ROONEY MAGAZINE
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Rooney



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Rooney acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We particularly acknowledge the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation, upon whose land *Rooney* largely operates. We recognise the important connection of First Peoples to land, water and community, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. This magazine contains Traditional place names within Australia sourced by AIATSIS Pathways or provided by galleries and museums. Please contact Rooney at editorial@rooney.info if you wish to provide feedback.



⚠ SPOILER ALERT ⚠

ROONEY QUIZ (ANSWERS)

1. Lottie Consalvo, Sarah Contos, Nadine Christensen
2. Fairfield
3. Michelangelo Dying
4. Central Station
5. Hugo Weaving
6. 20
7. Kylie Minogue
8. Cockatoos
9. Between yellow and green
10. Stark graphic text, contrasting colours, dynamic textures

SCORE

0-3 UNPLUGGED AND UNBOTHERED

Congratulations! While a low score may be uninspiring in most tests, the Rooney Quiz asks its readers to maintain a level of esotericism, a level of aloofness. You are on your own path, keep your eyes forward.

4-6 MODERATELY AWARE

You have half a foot in and out. You are in the know, but you are also exercising some blissful unawareness. So, I suggest—lock in or lock out.

7-10 IYKYK

And you know. I am sorry to say, but while you may not be a sheep, you are certainly tapped in to the culture. Watch yourself! You might start a new Instagram profile dedicated to archival garments with corresponding Pantone swatches.



Why *Rooney*?

To the reader,

I would like to welcome you inside the first issue of *Rooney*, a new arts and culture publication.

When approached with the idea of *Rooney*, I wondered what another publication could say? In the oversaturated audio-, visual- and text-based economy, I feared adding anything more into the aether. However, something that is increasingly apparent—as we witness an erosion of freedom, funding and in some cases, safety—is that art will always be made. Perhaps, it is one of the few things that is guaranteed.

Shamefully, I resonate with Patrick Hunn's Camille Wassenaar, who lives inside the featured fiction, *Syrup*. While many of us may not traverse wearing "unreleased Margiela split-toed equestrian boots" with a "statistically insignificant but economically consequential group of outrageously privileged people", the idea that, "She did not need *more* from life—she needed something *different"* touches on a familiar feeling. To have all the spoils of contemporary life, while yes, demanding and demoralising, is almost always mostly fine. However, as we watch the many horrors occurring overseas and in our own postcodes, the capacity for art—and taking the time to engage with it—can feel frivolous.

In his profile within this issue, Naoise Halloran-Mackay responds to this sense of constraint in his craft. His work *Cage* (2025) features an empty enclosure, serving as a provocation, "Are you in a cage? Or do you just think you are in a cage? Are you truly in a cage if you have the freedom to leave at any moment?" These are questions that, as a privileged person living under neoliberalism, I find seeping through in both my personal and professional life.

However, working on the first edition of *Rooney* has renewed and refined my feelings for the arts. As I think they have an important job: to serve society as a form of mirror. While it can be outlandish over literal, I believe it holds the power to reflect who we are as individuals and as a collective. Art does not sit on a throne ruling over us; rather it sits among us, as witness. It nudges us, it stretches us and it asks us: Who are we? Who do want to be? How do we want to treat each other?

The intention of *Rooney* is to engage with art in as many forms as possible. But further, as a gesture that hopes to inspire and support readers and artists, it will be free. Connecting back to the pleasure of reading physical media, we hope this issue finds those looking for something *different.*

Anna Carlsson
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Anna Carlsson, editor of *Rooney*, profiles Naarm/Melbourne-based multi-disciplinary artist and cover star Naoise Halloran-Mackay. They talk freedom, twitching (bird watching) and the Western Treatment Plant.

WRITER
Anna Carlsson



Starlings (2026), oil and timber, marquetry on panel, 57 x 34 cm.

“What does freedom feel like to you?” This is the first question I ask artist Naoise Halloran-Mackay.

UP IN THE AIR

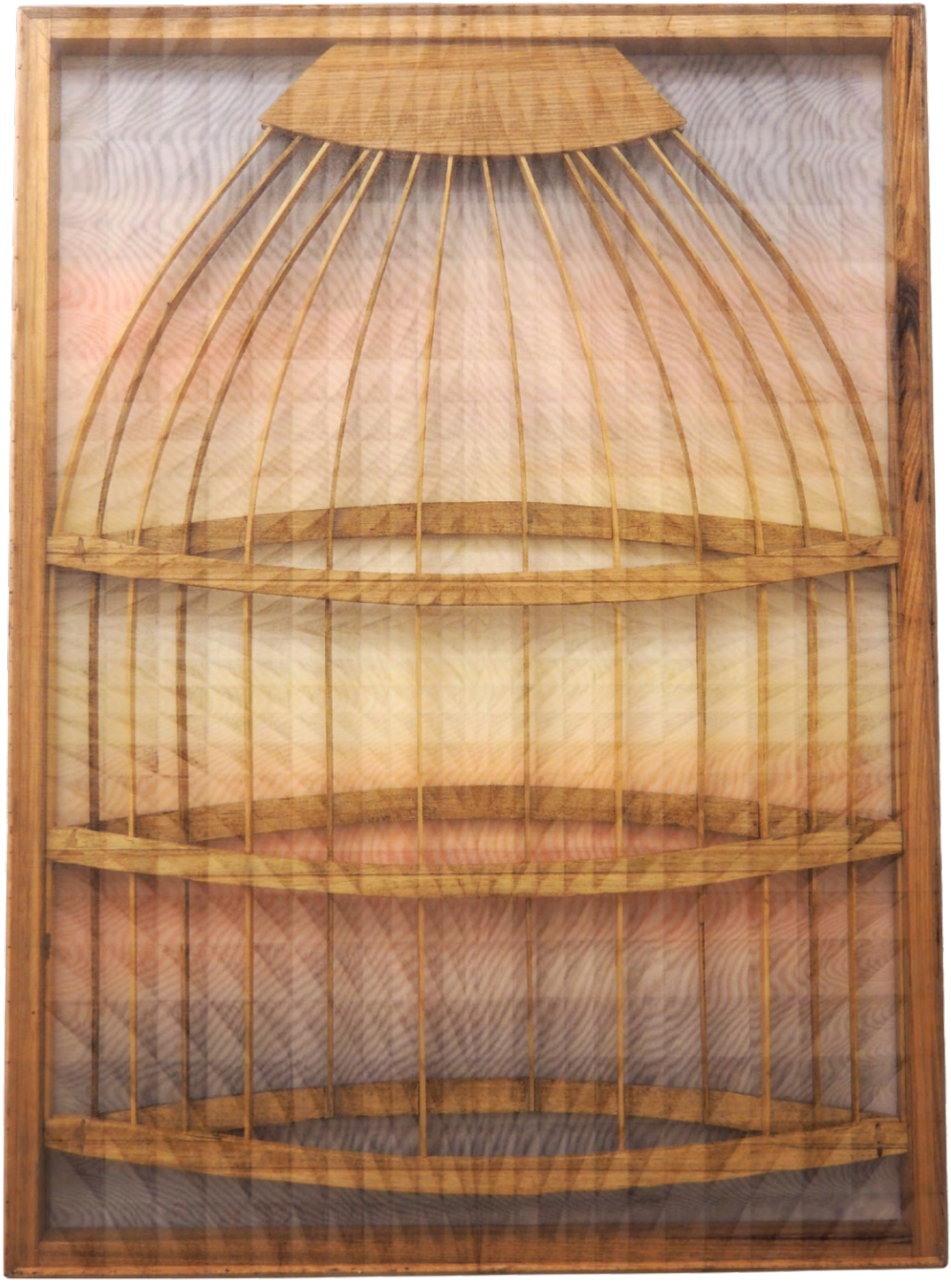


Care (2025), detail, oil on board and organza; timber inlay and salvaged hardwood support.

I identify as a late-in-life driver, only receiving my license the week before my 27th birthday. To some, that would still be considered young-in-life—but the 11 years between first receiving my L plates and graduating to the Ps felt like a strip of eternity. My road as a non-driver felt like one I could never get off. After stopping and starting driving lessons with multiple teachers from my teens to my twenties, I was resigned to the fact that getting on the open road in a vehicle alone would somehow be bad for me and those around me.

"What does freedom feel like to you?" This is the first question I ask artist Naoise Halloran-Mackay. His practice of intricate woodwork often features birds—something that, in my mind, symbolises ultimate freedom. Halloran-Mackay is an avid bird watcher, speaking with ease about the areas across Naarm/Melbourne that host bird species. "Do you know about the Western Treatment Plant?" he asks excitedly. I shake my head.

South of Werribee is Melbourne's largest sewage plant: "Everything goes through this process and is cleaned out through filtering pumps. But then with all the water that is left over, it has to be returned back into the environment. The best way they found to do that was to just return it to the wetlands, which will naturally filter through the water. So you end up with extremely nutrient-rich water that's just pumped back into these vast expansive wetlands." Inside the Western Treatment Plant, there are over 300 species of birds. While it is only accessible with a special bird-watching permit, the habitat itself exists as an open-air sanctuary, welcoming creatures to its abundant landscape, but also allowing them to leave.



