces. In *Photos by Andy Craig* we witness a dynamic meeting of art and sport as dextrous artist Blair Trethowan skates the most infamous of Melbourne artworks, Ron Robertson Swann's public sculpture *Vault*.

Thomas Deverall, *Rise and Fall*, 2000.

Sport has mythopoeic power. There are tendencies towards the generation of myths about the people who play and mediate sport. Many artists in *Fair Game* have responded to this theme, creating works that celebrate the achievements of their favourite sporting celebrity. For example, Valario Ciccone *Daryn Cresswell – The Swans* (football), Noel McKenna *Shane Kelly* (cycling) and Lleyton Hewitt (tennis), Daniel Moynihan *The Big Mark (Jezza)* Alex Jesaulenko (football) and Lisa Reid *Aaron Baddeley* (golf). Not all works featuring stars are complimentary. John Kelly's *Looking Back* is an inglorious representation of a decapitated Phar Lap, the legendary racehorse, in a post-taxidermist state. This undignified pose we presume was inspired by the uncensored time where the horse was somewhere between installations in a museum diorama.

Many people who participate in sport remain unknown, their excellence not at a level of public prominence, but their enjoyment of the activity is not diminished by this fact. Anne Lynch's footballers and gymnasts are rendered simply in beaming colours mirroring the joy of the sporting experience. In *Bronze*, Colleen Ahern depicts surfers in nostalgic hues, colours skewed through chemical changes in the photographs that she used as a source of inspiration. *The Jockey* by Ivan Durrant is in a post-race state, the grime of the ride coating his face a testament to the action of the course. Pippa Wischer has created photographs critiquing the frequently sexualised depiction of women in sport. Her *Warrior* series celebrates women represented for their sporting prowess rather than their gender. As Wischer demonstrates, not all works are celebratory. Where there are winners there are also losers. In 2000, at the time of the Olympic Games, Tracey Moffatt nominated herself as the unofficial photographer and created *Fourth*. This series of photographs is about tragedy. In these images we empathise with the agony of lost opportunity.

We see the disappointment evident on the faces of participants who came fourth and may well have lost due to an infinitesimally small increment of time. Many more people involved in sport are armchair participants. Their fanatical interest may lead them to assume the roles of commentator and critic. Garry (Spook) James's painting *Team Players* is set on a Saturday afternoon, after a football match. We see a man reclining in a lounge room chair, evidence of his sobriety negated by the empty beer cans that litter the floor beside him. Metaphor laden, in this work there are also representations of politicians and sporting personalities, and we are led to question, are these people really team players?



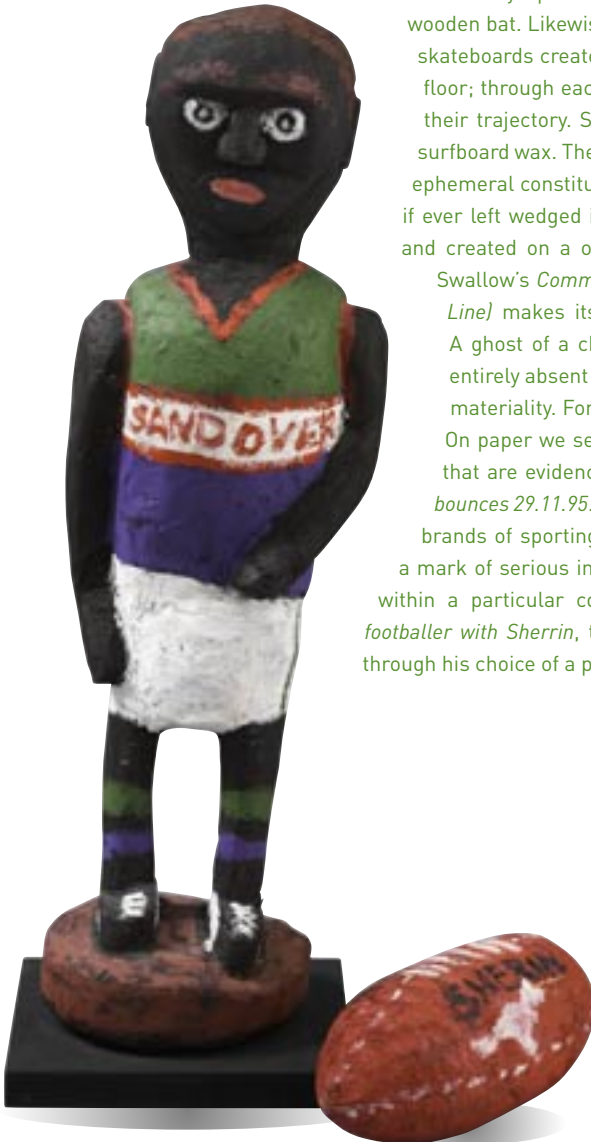
Julia Gorman *Gladiator*, 1998.

