

NETHERWORLDS

When hunter/gatherer people came together in the cave at Lascaux, and the spear was marked into the side of the bull painted on the rock wall, it solidified for them the success of the coming hunt; through mark-making, they called into being the meal of its meat; the warmth of its hide. Similarly, when their priests (shamans? witches?) painted and adorned themselves, their revisualised selves became not just the likeness, but the actual gods (the ancestors? the elementals?). This is well researched conjecture, first proposed by Richard Andree as *sympathie-zauber* - sympathetic magic. The idea that like produces like - that we call action into being with our thoughts, with our bodies, with our marks. This is all conjecture - a reading of an image, a projection of action.

This exhibition is about power. It reflects on these (maybe?) intertwined histories of art and magic (cultural ritual? spiritual practice? mysticism?), and particularly of art, magic, and outsiders. This has often been without our choosing; from the panic and pandemonium of 17th century Salem and the mass murder of women accused of witchcraft - to the continuing exoticisation of the 'Magical Negro(/Other)' in populist cultural output. The assumption of power becomes both grounds and methodology for our ostracism; *keep them away (...unless we need them?)*.

These six artists' practices draw from these wells; flowing from a history of power, creation, personal responsibility, cultural output, and here directing these streams to reclaim a history of accusation and ostracism. Here power and creation become tools for self-actualisation; they become a site for communitas; a series of distinct but linked netherworlds safe for those who know their true names and wield their own potential.

Blake Lawrence, with *Box Set*, crafts a shrine; evoking in formation something between the Houdou altars of Louisiana and the gilded holy tables of Catholic theatrics. Here the distant divine is replaced with self portraiture - supplanting the ephemeral and unbelievably powerful with the very real and very corporeal queer male body; nude, posed, erotic. Through self-actualisation and the structured ascension of the photographic images, the orgasmic is top-most and divine. Loaded pagan symbols are replaced by residue of the twin context of 21st century queer sex and artmaking; salt and crystals have become brown bottle chemicals (developing fluid or amyl nitrate?), and priapic wands swap out for priapic pornos. At the centre, the artist's own queer, quotidian body, and all the ways it creates and received pleasure. In the warm glow of candles (or the aftermath; surrounded by congealed drools of wax), we kneel at the shrine to queer self-love.

Another altar like form, Naomi Blacklock gives us *Parallel Presence*, where a mirror is positioned on the floor as if a portal to another world, or a summoning tool. The mirror is surrounded by six ersatz candlesticks, positioned over the mirror (at heights corresponding to the artist's chest, stomach, genitals) as surrogates for a coven. They burn and drip onto the mirror, generating a sound which Blacklock conjures and layers further sounds into, including her own breath. As the wax melts, the mirror becomes covered; the reflection closed off except for some scattered gaps. The portal is sealed and the ceremony is over. The recorded sound replays in the gallery space, the echo of a gathering now left in another world.

A gathering of another kind occurs in Chantal Fraser's clusters of masks, *#traditional #blurred lines*. Masks have a long history straddling an often problematic space between cultural ritual and the art context; notably and not least as a source of inspiration without responsible representation for Picasso (though many white European artists are guilty of this). Fraser's title, with hashtags and pop culture references, suggest a sampling of cultures; palatable, quotable, problematic - with the masks, she draws on her own Samoan heritage, but suffuses them with personal history; weaving in her own clothes, contemporary fabrics, and embroidering them with her own words. Gaudy sequins in kitsch arrangements, shells, costume jewellery, the symbol of the cross combine in a wearable object that inherently transforms both wearer and witness and invite a process of self-creation, adornment, and empowerment.

Poised at the window as if having just entered, or preparing for an escape, the masks watch over the handmade table at the centre of Caitlin Franzmann's *Magical Thinking*, where viewers are invited to perform readings with hand-collaged divination cards. With a question in mind, participants are invited to select a card; as Caitlin suggests; 'make sure you ask the cards and not to another person...not to the sky...direct all your energy into the cards.' Either solo or, in performance, guided by the artist, the power and responsibility for your future are left in your hands - the cards are a tool for divining, but how do you interpret the card, how much value do you place in the readings? Franzmann's final words are; 'Trust Yourself'.