Cage (2025), oil on organza with salvaged hardwood support, 113 x 82 cm.

“They’re the ultimate representation of freedom, to the point where we don’t even know where they are, where they go.”



Wetland off the M80 (2025), oil on organza with rose gum and ash support, 113 x 82 cm.

Many of the birds have long migration patterns, with some shorebirds breeding in Siberia, migrating south, before repeating the 25000-kilometre round trip.

Driving my car alone on the *free*way, I feel free. I listen to French musician Oklou's *blade bird*, letting the melancholic beat drift through, in, and around my mind. The song is about the concept of love being like a bird, or as she has stated in a 2024 interview with the publication *Office Magazine*, "a pattern where you fall in love with people because they represent a sense of freedom". To put it in a cage would be wrong, but feeling protective over someone else, you want to keep it safe and reach for the cage. To love something usually means you also want it to be free. But that means you cannot always keep it safe.

The Australian Painted Snipe is Halloran-Mackay's first bird love. He shares, "I've still never seen one. I've driven hours interstate to go and try and wait because I've heard they've been seen somewhere. But they are this highly elusive bird. In some ways, they're the ultimate representation of freedom, to the point where we don't even know where they are, where they go." The Australian Painted Snipe is featured in his work, *Care* (2025), oil on board and organza with a timber inlay and salvaged hardwood support. Within the shapes of the hardwood structure, Halloran-Mackay features a snipe as it is being tagged. The grip feels tight and almost cruel; the blue glove has captured the bird. While it feels at odds with the snipe's nomadic lifestyle, Halloran-Mackay acknowledges, "We require this sort of research and knowledge through our systems to justify why this bird deserves to be saved or how we can go about protecting it." The idea resonates, intercepting an individual bird's freedom in an attempt to protect a wider population, and feels connected to the conflict between individual freedom and the collective: at times, it is necessary to limit personal privileges to protect a greater group of people.



Care (2025), detail, oil on board and organza; timber inlay and salvaged hardwood support.

In the state of current affairs, it almost feels like this concept of freedom is inverted. When I ask him, "When do you feel most free?" he replies, "It feels really difficult to consider... a personal sort of freedom when there's so much going on in the world." True to American civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer's dictum, "Nobody's free until everybody's free." While not always evident physically, the connected nature of the human experience is made evident through crises. Global horrors are now livestreamed on social and mainstream media, with the collective experience of the world revealing its weight on individuals.

There is something captivating about imagining birds flying around the world. To humans, who are confined to two legs, it can feel like the open sky taunts us with possibility. The parameters of human experience, when compared to those of a bird, are restrictive. The closest I feel to the freedom of a bird is in my car. But not only does the car remain on the ground, I also am not free from the dangers of traffic, accidents, extremely small parallel parking spaces, and the conflict-driven fuel crisis.

As Maggie Nelson writes in *On Freedom* (2021), "driving fast in a gasoline-powered car whose emissions are contributing to the foreclosure of planetary life" seems to directly intercept any sort of freedom gained. As an anxious person, the negative components of freedom, at times, outweigh my positive freedom. I am free to go out into the world, but I am not free from the rough and unwieldy world, nor from leaving a negative impact. It feels a lot safer for me and for others, at home in my cage.

Halloran-Mackay's *Cage* (2025) is oil on organza with salvaged hardwood support. He works from cuts of salvaged lengths of timber, mainly hardwood, but with some pine and soft wood. Revisiting his training in residential construction, Halloran-Mackay's practice is detailed yet also expansive, utilising perspective points to give depth. The contrasting tones of the wood create a strong image, as the materials stand almost muscular in the light and delicate gallery setting. When speaking to Halloran-Mackay about the piece, I ask him whether he thought about putting a bird inside the structure. He said he had originally planned to, but then he realised the work didn't need it. An empty cage is more of a provocation: Are you in a cage? Or do you just think you are in a cage? Are you truly in a cage if you have the freedom to leave at any moment? If you own the keys to the door?



Starlings (2026), detail, oil and timber, marquetry on panel, 57 x 34 cm.



Sneak (Night Heron) (2025),
oil on organza with ash and burnt
oak support, 52 x 72 cm.

When so many other places in the world have their positive freedom violently compromised, it feels unfathomable that I would imagine I was encaged. Within my feeling of restriction, I can think myself a door, an opening, a way out. The guilt of having endless time to read, write, talk and make art is debilitating. It feels like too much freedom for my own good. How should we live, work and be when so much of the world cannot?

Freedom is often broken into positive and negative liberty, with the former being self-determination and the latter an absence of interference in one's pursuits. I think about this distinction when I think of the nest boxes Halloran-Mackay has constructed as part of his 2025 exhibition *Shelter*. Utilising his carpentry skills and remnants from old houses that he collected from working in the industry, he reconstructs tree hollows. He says, "A lot of Australian bird species nest within tree hollows. Tree hollows take decades or hundreds of years to form. So that is something that is lacking and causing a lot of extinctions and pressure on species." Halloran-Mackay's boxes use the original materials of trees that have been harvested and discarded, alongside non-toxic materials, and he fashions them into nest boxes. After the exhibition at First Draft, he returned them to nature, allowing them to serve their original purpose. The bird houses are part of a regenerative property along the Surf Coast, in the Barwon South West region of Victoria.

A bird's positive freedoms are consistently being eroded by humanity and our desire to expand, develop and advance. I wonder if our physical interference in destroying their homes creates a shared sense of danger for species that are not under the threat of extinction. Do they notice their neighbours disappearing? Halloran-Mackay's tree hollows seek to restore a bird's freedom. A bird cannot be free if it does not have a home to return to. A bird cannot be free if its ecosystem is destroyed. I think about home as a mindset, as a community, as much as a place of safety and residence—all vital in the experience of freedom.

When I drive my car, I look at the birds that fly in the distance. Even though driving is the closest I'll get to their speed and movement, I feel deeply connected to them. We share the same air, same skies, same world. I think about humanity's connection to birdlife and the way our interactions and relationships with them form a butterfly effect—small ripples and small protections that have the power to make a considerable and lasting change. If creating art is the first beating of a wing that leads to the opening of something or someone's world, then Halloran-Mackay's work is a mighty flap.

NAOISE HALLORAN-MACKAY: HORIZONITES
Mary Cherry Contemporary (Naarm/Melbourne)
29 August—19 September

MELBOURNE SCULPTURE BIENNALE
Billilla Mansion, Brighton (Melbourne/Naarm)
8—25 October

LOVEBIRDS (LOVE, BIRDS)
Berninneit Cultural Centre (Millawul/Phillip Island)
31 October—13 December

If you are interested in bird watching and conservation, consider becoming a volunteer Beach-Nesting Bird Monitor and Citizen Scientist through Bird Life Australia. https://birdlife.org.au/volunteer-opportunities/monitor-citizen-scientist.

Fiction by
Patrick Hunn

Illustrated by
Caitlin Aloisio Shearer

Camille Wassenaar meets Syrup.

Syrup

A short story





There was a forest, and for a time it was a perfect system.

Then a city appeared, and the canopy of nighttime stars was lost to artificial light. Small pieces of plastic began to appear in the stomachs of birds and mice. Parcels of ancient growth were shorn to the bare earth to create space for car parks and warehouses. To escape the city, people began to wander deeper and deeper into the parts of the forest that were as yet unmolested. It was a nice place to take a walk.

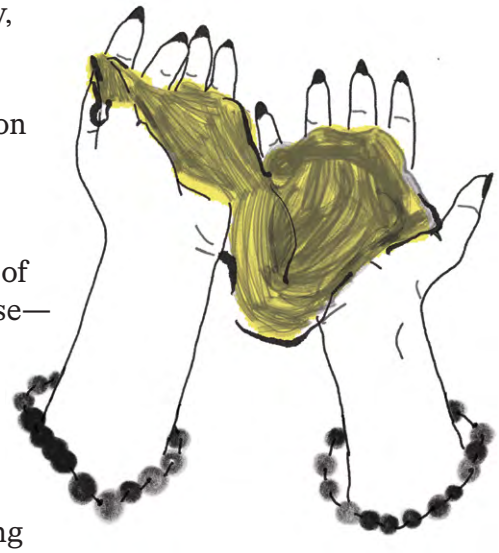
These trespassers did not usually notice Syrup, who lived in a hole and ate dead things. When they came close, he would withdraw into a pool of muck or the warm, soupy interior of a rotting trunk. Living in a hole and eating dead things were the two animating forces in Syrup's life, and he had no desire for a more complex arrangement.

This is it! he gurgled. *This is how I like it!* he slurped. His jelly shook with delight at the fact of his own existence. He did not know where he had come from. He was aware of the world turning around him only in the most distant way. Even for a creature of his simple construction, Syrup was not bright, and he knew it. He could observe the sophistication of the forest, the interlocking of the fine-toothed mechanisms that sustained life, but he could not understand it.

It's not my fault! I'm only little! he sometimes thought, and this reassured him.

