

GROUP SHOW: SECOND ITERATION

group show: second iteration showcases the work of Alan Constable, Benjamin Lichtenstein, Julian Martin, Matlok Griffiths, Georgia Szmerling and Pia Murphy who, among others, exhibited together in the collaborative exhibition *group show* held at Chapter House Lane in 2015–2016. The premise of the exhibition was simple: to make art and to make a joint effort of it.

The exhibiting artists were selected for a number of reasons, including their good character, their capacity to respond to others with sensitivity, similar processes, mutual sensibilities (such as affection for colour) or parallel interests, and for the notion that they *might* enjoy undertaking shared work. This posed a risk for me as a curator, though I envisaged the collaborations to result in nothing short of happiness. Failing that, riding out the evolution of the project would allow each artist to gain insight into the perks and rhythms of another creative force. This happened, and more was achieved.

The paired artists were invited to design their own methods of collaboration. Matlok Griffiths teamed with Julian Martin, Pia Murphy joined Georgia Szmerling and Alan Constable coupled with Benjamin Lichtenstein. From here, they teased out the collaborative processes by engaging in dialogue – both verbal and nonverbal – to develop a visual language.

Face-to-face conversation was not always possible, nor was it always necessary. Much of the work you see has been made at a distance and is the result of the collaborative efforts devised by the individual artists. Reference materials such as photographs and artworks were sent in the post and exchanged via email. Benjamin Lichtenstein sent Alan Constable an envelope containing black-and-white photographs of his SLR and point-and-shoot cameras, including a photograph of a ceramic camera – an artwork made by Constable that Lichtenstein had purchased in 2013. Alan Constable created a series of ceramic sculptures, ink drawings and watercolours resembling the visual references. This repeated action, or call and response, was mirrored in the other collaborations. Each participant was remarkably light on their feet.

When the opportunity arose for the exhibiting artists in the inaugural *group show* to make a comeback as collaborative peers, all but two of the artists emerged to build upon the project and to present a range of

artworks created before, during and after the first exhibition. This would take place at Arts Project Australia, where three of the six artists occupy a studio above the gallery.

Several of the works feel oddly familiar and yet completely new, like Pia Murphy and Georgia Szmerling's latest series of garden paintings, manifested through a dance-off of images depicting each other in situ; as well as Matlok Griffiths' oil paintings hung with Julian Martin's pastel drawings, in which if you squint you can make out the colourful streets of the City of Dumaguete in the Philippines, where Griffiths once lived. In a new oil painting by Griffiths, *9 Houses (progressively more luxurious)*, one squirmy house evolves into a bending abstraction of nine. Alongside Griffiths, Benjamin Lichtenstein presents a new photographic series titled: *I will give everything I have*, showcasing his real-world love of football and capturing the magic and camaraderie of fellow team members while on the field.

Other pieces on display include: Pia Murphy and Georgia Szmerling's paintings, inspired by a joint trip to Fairfield Boathouse and their time spent plein-air painting; Matlok Griffiths' 'blind' conté and charcoal drawings of wonky wheeled automobiles; and Alan Constable's heavily glazed ceramic sculptures, fashioned from photographs of cameras – a constant source of fascination for the artist. As the finished artworks in the exhibition saddle upon the partnerships, the reference materials find a place on view.

The exchanges brought together a rich and imaginative collection of works that reflect each artist's genuine and generous commitment to the project, and to their own art making. *group show: second iteration* serves a purpose to showcase the breadth of the work created, and to celebrate the connections between the artists, Arts Project Australia and Chapter House Lane.

LOUISE KLERKS, 2016
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The collaborations are further discussed by Christine McFetridge in her essay *Play Nice: The Collaborations in group show* (2015). This essay is available for download at:
<http://chapterhouselane.org.au/various-artists>