Clay Kerrigan's primary practice is as a writer, but the scenarios of his queer and visceral body of work spring from his own spiritual practice; a decidedly 21st century queer/pagan/shamanic ritual process of meditation, vision quest, and spell-casting. Invoking vibrant ephemeral images that draw on contemporary art heroes, porn performers, personal history, and a community of like-minded homos and partners, the writer's seldom-seen collage practice is here given space. A trio of finely detailed dreamscapes, the results of visions here given shape and form, sit alongside documentation of the process that calls them forth - a trio of journal entries that expand the images into time and give scope to the weight of sex, death, and feeling they carry; and self-documented webcam photo series that cluster and expand like windows to reveal the artist's process.

Anastasia Booth's *Portrait* series of mediated performances depict her own interpretations of Greek mythological women. The women we remember in many of these old stories are usually awaiting a masculine hero or being victim to circumstance, often with little agency of their own. However the character of Baubo is an old woman who is both comic and sexual, usually depicted with an exposed, exaggerated vulva. One of her most noted acts was mooning Demeter, an action funny enough to bring the goddess out of mourning her lost daughter Persephone. Booth reimagines this wickedly funny and lascivious woman using bells, which she exposes to the viewer, lifting her skirt and shaking her thighs. Alongside Baubo in this video pantheon are Artemis and Scylla; the former with whip, equal parts sexually inviting and warning - the latter wielding an attached phallus, gesturing at those coming through the gallery. With their repeated actions, the figures appear caught in ritual - and like their namesakes, caught in the repetition of enshrined mythology. Their leather costuming and props speak to the language of BDSM and fetish culture, explorations of which have long played a part in Booth's practice, with their considerations of female sexual desire, self-empowerment, and agency.

In distinct but adjacent ways, these works claim the power of maligned spirituality in art contexts. They draw on personal cultural practice for contemporary objects; utilising mystical imagery, symbols, and processes to craft new ritual for art contexts; and by reflecting on emergent pagan practices within queer and feminist communities. By doing so, they begin to reclaim a murmured history of power and potential; carving space for distinct, linked and intersectional spaces and communities.

Amy-Clare McCarthy and Kieran Swann

WORKS

Gallery 1

Anastasia Booth, *Portrait of Baubo*, 2016. Mediated performance.

Anastasia Booth, *Portrait of Artemis*, 2016. Mediated performance.

Anastasia Booth, *Portrait of Scylla*, 2016. Mediated performance.

Caitlin Franzmann, *Magical Thinking*, 2014. Set of 24 hand-collaged divination cards, handmade table and chairs - viewers are welcome to use the cards to perform their own readings within the gallery.

Chantal Fraser, *#traditional #blurredlines*, 2013-2016.

Clay Kerrigan, *Gate*, 2016. Text.

Clay Kerrigan, *Group*, 2016. Text.

Clay Kerrigan, *Road*, 2016. Text, and *Sigil*, 2016. Drawn sigil.

Clay Kerrigan, *Collages*, 2012. Digital collages.

Clay Kerrigan, *Ritual Screenshots*, 2016. Ritual documentation.

Gallery 2

Naomi Blacklock, *Parallel Presence*, 2016. Galvanised steel, Tasmanian oak wood, glass mirror, with sound created through effect pedals, contact microphone, vocal microphone, amplifier.

Blake Lawrence, *Box Set*, 2015. Wooden pinhole cameras, pornographic DVD-stack camera, analog pinhole photo prints, cyanotypes, digital negatives, synthetic battery operated candles.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

NAOMI BLACKLOCK

Naomi Blacklock is a Brisbane-based artist, working primarily with sound installation, text works and performance, her artworks involve an exploration and examination of mythologies regarding wild women archetypes such as sirens, witches and banshees, and the female scream as they have been treated in performance art and feminist psychoanalytic theories.

www.naomiblacklock.com/

ANASTASIA BOOTH

Booth works across sculpture, moving image, photography, sound and performance. Her practice playfully interrogates the portrayal of women's desire in cultural production and symbolic discourse, with a particular focus on fetishism. Employing strategies of subversion, abstraction and appropriation, her works draw influence from contemporary subcultures, art history and mythology. By reconstructing these visual codes through the formal and theoretical languages of artistic practice, her works speak to the problematic, humorous and often paradoxical relationship between depictions of the feminine and women's desire and agency.