Syrup had been 'only little' for centuries, his consciousness flickering like a sputtering wick. Each day was the same. Syrup woke and he drained himself from his hole, an abscess in the necrotic heights of a long-dead tree. As he dribbled down its side, the tacky surface of his body picked up a coat of small twigs and fragments of bark. Then, flopping to the ground, he trawled the forest floor for putrefacted vegetable and animal matter.

When he found something to his liking, his mouth-analogue distended from his translucent, featureless body. He had a preference for disease: a songbird lacerated with ulcers, or the rotting roots of a fern. In this way, he exhibited a certain accidental intelligence; like humans, he valued proteins that had been developed by the passage of time or colonisation by mycelia, like dry-aged beef, or rich cheese. This preference was Syrup's defining attribute. When he thought about the future—which was rare, for Syrup was a true gourmand, thinking of his next meal to the exclusion of everything else—he assumed that this would occupy his days for as long as his internal glands continued to produce the faintly luminous slime that lubricated his journeys through the muck.



It took him a week to eat a millipede, two to eat a pinecone, 24 hours to eat something simple like an acorn, or a particularly complicated leaf. The only things he refrained from eating were fungi: these he intuitively recognised as fellow gustatory travellers.

He was only interested in acorns, millipedes, and rotting roots; rolling his body over dead things; eating dead things. His was not the world of sunlight, the gentle breeze, the blue sky, laughter, the heat of the day radiating off stone. His was the world of mulch, sour fluids, fermentation in the dark. Lacking eye- or ear- or nose-analogues, he did not see or hear or smell—and *yet…!* Every day was exquisite for its repetitions of these modest pleasures.

Syrup's satisfactions came to an end when Camille Wassenaar stepped on him. By the time he noticed the vibration of her delicate steps through the undergrowth it was too late to disentangle his mouth-analogue from the partially digested body of the starling upon which he had been breakfasting for days.

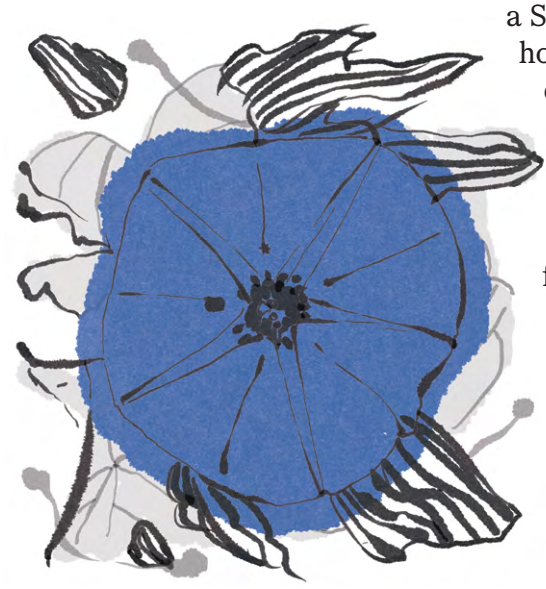
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Camille Wassenaar's life was a breathless procession of back-to-back ultra-long-distance flights, innovative dinners, and economically significant encounters in night clubs. She had four recreational colonoscopies a year. She had a lithe, boyish body. Her abdominal muscles fit together like scales on the belly of an armoured snake. She had an equine face that her gay friends loved and her male lovers found challenging in a way they congratulated themselves for overcoming.

When Camille Wassenaar stood on Syrup, she was wearing a pair of unreleased Margiela equestrian boots, an archival Yamamoto tunic, a vintage Alhambra bracelet from Van Cleef (as a joke), a thin jade necklace that featured on a list of historically

significant artefacts for which the National Museum of China sought repatriation, a mohair papoose suspended from her shoulder on a filigree silver chain that she had made herself in the first year of her knitwear degree at Central Saint Martins, and a panic button disguised as a lumpy ceramic amulet hanging on a gold rope. The amulet broadcast her location to a personal security company headquartered in Tel Aviv. Once activated, a constellation of private satellites identified her location and alerted nearby operatives who, it was guaranteed, would make a lethal arrival on-site within three minutes. It was a breathtakingly expensive service her parents, wary of those who would access their fortunes through little Mimi, insisted on.

She had two tattoos, carved into her by an ex-boyfriend she had met at boarding school: a scimitar on her forearm and, on the sole of her foot, the coded password to her cryptocurrency wallet, the decryption key for which was printed on a strip of aluminium kept in her mother's safe-deposit box in Lucerne. Her current boyfriend was a bisexual ziggurat of muscle who worked as a senior portfolio manager at Citadel. Technically, Camille was the head of activations and marketing for an international art gallery based in Manhattan, but lately she was doing some curation and some catalogue writing and some light-to-medium modelling, and when people asked her about it she said *idk hahaha im all over the place*. On the side, she consulted on images and ideas for Shiseido, a state-owned Chinese heavy industries enterprise, a Swiss pharmaceutical company hoping to relaunch a first generation chemotherapy medication as a weight loss pill, and Japanese Tobacco International. She had a boutique drug habit that had secured her professional reputation for being a good time and garrotted her ability for complex thought. She kept an apartment in London that she rarely visited, the bathroom of which had been photographed for *Cleaver* magazine's interior design issue, in a spread that also featured the bedroom where the widow of an assassinated Russian anti-corruption activist slept alone, the kitchen where 'Belgrade's Top MDMA Alchemist' performed his transmutations, and the maximum security cell where a mass murderer waited execution. She had been on so many 'Thirty Under Thirty' lists that the editors of the supplementary magazines in which these were published had, out of habit, continued including her until she was thirty-two.



She had four recreational colonoscopies a year

While everyone knew she was 'doing well' financially, she was doing better. She possessed an investment portfolio worth over 95 million American dollars, managed on her behalf since her infancy by her father, who had recently stepped down from his role as the chairman of the Monetary Authority of Macao. Her mother busied herself with her collections, including the world's largest collection of Royal Nymphenberg ceramics and the world's second-largest collection of artefacts relating to personages involved in the operation of the German state (1933–1945), sealed in a series of temperature-controlled rooms beneath the family seat in Sussex.

Bored by a string of summers in Uzès and Cap-Ferrat and Elba and Haut-Pauzerratte-sur-Saint-Thérèse, Camille had begun to holiday more adventurously. She had undertaken a two week macrodosing workshop in La Paz over Christmas, where her personality had been torn apart and pasted back together dozens of times. She had taken an off-the-grid cabin on the Massif Central where she had smoked hundreds of cigarettes while plucking every hair on her head off with a pair of tweezers. More recently, she had taken weekend solo trips to Ittoqqortoormiit and Antananarivo, but in both instances she had been too tired to do anything but call her boyfriend and scream senselessly while he did coke and ket off her gilt 18th Century Louis XVI hand-mirror, played *Elden Ring*, and had penetrative sex with her friend Paul, a generational talent in personal shopping, in her apartment. The week prior, she had offered her blood at a secret chapel in Mexico City to a branch of the Catholic church that offered invitation-only medical treatments paid for in consecrated proprietary cryptocurrency. In a month's time she had a booking with a genetic artist who was maybe going to grow an ear on the nape of her neck—or maybe somewhere else, she couldn't remember. Right now, she was in Syrup's forest, trying to engage with nature, though in fact, she barely knew where she was, a pharmaceutical schedule of sedatives and stimulants working at all times to keep the real world just out of reach.



These holidays were an attempt to address a serious and mounting depression. Her life, which by almost every measure placed her inside a statistically insignificant but economically consequential group of outrageously privileged people, seemed to have run aground. She was floundering at work, having become aware, sometime in the recent past, that she did not need to work. She was not effortlessly impressive to people in the way that she once had been. Paul said something cold and dismissive about her 'directionless' wardrobe before he hung up their most recent Facetime call to, she suspected, eat her boyfriend's ass. This year she had been contacted by no magazines, was not hounded by her lovers in quite the same insatiable way,



and drew fewer smiles at industry events—even the ones she hosted. She received around one hundred dinner invitations a month, down from the all-time post-Covid peak of more than a thousand. Increasingly, she was having arguments with her friends that she did not understand. None of these were emergencies, but they added up to the feeling that the good part of life, which she had been unaware of while she was living it, was over. The polynucleotide injections were doing nothing to smooth over the deepening crease in her forehead. She did not need *more* from life—she needed something *different*.

With all of this on her mind, Camille Wassenaar was not looking where she was going. She did not see Syrup, and her split-toed shoe punched a wet hole through his body.

Ah! thought Syrup, dumber than usual with shock. *Oo! No! Ah! Oo!*

Camille looked down at the offensive mound of filth encroaching on her shoes. "Gross," she said.

Syrup could not hear this insult, but he could feel Camille's foot as she began to slide out of him. His nervous system was just acute enough to register the feeling of someone penetrating and then withdrawing from the mucilaginous sac that contained his various organs and glands. For the first time in a thousand years, he panicked. He did the only thing he knew how to do, and, with the most innocent intentions, ate Camille Wassenaar.

He had never eaten something as it continued to move. Camille Wassenaar kicked her cloven lambskin hoof to dislodge his slime as it gathered at her ankles, the shock triggering various long-dormant biological apparatuses: sacs of neurotoxic venom gurgled to life; small, hair-like proboscises emerged from his surface. He did not know what was happening, but he felt an acceleration.

Oooooo! he moaned.

'Oh my god, what the fuck?' Camille wheezed, as her muscles seized, her heart slowed, and she fell forward paralysed. Syrup's gastric juices leeched into her flesh. Several seconds later, she was unconscious.

Syrup observed himself in dumb horror as he began to digest her, in a process he found he could not stop. Camille Wassenaar tasted intensely artificial and sinewy. Her perfume (a custom blend with notes of roasted phthalate, hyssop, goose blood and virus) caused a mild allergic reaction that clouded Syrup's translucent interior. The benzodiazapines in her blood made his mind fizz.

Not very yummy! Syrup thought.

Not very yummy! Syrup thought.
I want to stop! Syrup wailed.
Help! Syrup pleaded.

There was no one to help. He found he could not stop. It was as if his gelatinous muscle fibres had been fed a chemical accelerant. The glass ring of his digestive tract closed around Camille Wassenaar's skull and began to dissolve her hair and scalp.

As he penetrated her skull, Syrup felt the pulse of firing neurons, the signals in Camille's brain stem racing through his own, simpler nervous system. He could taste her frustrations, her sorrows, her complicated pleasures, her Pyrrhic approach to personal relationships. Images arrived in a percussive deluge: he experienced himself inducing vomit in a first class airplane toilet, fighting with a boyfriend in the stainless steel bathroom of a nightclub in Shenzhen, arguing with both parents until all three of them were tearful and screaming in the dimly lit drawing room of a house in the Cotswolds.

Syrup gagged on Camille's life. Camille misinterpreting compliments as slights. Camille feeling suicidal and vindictive. Camille cheating on tests. Camille being cruel to waitresses. Camille feeding her best friend's toy poodle Lexapro out of boredom. Camille sending anonymous, abusive e-mails about herself to the company inbox for attention. Camille disgracing herself at a rehab in the Grenadines, where she threw a large piece of coral at an orderly, blinding him in one eye. Camille spending hours—hundreds, thousands—shopping online. Camille's social circle dwindling to a tiny cluster of other young and beautiful people untroubled by the dirtying complications of real life. Camille bouncing between European capitals, small Korean villages, spas in the Andes. Camille leaving entire meals uneaten at hundreds of Michelin-starred restaurants. Camille stealing a small bar of soap shaped like a mega yacht from the bathroom of a friend's father's mega yacht.



Disgusting! Bitter! Revolting! Syrup screamed, asserting himself, desperately trying to reverse the fusion that was taking place, an overwhelming sensory tide of unrelenting chemical tang, microplastics and heavy metals. Syrup became inflamed, swelling into a glowing balloon the size of a truck, filling with pulsing lights and dark grey clouds, stretching his outer membrane gossamer thin. He shook helplessly in the crisp, woody air.

At once ravenous for her and rejecting every part of her essence, he made a last feeble effort to retract himself from Camille Wassenaar. Too late. His organs turned black. He was overcome by the alien sensations pulsing from Camille Wassenaar's paralysed body. Eating Camille Wassenaar was like eating a pudding made from faeces, liquid mercury, spent fissile material. There was too much of her.

Oh no!

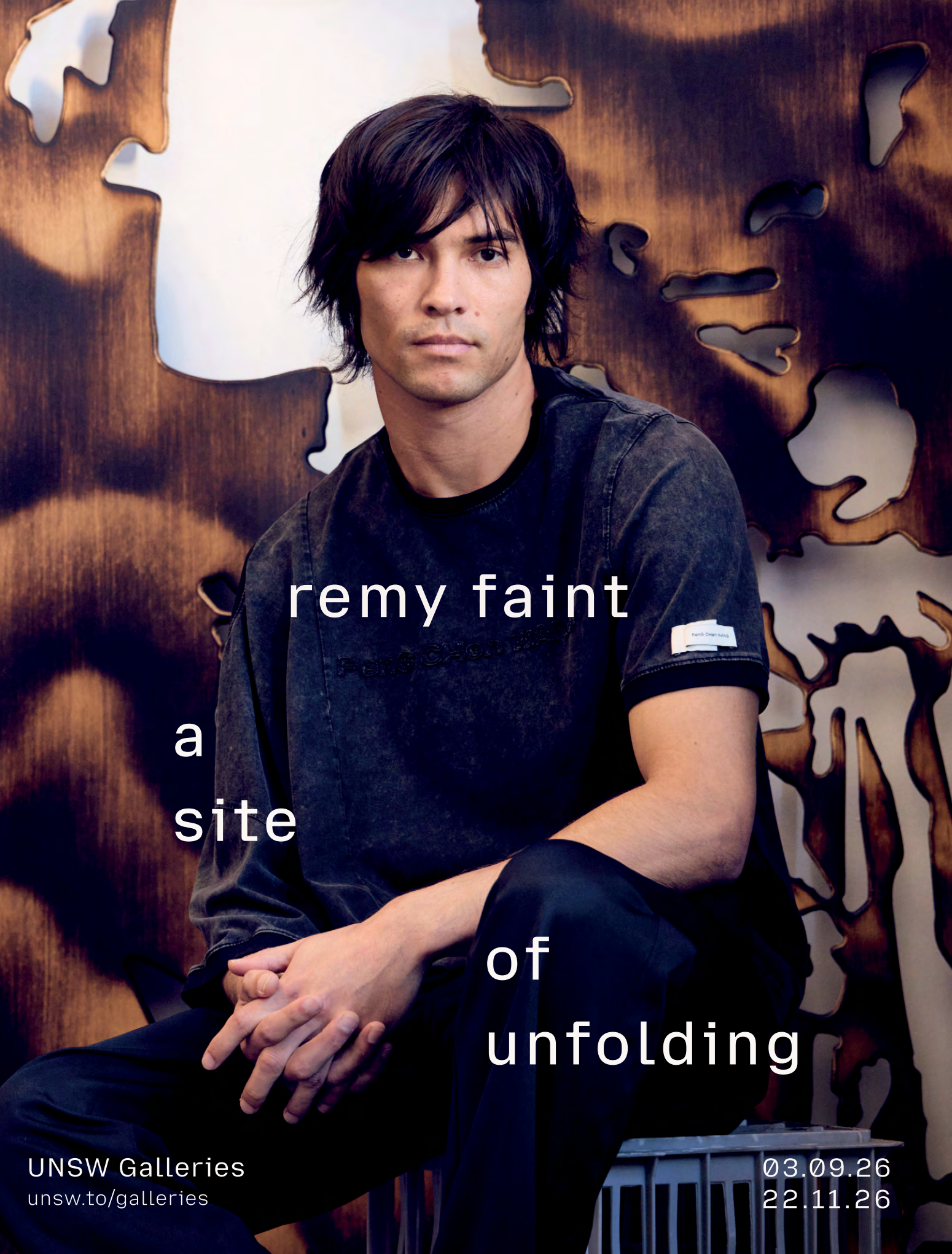
A moment later, his engorged body exploded in a rank nova of sludge and bile, terminating nearly a millennium of earnest enterprise.

***

When Camille Wassenaar woke several hours later, she was aware that a violation had taken place. Her legs were swollen and sore. When she touched her scalp, locks of her hair came away in dusty fragments. The trees and shrubs around her were thickly covered in a dun-coloured jelly. Bad drugs, maybe. The hair could be fixed. The skin on her legs could be resurfaced. She touched her hand to her clavicle and found the reassuring lozenge of the panic button, hidden beneath the architectural folds of the Yamamoto tunic. She pulled it out and inspected it. It was not vibrating to signify recent activation. This, more than anything, was confirmation that nothing seriously bad had taken place. Camille Wassenaar was confident that the panic button worked because she had used it once before, on an evening when she was coked out of her mind and her friend Maria—who had a column in the *Guardian* and an up-and-coming Syrian actor husband—was irradiating her with a long, weepy retelling of the loss of her mother to cancer, a torpor of hospice care, Ondansetron, nasty and unfeeling nurses, the exhausting process of planning a funeral. She had not expected what happened two-and-a-half minutes after she pressed the button out of boredom, when two men in tactical gear burst through the door and shot Maria in the throat. They cleaned up the mess while Camille, unsure what to do with herself, read the news on her phone. The floors were so spotless that she forgot about it, and it was almost lunchtime the next day before she remembered what happened.

She let the panic button drop to her chest. Content that there was no danger, Camille Wassenaar rested on the forest floor. She listened to the alien chorus of small birds. She observed the way the sunlight was separated into a soft, dancing mosaic by the tree canopy overhead. A centipede burst out of the dark soil and worked its way past her, its multi-segmented body an iridescent mechanism produced by millions of years of slow, hard-won change. For a moment, it held her attention.

* **PATRICK HUNN** is a writer from Aotearoa who lives in Naarm/Melbourne. His collection of short stories, *Either Way You Lose*, is published by Sick Leave. * **CAITLIN ALOISIO SHEARER** is a Naarm/Melbourne-based painter and poet, working at a window that looks out onto her garden.



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CLEOPATRA'S BLING

Rooney asked artist and writer Diego Ramírez to respond to a single artwork in an effort to hush background noise, and to encourage looking closely, slowly and with sharp focus.

Satanic Panic

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER:
Diego Ramírez on *No Title (The Fire God)* (1950)
by Rosaleen Norton

On the plane to Australia that happened to become a permanent stay, I read Alejandro Jodorowsky's auto-magic realism book, *La Danza de La Realidad* (2001). He speaks about meeting the surrealist painter Leonora Carrington in México, who initiated him into the tarot—a 15th-century game of cards from northern Italy. The tarot became a metaphysical instrument for occultists in the 18th century, after esotericist Antoine Court de Gébelin claimed to have found the Roma people using the tarot for divination (Gébelin went as far as claiming that it was a coded book smuggled out of Egypt). Jodorowsky later met André Breton in France, who gave Jodorowsky a Tarot de Marseilles (TdM): a style that many historical decks from Europe share, dating back to Philippe Vachier's TdM (1639). Breton claimed that the TdM was the *real* tarot, from which all others descend. This purist vision prompted Jodorowsky to centre his mystical atheism on the TdM, inspiring outlandish (and all sorts of problematic) works, like *The Holy Mountain* (1973). Similar to Carrington, who designed her own Major Arcana tarot deck based on TdM (posthumously available to the public), Jodorowsky embarked on a restoration of the colours in TdM in 1997, which was previously only available on a limited palette of primary colours.

Rosaleen Norton, *No Title (The Fire God)*, (1950).





LEFT TO RIGHT: Carla Cescon, *A Room for Roie*, (2025); Rosaleen Norton. Installation view, *Knowing Otherwise*, Monash University Museum of Art, Naarm/Melbourne, (2026). Photo: Christian Capurro.

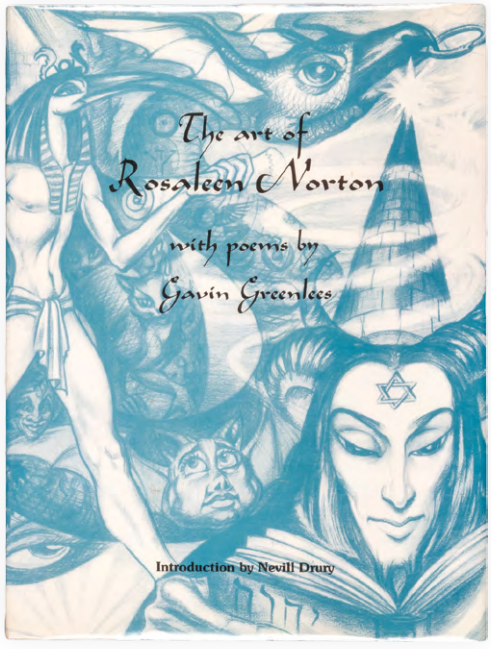
Of course, at an impressionable age, the first thing that I did when the plane landed, once I settled on this foreign land, was buy a TdM—a classically ugly one, printed with saturated reds, yellows and blues. Unlike Anglo-Saxon nations, where Pamela Colman Smith's Rider Waite tarot deck is dominant, TdM is fairly standard in México, so it wasn't a stretch to get TdM-pilled. The Major Arcana quickly became 22 friends that helped me make sense of this uncanny world, which alienated me with its penal colony culture of peer-to-peer surveillance, rules and hierarchies. Eighteen years later, sitting down at the campus library, where I'm doing a PhD with ageing millennials in their mid-to-late 30s (few things are more desperate), and now incorporating the Minor Arcana, I need the 78 cards in the TdM more than ever. Why am I here, wearing sunglasses, a plastic nose, and a fedora hat to stay incognito on campus, fiddling with tarot cards under the table? Shhh.

As usual, for anyone dumb enough to enter the culture industries, art is the magnet. I'm here to see *Knowing Otherwise* curated by Stephanie Berlangieri, Amanda Haskard (Gunaikurnai) and Francis E. Parker at Monash University Musem of Art in Naarm/Melbourne, showing the work of Wemba Wemba and Gunditjmara artist Paola Balla, Carla Cescon, Yin-Ju Chen, Mel Deerson, David Egan, Meriam artist Gail Mabo, Maŋgalili artist Naminapu Maymuru-White, Clare Milledge, Tracey Moffatt, Vali Myers, Rosaleen Norton, Leyla Stevens, Heather B. Swann, Suzanne Treister, and Karina Utomo.

"*No Title (The Fire God)* (1950) has a special kind of satanic panic appeal that I tend to gravitate to."

Contextualising mysticism as a response to a crisis of governmental faith, *Knowing Otherwise* brings together artists that engage in a risky term to use after the culture wars 'heterodox' (forms of knowledge, that arguably depart from official strands rooted in some notion of rationality, scholarship)—and, may I dare say—contemporary art radicalness (ahem, I mean, 'radicality'). Beyond institutional confines, the exhibition as a whole appears to grasp the bottomless residues of mystical ways that pre-date the formation of the nation-state itself, which heralded the "promises of liberal democracy" that inform the disillusionment propelling this exhibition's magical enquiry. Despite containing many artworks that proved an exciting sight to witness, I'm voluntarily succumbing to the brief of this *Rooney* commission and focusing on a single artwork, as it offers me the chance to concentrate on Rosaleen Norton.

Somewhere in between Kenneth Anger's hashish mysticism, the foggy hell in Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the vulgar eroticism in the animation *Heavy Metal* (1981), lies Norton's phantasmagoric art. If you play fantasy video games, I'm sure it also strikes a chord there. Otherwise known as the "Witch of Kings Cross", hailing from Gadigal Country/Sydney, her work greets patrons in the first right hand room of *Knowing Otherwise*. Covering two walls with frenzied visions of a nether-zone, several works on paper and board—employing traditional mediums, such as pencil, colour pencil, crayon, watercolour, and oil—with seemingly missing titles, bearing names such as *No title (The Fire God)* (c. 1950s), *No title (Three Witches)* (c. 1951) and *No title (Nude With Octopus)* (c. 1951) are on show. Her banned book, *The Art of Rosaleen Norton* (1952), once deemed too vulgar to exist, is also on display, inside a perspex cabinet—open on an illustration of the famous occult image of a Sabbatic Goat.



Norton, R., & Greenlees, G. (1952) *The art of Rosaleen Norton*. Sydney: Walter Glover.

I must confess that I didn't know anything about Norton until this exhibition, and I decided to keep it this way for the most part, until this review comes out. The reason is that her biography seems to overshadow her art, given that she was rather unique for adopting a type of post Aleister Crowley persona that pre-dates the counter-culture movement of the 60s, which made alternative systems of worship more ubiquitous. Her contemporaries include Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, meaning that unlike most Australian artists, she was truly *it,* rather than a delayed echo of what's trending overseas, commonly hitting these shores several years later, by way of parochial mimicry. In typical Australian fashion, her uniqueness made her a subject of punishment and several court charges.



Kenneth Anger, *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954).

Art critic Cameron Hurst offers more biographical information in relation to the show in *Memo Review,* and Norton is also the subject of Sonia Bible's documentary *The Witch of King Cross* (2020). If this text fails to scratch an itch for the personal.

Choosing a single work from her entire set was undeniably a difficult task; however, *No Title (The Fire God)* (1950) has a special kind of satanic panic appeal that I tend to gravitate to. Rendered on pastel and watercolour pencil, this work on paper is a portrait of what appears to be a demon with fangs and four eyes. Concocting an evil colour palette of purple, red, blue, yellow, green and black, the aesthetic is extremely 'villain'. As if suggesting that this creature's brain is comprised of a shadowy legion, the upper section of the head features a smaller Baphomet—the typical goat head with pigeon wings sitting on a lotus position that shopping mall goths tend to tattoo on their forearm (Éliphas Lévi much)—commanding a battalion of red-winged minions. On the bottom left of the picture is a gothic metropolis somewhat reminiscent of noir films, inevitably evoking its most cliched incarnation in Batman's Gotham City. A witch on a broom, at the centre of a flock of fiends traversing the sky, dominates the bottom right corner.

The overall aesthetic finds a parallel in Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954), featuring head close-ups with similar colours, overlayed with other footage to create a supernatural mirage. It's also a precursor to horror movies, most distinctively the psychedelic palette in Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977), as well as the hysterically terror-ific makeup that distinguishes films like Juan López Moctezuma's *Alucarda* (1977). Norton achieves a hazy and colourful texture with her pastels, marking gestures that travel around the portrait, merging into a purple vignette that resembles urban smoke.

The image first strikes me as portraying the romantic lure of meeting a stranger in the city, who happens to reveal a tail above their arse, after an indulgent night of dancing (not that it has ever happened to me), inaugurating a dawn of unfathomable pleasures.