Things

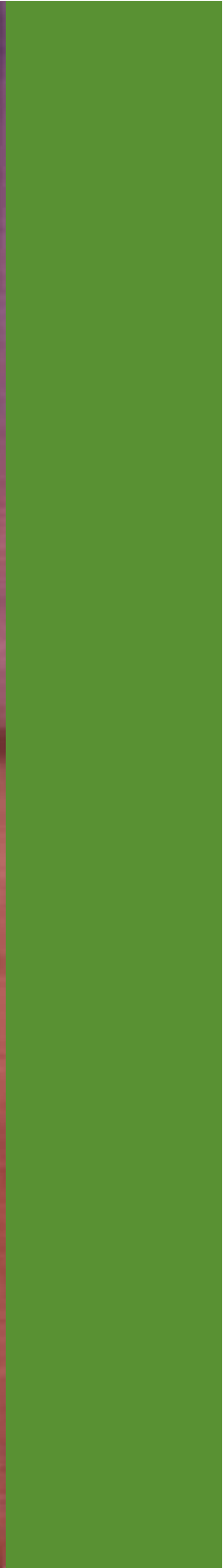
Football isn't a matter of life or death; it's much more important than that.

Bill Shankly (1913-1981)

The uncanny is a psychological state where objects removed from their natural environs assume an air of mystery. What happened in James Angus's forensically astute *Soccer ball dropped from 35,000 feet*? John Meade's *Set of holds* resembles a morphed vision of an indoor climbing gym after a fecund tryst with some form of otherworld entity. Potentially the work could continue to evolve after a period of gestation on the gallery wall. Lauren Berkowitz has fastidiously crafted an organic growth entirely constituted by reassembled cricket ball offcuts that slouches in a corner of the gallery. The pristine red skins of *Dystrophy* are never to be sullied by speed bowling and the uncompromising whack of a wooden bat. Likewise, Tim Silver's *Untitled (what if i drive?)* features skateboards created from crayon wax, designed to drag along the floor; through each incarnation they diminish, leaving a record of their trajectory. Silver's *Untitled (Rub)* is a surfboard made from surfboard wax. The action of rubbing would destroy it and due to its ephemeral constitution we are convinced that it would disintegrate if ever left wedged into the sand on a hot day. Equally impractical, and created on a one-to-one scale from plastic and paint, Ricky Swallow's *Commemorative Model, Peugeot 'Taipan' (Discontinued Line)* makes its presence felt through an appropriated form. A ghost of a childhood aspiration, this BMX bike is in reality entirely absent - all possible use of the object denied by its very materiality. For Neil Roberts, the sporting object has vanished. On paper we see a tonal field of gestural black Nugget marks that are evidence of a prior action suggested by the title, *3000 bounces 29.11.95*. Tradition is supremely important and particular brands of sporting implements are idolised by players. They are a mark of serious intention and also operate as a symbol of status within a particular community. For Stevie Loy Akemarr, *Sandover footballer with Sherrin*, the indigenous ball player's merit is endorsed through his choice of a particular type of ball.







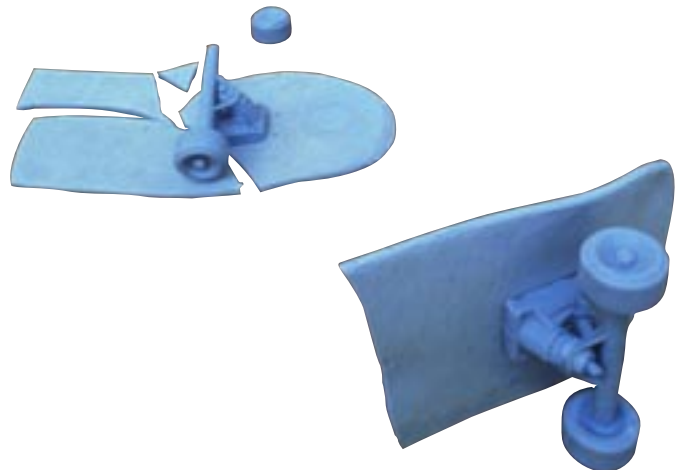
Listening to sporting dialogue on radio or television, commentators could be speaking another language where truths about the skill and character of the players are both constructed and demolished through incessant discussion. This analytical free-for-all does not stop at the stadium gate or the radio airwaves; the plethora of television programs dedicated to various forms of sport, from traditional to extreme, is further testament to the integral nature of sport in the Australian sensibility. Language derived from sporting activities has infiltrated everyday life. Jon Campbell plays with this notion in his neon works, titled *Howzaat* (used when a cricketer catches a ball) and *Maaate* (an endearment used to one's friends and colleagues). In addition to language, clothes intended for consumption by sporting types have periodically punctuated high fashion. Julian Martin's pastel work depicts artfully arranged and brightly garbed individuals. We are led to believe that these spectators would be equally at home lurking beside a football ground or posing for a fashion shoot. In Christopher Langton's sculptural work titled *Action Men*, three white male figures are garbed in generic sporting gear. These men of action are triggered to gyrate in the presence of viewers, proudly displaying their attire and through this action the viewer is reminded that many polyester tracksuits and computer-engineered sneakers are destined to remain off the field and court, enjoyed for their comfort by the populace at large.

Through *Fair Game*, the NGV acknowledges the perpetual intermingling of sport and life. The varied and sometimes extreme approaches by artists to the theme reflect the ambivalence felt by many people. Sport inspired by art mirrors a broader cultural impact of physical activity and strategic game playing. As with many phenomena, it is likely in the future that art will remain a cipher through which we bear witness to these events.

Anonda Bell
Curator (Projects)

If all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work.

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)



Checklist

Ian Abdulla *Football in the fog*, 1995. Acrylic on canvas, 92.0 x 122.0 cm. Collection of Brendan Marshall and Catherine Webb. Courtesy of Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.

Colleen Ahern *Bronze*, 2002. Oil on board, 30 x 46 cm. Collection of the artist.

James Angus *Soccer ball dropped from 35,000 feet*, 1999. Plaster, 20.0 x 22.0 x 22.0 cm. Edition of 5. Collection of Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Purchased 2000. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Paul Batt *Untitled (Bowling alley)* from the *Sports Spaces* series, 2002. Type C photograph, 90.0 x 110.0cm. Collection of the artist.

Paul Batt *Untitled (Pistol range)* from the *Sports Spaces* series, 2002. Type C photograph, 90.0 x 110.0cm. Collection of the artist.

Lauren Berkowitz *Dystrophy*, 1997. Leather cricket ball off-cuts, fishing line, 300.0 x 100.0 x 60.0 cm [irreg.]. Collection of Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Purchased 1998.

Jon Campbell *Howzaat*, 2002. Neon, mdf board, perspex, enamel paint, 40.0 x 60.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Uplands Gallery, Melbourne & Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Jon Campbell *Maaate*, 2002. Neon, mdf board, perspex, enamel paint, 40.0 x 60.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Uplands Gallery, Melbourne & Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Valario Ciccone *Daryn Cresswell – The Swans*, 2002. Pastel on paper, 66.0 x 50.0cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Thomas Deverall *Demopticon 2*, 2003. Paper, 165 x 138 x 45 cm. Collection of the artist.

Ivan Durrant *The Jockey*, 1973. Acrylic on masonite, 129 x 113.5 cm. Collection of Bendigo Art Gallery. Gift of Ian Rogers under the Cultural Gifts Program 1999.

Julia Gorman *Gladiator*, 1998. Wall drawing in self-adhesive vinyl, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney and Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

Garry (Spook) James *Team Players*, 1994. Oil on canvas, 112.0 x 153.0 cm. Private collection, Melbourne. Courtesy of The Artist's Garden, Melbourne.

John Kelly *Looking back*, 1998. Oil on linen, 122.0 x 122.0 cm. Private collection, Sydney. Courtesy of Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.

Christopher Langton *Action Men*, 2000. Mixed mechanics, steppers, actuators, programmable controllers, polyester, silicon rubber, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

Christopher Langton *Untitled (Shoe)*, 1999. PVC, fan, 360 x 620 x 245 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

Stevie Loy Akemarr *Sandover footballer with Sherrin*, 2000. Synthetic polymer paint, beanwood, 65.0 x 22.5 x 18.0 cm (footballer), 10.0 x 32.0 x 13.2 cm (football). National Gallery of Victoria. Presented through the NGV Foundation by James and Elizabeth Cousins, Members, 2003 © Courtesy of Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.

Anne Lynch *Footballers*, 1996. Pastel on paper, 50.0 x 66.0 cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Anne Lynch *Untitled (Gymnast)*, 1998. Pastel on paper, 33.0 x 50.0 cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Anne Lynch *Untitled (Gymnast)*, 1998. Pastel on paper, 33.0 x 50.0cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Julian Martin *Untitled*, 1995. Pastel on paper, 66.0 x 50.0 cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Noel McKenna *Unplaced Effort*, 1992. Enamel on canvas board, 40.0 x 50.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Niagara Galleries, Melbourne and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Noel McKenna *Shane Kelly*, 1997. Pencil and watercolour on paper, 35.0 x 49.5 cm (image), 60 x 73 cm (framed). Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Niagara Galleries, Melbourne and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Noel McKenna *SMH Watercolour (Lleyton Hewitt)*, 2001. Watercolour and ink on paper, 38.0 x 57.5 cm. Private collection, Brisbane. Courtesy of Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

John Meade *Set of holds*, 1999. Styrofoam, enamel, polyurethane, sand, 5 parts, overall: 245.0 x 290.0 x 50.0 cm [irreg.]. Collection of Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Purchased, 2000.

Tracey Moffatt *Fourth 1*, from the *Fourth* series, 2001. Colour print on canvas, 36.0 x 46.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

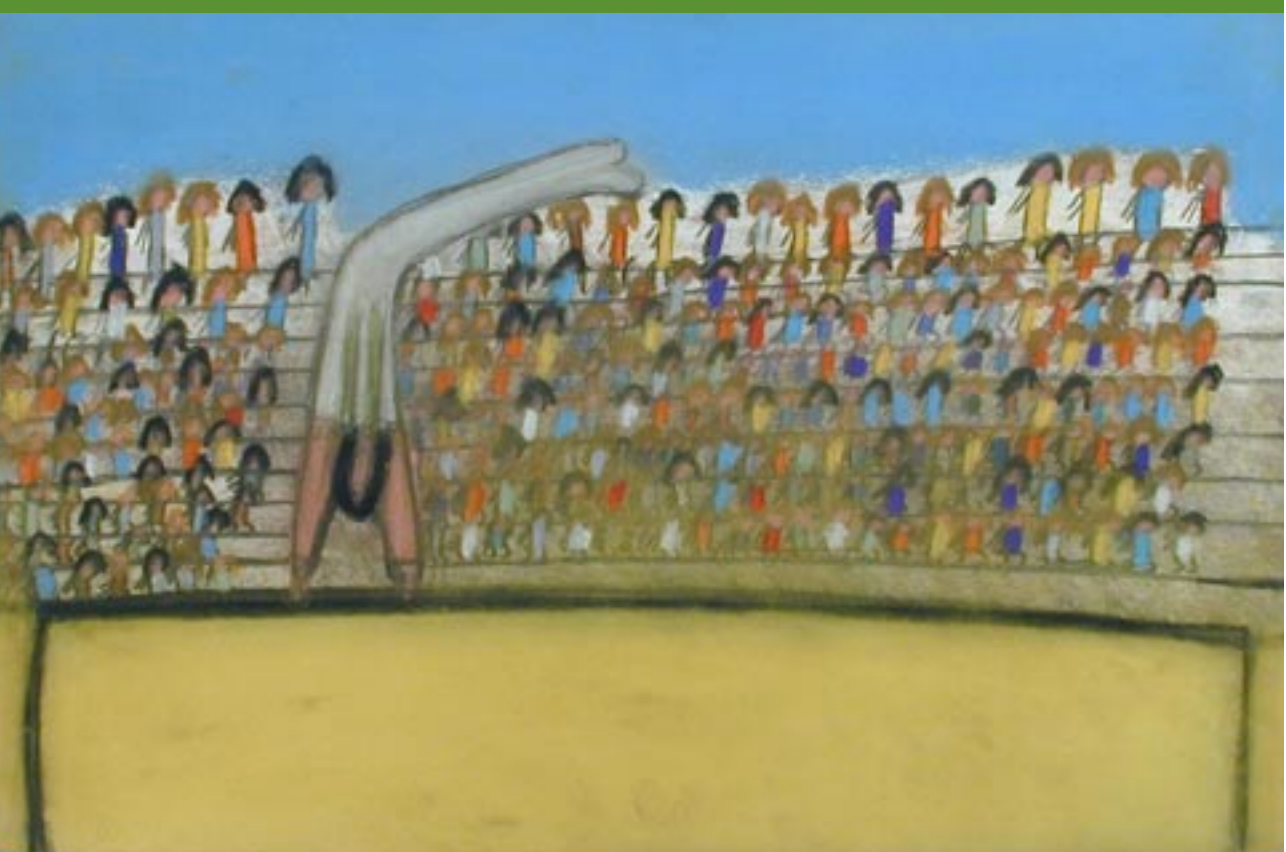
Tracey Moffatt *Fourth 2*, from the *Fourth* series, 2001. Colour print on canvas, 36.0 x 46.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Tracey Moffatt *Fourth 11*, from the *Fourth* series, 2001. Colour print on canvas, 36.0 x 46.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Tracey Moffatt *Fourth 13*, from the *Fourth* series, 2001. Colour print on canvas, 36.0 x 46.0 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.







Daniel Moynihan *The Big Mark (Jezza)*, 1980. Etching, aquatint, drypoint (printed by the artist), 100 x 50 cm (plate), 134 x 84 cm (frame). Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Gallery 101, Melbourne.

Daniel Moynihan *The Big Mark*, 1982. Etching, aquatint, drypoint (printed by the artist), 100 x 50 cm (plate), 134 x 84 cm (frame). Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Gallery 101, Melbourne.

Polixeni Papapetrou *Neo-classical bod*, 1997-2003. Light jet prints, 5 prints, each measuring 65 cm (h) x 135 cm (w). image (each triptych) 42 cm x 126 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art, Melbourne & Stills Gallery, Sydney

Lisa Reid Aaron Baddeley, 2001. Pastel on paper, 50.0 x 30.0cm. Collection of Arts Project Australia, Melbourne.

Neil Roberts *3000 bounces 29.11.95*, from the series *Bradman's Trunk*, 1995. Boot polish on Stonehenge rag paper, sheet 76.5 x 56.5 cm. Collection of Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Purchased 1998.

Tim Silver *Untitled (what if i drive?)*, 2001-2002. Crayola crayons, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

Tim Silver *Untitled (Rub)*, 2003. Summer Breeze surfboard wax, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist.

Ricky Swallow *Commemorative Model, Peugeot 'Taipan' (Discontinued Line)*, 1999. PVC piping, PVC sheeting (some heat formed and some cut and modeled), milliput, airbrushed stone white automotive paint, 1:1 scale replica model. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

Blair Trethowan *Photos by Andy Craig*, 1999. Lambda prints displayed in industrial light box, 841 mm x 1189 mm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

Blair Trethowan *Photos by Andy Craig*, 1999. Lambda prints displayed in industrial light box, 841 mm x 1189 mm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

Pippa Wischer *Warrior #1*, 1998. Type C Photograph mounted on anodized aluminium, 60.0 x 95.2 cm. Collection of the artist.

Pippa Wischer *Warrior #9*, 1998. Type C Photograph mounted on anodized aluminium, 60.0 x 95.2 cm. Collection of the artist.

Anne Zahalka *Woodchop Stadium*, from the *Leisureland* series, 1999. Type C photograph, 115.0 x 145.8 cm (image). Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria. Purchased 1999. Courtesy of Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne.

Anonda Bell would like to thank the following people: All the artists and lenders who have contributed to the exhibition, as well as the following individuals: Michael Coulter, Michael Looby, Tony Hallam and Michael Randell. I would also like to thank NGV staff who have worked on this exhibition.

Julia Gorman would like to thank Sam Funnell, Patricia Funnell, Elizabeth Gorman and Christian Capurro.

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Tim Silver



Blair Trethowan

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