www.anastasiaboath.com

CAITLIN FRANZMANN

Caitlin Franzmann's practice explores contemporary art's potential to instigate change by way of critical listening, dialogue and self-empowerment. In reaction to the fast pace and sensory overstimulation of contemporary urban life, she creates situations to encourage slowness, mindful contemplation, and social interaction in both galleries and public spaces. These situations include immersive sonic spaces such as wearable listening sculptures, architectural interventions and audiowalks. Caitlin's practice is social, drawing on diverse communities as principle collaborators in generating unforeseeable possibilities. She often works site-specifically – researching, experimenting and developing new work in the environments she is responding to. Recently, her work has extended to public spaces, celebrating the inextricable links between space, ecologies and human life.

www.caitlinfranzmann.com/

CHANTAL FRASER

Chantal Fraser is a multimedia artist with a BFA (Honours) from Queensland University of Technology. Fraser's practice engages in pushing the boundaries of adornment, intersectional experience, social positioning, and gender through mediums such as collage, installation, performance and digital media. She has exhibited at various national institutions and galleries such as QUT Art Museum, UQ Art Museum, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Footscray Arts Centre, Blindside ARI Melbourne, Bus Projects Melbourne, MOP Projects Sydney and Casula Powerhouse. Fraser has exhibited at international institutions including La Cité internationale des Arts in France, Les Brassières in Belgium, Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia and Harris Gallery, University of La Verne, California USA. This year Fraser has been included in two satellite exhibitions as part of Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival and discussed her work as part of the Cindy Sherman Public Programs at QAGOMA.

CLAY KERRIGAN

Clay Kerrigan is a poet, writer, model, teacher, and ritual artist living in Los Angeles, California, where he received his Master's degree at the California Institute of the Arts. Blending fantasy tropes, queer archetype, gothic magic, and made-up rituals in visions of possible deaths through homo-fucking, fighting, and family-making, he deconstructs notions of "community" in an attempt to navigate a shared ultradimensional solitude. Clay reaches backward while dreaming forward on the timeline of humanity, hoping to see through the veil, into the divine, through the lenses of sex, gender, and age in essay explorations of queer monsters and their societal practices. Clay has produced chapbooks for Darin Klein's Box of Books VIII and The Earthfire Institute Wildlife Sanctuary. He is currently a staff-writer for End/Pain's online magazine ISSUES, a writing instructor at both Los Angeles City College and Glendale Community College, and an editor for Litmus Press.

BLAKE LAWRENCE

Blake Lawrence is a queer Sydney-based artist working across wearable forms, performance, and digital and camera-less photography; most recently, the alchemical printing process of Cyanotype. His work addresses personal history, fantasy and spirituality, the queered and natural environment and sexuality. His work is deeply tied to the Australian landscape, particularly the estuaries and agricultural lowlands of his hometown Palmers Island, in Northern NSW, and those surrounding Sydney. He performs post-gender neo-burlesque locally, under the moniker Canoe, and is a member of the club costume/character duo, Wisteria Hysteria.

<http://cargocollective.com/blakealanlawrence>

CURATOR BIOGRAPHIES

AMY-CLARE McCARTHY

Amy-Clare McCarthy is a curator and writer. She currently works at Metro Arts, Brisbane, supporting contemporary artists to develop exhibitions. She completed her Bachelor of Creative Industries Honours at Queensland University of Technology in Visual Art in 2010. Her honours research focused on different modes of viewer participation in contemporary art. In 2011-2012 Amy-Clare undertook internships in New York at MoMA PS1 and e-flux, New York. She formerly worked as an Exhibitions Project Officer at the State Library of Queensland.

www.amyclaremccarthy.com

KIERAN SWANN

Kieran Swann is an artist, and freelance curator, producer, and facilitator; with a background in both performance and visual art. His practice returns to ideas of memorial practice, queerness, locational histories, performance as archive, the public/private dichotomy, and strategies of co-creation, meaningful engagement of the audience, or at least displacing the usual audience/artist relationship. He maintains a joint curatorial practice with Amy-Clare McCarthy; and is one-fourth of The Good Room, a collective who use the anonymous experiences of ordinary people to create extraordinary performance works. In 2016/17, Kieran is undertaking postgraduate study at Wesleyan University's Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance, in Connecticut USA; and working freelance in curatorial/producing and public programs with Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Danspace Project, and PS122; and associate curatorial duties with Venice International Performance Art Week.

www.kieranswann.com