It's a distinctive visage, somewhat invoking a primal encounter with an urban witch in a red district, who is smoking herbs from some kind of pipe in a dingy property, that appears colourful because—duh—whatever is in those herbs, it's hallucinogenic. Similar to these films, Norton trades in an exaggerated vision of wretchedness that verges on the cartoonish, summoning the grotesquery that makes demons in the Middle Ages so fun to look at. Some may patronise her work for this reason, judging it as kitsch. However, it's my sense that in a society prone to scandal, she most likely relished on depicting extreme Luciferian visions.

The image first strikes me as portraying the romantic lure of meeting a stranger in the city, who happens to reveal a tail above their arse, after an indulgent night of dancing (not that it has ever happened to me), inaugurating a dawn of unfathomable pleasures. On a more complex note, reflecting on her experiences with the legal system, which often mobilises rules to impart the will of the ruling class, rather than offer civil protection, I can also imagine Norton developing a hostile vision of the urban landscape: one that motivated her to seek protection from the rebel angel, who emancipated humans in heaven, from an authoritarian government. Indeed, *No Title (The Fire God)* (1950) bears the traces of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), in which Satan inaugurates a parliament in the city of Pandemonium, after falling from heaven. Within the curatorial scaffold of *Knowing Otherwise,* Norton's sombre vision casts a shadow on the structural forces that offer the narrowest freedoms, at the cost of all other liberties: the "promises of liberal democracy" that the curatorial blurb is so disenchanted with. Like The Devil XV arcanum in the TdM, standing on a chamber of desire with two minions learning the ropes, Norton stands for knowing otherwise, by poking at the dominant interests that moral and legal codes serve, which ultimately maintain the power structures that this exhibition seems to target.

KNOWING OTHERWISE
Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA)
(Naarm/Melbourne)
7 February—2 April 2026

Diego Ramírez is an artist with dreams, a writer with hopes and a facilitator with beliefs. He has shown locally at ACMI in partnership with ACCA, NGV, Gertrude Glasshouse, Westspace, Sydney Contemporary and Blakdot. He has curated at Gertrude Contemporary, Seventh Gallery and Dogmilk Films. Ramírez has written locally for the Art Gallery of Western Australia, *Art and Australia, Disclaimer, Memo Review* and *unProjects*. He is represented by MARS Gallery.

rosalie gascoigne

24 Oct 2026 – 14 Feb 2027
National Gallery, Kamberri/Canberra
Free

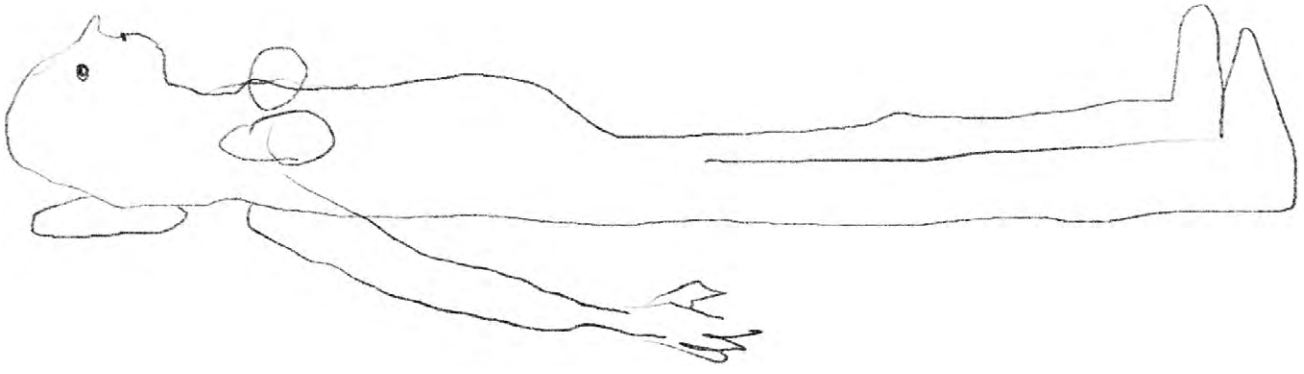


Rosalie Gascoigne, *The colonel's lady*, 1976, National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra, purchased 1976, © Rosalie Gascoigne/Copyright Agency, 2026


ALPHA60

faux pocket

POEM AND ILLUSTRATION
Caitlin Aloisio Shearer



They look out into the street all day
the girls around here
wearing the same sneakers
When i'm in my dream
the same greyhound
hanging its head

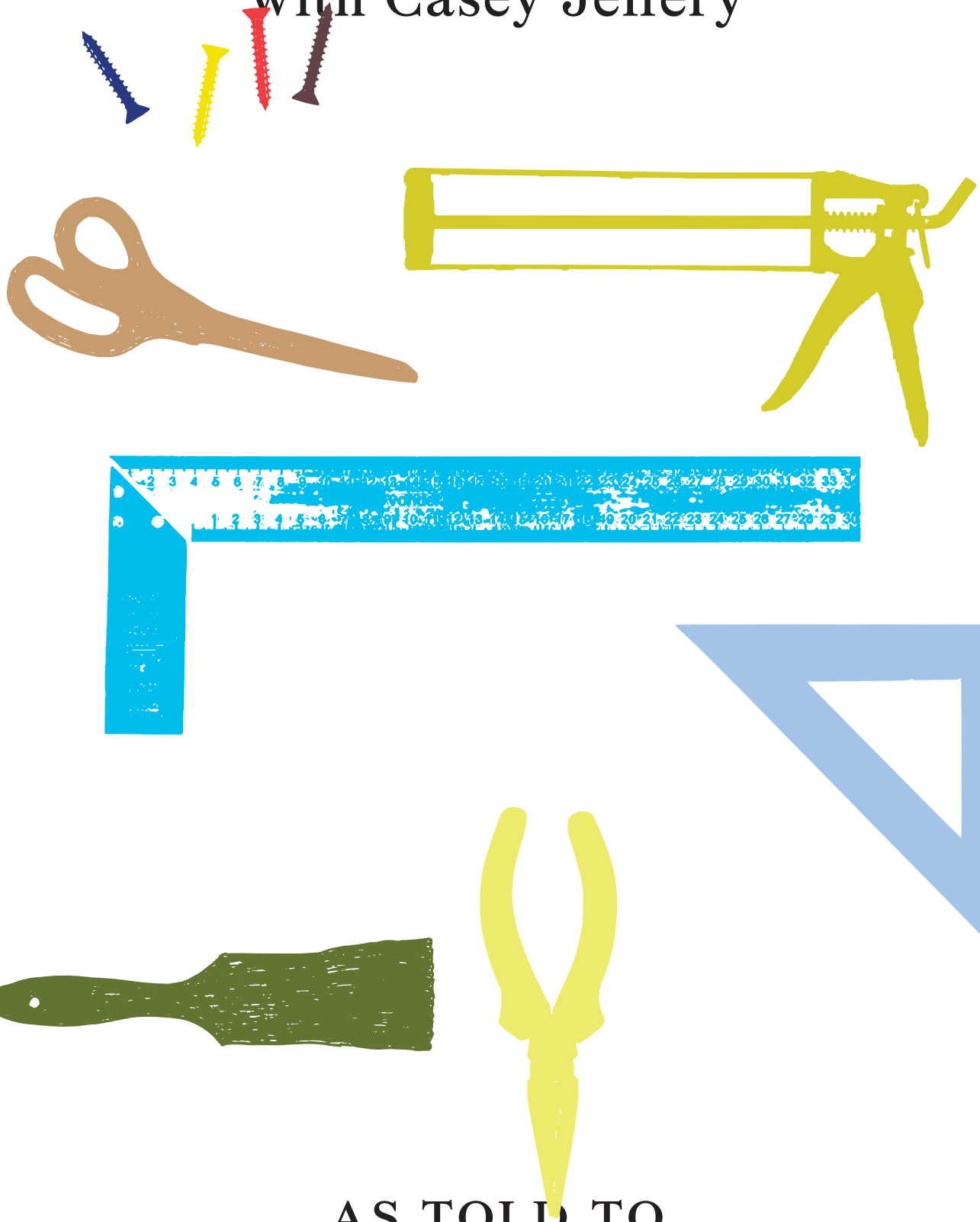
I'm in my dream
Where we choose the same rug
And place it down between us
The dream of the solid gesture
And standing face to face

The dream of something round
That is also a Tupperware container
That is also a cup half full
That is not one of those decorative pockets
stitched onto a Jean jacket
with no entry point
no point on entering
It is something else
Entirely

Working as an exhibition installer or technician is often a thankless job. The stakes can feel high being at the coal face of bringing an exhibition to life. The role requires a particular skill set of technical know-how, attention to detail, with a knowledge of art and art objects. In this interview, Jackson McLaren goes behind the scenes with Naarm/Melbourne-based artist and arts worker Casey Jeffery, who sheds light on starting out in the industry, some personal highlights, and strange hazards of the job.



TRADE SECRETS
with Casey Jeffery



AS TOLD TO
Jackson McLaren

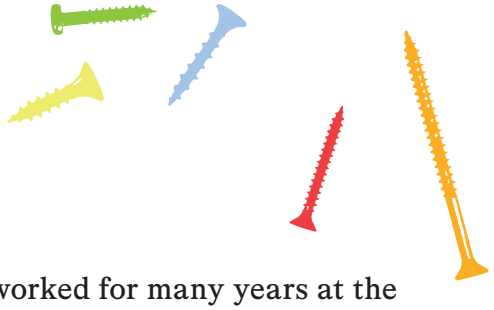


JM What advice or tips would you give to someone starting out in this industry?

CJ My advice is to find your skillset. Are you good at AV? Construction? Painting? Lighting? If there is a specific thing you know how to do well from working in your own practice? Look into what kind of installs galleries do and what skill sets they might need on their install team. If you volunteer at an artist-run space, ask if you can help with an install for some experience. See if any artists are paying for help on their installs. Or just send a resume around. Hint: A powerful skillset is AV! We live in a digital age!







JM You worked for many years at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) in Naarm/Melbourne. What were some favourite exhibitions you worked on?

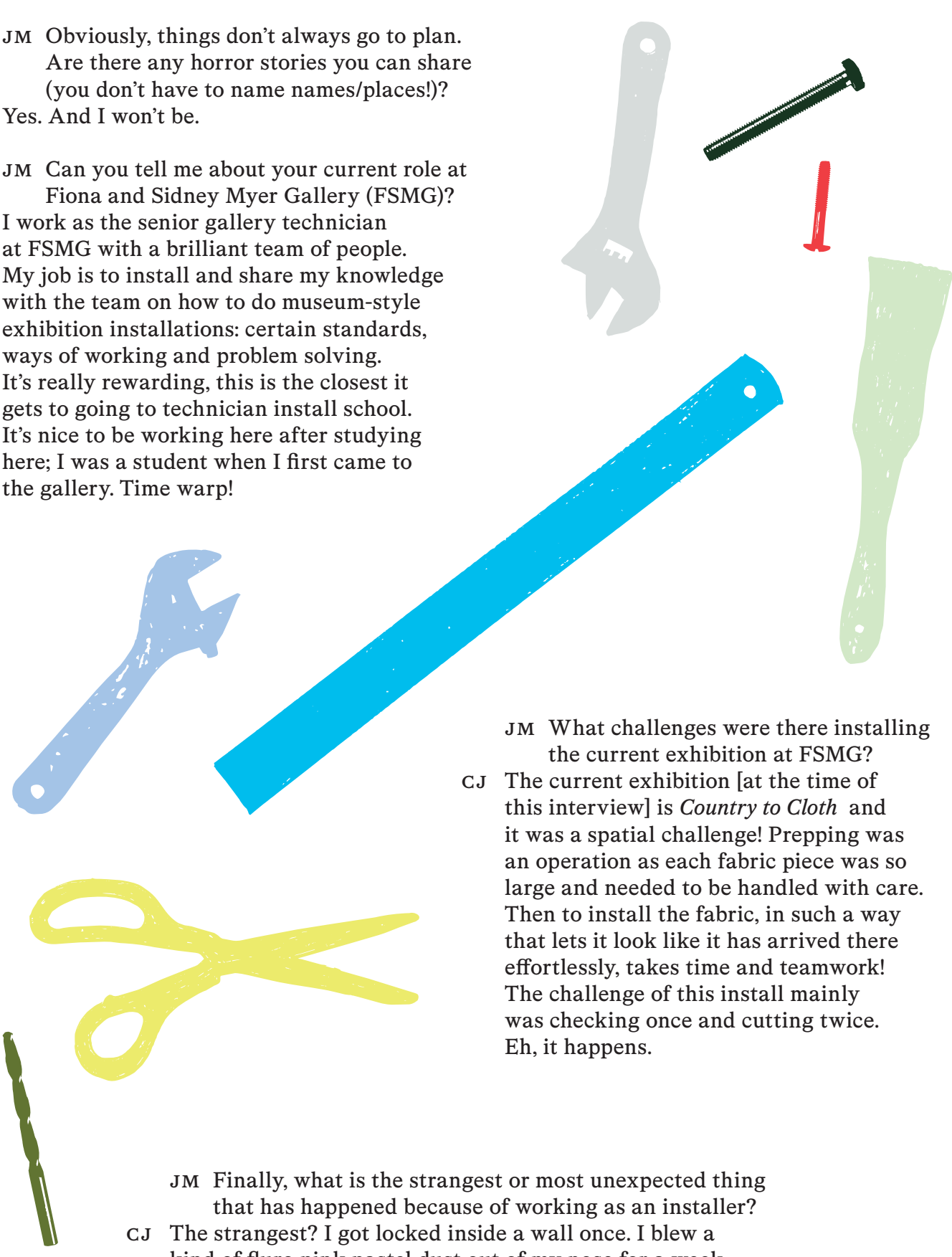
CJ *The Biography of Daphne* was a beautiful show curated by Mihnea Mircan in 2021. That one always stuck with me. The exhibition brought together historical and contemporary narratives on the myth of Daphne, Apollo's pursuit, and her metamorphosis into a tree. That show really exhibited the diversity in art (throughout time) even when the concept is singular. Some other highlights include Yhonnie Scarce's exhibition *Missile Park*, which was special to handle so many precious glass pieces. Paul Yore's *Word Made Flesh*, was like being in another world. I steered the mosaic hearse in (I'm superstitious so that was scary). I worked a lot of shows at ACCA, and each one was learning something new, putting your skills to the test and working with some incredible artists. I love the install team there! They make dreams come true.

JM Obviously, things don't always go to plan. Are there any horror stories you can share (you don't have to name names/places!)?

CJ Yes. And I won't be.

JM Can you tell me about your current role at Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery (FSMG)?

CJ I work as the senior gallery technician at FSMG with a brilliant team of people. My job is to install and share my knowledge with the team on how to do museum-style exhibition installations: certain standards, ways of working and problem solving. It's really rewarding, this is the closest it gets to going to technician install school. It's nice to be working here after studying here; I was a student when I first came to the gallery. Time warp!



JM What challenges were there installing the current exhibition at FSMG?

CJ The current exhibition [at the time of this interview] is *Country to Cloth* and it was a spatial challenge! Prepping was an operation as each fabric piece was so large and needed to be handled with care. Then to install the fabric, in such a way that lets it look like it has arrived there effortlessly, takes time and teamwork! The challenge of this install mainly was checking once and cutting twice. Eh, it happens.

JM Finally, what is the strangest or most unexpected thing that has happened because of working as an installer?

CJ The strangest? I got locked inside a wall once. I blew a kind of fluro pink pastel dust out of my nose for a week because of one install. But the strangest, most unexpected thing to happen during any install is for everything to go exactly as planned.



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Image: Todd Fuller | *No use crying over ripped lace* (still) | 2023 | video | 2 min 43 sec.
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Photographer LISS FENWICK's photo essay sits alongside the release of their new publication, *The Colony* (2026) published by Perimeter Editions. Made on Larrakia and Wulna Country, where Fenwick was raised and depicted in their debut book *Humpty Doom* (2023) (Bad News Books), the photo series selected for *Rooney* reflects not only a time and place, but feelings; of heat, great expanses, destruction and regeneration, engagement with colonial history, and a close attention to Country.

Liss Fenwick,
Bushfire, Larrakia Country.

LARRAKIA AND WULNA COUNTRY





Liss Fenwick, *Snake, Larrakia and Wulna Country.*



Liss Fenwick, *Biker, Girraween, Larrakia and Wulna Country.*



Liss Fenwick, *Nieces, Girraween, Larrakia and Wulna Country.*

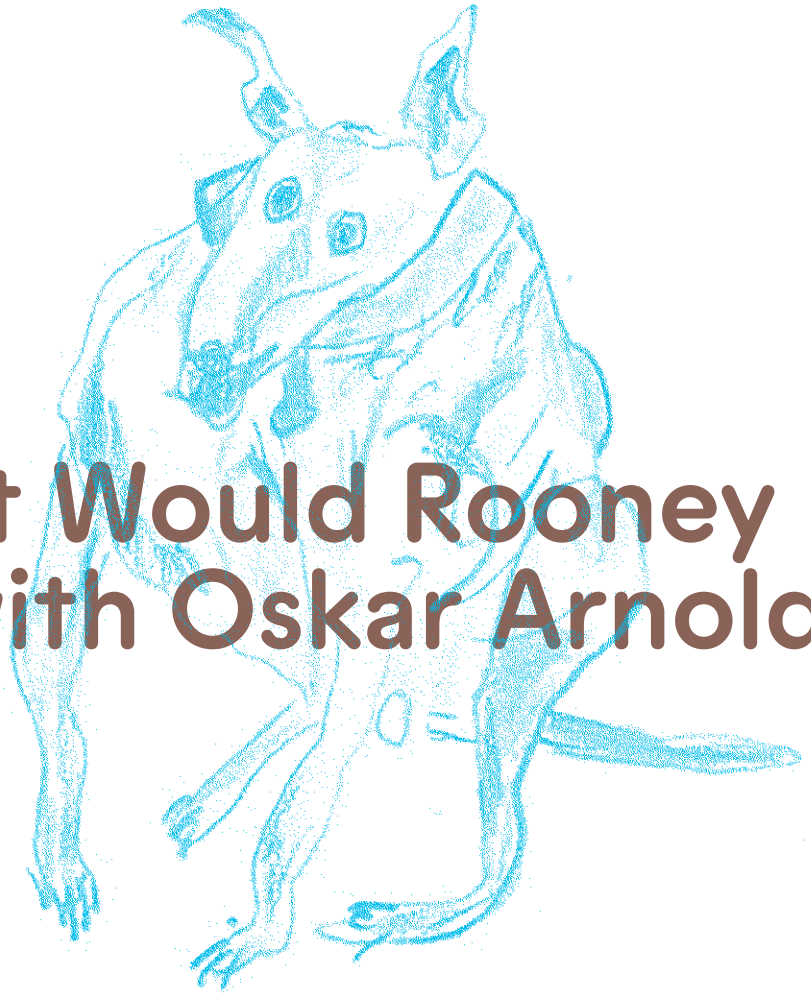


Liss Fenwick, *Pandanus, Larrakia Wulna Country.*

Life can feel like one endless unanswered question. So, we have aimed to offer a solution by asking, "What would Rooney do?"

Rooney the dog (whom this magazine is named after) has a wealth of wisdom. With an unknown date of birth—we think approximately 10 human years, 66 dog years, but we're unsure as he is a rescue pet from Gumtree five years ago—he has lived many lives. With Rooney's infinite and unknowable journeys, it is only fitting he gets to share his astuteness on love, fashion, food, existential dread—and everything in between.

The magazine's canine translator Oskar Arnold is not new to animal whispering. He has been speaking to animals for as long as he has been speaking to humans. Thus, with his sensitive ear and deft understanding of Rooney's mind and message, he is the perfect conduit to our resident oracle. Arnold sits down with our guru, and with precision and care, translates the answer to the question, 'What would Rooney do?'



What Would Rooney Do? with Oskar Arnold

ARTWORK BY GARETH MORGAN

HAVE YOUR OWN LITTLE DILEMMA? EXISTENTIAL QUESTION? SOMETHING YOU ARE TOO AFRAID TO ASK YOUR FRIENDS? SEND YOUR AGONY TO ROONEY AT EDITORIAL@ROONEY.INFO, AND YOU JUST MIGHT FIND YOUR ANSWER.

DEAR ROONEY,
HOW CAN I TELL IF MY FRIEND'S PSYCHIC IS MORE SCAM THAN SAGE?

Rooney has had enough collective experience to be a firm believer in the occult and the paranormal. He believes that on matters of love, life and death, consulting the oracle in one form or another should generally be the first port of call.

Grifters, however, exist in every profession, and given the unregulated nature of the psychic industry, you have to make sure to choose the right service provider.

During a recent visit to a psychic and adjoining gift shop, some observations were made which can offer guidance to Rooney's readers (and their friends) to steer them down the right path.

Broadly speaking, Rooney believes that the determination of whether a psychic is more scam than sage comes down to the following aesthetic and environmental factors:

- ☆ The psychic should be accessed through a sketchy website with no option to book online, preferably with an expired security certificate
- ☆ The font Papyrus should be incorporated in either its online or physical presence
- ☆ The smell should be strong and cloying; Nag Champa or similar
- ☆ The psychic herself (obviously) should be draped in at least three different patterned textiles
- ☆ The psychic's premises should have an array of toy black cats on broomsticks and fake ancient Egyptian relics for sale
- ☆ No sponsored content (much like a plumber, a good psychic relies on word-of-mouth)
- ☆ Likewise, she should not give guidance in the form of Instagram carousels
- ☆ Her shop should not smell of any ingredients aligned with a genderless, contemporary Aesop or Comme des Garçons aesthetic, such as vetiver, oud, cypress, or bergamot.

If multiple of these are true, then your friend's psychic is sage.

For further research on the mood, Rooney recommends:

- ☆ Jennifer O'Neill's titular role in the giallo film *The Psychic* (1977), directed by Lucio Fulci, where she experiences terrible visions and premonitions behind the wheel of a Rolls-Royce, dressed in floppy hats and suits
- ☆ The mystical songs *Sky Fits Heaven* and *Shanti-Ashtangi* from Madonna's album *Ray of Light*
- ☆ Sam Raimi's *The Gift* (2000), the southern gothic chiller, táring the psychic gaze of Cate Blanchett
- ☆ The sacred monophony of Hildegard von Bingen.

The editorial team has put together a quiz, to test your knowledge of the arts and beyond. Low scores encouraged. Answers on page 4.

ROONEY QUIZ

1. Match the first name with the surname of these Australian artists:
   Lottie, Sarah, Nadine.
   Contos, Consalvo, Christensen.
2. Which suburb in the north of Melbourne has a large wooden dog sculpture?
3. What is the title of Cate Le Bon's 2025 album?
4. Artist Rose Nolan's large-scale terrazzo floor work can be found at which Sydney train station?
5. Which Australian actor has starred as a queen, a chaplain, and an elf?
6. At what age does one become a vicenarian?
7. Who sang "Traded in my sorrow for some joy that I borrowed From back in the day"?
8. Gang Gang, Bare-Eyed, and Major Mitchell's are all types of what?
9. What shade is the colour chartreuse?
10. Alix Higgins gained critical acclaim in the Australian fashion scene for a specific visual style. What are some defining characteristic of his label's aesthetic?

ROONEY ISSUE 02

Keep a look out for ROONEY ISSUE 02, coming March 2027. Limited copies.
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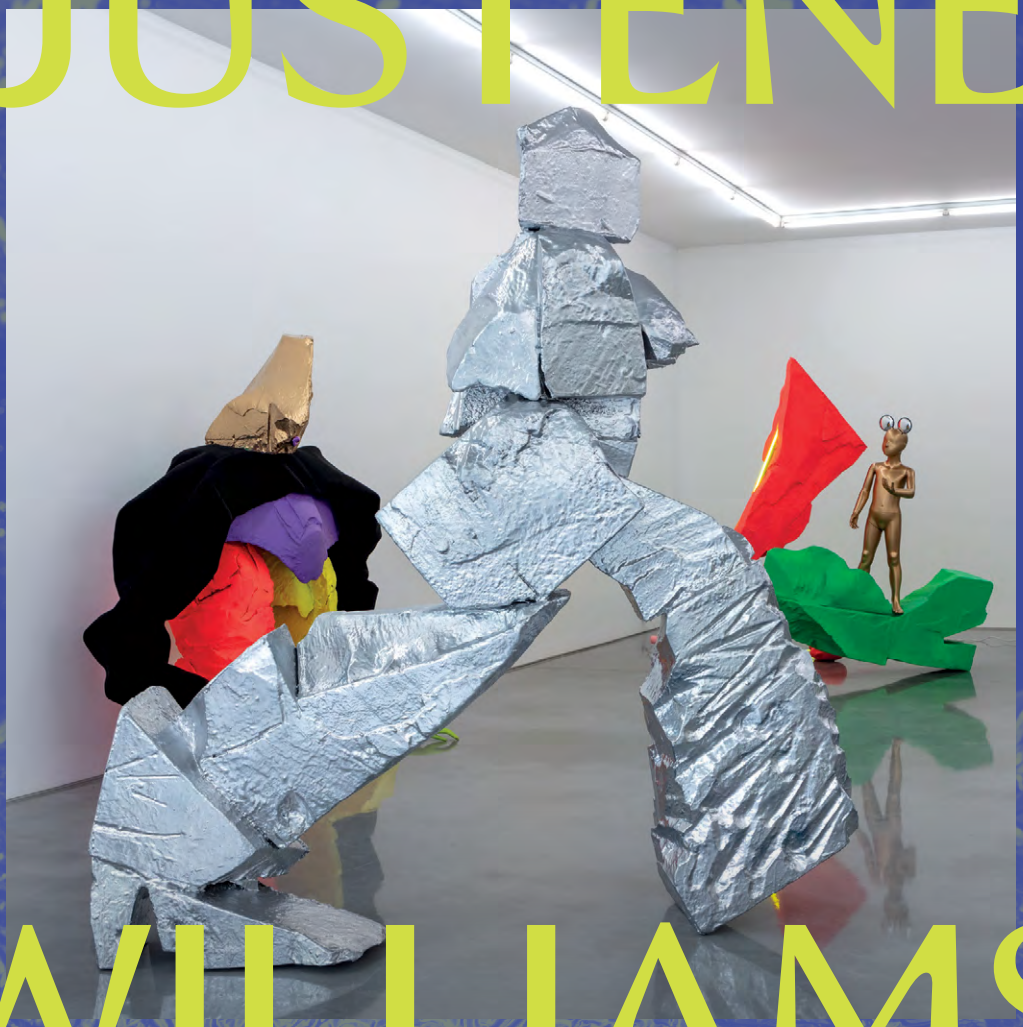
the DESIGN MUSEUM

MATTEL

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VICTORIA State Government | CREATIVE VICTORIA

JUSTENE WILLIAMS



Justene Williams, Australia b.1970 | *She has no beginning or end* (detail) / installation view, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney 2022 / © Justene Williams

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