Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art

1 October 2014 – 18 January 2015

An exhibition of Australian and New Zealand ‘Outsider’ artists which challenges a key existing interpretation of the genre will be presented at the Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, from 1 October 2014 to 15 January 2015.

*Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art*, features the work of artists Andrew Blythe, Kellie Greaves, Julian Martin, Jack Napthine, Lisa Reid, Martin Thompson and Terry Williams.

The term ‘Outsider art’ was coined by British art historian Roger Cardinal in 1972 expanding on the 1940s French concept of *art brut*—predominantly artworks made by the institutionalised mentally ill—to include artworks made by folk artists and those who are self-taught, disabled, or on the edges of society.

The work of Outsider artists is often interpreted as expressing a unique inner vision unsullied by social or cultural influences. *Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art* counters this view by presenting contemporary Outsider artists whose works reveal their proactive engagement with the everyday world through artworks that focus on day-to-day experiences.

Curator, Joanna Bosse, says the exhibition questions a key interpretive bias of Outsider art that is a legacy of its origins in *art brut*.

“The association with an interior psychological reality that is unsullied by social or cultural influences remains deeply embedded within the interpretations of Outsider art today, and can lead audiences to misinterpret the
agency and intention of the artist. _Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art_ questions this key interpretive bias, and presents the work of Australian and New Zealander outsider artists that demonstrate a clear and proactive engagement with the world.

“The work of artists Andrew Blythe, Kellie Greaves, Julian Martin, Jack Napthine, Lisa Reid, Martin Thompson and Terry Williams reveals their blatant interest in the here and now,” Ms Bosse said.

Terry Williams’s soft fabric sculptures of everyday items such as fridges, cameras and clocks convey his keen observation of the world and urgent impulse to replicate what is meaningful through familiarity or fascination.

Kellie Greaves’ paintings are based on book cover illustrations with the addition of her own compositional elements and complementary tonal colour combinations.

The traditional discipline of life-drawing provides Lisa Reid with a structure to pursue her interest in recording the human figure. Her pen and ink drawings are carefully observed yet intuitive renderings.

Jack Napthine produces drawn recollections of his past and present daily life in the form of visual diaries. Light fittings from remembered environments feature prominently as do doors with multiple and varied locks. Napthine’s work has a bold economy of means; he uses thick texta pen to depict simplified designs accompanied by text detail that often records the names of friends and family.

The work of Martin Thompson and Andrew Blythe also displays a similarly indexical approach. Both artists produce detailed repetitive patterns that are borne out of a desire for order and control. Thompson uses large-scale grid paper to create meticulous and intricate geometric designs whereas Blythe uses select motifs—the word ‘no’ and the symbol ‘x’—to fill the pictorial plane with dense yet orderly markings that result in graphic and rhythmic patterns.

“In the last decade in particular there has been much debate about the term ‘outsider art’: who does it define? What are the prerequisite conditions for its production? What is it outside of, and who decides? This exhibition doesn’t seek to resolve these ambiguities or establish boundaries, but looks beyond definitions to challenge a key assumption underlying contemporary interpretations of outsider art,” Ms Bosse said.

_Everyday imagining: new perspectives on Outsider art_ is held in conjunction with the international conference _Contemporary Outsider art: the global context_, presented Art Projects Australia and the University of Melbourne and held 23–26 October at the University of Melbourne. The conference proposes an inter-disciplinary exploration of the field, drawing on the experience and knowledge of Australian and international artists, collectors, curators and scholars. More information at www.outsiderartmelbourne2014.com

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Images available upon request and interview with curator, Joanna Bosse

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T: 03 8344 5148 W: www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au  
Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm: Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5pm
RELATED CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITIONS:

*Contemporary Outsider art: the global context Conference, 23–26 October 2014*

*now the heart is filled with gold as if it were a purse*, Exhibition, 11 October – 29 November 2014
ARTS PROJECT AUSTRALIA, Curated by Glenn Barkley [www.artsproject.org.au](http://www.artsproject.org.au)

*Raw Emotion: selected works from the Cunningham Dax Collection* Exhibition, 23 October 2014 – 23 January 2015

*Albert Tucker and the Mystery of H.D* Exhibition, 13 September 2014 – 15 February 2015
HEIDE MUSEUM OF ART, Curated by Jason Smith


*Small Universe* Exhibition, 9 – 26 October 2014,
Curated by Glenn Dalton, Jessie Imam and Ching Yee Ng from Arts Project Australia

*Outside* Exhibition, 17 – 31 October 2014, Curated by Grace McQuilten

*From the Outside: Julian Poon, Tim Maley, Clive Collender & Katrina Barber* Exhibition,
14 October – 7 November 2014

Andrew Blythe, Untitled 2012, synthetic polymer paint on paper, 88 x 116cm, Courtesy the artist and Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland