

## **The Persistence of Relief: Relief Sculpture in Contemporary Art**

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# The Persistence of Relief

## Relief Sculpture in Contemporary Art

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*September 2018*

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All photographs by the author unless otherwise noted.

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.  
11<sup>th</sup> September, 2018

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## Abstract

Relief sculpture can be understood as a form in two and a half dimensions, between drawing or painting and sculpture. Relief is also a renewed area of artistic practice, long in decline and marginalized in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It engages with the archaic and the physical and as such is counterpoint to the proliferation of disembodied digital images in contemporary culture. Relief is an art form well suited to re-examining our past from under the shadow of sculpture and painting, not least because it is characterised by ambiguity and dualism and the compatibility of its formal character with themes of conflict and antiquity.

This paper discusses the persistence and value of relief sculpture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and analyses the historical dualities of relief and how these dualities resonate in contemporary art. I argue that the scattered presence of relief sculpture in contemporary art no longer designates a strict formal discipline but rather expresses both *dissecta membra* (fracturing) and a transitional zone in visual arts. Contemporary relief is analysed through the work of artists who have explored dualities within this transitional space: works by Thomas Houseago, Anselm Kiefer, William Kentridge and Matthew Monahan, and through key works from my own studio research, including publically sited works from 2015 to 2018.

This paper explores how the transitional zone of contemporary relief echoes the duality inherent in historical (classical) relief. It examines this zone with the superimposition of dualities that include the physical and the image, the archaic and the contemporary. Relief is characterized by dialectics, and the coexistence, reconciliation or synthesis of opposites. It is a manifestation of Edward Soja's *thirdspace* (1996) —a shared response or *metbexis* synthesizing history with sensorial and conceptual (or physical and imaginary) space.

The research draws from Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) and his observations and historical perspective across art forms, arguing that the nature and fate of genres inform understandings of relief sculpture in contemporary art. Perspectives of time and space as described in Jacques Ranciere's episodic approach to history are complemented by Henri Lefebvre's and Edward Soja's subsequent analysis of space. Other philosophers and historians referenced include Walter Pater (1839 to 1894) and his biographer Lene Ostermark-Johansen who form a part of the historical perspective on relief and its position in art. Adolph von

Hildebrandt (1847-1921) and Rosalind Krauss assist in comparing relief before and after cubism, which I argue is critical in understanding relief's renewal through its revised approach to materials coupled to spatial enquiry.

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## Preface:

This Doctoral research was preceded by research in Dunhuang, northwest China, in London, Venice and at the British School in Rome, where the project in this form was conceived. It evolved from considerations of motifs and forms in architecture, sculpture, painting and carpets. I considered this vast area synonymous with trade, contestation, the uncertain—and crucially, the in-between.<sup>1</sup>

My interest then moved from what lies between the east and west and the traffic between the archaic and contemporary in order to contain and focus overlapping concerns. I began to concentrate on a specific form of work that lies between the two and three dimensional as the encapsulation of these broader cultural dualities and proceeded to work within the material and technical limitations of gypsum-based casting in relief.

The archaic (by which I simply mean the very old) resonates in recent conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Tibet where past cultures are disseminated or destroyed in the initiation of new political imperatives. Recent works by artists including Matthew Monahan and Thomas Houseago reflect shared interest in the past and in themes relating to the contradiction, paradox and polarity indicated in such conflicts.

The work I have made during my candidature extends more than three decades of studio based research on the nature of images and their relationship with objects and materiality. The focus of this research—the value of relief to contemporary art—has provided a useful framework for reflecting on the key concerns of my studio practice as a whole, and in identifying my specific contribution to this area. Documentation of work leading up to this research can be viewed online at [BruceReynolds.com.au](http://BruceReynolds.com.au) and the earlier archive, [BruceReynolds.net.au](http://BruceReynolds.net.au).

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<sup>1</sup> Conflict has historically been followed or accompanied by trade, religious and other forms of cultural exchange. On Artist and corporate trader Xu Zhen deals with this. He accumulated copies of ancient work from Dunhuang and Rome and showed *Eternity Buddha in Nirvana* 2018 at the NGV Triennial. He previously exhibited his version of the Parthenon pediment made by Swiss sculpture company Kunst Giesserei AG who also produced work for Rudolf Stingel. see *Black Relief* 2012 chapter two.  
See <http://www.afr.com/lifestyle/xu-zhen-is-the-steve-jobs-of-the-art-world-20171129-gzv9n>

## Introduction

Historically, relief has been defined as a principally carved or cast form, frequently associated with the monumental and memorial. Its revision and development continue in the face of new technologies. For the purposes of this research, bas-relief, high relief and relief sculpture will be referred to as relief. I argue that those traditional terms lead, at times, to inappropriate categorization and misleading associations based on the understanding of early techniques employed. Relief, I shall argue, is most significantly characterized by dualities— pairs of coexistent and interactive characteristics; what critic and curator Guy Brett calls “pairs of opposites that can’t exist without each other”.<sup>2</sup>

Collectively, contemporary works in relief are identified in this research as the confluence of what occurs between several poles or dualities and are no longer described as a genre or discipline. Advancing from Brett’s interpretation, I examine prominent dualities through theoretical and studio-based examples. Central to my approach, relief— rather than simply bringing separate elements into proximity, the side-by-side placement of opposites or presenting a form in the round— is the formal incorporation of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional. The surface of relief can therefore be regarded as the frontier of the art/life boundary. It represents the physical extension of the pictorial into the material world. Simultaneously, this extended pictorial plane is wedded with the wall—attached to an architectural and social context in a coexistence of spatial types.

Relief is an ancient form that has endured into the 21<sup>st</sup> century yet is generally unacknowledged in visual art discourse. It has become an uncommon term. However, prominent contemporary artists, (such as Thomas Houseago, William Kentridge, Anselm Kiefer and Matthew Monahan), arriving from diverse positions, converge in the formal territory that relief describes; where their dynamic engagement addresses themes both distinct and shared. This research therefore constitutes an important contribution to the field, investigating relief’s renewed and integral role within contemporary art. Further, I argue that relief changed in utility and conception after its decline in significance in the previous two centuries moving from a physical and deeply rooted subservience to architecture<sup>3</sup> to a diversity of more

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<sup>2</sup> Guy Brett *Between Work and World* in *Modern Sculpture Reader*. Ed. Jon Wood David Hulks and Alex Potts 485. (Leeds and Los Angeles: Henry Moore Foundation and Getty Publications, 2012)

<sup>3</sup> The notable exception being the spiral relief tower

autonomous forms in reconsidered spaces.<sup>4</sup> Relief is altered in perception and execution. While I have described relief as between and arbitrating painting and sculpture, the examination of relief that follows is largely independent of discourse on painting and to a lesser extent, independent of sculpture in order to locate this neglected area more precisely.<sup>5</sup>

I outline how relief has become a zone of art making rather than a discipline, where specific formal and thematic concerns meet and resonate with the content and subjects engaged by the artists examined, (where artists exploit relief's character in accordance with their thematic interests or those interests lead to this area of formal concerns perhaps due to its comparatively flexible, extended dimensionality or indeed its compressed and restricted nature). I argue that the character of relief reflects the works content and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> This view of relief is informed by its historical use and discussed with reference to recent works where duality and opposites are seen to recur and overlap. It also suggests a model for thinking more broadly about contemporary art. Discussion of the archaic and contemporary is closely aligned with that of creation and destruction in chapter two and followed by the duality of the image and object—the pictorial and the physical.

Relief's recurrence, persistence and occasional prominence in art this century is indicative of its relevance and efficacy in exploring the relationship between abstract, physical and social spaces and poses questions for those interested in taxonomies of the interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary or hybrid.

The first chapter *Previously in Relief Sculpture*, sketches relief's widespread use in prehistory: How it was associated with authority and proclamation from Nineveh to Rome and beyond, how it transmitted figurative sculpture's achievements from Rome to August Rodin,<sup>7</sup> how it peaked in technical and artistic achievement in Renaissance Italy<sup>8</sup> and declined to eventually be seen as an apology for sculpture in the nineteenth century. Aesthetes, such as Walter Pater,

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<sup>4</sup> including social and pictorial spaces.

<sup>5</sup> While this has been the case historically, recent texts rarely refer to relief as independent of sculpture. See *Shape of things – Un Monumental, New Museum 2011*.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Kiefer's disruption of pictorial language with appended objects echoes his view of history and philosophy while conforming to the spatial language of relief.

<sup>7</sup> Nicola Pisano, cited by Henri Moore as the father of Modern sculpture, was particularly important in reviving the Roman achievements in relief through his study of sarcophagi in Pisa.

<sup>8</sup> See Donal Cooper and Marika Leino's. *Depth of field: relief sculpture in Renaissance Italy*. Bern, Switzerland 2007 and William Dunning's *The Changing Images of Pictorial Space: A History of Spatial Illusion in Painting*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991

with their distaste for the physical, viewed relief as inferior to painting and superior to sculpture, sharing the latter's fate as memorializing and moribund.<sup>9</sup>

Influential 19<sup>th</sup> century sculptor and theorist, Adolf von Hildebrand, indirectly contributes to relief's reinvention by Pablo Picasso and other Cubists as a tool to re-examine vision and perspective.<sup>10</sup> As a practitioner, his comprehensive formal analysis accounted for an informed if arcane approach to the evaluation of art and its popularity offered a focus point for discourse in a climate of continuing change.

Relief's persistence into this century, now with diverse approaches to its function and to materials, is subsequently recognized as a transitional zone rather than as the earlier, discrete art form exemplified by the *Frieze of Parnassus* in London in 1872.<sup>11</sup> Many contemporary artists with diverse media interests share an interest in the archaic. This is argued with reference to ideas from Rosalind Krauss, Henri Lefebvre, Jacques Ranciere and evidenced in the range of works discussed. A tradition from the Parthenon to Rodin marks two millennia of figuration. Representation is fundamental to the nature of relief and warrants more comment than is possible here.<sup>12</sup> I confine the research to considering the representational space used in relief (Chapter 4), rather than providing an analysis of representation and figuration per se.

In Chapter 2 *Dualities as Characteristics of Relief*, duality is defined and discussed as a strategy for analysis and put into the context of a model with reference to the nexus of specific dualities. Connections are made between dualities observed historically and those that are common to

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<sup>9</sup> Less grossly material than sculpture; more transformed and textual but less so than painting.

<sup>10</sup> There is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest a direct link via Hildebrand's popular "Problem of form in Painting and Sculpture" (published in French in 1903, English in 1907) where an explanation of planar space describes cubism accurately if inadvertently. This was sufficient to cause Ernst Gombrich to write to Picasso's dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who's denial of such an influence somehow adds to its credibility, given Picasso's confessed extreme contrariness in those years— an attitude shared with the anarchist Carl Einstein who like Picasso sought a new, ground zero approach to art. It would also explain Braque's refusal to disclose what he intimated was a banal source of cubism. See "The back plane and the front plane" and "The unimportance of the actual depth" page 88

<sup>11</sup> Designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott

<sup>12</sup> See Donal Cooper and Marika Leino's. *Depth of field: relief sculpture in Renaissance Italy*. Bern, Switzerland 2007 and William Dunning's *The Changing Images of Pictorial Space: A History of Spatial Illusion in Painting*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991 for the foundational material on this topic which complements Adolf von Hildebrand's influential *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* 1907 which is likely to have caused the focus on spatial perception to eventuate in Cubism.

the artists discussed in the second part of the Chapter. This addresses the question of why this implicit tension between opposites has been compelling for my studio research that follows in the final chapter.

In order to further assess the significance of relief in contemporary art, the characteristics established here are acknowledged by linking the *Archaic and Contemporary* with *Creation and Destruction*. Relief is no longer restricted to stone, bronze and ivory. It is a formal and conceptual approach to representation. From ancient petroglyphs through to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was dominated by carving, modelling and casting. Relief works have more recently used software driven processes and a wide range of materials. I will also argue that the archaic has special significance for contemporary artists using relief and that the theme of creation and destruction is one of several dualities that collectively resonate to characterize relief in the work of Kentridge and Monahan. Artists reflect on inequity, conflict and the nature of change both now and in history. For some, the past and present often find equivalence in the physicality of binary processes: modelled, carved or cast, reductive or additive. The simultaneity of destruction and creation is increasingly visible in art and elsewhere.

In the section that follows on *The Pictorial and the Physical*, relief is discussed as sitting between drawing and sculpture, between two-dimensional or pictorial space and three-dimensional, sculptural space. The physical and social context represents a third type of space in which relief exists. Thus the three types of space that occur in relief works can be identified as the pictorial, the physical and the social. Relief operates as a social and political indicator of how a space is intended to function. Pictorial and physical spaces coexist in works while representational space is compressed in depth, represented in a much higher ratio than width and height. A painting has little or no depth and a sculpture may deploy various ratios but are generally equal, without distortion or compression but relief's measured or implied reduction in dimension from front to back constitutes a compressed, translation of space. Of course, not all reliefs are representational, however, like painting, relief has a history of viewing conventions around representation and transformation. In the discussion of the physical, the materials and processes of realization are also considered with reference to Anselm Kiefer and Thomas Houseago.

Philosophers Jacques Ranciere and Henri Lefebvre take a wide and long view across art forms and history and have informed an understanding that incorporates Edward Soja's *thirdspace*, itself a clarification of aspects of Lefebvre's *Production of Space*.<sup>13</sup> A confluence of Ranciere's episodic view and *thirdspace* via Lefebvre, offers a way of considering the zone of relief that is defined by all of its users over time—the artists, and the respondent context of their works.

The third chapter *Reflections on Studio Research* describes the role of earlier work and the studio methodology I have used during my candidature. I summarize the major stages of research gathered in three exhibitions in Sydney and Brisbane and in three stages of publically installed works commissioned by Cox Architects.

The *Conclusion* reflects further on the overall research and indicate the trajectories of the research including the changing nature of context for relief works, the oscillation of contemporary artists practices between media and the increasing importance of the past in the future as exemplified by relief. Several questions emerge.

The illustrations (photographs) in the paper form part of the exegesis and are residual elements of quantitative as well as qualitative research. The diagrams included formed part of evolving and clarifying ideas expressed in the text.

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<sup>13</sup> Lefebvre, Henri *Production of Space* Blackwell 1991

Soja, Edward *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1996

## Previously in Relief Sculpture

*“The substantial element of genres and forms has its locus in the historical needs of their materials.”*<sup>14</sup> observes Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory*. This material genesis determined relief’s course in history. The origin of relief as a genre in carved form was influenced and largely determined by the nature of stone— geology—site. This is observable in preserved sites around the world, throughout millennia. Dependency on available materials, techniques, the organization of labour and the need or otherwise for durability all interdependently play roles. The Murujuga petroglyphs in Western Australia, estimated to be up to 37,000 years old included the world’s oldest known depiction of a human face (recently destroyed) make this clear.<sup>15</sup> The economy of line expressing pictographically reduced imagery reflects the hardness of the stone and the level of visibility in relation to the stones colour, texture and illumination as well as the petroglyphers’ desire for durability.

That material imperative however, changed over time. Adorno further stated, that “In antiquity, the ontological view of art, on which genre aesthetics is based, was part of aesthetic pragmatism in a fashion that is now scarcely imaginable.”<sup>16</sup> This pragmatism would return to relief in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Monuments, Portals, panels, shields, medallions, pediments, friezes and sarcophagi are principal forms associated with stone and metal relief work since the iron age that varies in depth and technique but consistently presents a compressed space between the two-

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<sup>14</sup> Theodore Adorno *Aesthetic theory* pg199

Art forms and genres have been subjected to macro and micro categorizations of media, subject and forms that may overlap or be contradictory. From a background in music, Theodore Adorno references the fugue and the rondo among genres and forms from drama, literature, music and visual arts. Relief can be similarly understood as a genre or category of art based on a formal tradition originating in materiality. It is in this sense that I refer to relief as a genre or form rather than as a reference to subject or style.

<sup>15</sup> *Submission 13 to the Australian Government Senate Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Rock Art of the Burrup Peninsula* Black, J. L., MacLeod I. D. and Smith B. W. (2017). Theoretical effects of industrial emissions on colour change at rock art sites on Burrup Peninsula, Western Australia. Submitted 8 November 2016: Journal of Archaeological Science Reports.

Paradoxically, the petroglyphs at Burrup are simultaneously under threat of destruction and consideration for World Heritage listing.

<sup>16</sup> Theodore Adorno *Aesthetic theory*

dimensional and the three-dimensional. To clarify this, an object in the round, in three dimensions, has a ratio of height to width to depth of 1:1:1 and when represented in relief the depth ratio is reduced. For example in a landscape with figures foregrounded, the ratio might become 1:1:100 so as to accommodate distance within the shallow space of the relief object. The background is commonly most compressed and the foreground figures least.<sup>17</sup>

This manner of working in relief has declined and undergone numerous reinventions since the Murujuga petroglyphs were made. Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Indochinese relief works are widely studied and comprehensively discussed elsewhere. So too are the key works that represent relief's highlights up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at which time its role in art diminished. *Ara Pacis* and *Trajan's Column* in Rome,<sup>18</sup> the works of Nicola Pisano (1220-1284),<sup>19</sup> Lorenzo Ghiberti (c.1378 –1455), Donatello (Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi c.1386 – 1466),<sup>20</sup> Antonio Canova (1757-1822)<sup>21</sup> are among such works.

Relief has also varied through time according to its social imperatives. In antiquity, a function of relief sculpture was to proclaim and convince in monumental form, to memorialize, make real and to promise or render in law.<sup>22</sup> Powerful regimes commissioned massive works in living rock where circumstance and means coincided, such as in the necropolis Naqsh-e Rostam (550–330 BCE) and the temples of Abu Simbel (13<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Continuing to associate stone with endurance and the afterlife, Greek and Roman sarcophagi designs depicted complex hunting or battles scenes with dozens of figures. The *Portonaccio Sarcophagus* (180–190 CE) and the *Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus*, in Rome and others collected in Campo

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<sup>17</sup> Ghiberti and Donatello reduced the depth of backgrounds to an inscribed surface while foreground figures retain their three dimensional form.

<sup>18</sup> See Eugenie Strong's volumes *Roman Sculpture from Augustus to Constantine* 1907 and *Art in Ancient Rome* 1929 and on relief's highest point and its types of implied space see '*Depth of Field: Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy* ed. Donal Cooper 2007'.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Moore referred to Nicola Pisano as the father of modern sculpture, see Henry Moore's *Henry Moore Writings and Conversations*

<sup>20</sup> Donatello and "his greatest rival" Ghiberti feature prominently in Donal Cooper's *Depth of Field. Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy*. 2007

<sup>21</sup> See R. Krauss *Passages in Modern Sculpture*

<sup>22</sup> Examples include the Stele of Hammurabi (c. 1792-1750 BCE) a code of law commissioned by Hammurabi in Babylon, Ashurnasirpal II holding the Assyrian instruments of power, and triumphal arches, columns and the Ara Pacis in Rome, commissioned by the Senate to celebrate the emperor Augustus's victorious return from war.

Santo in Pisa are examples that preserved achievements in figurative, narrative stone carving that were taken up by Nicola Pisano. In metal, the shield, the cuirass (breast plate armour), and coinage all used relief with varying combinations of gravitas, ceremony, symbolism and decoration in their functions. This functionality dependency on materials and technique can be followed into the Italian Renaissance.



Fig.1 left: *Portonaccio Sarcophagus* (Rome 2<sup>nd</sup> century) in the Palazzo Massimo, Rome.  
right: Nicola Pisano *Pulpit in Siena* (1268).

Increasing trade and patronage contributed to formal refinement in relief through advances in perspective and casting technique leading up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the lives of Lorenzo Ghiberti and his student Donatello who brought relief sculpture to virtuosic heights of expression. Their works exemplify the mastery of material control where bronze complies with intricately designed narrative and spatial schemes in shallow relief (*rilievo schiacciato*).<sup>23</sup>

This mastery of material and technique extended through the baroque interior in a comprehensive orchestration of stones, plaster, bronze, gold, silver and paint uniting the

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<sup>23</sup> see Donal Cooper's *Depth of Field. Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy*. 2007

pictorial and physical worlds, the representational and the real, the viewer and the divine.<sup>24</sup> In the *Cornaro Chapel* of *Santa Maria Della Vittoria*, Bernini's *bel composto* —his promotion of the unity of art forms—is clear from Saint Teresa's illuminating ocular lantern above, to her feet below and the adjacent relief portraits of patron witnesses. She is surrounded by at least ten types of marble and contained within an elliptical— that is a compressed circular space— with coffered dome and lantern to match. The whole chapel has been reduced in depth while occupying real space in the same manner as a relief panel. This design is used for *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale* (1661-1670) where those who enter find themselves confronted by and then occupying this theatrical, geometrically transformative space, the result of a continuum of orchestrated disciplines.



Fig.2 left: Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1652) and adjacent wall relief of *Cornaro Portraits* in *Santa Maria Della Vittoria*. right: detail of two and three dimensional media in a chapel of *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale* 1670 Rome.

Marble relief panels occupying the focal point above church altars in Rome continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Alessandro Algardi (1598-1664) and Filippo Della Valle (1697-1768) pushed

<sup>24</sup> I have visited *Sant'Andrea del Quirinale* (1661-1670) numerous times; during its restoration in 2013 and afterwards in 2017. My observations no doubt follow those of many others. Lorenzo Bernini, typically quiet regarding his achievements, was reputedly pleased with *Sant'Andrea*. (see page 5 of Sarah Watson's *Martyrdom in the Oeuvre of Gianlorenzo Bernini: Evolution and Resolution of a Theme within San'Andrea al Quirinale* in which she recounts Bernini's son Domineco's recollections and discusses the "wholeness" and "fusion of all disciplines..." in the church).

complex pictorial relief towards sculpture in the round and provided influential examples in *St. Peters* in Rome.<sup>25</sup>



Fig.3 left: Alessandro Algardi *St. Leo Repulsing Attila* 1646 centre: Filippo Della Valle *Annunciation* 1750  
right: Nicola Salvi Trevi Fountain 1762 with relief panels above the statues of *Abundance* and *Sobriety*

Under Papal patronage, relief continued to reflect technical, political and institutional power and continued its grave and elevated themes, its narratives and fine material skills with pioneering perspectival illusion. Where relief remained outside, it advertised patronage and the longevity of power as seen in the ubiquitous papal and family emblems of the Pamphili, Corsini, Barberini and Chigi that overlook the streets of Rome. An example designed by Bernini, caps the Porta del Popolo. Antonio Canova, Bertel Thorwaldsen and François Rude maintained a classical approach to relief leading up to August Rodin's *Gates of Hell* 1880.

Gradually, relief became less independently significant in its position between the two-dimensional, the sculptural and the architectural, while seamless multi media spectacles such as the *Trevi Fountain* continued to be realized across Europe and expanded into landscape designs and events.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "St Leo repulsing Attila" 1646 by Alessandro Algardi is an example in Saint Peters demonstrating a union of carving and pictorial virtuosity.

<sup>26</sup> The architectural façade forming a low relief backdrop for the Trevi Fountain sculptures and water, displays two reliefs and conforms to the earlier description of spatial compression in the manner of a theatrical stage.



Fig.4 left: The *Doria Pamphilj* crest. right: inner façade of the *Porta del Popolo* designed by Bernini for Pope Alexander VII of the Chigi family, featuring his insignia of six mountains with a star above. The insignia is similar in size to the portal below.

Broad political and intellectual developments continued to affect relief's position in the arts. The industrial revolution influenced changes in sculptural production. Steam power transformed the marble quarry at Carrara, foundries multiplied. Aesthetics in Europe and Britain, the emerging discourse on art and beauty, was another agent of change. Excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii, Egypt and Greece fuelled the birth of art history. Johann Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764) subsequently informed Walter Pater, Jacques Ranciere and much writing between. Relief was subject to the reappraisal of social and artistic hierarchies.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) proposed “a new principle of pleasure, which is nothing else but the action of the mind, which compares the ideas that arise from [the representation], with the ideas that arise from the objects themselves”.<sup>27</sup> This precedent anticipated a changing hierarchy of materials based largely on cost. Patrons (and their budgets) influenced materials used by artists and the techniques tied to those materials. As a result, in relief preference shifted to bronze over marble by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>27</sup> *The Spectator*; with notes volume II. 1826 New York.  
See also <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-18th-british/>



Fig. 5 19<sup>th</sup> century sandstone relief in Australia. *left* Royal coat of arms designed by J.J.Clarke (1875) *Government House Melbourne* *centre: Sydney Mortuary Railway Chapel.* *right: Art Gallery of New South Wales* façade designed (1897) with the last commissioned relief *Augustus at Nimes* (1931) by Sir William Reid Dick.

## Genre Loses Definition

By the nineteenth century, relief had become predominately associated with monuments and decoration in a revisionist manner.<sup>28</sup> It had slipped from Donatello's high art achievement and sculpture too, now came in for severe criticism. "Why is Sculpture Boring?" Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) had asked in 1846. In 1859 he observed that "the *bas-relief* is already a lie, that is to say, a step taken in the direction of a more civilized art". Théophile Gautier declared the death of sculpture in 1855 comparing it to Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin. "Sculpture, I knew was a dead art; buried centuries deep out of sight, with no angel keeping watch...".<sup>29</sup> These declarations were symptomatic of the low regard for both relief and sculpture in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> According to Gautier, relief's status below painting but above sculpture partly originated in the aesthete's distaste for a physical, apish materiality that occupied the same space as the viewer. Gautier was also implying that the love affair with antiquity that

<sup>28</sup> For example, *the Frieze of Parnassus* on the Albert Memorial 1872 in London.

<sup>29</sup> Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (London: J. Camden Hotten, 1866), pp. 16–17

<sup>30</sup> Lene Ostermark-Johansen-writes of Walter Pater's problem with sculpture's materiality suggesting "he moves towards more painterly and atmospheric ideals, to texture and relief, to tactility in two-and-a-half dimensions rather than in troublesome three dimensions."

*Caught Between Gautier and Baudelaire: Walter Pater and the Death of Sculpture*

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261936853\\_Caught\\_Between\\_Gautier\\_and\\_Baudelaire\\_Walter\\_Pater\\_and\\_the\\_Death\\_of\\_Sculpture](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261936853_Caught_Between_Gautier_and_Baudelaire_Walter_Pater_and_the_Death_of_Sculpture) [accessed Jan 15, 2018].

In *Walter Pater and the language of Sculpture*, Ostermark-Johansen reproduces David Teniere's *The Monkey Sculptor* (1660) devoting pages 136 to 147 to this idea that links Baudelaire with DaVinci and with the perennial art school joke about sculptors' knuckles dragging along the ground.

Winckelmann championed had run its course. Broken stone and even bronze had become tiresome or at least the relationship between subject and object had become an area of repetitive discourse. Sculpture's three-dimensionality was tediously similar to nature, which the urban aesthete held in disdain. The limited viewpoints of relief, closer to painting, therefore made it a more civilized art.

Contemporaneous with Baudelaire, John Charles Robinson compiled the Victoria & Albert Museum's collections of Italian relief sculpture, in spite of its unpopularity.<sup>31</sup> "Bucking the period's disregard for this type of sculpture, Robinson exploited the museum's foundation as a repository of applied and decorative arts to justify his unpopular selections...other scholars relegated the sculptures to the category of decoration"<sup>32</sup>

Paradoxically and still looking backwards, Walter Pater in *The Renaissance* (1873) saw relief as a metaphor for the emergence of modern art. His poetic analogies had little to do with the materials of relief since the hierarchy of marble, bronze and terracotta had persisted for centuries. Rather, Pater's metaphor used the inscribed and sculpted components of high and low relief to represent history, literature and art.

A century later, Jacques Ranciere also generated metaphor with a poetic logic that attempted to balance historical understanding with modern needs. Ranciere's metaphor of body (aesthetic, sensate) and fragmentation (episodic experiences) offers a new view also built on Johann Winckelmann's experience. Ranciere and Pater similarly ignore what is not suited to their purpose: Ranciere ignoring Winckelmann's homoeroticism, Pater inspired by it. Independently they convey speculative, modified observations departing from objectivity in order to synthesize an account of humanity.

Following 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century neoclassicism, relief remained largely un-discussed in contemporary discourse with one key exception, August Rodin's relief doors *The Gates of Hell*— the subject of work by Rainer Maria Rilke and Albert E. Elsen and included by Rosalind Krauss in *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977). Here Krauss argues that the doors are not concerned with narrative nor depicted space, describing the work as "opaque" and

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<sup>31</sup> In the 1850's and 1860's he made several collecting trips around Europe.

<sup>32</sup> Wrote Sarah Blake McHam In *Depth of Field: The Place of Relief in the Time of Donatello*, Donal Cooper ed. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute with Victoria and Albert Museum, 2005.

intended to “dam up the flow of sequential time”(pg 15). It was also manifestly Rodin’s—and sculpture’s— struggle with the dynamic modernity of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Parisian art scene where impressionism, symbolism and the art nouveau style coexisted, (the latter especially celebrating surface rather than illusionist space.) Impressionism rejected glazing in favour of opacity and surface.

Rodin had already started on the weight of Dante’s *Inferno* even before the *Gates* were commissioned. Rodin’s thirty-seven years working on them was a struggle to deal with narrative, decoration, form and function as well as life and death— together informing another critical question. What relief and sculpture would become in the impending new millennia? and how could sculpture catch up with painting? Contrary to Elsen’s view, the relief form of *The Gates of Hell* was a painterly approach to sculpture, inspired by paintings as well as narrative. His *Adam* came from Michelangelo Buonarroti’s *Sistine Chapel*, the figure made vertical. And from *The Last Judgement* a damned figure is the precedent for Rodin’s thinker, originally depicting Dante.<sup>33</sup>

In *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2006) Ranciere discusses the mechanical arts (a term coined in the 9<sup>th</sup> century that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century distinguishes fine art and the intelligentsia from practiced skills).<sup>34</sup> He cites Walter Benjamin’s “deduction of aesthetic and political properties... from its technical properties”<sup>35</sup> while noting Benjamin’s allowance for crossing over between the two. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, photography and film are mechanical arts in the ascendancy while relief, had become a marginalized historically arrested art activity unable to move much beyond the territory of Adriaen de Vries’ *The Forge of Vulcan*(1611).When Matisse’s relief series of *Backs* were cast posthumously in 1955, modernism had largely relegated relief to colourless historical reference and confinement in the mechanical arts.

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<sup>33</sup> See *An Interpretation of Rodin’s Adam* (1982) by Alicia Faxon, Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal

<sup>34</sup> *An Introduction to the Mechanical Arts in the Middle Ages* Steven A. Walton web version 2003  
[http://www.avista.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Walton\\_MechArts.pdf](http://www.avista.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Walton_MechArts.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2006) Jacques Ranciere page 31 Bloomsbury. In prelude of *Aisthesis* (2013), Ranciere mentions the Greek origins of separating coarse labour from higher arts and in the Chapter Divided Beauty, page 10 he underlines Winckelmann’s separation of art into beauty and science, an idea he seeks to reform.



Fig. 6 Adriaen de Vries *The Forge of Vulcan* (1611) and Henri Matisse *The Back* (modelled 1908-1909 cast 1955)

Crucially, relief was reinvented early in the twentieth century as a tool for the re-examination of space and representation. The strategy of working with genres themselves (here genre is used inter-changeably with art form) served to extend an artist's principal area of practice. Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Tatlin(1885-1953) were prominent in this and used prosaic materials such as wood, paper, wire to assemble works with a directness and urgency that shunned the historical burden of bronze and marble. The artist's dependency on historically approved materials —'art supplies' was gone. Paint would be acquired from industry rather than exclusively from traditional suppliers. In their pragmatic employment of materials in relief formats, possibilities re-emerged for the reviewing of space and materiality in modernist terms and for the reinvigoration of the anachronistic. The purpose of the research is to argue the importance of relief as a means to understanding not just certain artists' practices that include my own but to illuminate questions of genre. Adorno qualifies the role genre plays. *"Just as the arts as such do not disappear tracelessly in the general concept of art, the genres and forms do not merge perfectly into the individual art forms. Probably no important artwork ever corresponded completely to its genre."*<sup>36</sup> In the use of materials and technique, the new reliefs would have a sustained impact beyond the limits of genre.

Since Canova, Picasso is the most influential figure in relief sculpture and in the relationships between genres. In 1912 while working with collage, he also assembled several paper guitars. His collage and assemblage signalled a radical approach to an unfashionable and neglected medium.

<sup>36</sup> Theodore Adorno *Aesthetic Theory*.- Pgs 273, 199

The displacement of marble and bronze reprioritized visual thinking over academic modelling and carving from life or from plaster casts. Theories of space extended and consolidated concerns, revising the role of illusionism in painting and collage, drawing, sculpture and theatre design. Exploring viewpoint and pictorial space, following leads from Cezanne, Cubism's emphasis on strategy, analysis, and geometry at the expense of representational detail and deep pictorial space would have immediate consequences for relief even where the artist returned to traditional media as can be seen in Jacques Lipchitz's (1891-1973) sculptures and relief works. Picasso had no formal training in sculpture. He said "now we are delivered from Painting and Sculpture, themselves already liberated from the imbecile tyranny of genres. It's neither one thing nor another."<sup>37</sup>



Fig.7 Picasso *Guitar* 1912 and *right: Lipchitz Still Life With Musical Instruments* 1918 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The approach to materials became a key element in relief's reinvigoration that resulted from radical cubist investigations of space. After conceptual, performative, deconstructive works of the 1960's and 70's, a refreshed approach to materials followed. Benjamin Buchloh notes, commenting on the Venice Biennale in 2017 "the features that both sculpture and the book once shared have now, on their loss, become all the more prominent: Made with material supports derived from natural resources."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> J. Richardson, *A Life of Picasso 1907-1917: The Painter of Modern Life*, London 1996, p.254

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh *Rock Paper and Scissors* Art Forum September 2017

<https://www.artforum.com/inprint/issue=201707&id=70461>

Buchloh, is reiterating the break from the order of genres and disciplines of Pater's time and the renewed engagement that motivates artists towards their chosen zone of making.<sup>39</sup>

This disruption and renewal between Pater and Buchloh is evident in Adorno's overview and in the effect of Cubism and later assemblage that reinforced the importance of strategy.<sup>40</sup>

Relief, even as it persisted through the twentieth century, is rarely referred to as genre, discipline or form in this century. Contemporary examples of relief that I will discuss shortly are in dialogue with the past and future. Recently, relief has continued to share formal and associative qualities even while approached with diversity of intent, method and material substance. However, artists' exemplification of relief as a genre may be incidental. That is to say, artists are often indifferent to taxonomies of forms and genres. If relief no longer describes a discrete genre, it does suggest mobility and renewal acknowledging its associated traditions by responding to or denying the functions that it once had, echoing rather than displaying continuity.

Robert Morris held that relief was an inadequate format because of its pictorial convention. "it cannot be accepted today as legitimate"<sup>41</sup> since that would imply sculpture sharing with painting, defying gravity by hanging on a wall. Yet Morris himself had made reliefs, as Judd pointed out and would return to relief later. Therefore, relief remained a problematic term.

Part of a reinvigorated attention to history since modernism is the excavation of Modernism itself, within which relief reappears in diverse practices. 20<sup>th</sup> century examples include:

David Smith, who said "I do not recognize the limits where painting ends and sculpture begins"<sup>42</sup>, Red Grooms, who documented Manhattan in painted relief as cereal box dioramas and film sets and Lee Bontecou, whose reliefs epitomise the union of destruction and creation—or sex and death. Donald Judd designated her work *specific objects*: "a three-dimensional form that was neither painting nor sculpture".<sup>43</sup> This statement demonstrates the forgotten or disowned nature of relief in High Modernist Manhattan, then Greenberg's domain

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<sup>39</sup> Walter Pater (1839–1894) was an influential essayist, critic and promoter of aestheticism and style.

<sup>40</sup> For example by Kurt Schwitters and Jean Dubuffet in Europe, Rauschenberg and Robert Morris in the U.S.

<sup>41</sup> Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris 1993 October Books

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/david-smith-australia-1951](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/david-smith-australia-1951)

<sup>43</sup> quoted by Arthur C. Danto in *A Tribe Called Quest* <https://www.thenation.com/article/tribe-called-quest/>

where sculpture and painting should confine themselves to their “essential conditions” (that Krauss represented as media specificity.)



Fig. 8 *right*: David Smith *Hudson River Landscape* 1951 *left*: Lee Bontecou in her studio New York 1963

## **This Century**

Considered in the contemporary context of painting and sculpture, relief's dimensional ambiguity, its mobile or transitional character of between-ness has a potential to transgress the norms of the surviving genres of architecture, painting and sculpture. Permeable facades, extended surfaces and compressed three dimensionality that shelters against the wall are uncertainties attractive to artists seeking a platform of investigation and reassessment, untethered to immediate social and technological trends such as audience participatory apps and video projected reportage.

Earlier mentioned artists such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg made excursions across art forms usually in collaborations. Such excursions once described as hybridity or interdisciplinarity are, in a post conceptual age, now routine for artists who are motivated by representations of meaning more than commitment to a discipline or singular art form. Relief then is both an historic discipline and in contemporary art an area of formal interest taken up by artists in a range of media. While some artists might participate in relief as a conscious extension of an historic discipline (for example, Australian Ricky Swallow), artists are now

more likely to be motivated by factors external to that tradition once associated with an architectural context. Artists might be motivated to use relief to examine aspects of space, representation, images, form, time, gesture and, as mentioned in the introduction, any other concerns through this conceptually and formally dualistic art form.

These possibilities of relief do not dissolve into a ‘non-medium’. Rather they exist at the nexus of numerous artistic and related axes.

Gerard Genette’s perception of the Baroque is a useful mechanism for considering the position of relief in the twenty-first century: “The Baroque, *if it exists, is not an island ... but a crossroads (or nexus, un carrefour) a ‘star’ and, as is very evident in Rome, a public place. Its genius is syncretism, its order is its very openness*”.<sup>44</sup>

The diagram below situates relief as nexus and epicentre in relation to other forms located (impermanently) between poles of influence. The consideration of art forms within a constellation re-occurs with variation in the writings of Theodore Adorno, Jacques Ranciere, Edward Soja and Rosalind Krauss to whom I shall soon return.



Fig.9 Relief as a transitional zone and epicentre in a constellation of mutually influential elements. Reference to the constellation as a model recurs in the writings of Adorno, Ranciere, Soja and Krauss.

<sup>44</sup> Gregg Lambert *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture* Bloomsbury

These crossroads or epicentres are often more visible to historians than to artists who may be less tethered to a historical view of disciplines as discrete. For instance, an artist may use photography but not identify as a photographer.

Artists arrived at the zone of relief from different directions or axes. Monahan, Houseago and Kentridge exemplify this. Monahan, with a background in conceptual art and theory, worked with drawing and moved towards sculpture, encountering relief between the two and three-dimensional.<sup>45</sup> Houseago came from performance, which informs his very physical approach to sculpture and relief. Kentridge's foundational work method is drawing, from which animation, printing and relief have flowed. All of these approaches reflect what Krauss referred to as 'post-medium condition' in the shift to a more dynamic, exploratory and transient zone from the fixed hierarchies of genre of the 18th century.<sup>46</sup>

This century, the practices of Thomas Houseago (U.S.A.), William Kentridge (S.A.), Anselm Kiefer (F.R.G), and Matthew Monahan(U.S.A.) exemplify this nexus. They have either pushed out beyond the picture plane and the pictorial, embracing their materials en route to inhabiting a sculptural or theatrical space or, in Houseago and Monahan's cases, reduced their performative space to a wall work. This area between two and three dimensionalities is their re-negotiation of image and material, their re-investigation of representation. In contrast to the site specific nature of earlier relief works, the expanded audiences of this century allow for regularly moved and reinstalled work on almost any scale, including Houseago's monumental *Masks (Pentagon)* (2015).<sup>47</sup> They counter the polished granite architectural site with hand made human fallibility and impermanence emanating precisely from what Adorno describes as "unknowable pragmatism".

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<sup>45</sup> With *What Hegel called the unfolding of truth that occurred as the same process of unfolding both in art and philosophy*. Adorno, T. *Aesthetic Theory* Page 222. See Monahan's masked response to this statement in his reliefs.

<sup>46</sup> More accurately, their approaches respond to the temporal circumstance and social space reflected in Peter Osborne's assertions regarding contemporaneity, the trans categorical, post-conceptual and the tenacity and flexibility of conventional categories.

<sup>47</sup> Houseago made them in his Los Angeles studio for installation at the Rockerfeller Centre, New York. They are five meters tall. There are Five. His Moun Room is 14meters by 11 meters by four meters.

Kentridge's half-kilometer Roman frieze *Triumphs and Laments* (2016) exploited the theatricality that such scale suggests. It survives as film, drawings, book and gallery sized individual reliefs.



Fig.10 Matthew Monahan's *F minor I and II* 2000 ink on paper and *Untitled* 2016 (palladium steel).

The model of the epicentre in a field of connected disciplines corresponds with Jacques Rancière's "thinking between disciplines" that he states is "neither a basis, nor an instrument, nor a specific material. It is the perceptual milieu of their coexistence." This coexistence parallels the dualities and their reconciliation that Rancière might refer to as the "sensible fabric of experience",<sup>48</sup> the diversity in ideas and material use where art emerges. Modelling relief in recent art, the constellation is a dynamic configuration of elements, surrounding the nexus of dualities. Particularities are suspended as in Rancière's "sensible fabric", in a mesh of polarities in order to see where works sit in proximity to one another and in relation to events.

Rancière's episodic *Aisthesis* (2013) attempts to see examples of art or literature together transforming "into a moving constellation in which modes of perception and affect and forms of interpretation defining a paradigm take shape... weaving together a sensible community"<sup>49</sup> beyond the formal limits of media or genre and without its earlier hierarchical features. In his

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<sup>48</sup> Rancière *Aisthesis* (2013)

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*

“esthetic regime of art”, art’s ‘singularity’ means that the use of materials need no longer conform to disciplines and genres. Ranciere’s abstracted idealism evokes numerous questions, provocative in their connectivity of events, objects and social context. When discussing sculpture, he focuses on the literature associated with sculpture rather than sculpture itself. However, links with episodic time and a transitional space where artists work within his singularity promote new connections indicating how relief can be experienced as events perceived in space and time rather than as static points of reference.

Relief can be conceived as an event based on a synthesis of Ranciere’s episodes from *Aisthesis*,<sup>50</sup> with Lefebvre’s physical, psychological, social types of space and Soja’s *Third Space* which is determined by what happens in that space, how its users can define that space. This model synthesises axioms with a Venn diagram, in order to visualize the variables associated with an abstraction of relief as an experienced event.<sup>51</sup>

This promotes a consciousness of the interactivity, the social and temporal nature of relief experienced, neither as fixed nor as an isolated individual experience. Paired opposites surround an individual work, just as they also surround the zone that is relief, an area of transition, of between-ness, traversed by artists, some of whom linger, finding nourishment and enlightenment away from other traditional media or genres.<sup>52</sup>

This traversing of relief’s zone as (or if) the artists move beyond it, is important in examining what Krauss referred to as the post-medium condition. Whilst working in this area, artists are likely to be reviewing any commitment to traditional mediums, materials or genres. Krauss explains that outmoded technologies can reveal how to “grasp the inner complexity of the mediums those techniques support.” Relief is such a medium. Assemblage, casting and

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<sup>50</sup> Contributing editor at Art Forum, Marcus Greil has used a similar model published in Art forum and elsewhere since 1986. My exposure to Marcus’ episodic cultural criticism which emphasizes perception in episodic context has significantly shaped my interpretation of Rancier’s episodes and Lefebvre’s account of space not least due to the sharing of specific and particular experiences that define the fine grain of what is sharable and what is not in culture and where the edges of art and life can be found.

<sup>51</sup> It remains conceivable as a three dimensional model with the addition of other axioms where the circles become spherical overlaps. It started as an alternative to Krauss’ synthesis of Frederick Jameson’s use of the Klein group with Michal Fried’s famous discussion of art and non art in “Art and Objecthood”.

<sup>52</sup> This is illustrated in the chronological catalogue of artists’ works as seen on Ricky Swallow’s web site. <http://www.rickyswallow.com/>

drawing are such technologies. Krauss cites Kentridge as involved in this understanding and reinvention.<sup>53</sup>

This reorientation brings us to a contemporary art where the space of relief can be understood in new ways while remaining historically and formally tethered to the space between painting and sculpture, installation and site.

Accepting this, Monahan and Houseago are also proponents of the “outmoded” as an expression of history. Direct, unambiguous technique is suited to address ambiguity and complexity, the known being pushed towards the unknown. Houseago has up-scaled the plaster casting process to grossly physical proportions.<sup>54</sup>

Brett and Krauss substantiate the plausibility of such zones of transition as having displaced earlier disciplines or genres as societal conditions and technical developments have influenced the dynamics and nuance of artistic development. Contemporary art is then viewed against a

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<sup>53</sup> Krauss said in *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture) Rosalind E. Krauss Thames & Hudson, 2000

“Artists have resisted, as impossible, to retreat into etiolated forms of the traditional mediums... Instead, artists such as... William Kentridge has embraced the idea of differential specificity, which is to say the medium as such, which they understand they will now have to reinvent or rearticulate.”<sup>[8]</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the emergence of Cubism from did not result from Braque or Picasso turning to film or photography or printing, but from rawness and paint. They can be distinguished from Rudolf Stingel, Olafur Eliasson and others working with software, architects and parametricians<sup>54</sup> to harness recent technologies in producing reliefs in the form of installations and walls. Eliasson has become an architect and Stingel a designer. Their work is in contrast to the tension and dynamics in the work of Houseago, Kentridge, Kiefer, and Monahan resulting from multiplicity, complexity, paradox and the in-between or unresolved. It is unsurprisingly accompanied by elements of scepticism and anxiety. These artists are discussed in chapter two.



Fig.11 *left*: Olafur Eliasson *Oslo Opera House* 2008 *right*: Rudolph Stingel *Untitled* 2007 South Tyrol carving cast by Kunst Gieserie, Switzerland. (photographs unattributed).

framework of historical, formal and conceptual reference where other paradigms and categories have “run into sand” as Hal Foster put it.<sup>55</sup>

Relief is both an archaic form and now an area where artists test the relationship between history and the contemporary. Its formal and historical characteristic of representing space necessitates the negotiation of modes of representation with the role played by materials. It is an area characterized by mediation and reconciliation as well as duality.

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<sup>55</sup> Foster, Hal *Design and Crime: And Other Diatribes* pg126

## Dualities as Characteristics of Relief

As a structure, dualism is primitive: the most basic forms of cellular life simply distinguish forwards and backward—eating from defecating. Dualism is in the DNA of the biological universe and implies parameters as well as direction and gradation. Polarity, the intermediate or in-between-ness, complexity and nuance all flow from this understanding; a strategy to highlight difference and deviation.

Dualism is a recurrent theme in my research, defined by the Oxford dictionary as “The division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects”.<sup>56</sup> It is as ubiquitous as it is antique, notably playing a role in the abstraction of ideas in ancient Greece leading to the privileging of mind over body and the separation of beauty from concept (as identified by Ranciere following Johann Winckelmann). Ancient Romans evoked the two faced Janus, god of doorways, transition, journeys and possibility. He personified the inseparable nature of time and space, past and future.

Dualism has been long associated with taxonomy and with opposites and beyond this, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel identified duality’s complexity. “That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements.”<sup>57</sup> Duality here does not refer to the separation of body and mind but to those dualities that characterize relief in particular: the two-dimensional and three-dimensional, the image and the material object, the *pictorial and physical* that resonate within (and beyond) this area of art—with other persistent dualities— *archaic and contemporary*, *destruction and creation* (a subset of positive and negative). They bridge metaphor and representation with the physical reality of casting and carving. The implication of hegemonic and a moral axes co existing with a spatial or tonal one involves complexities too great for this account. I have therefore limited the dualities to the sections that follow in this chapter and identify aspects of these in the accounts of key works in the final Chapter.

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<sup>56</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dualism>

<sup>57</sup> Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830) Part One IV. Second Attitude of Thought to Objectivity *TWO*. *THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY* §40

Following from Hegel and Adorno, Ranciere addresses the separation of art history from medium. He describes how genre and medium were joined and the arts themselves were separated into the 'liberal' and the 'mechanical'. Lefebvre identifies the separation and the privileging of abstracted or conceived representations of space over perceived spaces. Relief provides the opportunity to seek redress from such separations—in the studio research and in the work of the artists discussed, since it has the ability to affect and link types of space.

As we have seen, the role of opposites or dualities is at the base of dialectics. As such, they represent a way to consider a question or proposition of the type that artists regularly encounter. They are a device, a theme and a recurring structure. They imply analysis, pose questions about the in-between, about synthesis or location on a scale of gradation. They overlay a reference with which to assess a complex set of conditions, to measure extent and to reveal aberration from a polar axis.

As Bertrand Russell holds, the dualism of the universal and the particular is profound in art.<sup>58</sup> Adorno, while referring to music, reminds us “The dialectic of the universal and the particular does not... eliminate their difference.”<sup>59</sup> The specificities within relief suggest a sub-language, where this dialectic resonates with other dualities. Duality and metaphor in relief frustrate categorical distinction as they promote poetic meaning.

Paired opposites indicate parameters within which a dialogue or negotiation can occur. Whether axiomatic or entirely theoretical, when overlapping more than one pair of opposites—intersecting axes of graduated contrast between each extreme—they propose points of reference that become a part of the background noise of propositions in the studio. They provide a means to invoke external (sometimes physical or chemical) processes to play a role. In this way, an awareness of connections between subject and object or process and concept and so on is rationalized. An example could involve critical reflection on whether a work in progress would benefit from more destruction or more creation and therefore suggest a process or technique with which to proceed.<sup>60</sup> The consequential path may follow a decision

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<sup>58</sup> Bertrand Russell *On The relations of Universals and Particulars* PAS new series 1912 Aristotolian Society reprint.

<sup>59</sup> Adorno, Theodore *Aesthetic Theory* Universal and Particular pg 201

<sup>60</sup> Specifically Kiefers' 2017

stimulated by, although not necessarily represented on the continuum between the extremes. Here is a reminder of Ranciere's articulation of another familiar idea— an invitation to the unlikely that welcomes the impossible. Broadly, the nexus of dualities provides a speculation or confirmation of our concerns in the interrogation of relief.

In relation to dualities and their nexus, the fragmentary should also be acknowledged in the constellation metaphor shared in various accounts of art by Ranciere, Rilke and Adorno.<sup>61</sup> Victor Burgin too, repeats the astronomy metaphor: Diverse visual practices surround relief and come “together...not as a totality but as a constantly shifting constellation of fragments.”<sup>62</sup> Here, time and space are connected in the same way that Adorno insists on the union of subject and methodology. We are compelled to acknowledge continua and a poetic in-betweenness with regard to these models and relief as a zone or form.

Polarities account for these forces that organize the fragments, the constellation. My model below, *Traces of everything*, relates to Ranciere's *Aesthesis* or Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*:

*Art is related to its other as is a magnet to a field of iron filings. Not only art's elements, but their constellation as well, that which is specifically aesthetic and to which its spirit is usually chalked up, refer back to its other. The identity of the artwork... is also that of the work's gravitational force, which gathers around itself its membra disjecta, traces of the existing.*<sup>63</sup>

Ranciere's episodes, derived from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, are particularities or fragments that could also take the form of specific relief works located within the model.<sup>64</sup>

History and possibility is represented here. At the centre, and close to the central vertical axis, more data is knowable due to its proximity to the present whereas knowledge at sparser, more distant regions is more speculative. Any straight line passing through the torus will therefore

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<sup>61</sup> “The fragment is that part of the totality of the work that opposes totality.” The word ‘constellation’ occurs twenty four times in *Aesthetic Theory*. For Adorno “ideas are related to objects as constellations are to stars”. Adorno – *Aesthetic Theory* page 45

<sup>62</sup> Victor Burgin *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* By pg22

<sup>63</sup> Adorno – *Aesthetic Theory* pg7

<sup>64</sup> The confluence of visualization is of interest given that the model preceded my familiarity with both *Aesthesis* and *Aesthetic Theory*.

include some speculation since abstractions and universals more likely include conjecture and postulation. The circular, torus form with its sparse outer edges, is a reminder of arts need for autonomy and its simultaneous dependency.

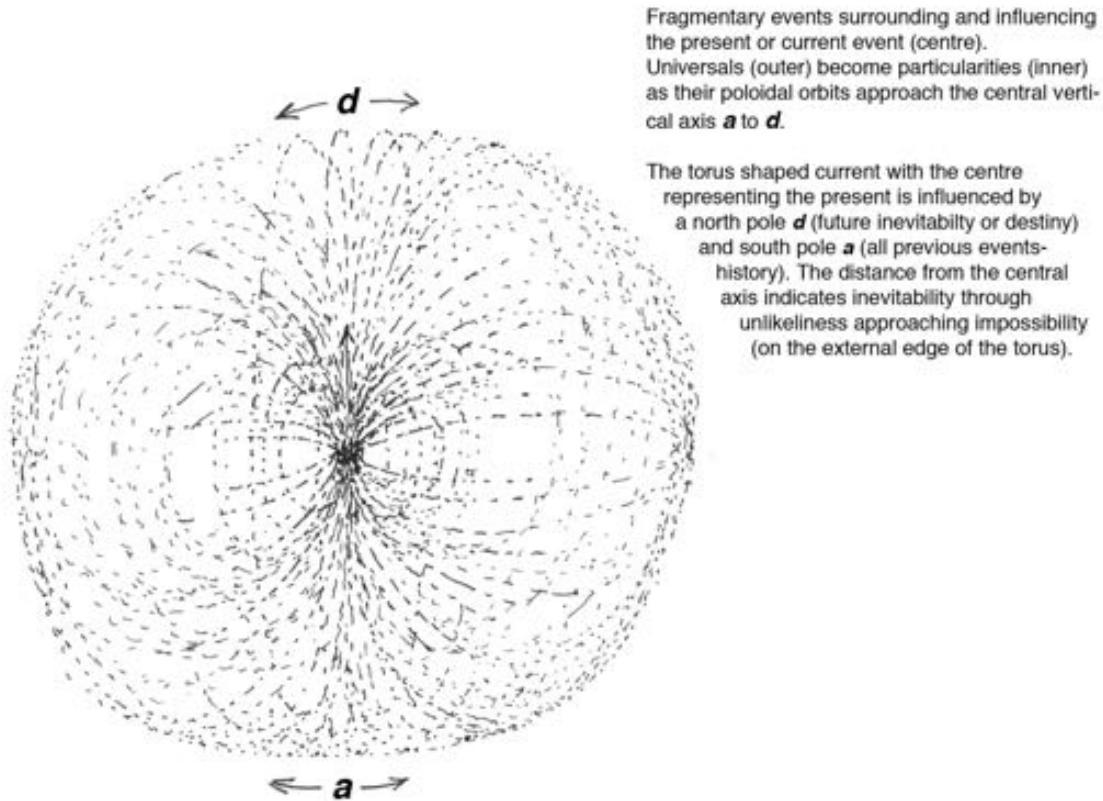


Fig.12 Torus of particularities: *Traces of Everything*

### The Archaic and the Contemporary: Creation and Destruction

Our consciousness in contemporary life is both excited by and burdened with information including an awareness of many histories from uneven geopolitical terrain. The duality of a distant past coupled with contemporaneity is a shared interest for the artists considered here. The organization of labour, war and other determinants of civilization have been rendered physically onto the landscape and in this way relief is the visual form that represents the gravity of human destiny, whether in Ridley Scott movies or at World Heritage sites.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Relief works representing ancient civilization set the scene in *Prometheus* (2012) and *Alien: Covenant* (2017).

Creation and destruction signify sequenced and cyclical events on scales varying from valley walls to intimate ivory carvings. Adorno's 'unimaginable pragmatism' is at the heart of this marriage of materials and techniques that fades with technical mastery and returns with the return to the basic needs of cubism and artists who followed, often guided by materials and the actions that those materials demanded. Contradiction, incompleteness, heroism and dysfunction describe prominent relief works by Kentridge, Houseago, Monahan and Kiefer. They cut, erase, melt, blast, bend, rip and scrape.

What follows is the background of creation and destruction in historic relief works and in philosophic commentary. I will account for how Kentridge and Houseago, representing two different generations, work with these two dualities. In this way, they are interchangeable with Monahan and Kiefer. The latter addresses himself in his journal:

*You laid the paintings on the floor without anger, without despair, and poured the burning hot lead on them. No cause for despair any longer, for you know: at some point something will come of it; indeed, you count on the disappointment from the outset.*<sup>66</sup>

However, discussion of Kiefer and Monahan regarding the pictorial and the physical will follow my focus on Kentridge and Houseago.

A letter to Walter Benjamin from Adorno states "I have come to realize that just as the modern is the most ancient, so too the archaic itself is a function of the new."<sup>67</sup> This supports a perceived reawakening of the numinous paralleled by "a new awareness of the archaic"<sup>68</sup> that is symptomatic of the spiritual aspirations for art in the West and is complementary to today's highly connected, information-saturated awareness of the contemporary.

Rilke's account of Rodin's fragmentary approach to Dante's 14<sup>th</sup> Century epic details destruction and creation in the themes of the *Gates of Hell* and that we see unfolded a century

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<sup>66</sup> Kiefer's journal is quoted on Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac's website and press release, February 2018. <https://www.ropac.net/exhibition/fur-andrea-emo>

<sup>67</sup> *The Complete Correspondence*, 1928-1940 Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin

<sup>68</sup> Jacques Derrida is quoted in Paul Bishop's *The Archaic: the past in the present* (2011) Routledge

later into the frieze sequence of suffering and heroism in Kentridge's *Triumphs and Laments* (2016). Artists continue to seek an understanding of now in the past. As with the broken *Belvedere Torso*, last damaged during the 1527 sacking of Rome, the incompleteness of the archaic offers the opportunity to find superior beauty, a poetic truth in ambiguity.<sup>69</sup> Winckelmann saw the torso as the invincible conqueror in vulnerable state. The mutilated statue symbolized the end of the Roman Renaissance amidst the most shocking defilement of Europe. The inextricability of destruction and creation is bonded to our relationship with history and therefore with our nature and our origins.<sup>70</sup>

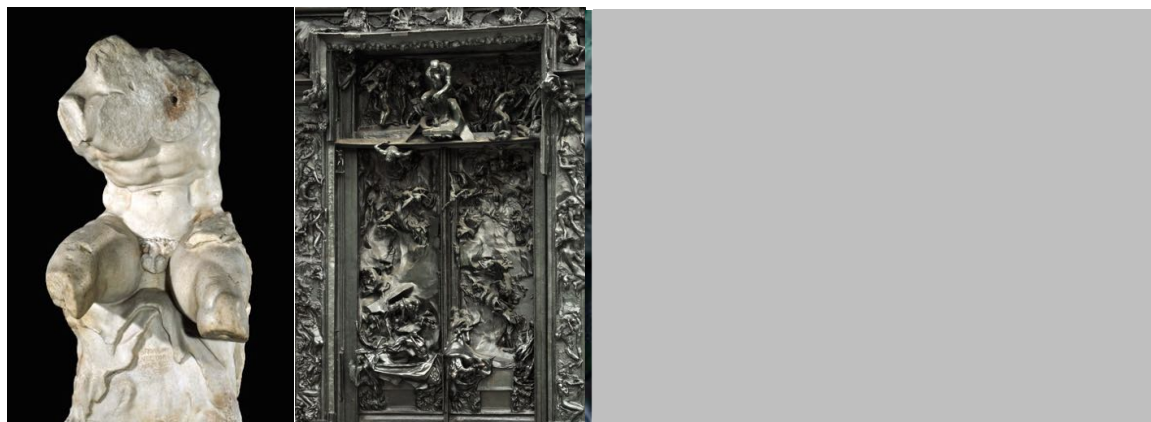


Fig.13 left: *Belvedere Torso* 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE. centre: *The Gates of Hell* 1917 Rodin.  
right: Relief set from *Alien: Covenant* 2016 directed by Ridley Scott.

The past and present continue to meet on violent terms. Around 600 BCE, Nineveh was the greatest city in the world. Much of the city's large and long-lived relief works survived to be destroyed in February 2015 with pneumatic hammers and power tools, filmed and shared from mobile phones.<sup>71</sup> The detonation of the Bamian Valley Buddha in Afghanistan (carved around 450 AD, destroyed 2001) and the ongoing destruction on Burrup Peninsular of probably the largest and oldest group of petroglyphs in the world, all result from contemporary ideology confronting the archaic. These events continue to impact on artists and historians alike.

<sup>69</sup> Rilke is Ranciere's lens on Rodin, and Winckelmann is his other lens to focus on the headless Belvedere torso that represents antiquity and damage as beauty. Jacques Ranciere *Aesthesis* pg 2 and Johann Winckelmann *History of Ancient Art Volume II*

<sup>70</sup> "The archaic is encountered en route to origin itself". Paul Bishop -*Plato to NATO*

<sup>71</sup> Archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad was beheaded in Palmyra Syria in 2016  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33984006>



Fig. 14 left: *Ludovisi Sarcophagus* 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD Palazzo Altemps, Rome  
 right: from the *Arch of Constantine* 315 AD a panel reused from Trajan's Dacian war frieze.

The reliefs of antiquity memorialize conflict, conquest, victory and destruction. Roman reliefs are primarily war-related—*Trajan's Column* (113AD) and the *Arch of Constantine* (315 AD) are iconic examples— the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace, 9BCE) being the exception. The *Arch of Constantine* incorporates spolia in the form of relief works depicting conquest, looting, subjugation and slaughter; already over two hundred years old at the time the arch was commissioned.<sup>72</sup> These are the subjects of some of the most influential works of Europe: the Parthenon frieze and metopes both depicting and subject to violence and destruction.<sup>73</sup> Trajan's column, Hadrian's column, and the numerous sarcophagi including the Portonaccio and Ludovisi sarcophagi are further examples that edify and memorialize conflict and destruction.

All ruins lie between the erection of culture and the erosion of nature. The surface of ruins is the patina of events, the interface of past and present. However, Winckelmann's romance with the past and the Romanticism that followed is mostly absent from these dualities as they occur in the work presented in Rome in 2016 by Kentridge and Monahan. This ruinous sensibility

<sup>72</sup> The form of the triumphal arch is symbolic of hindsight/foresight and of *Janus*, the god of doorways and the transition between past and future. On the narrative and violence in the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine and Arch of the Argentarii at Rome see Jas Elsner *From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms* Papers of the British School at Rome, Vol. 68 (2000), pp. 149-184 Published by: [British School at Rome](http://www.britishschoolatrome.org/) Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40311027> and Sacrifice and narrative on the Arch of the Argentarii at Rome. *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 18, 83-98. doi:10.1017/S1047759400007224

<sup>73</sup> The Fall of Troy, Centaurs vs. Lapiths, battles of Amazonomachy and Gigamarchy.- Gods, mythical creatures and foreign peoples were all represented in conflict and severely damaged in a Venetian military attack.

and the rough edges of spolia inform Kentridge's work including his Roman frieze, *Triumph and Lament* 2016 of which he said he was finding the triumph in lament and lament in the triumphs.<sup>74</sup>

Fig.15 The processional performance of William Kentridge's *Triumphs and Laments* Rome 2016.

*Triumphs and Laments* consisted of travertine areas revealed from beneath a layer of accumulated algal material by abrasively blasting through ninety ten-meter high stencils onto 550-meters of the eastern stone embankment of the river Tiber.<sup>75</sup> Its residual images of victory and defeat simultaneously bears witness to the city and incorporates images from the murder of Remus, Bernini's sculptures, Pasolini's death and recent refugee crises.<sup>76</sup>



Fig.16 Details of *Triumphs and Laments* Rome 2016 with spoils from Jerusalem from the *Arch of Titus* (82AD).

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.lizatlancaster.co.za/blog/every-winner-has-a-loser-william-kentridges-triumphs-and-laments-on-the-banks-of-the-tiber-in-rome>  
<http://magazine.art21.org/2016/11/23/triumphs-and-laments-a-procession-across-time-an-interview-with-william-kentridge/#.WbqAx9MjHXE>

<sup>75</sup> a process reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even" (1915 to 1923), the surface of which, (Oil, lead, dust and varnish on glass) results from destructive and creative events that extend our understanding of that work's existence in time.

<sup>76</sup> Kentridge mentions celebration and shame, the wealth of baroque achievement in Rome, and the simultaneous creation of its ghetto. W. Kentridge at the British School at Rome in conversation (with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016. describes his focus on destruction and creation in art making as 'anti-entropy'. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NO3djojrte>

At the contemporary art museum MAXXI in Rome, after the removal of *Triumphs* in 2017, paper studies of the frieze remained on show, displaying the connections Kentridge made between drawing, printmaking and relief. His use of negative stencils is, in essence, a printmaking technique familiar to screen printers and photo-etchers. The drawings have been cut out then laid on top of news printed pages that represent the wall support of the procession of historic images and incidents.<sup>77</sup> Processions have been a major part of Roman city life and Kentridge extended the frieze from propaganda to performance with an operatic production casting the players and their shadows into relief with the imagery on the stone wall. The frieze included reference to events such as “...the looting of Jerusalem in 70 BCE (from the Arch of Titus)...put together with images of Jews in the ghetto from the seventeenth century... with the beheading of barbarians (from *Trajan’s Column*) placed together with the body of Aldo Moro... together with *The Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*”.<sup>78</sup> Thus Kentridge has not only rearranged the past, he has done so with a condensed history of Roman relief as ghostly residual images made from the grime of ages and frozen in poses from an epic cinematic sequence that compresses millennia as well as pictorial space.



Fig.17 William Kentridge Study for *Triumphs and Laments* 2016 with spoils from Jerusalem from the *Arch of Titus* (82AD) exhibited in *MAXXI* Rome 2017.

In contrast to Kentridge’s selective erasure of history’s grime, Monahan’s drawing and erasure of drawings is taken to the point where an image on paper is buckled and ripped. In this way

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.maxxi.art/en/william-ge-vertical-thinking-3/> The residue and aftermath [http://www.artspace.com/magazine/news\\_events/art-fairs/10-of-the-best-artworks-at-frieze-london-2016-54260](http://www.artspace.com/magazine/news_events/art-fairs/10-of-the-best-artworks-at-frieze-london-2016-54260)

<sup>78</sup> from an interview with art21. See <http://magazine.art21.org/2016/11/23/triumphs-and-laments-a-procession-across-time-an-interview-with-william-kentridge/#.WxiztKmYMUE>

the graphic process ritualistically and performatively becomes more three-dimensional, driven by Monahan's need to "scour art history for new ways into sculpture"<sup>79</sup> and driving the materials and images into relief. He creates objects that often do not fully arrive at sculpture. This incompleteness can be accounted for by Monahan's own words:

*Breaking and fixing are key notions in my practice, like an accelerated archaeological process: every work is confronted by wars and earthquakes, continually cracked up by my dissatisfaction.*<sup>80</sup>

Destruction is synonymous with history for Monahan and it is essential thematically in countering a kind of classicism with the barbaric in representations that include masks and warriors referencing both immortality and the dead. His influences include Persepolis and Mycenae, Medardo Rosso and Ridley Scott.<sup>81</sup> The wide eyes of Archaic Greek statues and Assyrian relief figures at Persepolis stare at destiny from their fate in Monahan's fractured figurative incarnations. Not simply damaged but arrested in a state that amplifies the ambiguous smile and stare of history. "Time is not moving forward here, it is piled up in ruins... I have been handed a skeleton key to a room full of ghosts..."<sup>82</sup> and "place and time have to be buried within the figures. They are remote and incomplete...and the journey is paradoxical in any case: to go back in order to go forward."<sup>83</sup>

This incompleteness in perpetuity recalls several literary precedents. The first, a short story by Gerald Kersh—with an inconclusive, Chekov style ending—of an immortal corporal, a soldier scarred from four hundred years of battle injuries, who questions the point of immortality.<sup>84</sup> It is a personal recollection (my own), of the type that occurs in the complex formal and poetic space constructed by the artist; one that is also evoked by Kentridge and in a prescribed, heavy handed and illustrative manner in Scott's film *Prometheus* (2012).

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<sup>79</sup> Ludovico Pratesi *Notes on the Side-line of an Exhibition in Matthew Monahan* 2016 (Milan Mousse) page 5

<sup>80</sup> Matthew Monahan *Bronzo* Mousse Publishing 2017 pg 5

<sup>81</sup> Many artists today including Monahan and Houseago, make no distinction between high and popular cultural references. This is a point of generational distinction with older, non American artists such as Kentridge and Kiefer who felt a need to minimize such influences since they were principally aligned with consumerism.

<sup>82</sup> Matthew Monahan, *Monahan by Monahan* (Cologne Hatje Cantz 2011) page 61

<sup>83</sup> *ibid*

<sup>84</sup> Gerald Kersh's *What happened To Corporal Cuckoo I* from *One Hundred Years of Science Fiction* (Simon and Schuster 1968)



Fig.16 from left to right: Matthew Monahan *Drawing* 2010, *Untitled* 2007 Anton Kern Gallery and *Neptune (Rescue)* 2016 installed at Palazzo Altemps, Rome.

The second perpetual incompleteness recalled is a theoretical context described by historian and critic Carl Einstein (1885-1940): “our precarious achievements built on a void, grounded in a fundamental groundlessness”.<sup>85</sup> Einstein was responding to Cubism’s well documented disruption and antagonism, when Picasso and Braque researched without any interest in completion. They share something of the circumstance of the artist as “lost wanderer”, godless and disconnected from a broken western art history, Modernist or otherwise — built on assumption and error. “...like a tragedy all its own.”<sup>86</sup> This climate of investigations free of earlier dogma is shared in relief by Picasso and Monahan.

Monahan’s work evokes the use of spolia, antiquity’s reuse of already historical fragments. However, he precludes found objects, and direct observational drawing from life or photos. His studio rules promote an internalization of his studies of antiquity and promoting a sense of what is absent in the presence of his works. This is clearly articulated in his *Palazzo Altemps* exhibition where, as the first contemporary artist to show work, he responded to the spaces and the permanent collection of antique sculpture that includes the *Ludovisi Sarcophagus*, the *Ludovisi Throne* and the subject of Winckelmann and Ranciere’s attention, *Juno Ludovisi*.

<sup>85</sup> Sebastian Zeidler *Form as Revolt: Carl Einstein and the Ground of Modern Art* pg 27 Cornell University Press, NY.

<sup>86</sup> Matthew Monahan, *Monahan by Monahan* (Cologne Hatje Cantz 2011) page 79. More fully, “ I don’t want to bridge the gap between art and life. I want to sustain it, like a tragedy all its own.” which, in turn recalls Einstein’s suicide — when cornered by the advancing Nazi army in France in 1940, jumping from a bridge. Understood collectively, these references and observations gather elements of critique and desperation, nihilism, existentialism, anarchy and poetry evident in works by Louis-Ferdinand Celine and Alfred Jarry as well as Carl Einstein.

Monahan does not compete but comments and accessorizes these signposts of history to remind us that the past is not past. This exceptional site is affected as a thirdspace of a singular nature; an event that itself is changed by the installation of the same work in London's *Regent's Park* at the *Frieze* art fair. This conscious extension of the works space is implicit too, in his catalogue for the exhibition reproduced over that of the *Palazzo Altemps* collection.



Fig.17 *left: Neptune (Rescued) 2016 installed at Palazzo Altemps, Rome.*  
*centre: Neptune (Rescued) 2016 reproduced in catalogue.*  
*right: Neptune (Rescued) 2016 installed at Frieze, Regent's Park, London.*

With an awareness of Gilles Deleuze's reference to folds in time and space, Monahan's folding of faces, bring drawings into relief.<sup>87</sup> This procedure transformed drawings and other flat surfaces into mask forms reminiscent of the Mycenaean Mask of Agamemnon. His works, as curator and art historian Raphaela Platow says, "are suspended in mid-process", between destruction and reconstruction.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Matthew Monahan, *Monahan by Monahan* (Cologne Hatje Cantz 2011) 80

<sup>88</sup> *Matthew Monahan* Raphaela Platow *Ruins without History* "intelligibility of surfaces" page22



Fig.18 *left: Untitled (Green Head) work on paper 2017 right: Basbo 2014 polished bronze.*

Raphaella Platow, writing on Monahan, cites the precedent of the art historian Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924-29) that attempted to travel pictorially from the archaic to the contemporary, just as Kentridge, in frieze form, physically parades a reshuffled chronology in *Triumph's and Laments*. This shared sense of the historical is born both of a profound desire to investigate and account for humanity in addition to literature and contemporary commentary. Neither Monahan nor Kentridge offer a chronology but both demonstrate through their time travels, a trajectory of which we may not have been aware.

The simultaneous presence in Rome on both sides of the Tiber by these two artists establishes temporal, social, physical spaces surrounding relief with a continuity that extends to the geopolitical origins of wealth that Rome is built on. They represent an ambitious if unresolved historical reach, making substantial links between place and time.

### **The Pictorial and the Physical**

Relief utilizes pictorial language and representations of space within its corporeal reality while confronting its physical location. The Roman works by Kentridge and Monahan demonstrate the integration of this with their temporal concerns and use of site. Since dualities in relief are not discrete, as established in discussion of the models and elsewhere, the following exemplars, Anselm Kiefer and Thomas Houseago could change places with Monahan and

Kentridge from the previous section *Archaic and Contemporary, Creation and Destruction*. Their overlapping content and its integration with the formal duality in the discussion to follow is symptomatic of common understanding among artists from diverse backgrounds and different generations. In contrast to Monahan and Kentridge, Kiefer and Houseago have backgrounds respectively in painting and performance. Kiefer is informed by the philosophy and the burden of German history, Houseago energized by his own migration to California and an openness to the broadest cultural references. My intention here is to extend a consciousness of the multiple dualities that coexist in relief through discussion of their work following a broader explanation of the physical, pictorial duality with some historical context for this image-object relationship.<sup>89</sup>

The contemporary separation of image from physicality can in part be understood in terms of the increasing role of digital interfaces and Fredric Jameson's claim that "the total saturation of cultural space by the image" is accompanied by the ghettoization of physical experience into clubs and gyms in a world of specialization and increased population densities.<sup>90</sup>

The pictorial has been viewed as the higher, transcendent aspect of art; the physical being associated with labour and servitude since Plato, as discussed with regard to the decline of relief in the first chapter. The characteristic physicality of relief in carved wood, terracotta, cast bronze and marble, has historically been defined by the mechanical craft of its material. It has been approached with pragmatism in the economic use of material, whether bronze, wood or stone. Artists systematized the space of relief mathematically in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Donal Cooper's *Depth of field*, elaborates on the wedding of material technique to geometric and pictorial development in the Renaissance such as occurs in Florence where Lorenzo Ghiberti and Donatello's low relief perspectival inscription was grounded respectively in gold smithing

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<sup>89</sup> Critical events in the changes to this duality include the widening dissemination of images through the printing press, photography, television and digital platforms that utilize the internet. Less so, material processes such as casting and transportation have also played roles.

<sup>90</sup> Modes of image presentation vary from petro glyphic to digitally projected. The ubiquity of photography is well documented. There are more than 36,000 labeled images of the Rosetta Stone on Instagram : socks, tea towels, ties, shirts, bags and more carry its image. Objects editioned from 3d scans are disseminated as reproductions of artifacts and art works, including relief works recently destroyed in Iraq and Syria along with pirated Tony Cragg sculpture copies in Singaporean shops.

and foundry work as much as in the new geometry.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Canova's achievements, like Borromini's, stemmed from his stonemasonry experience, demonstrating the power of three-dimensional geometry as a foundational language shared between imagery, abstraction and the material, physical world.

Relief was used more intuitively and flexibly in the compression and containment of narrative or representational space prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> C and since the early 20<sup>th</sup> C when Picasso's approach marked an emphatic liberation of sculpture and relief from the mechanical trade skills of carving and casting still dominant then. Leading up to this in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the separation of imagery and physicality in art reaches another crisis with the spread of photography and the revision of the pictorial, analysed in Adolph von Hildebrand's *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (1907) that discusses relief and its relationship with the two-dimensional image. It implies a system, built on an assumed tradition of technical virtuosity or craft upon which was imposed a schema: a set of planes that Hildebrand outlines. Yet, in painting, this set of rendering skills had already been overwritten by Impressionists and by Post-Impressionists including Cezanne. Artists' technical approach to media, to clay, paint and to object making was shifting along with revisions of their approach to representation. So too was the ground beneath Hildebrandt's pictorial approach to sculpture.

Carl Einstein referred to Hildebrand's *Fernbild* or distant picture as "pictorial sculpture"—his derogatory term, describing a pre-modern, privileged frontality, where the world is reorganized for the subject and object as image, effectively making most sculpture operate with a limited viewpoint— as high relief.<sup>92</sup> Hildebrand describes the formal mechanisms of relief but rejects any disturbance of the viewer/work relationship such as intrusions into the viewers space, even as occurs in Canova's *Tomb of Maria Christina* (1805).

His analysis was taken on by many including Einstein but was inverted to serve Einstein's own, radically different ideas. It is easy to imagine Einstein's friend Picasso, working literally from Hildebrand's text with a diametrically opposed agenda, having already abandoned

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<sup>91</sup> Donal Cooper and Mariko Leino *Depth of Field: Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy* 2007 published Peter Lang, Bern gives a complete picture of the topic in this period and place.

<sup>92</sup> Sebastian Zeidler *Form as Revolt: Carl Einstein and the Ground of Modern Art* pg 81 Von Hildebrand's *Wittelsbacher Fountain*, 1890-1895 is a famous example. It can be compared with Françoise Rude's *La Marsellaise* 1836 mentioned in Krauss' *Passages of Modern Sculpture*.

perspective, —an agenda that would reify the picture plane and step in front of it rather than remain forever in the pictorial window.<sup>93</sup>

In Hildebrand's pictorial 19<sup>th</sup> century approach, representational image and object coincided in illustrative or pictorial sculpture with the subject foremost. In early Cubist reliefs, the discrepancy or tension between image and object represents a dialogue with considerable potency where a renewed pragmatism (remember Adorno's wistful reference to the "unimaginable pragmatism" of the archaic) takes place with regard to both materials and technique. Greenberg describes this with reference to Picasso's *Guitar* (1912).

*It was as though, in that instant, he, (Picasso) had felt the flatness of collage as too constricting and had suddenly tried to escape all the way back—or forward—to literal three-dimensionality. This he did by using utterly literal means to carry the forward push of the collage (and of Cubism in general) literally into the literal space in front of the picture plane.*<sup>94</sup>

Picasso went on to nail together the first assemblages or construction works. His succinct, technically primitive and simultaneously radical approach intensified focus on ideas by making technique transparent, an influential approach continued with Julio Gonzalez—welding sculptures that Gonzalez referred to as "drawing in space".<sup>95</sup> The same notion of creating form and image simultaneously by extending pictorial space to become a relief space—including real space without embracing sculpture in the round—has become a common place strategy among artists since: notably the sculptors David Smith and Anthony Caro who assembled images such as Caro's *Twenty four Hours* (1960).

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<sup>93</sup> At the time of publication of *The Problem of Form*, Picasso had determined to break through his problems with *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) with an "utterly original, compelling style" taking a contrary stand to much that surrounded him.

<sup>94</sup> *Art and Culture: Critical Essays, Collage* By Clement Greenberg Beacon press Boston pg79 Greenberg's privileging the idea over the material recalls the much earlier artisan's exclusion from art (and Winckelmann's separation of sensorial beauty and technically delivered concepts). He is in conflict with Michael Fried's recognition that the artwork is still an object. For Picasso this was never an issue but a given. He was thinking with materials, whether painting or working with scissors. Picasso and Braque left many unsigned works in this period and decried the notion of a finished, completed work. It was simply inquiry.

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/gonzalez-head-called-the-tunnel-t01698>

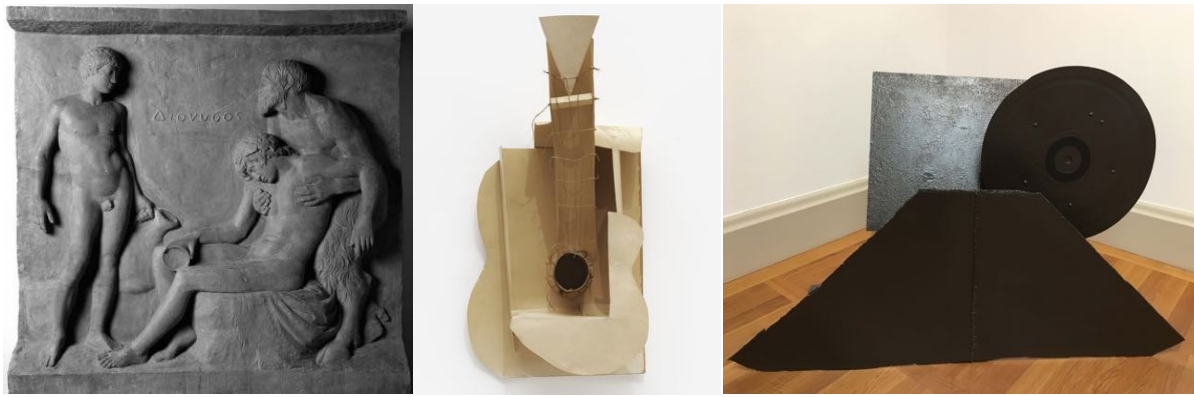


Fig.19 left: Hildebrand *Dionysus Relief* 1900 from *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*. centre: Picasso *Guitar* 1912 Museum of Modern art New York. right: Anthony Caro *Twenty Four Hours* 1960 Tate Britain.

Hildebrand’s inadvertent description of Cubism in his chapter *Ideas of Planes and Depth* in *The Problem of Form* (which suggests a role as catalyst for Cubism), he states, “...deriving the principles of art from the material (is a) confusion of the end with the means (and) should be discredited once and for all.”<sup>96</sup> This confirms a conventional understanding of the time, contested on two fronts: by a tradesman like approach to sculpture and by early modernists such as Constantine Brancusi who partially inverted this approach to materials and image with *The Kiss* in 1907, the year Hildebrand was published in English.

Brancusi’s vision of a material essence awakens the possibility that, rather than the imagery of relief being subservient to architecture, the *Ludovisi Throne*, the *Parthenon* friezes and the *Lions Gate* can be seen as physically realized images in an architectural role. The Ludovisi Throne (an altar), counterpoints three sides of lucid pictorial images with the mass and gravity of a cubic meter of marble. It features “delicate, transparent drapery, calligraphically chiselled”<sup>97</sup> accompanied by cross-legged chastity and the suggestion of music—the antithesis of stony silence—poetic abstractions of a numinous culture in resolute material with qualities derived from the counterpoint of image and substance, the *Hypokeimemon*.

<sup>96</sup> Adolf von Hildebrand *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* pg 92

<sup>97</sup> Giovanni Becatti *The Art of Ancient Greece and Rome* 1968 *Thames and Hudson* pg 154

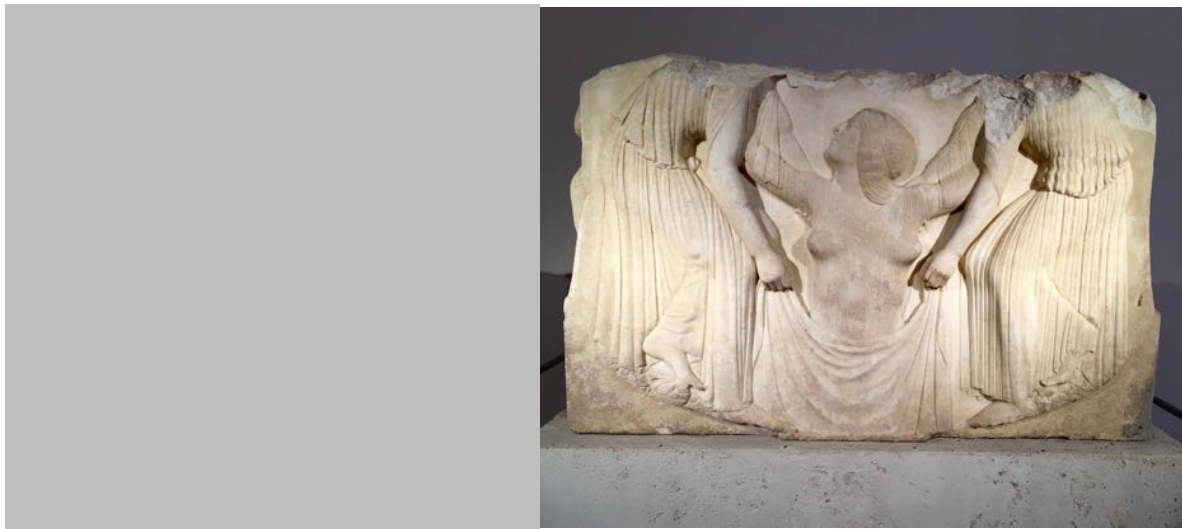


Fig.20 *left*: Constantin Brâncuși *The Kiss* 1907-08 in the Museum of Art, Craiova, Romania.

*right*: The *Ludovisi Throne* 460 BCE in the Palazzo Altemps, Rome.

This material use is aligned with the living rock architecture of widespread ancient precedents that include Greek theatres, Egyptian temples and Sassanian tombs. The tombs of Darius and Xerxes in Iran attach images to landscape connecting dynastic representations with geological time and demonstrating the complex associative meanings that emanate from image/object/material/place relationships.

Subsequently, artists including Kiefer, Monahan and Houseago display an attraction to this “naïve” mediation of materials and images to avoid the “uncritical use of new technology” of the type that Benjamin Buchloh denounced in Bill Viola’s video work<sup>98</sup> and to avoid the identified negative attributes of spectacle that Claire Bishop identifies through similar reasoning.<sup>99</sup>

Houseago and Monahan once shared studio space and studio rules intended to focus their vision on processes and materials through the idiosyncrasies of personal authorship. Their rules were contrived to excluded the premade and effectively facilitate the assertion of self at all stages of image and object making. Monahan’s “no skulls!” policy marks their difference as

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<sup>98</sup> Claire Bishop *Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?* transcript of lecture at Cooper Union May 18<sup>th</sup> 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvXhgAmkvLs> accessed 2017. Here Bishop gathers Buchloh, Krauss and others’ objections to forms of spectacle.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

Houseago frequently returns to conflating skulls with masks in relief and in freestanding works.<sup>100</sup>

Houseago's masks and the reinforced plaster figures, *Baby* (2009-10) or *Working Title* (2008) for instance, are rapidly and simply drawn on the floor, then poured wet onto the drawing, then lifted into the vertical plane once set, entering three-dimensions from a conception as an image via Houseago's physical performance with plaster. Unmitigated and uncoloured, its reinforcing and its procedural sketching is plainly in evidence transferred from the floor onto the plaster surfaces. These figures are anatomically reckless, at times, technically primitive, even formally hideous in their pragmatism but everything about them is perfect since they do no more or less than exist—as the residual artefact of a sincere performance that realises frailty along with heroism.



Fig.21 Thomas Houseago: *left: Baby* 2009-2010 *right: Houseago starting a relief in clay on a drawing* 2013

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<sup>100</sup> from the Marizio Catellan interview for *Flash Art* 259 March-April 2008

MC: *You mentioned you have rules in the studio.*

MM: No use of photography, no projections, no mannequins, no live models, no body casts, no ready-mades, no fabricators and no source material. I am pretty dogmatic about this....If you fix the rules and the subject matter, you can really concentrate on the development of style....The loneliness could have been too much but I was in a kind of gang with two other artists, Tom Houseago and Micheal Kirkham. We called ourselves “the crows,” and we really stuck to this dogma and supported each other in our new figurative adventure. Otherwise I think it would have been impossible.

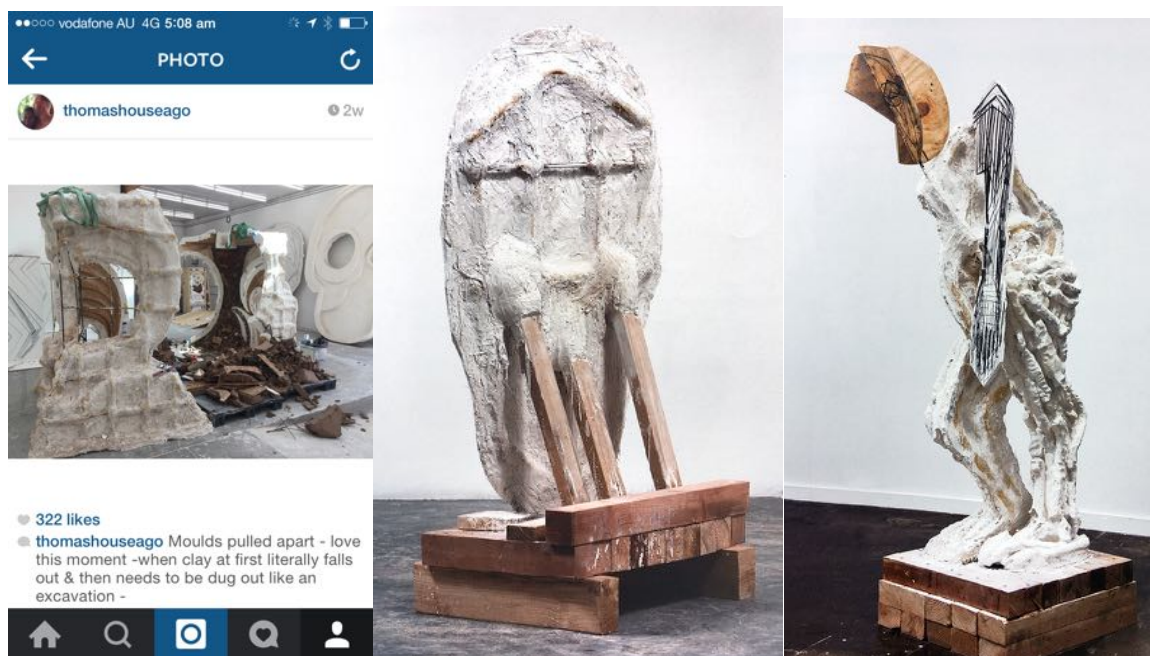


Fig.22 Thomas Houseago: *left*: Instagram post 2015. *centre*: *Untitled* 2008 *right*: *Walking Boy* 2009

Other mask reliefs pile lengths of clay on top of a flat drawing, extending the linear treatment into relief with overlaps and creating voids between what were previously blank spaces in the drawing. Many of these works approach or exceed two meters in height, realised with each laborious performance and vast quantities of clay or recast from large plaster moulds.<sup>101</sup> At conception, the imagery is frontal, graphic and symbolic; informed by the flatness of modernism: masks, faces, skulls reduced to diagrammatic shapes that are brought into the space of relief either as flat components to be assembled or as individual relief works. Houseago's exertion is cast solid to portray civilization as an exhausted quarterback (*Baby* 2009-10), exhibited with skulls and masks.<sup>102</sup>

Many of Houseago's works depict a conflict between of vitality and mortality. The composition of *Pentagon (masks)* 2015 creates a central void reminiscent of some atavistic altar or archaic temple, lined unapologetically with the procedural surfaces of their making. It is primitive architecture and relief, uncertain of its own secular or religious nature. Its fallibility

<sup>101</sup> The negative moulds themselves are often interchangeable with the positive cast components to compound the intentional with the procedural.

<sup>102</sup> This is contrasted with artists who subcontract physical, technical and design work. Rudolph Stingel, who used South Tyrolian woodcarvers, then the Kunst Geisserei (Swiss Art foundry) to fabricate his modular *Relief* 2007

emanates from the graphic nature of the masks' starting point and their development to a scale that interacts with the plaza, retaining tension with its origins in the form of an awkward physical presence in the corporate architectural environment of New York city.<sup>103</sup> It is one of two handmade works to be presented in this ongoing series of public art commissions, the other one being Kiefer's *Uraeus* (2018) that combines the industrial with the literary in reconciling its imagery and physicality.

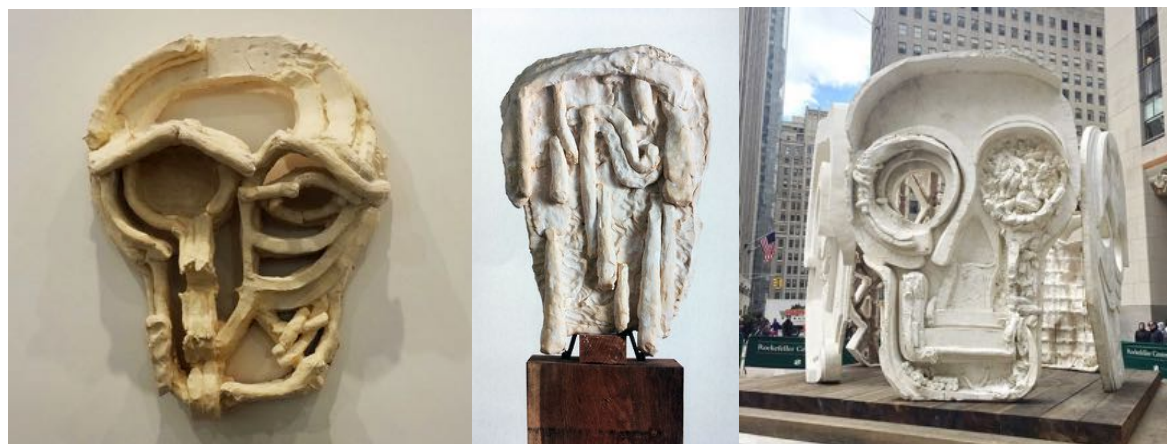


Fig.23 Thomas Houseago: *Roman Mask II* 2013, *Abstract Portrait* 2009 and *Pentagon (Masks)* (2015) at the Rockefeller Plaza.

Both share the tension of each artist's haptic engagement with a pointed materiality used to address the question of how or if contemporary art can speak to spirituality. Each work extends the frontality of relief to address the public space in a multi directional way rather than in a three-dimensional, sculpturally coordinated manner. They evoke relief's earlier function as papal stemma, emblematically branding the public space.

*The real alchemist is not interested in material things but in transubstantiation, in transforming the spirit. An alchemist puts the phenomena of the world in another context.*<sup>104</sup>

Kiefer's statement, a definition of personal, artistic intent, affirms the crucial role of materiality in creating his imagery of desolation and ruin. For Kiefer, duality involves the coexistence of representational image and material object fused with themes associated with

<sup>103</sup> *Pentagon (Masks)* is neighbored by permanently installed reliefs by Paulanship (1885-1966) and Isamu Noguchi (1904-88).

<sup>104</sup> Kiefer interviewed by Jackie Wullschlager for the Financial Times September, 2014  
<https://www.ft.com/content/4ad87118-3f42-11e4-a861-00144feabdc0#slide0>

creation and destruction. To elaborate, it is not merely an accompaniment but an evolved synthesis of graphic, two-dimensional images with the actual, physical and chemical residue of processes that contribute to the artist's reconciliation with history, philosophy and poetry.

The materials and processes are linked to poetic intent; expressions of the phoenix, melancholy, waste, beauty.<sup>105</sup> Lead, soil, paint, straw, oxidation, burning, peeling, hacking, cracking all contribute to the imagery of paintings that extend towards the sculptural or the imagery of sculptures. Kiefer has developed a vocabulary of materials and a formal language of low saturated colours that contribute tonally to building a relief space.

This space has a background of pictorial devices such as linear and atmospheric perspective, drawn, painted or relief printed or composed of silver nitrate photographic prints. They are surfaces that enlists the physical to give gravity and emphasis to the graphic—to reach from illusionistic and representational picture making toward the world of substance and objects often culminating in a foreground attachment of a constructed or selected component. It is a language of dereliction, iconoclasm and bravura. Many works are two-dimensionally monumental with their depth only modestly extending towards the viewers' space with the size of the foregrounded subject/object adding to a pathetic tenor through scale by emphasizing the vastness of the background field of pictorial space.

His vocabulary of materials conforms to Hildebrand's description of successive proportional depth layers, with the flattest as background, on the support and the deepest at the front. Multiple items are arranged with the largest to the foreground (usually lower) section and smallest to the perspectively recessive (upper) area in order to maintain unity between depicted and actual elements. Kiefer makes little attempt to construct intermediate forms of transition, preferring to leave such connections to the viewer.<sup>106</sup> His interpretation of relief's space extends its pictorial/material possibilities while abbreviating or simplifying the formal language of Hildebrand that remains a reference for relief.

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<sup>105</sup> "You cannot avoid beauty in a work of art." however Kiefer withdrew at least one painting from his Royal Academy retrospective "because it is too beautiful" he told Jackie Wullschlager in September, 2014. My use of *phoenix* comes from Kiefer's frequent use of ashes and his statement "*you've come to realize that a picture always erases the immediately preceding one, that it's a matter of constant disposal and rebirth*".

<https://www.ft.com/content/4ad87118-3f42-11e4-a861-00144feabdc0#slide0>

<sup>106</sup> Kiefer has used impasto paint to sculpt imagery (flowers) on, above a works surface in an intermediate manner.

*Fur Paul Celan: Asbenblume* 2006 typically moves from actual books attached (smallest above, to register in the background) in front of a single viewpoint, linear perspective field that can be connected as a continuum by the viewer. *The Heavenly Palace* 2004 operates in the same way, with three-dimensional additions to a two-dimensional surface and little if any intermediary work. Even the level of impasto changes little across the most of the surface. Nonetheless, our desire to experience the work as a pictorial space will likely prevail with as little as a horizon form with which to infer a window space. In this way, Kiefer knowingly uses our narrative-needy projections on to his surfaces. Thus, he shows us a strategy for approaching narrative in relief.



Fig.24 Anselm Kiefer *Fur Paul Celan: Asbenblumen* 2006 at Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, Tel-Aviv.

The coupling of sculptural object and image in one work forms a relief space that operates in a similar, but more exaggerated manner in the more recent works *A Snake In Paradise* 1991-2017 where an earlier landscape is subjected to molten lead, which combines with and transforms the painted surface both chemically and with heat. The soft metal was subsequently peeled back and brought into conversation with a cast snake, also in lead. The ensuing dialogue between a burnt (literally) landscape and the now grossly sculptural elements, extends the pictorial/physical exchange of earlier work with a stronger tonal and colourfully saturated rendering of the landscape beneath. A similarly strong, graphic ground in other works extracted the same fiery and toxic response in most of the other works in Kiefer's 2018 Thadeus Ropac exhibition titled *Fur Andrea Emo*. Many of which gain a more sculptural identity as opposed to a more pictorial unity more typical of the earlier work. This is also

symptomatic of Kiefer's extensive works in vitrines and installations that demonstrate his interest in three-dimensional form and his exploration of this dry littoral zone.



Fig.25 Anselm Kiefer *A Snake in Paradise* 1991-2017 Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris



Fig.26 Anselm Kiefer *left: Am Grunde der Moldau, da wandern die Steine* 2008-2017. *right: Gehütete Landschaft* 2014-2017 from the exhibition *Für Andrea Emo* 2018 Galerie Thadeus Ropac, Paris.

A final point here is to note the difference in approach to relief between Houseago and Kiefer, most clearly articulated in relief's 20<sup>th</sup> century precedents. In the nineteen fifties Robert

Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns employed an uncompromising frontality in their works that brought their pictorial compositions into the viewers' space. Rauschenberg's 'combines', *Monogram* (1955-59) for example, develops Picasso's and Kurt Schwitters' assemblage and collage into the action or installation space of the gallery in literal terms—the non representational use of paint, tyre and stuffed goat. Along with the flag, target and numeral motifs that Johns used (which sit in both worlds), Rauschenberg's work contributes to a non-illusionist occupation of the physical world that eschews the perspectival devices that Kiefer, until *Fur Andrea Emo* in 2018, has relied on to deliver a window into history. One could add that the device itself is of that history, further connecting form and content.

Houseago remains closer formally to Johns' subject matter of target, flag, beer can and numerals with his own *Spoon* and the motifs of masks and coins, by choosing to depict objects already flattened rather than deploying numerous pictorial devices to that end.

Houseago and Kiefer represent a divergence that once defined art in the second half of the twentieth century along the lines of using or rejecting pictorial space and representation.

Rauschenberg, Johns and Houseago employ a shallow, deadpan space for the wall works while Kiefer's window spaced works are accompanied by an emphatic acknowledgement of surfaces and their physical decay along with their depictive marks.

## Chapter 3

### Reflections on Studio Research

This chapter is an overview of my studio research based in reflexive and deductive processes that aim to clarify pre-existing concerns and speculate on the dualities and themes discussed in the earlier chapters. The research was informed by observing the antique<sup>107</sup>, attending museums and recent art exhibitions<sup>108</sup> and by assimilating photographic and written notes, diagrams and other works on paper.

In late 2012, I had experienced a history of painting and sculpture in the temple caves of Mogao in Northern China. Buddhists worked these 492 caves in the Gobi desert with little disruption from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Arts developed in Rome over a similar period but with contrasting extreme and recurrent disruption. Rome is shattered into layered and interrupted sites. I started working there with plaster and a limited knowledge of Rome's history but determined to respond to the cultural cacophony experienced in the company of archaeologists, classicists and other artists.<sup>109</sup> The research through making recommenced in 2015 in a Brisbane studio and fabrication workshop and is chronologically considered here in four groups of work.

The first explores carving as drawing in an attempt to harness memory in order to interpret, speculate on and summarize the overloaded complexity of East-West trafficked motifs from China to Rome without prescribed form. The second group, also dealing with the difficulty of distant or unknowable history, attempts to realize specific forms and devices evoking 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. They follow on from the previous *stemma*<sup>110</sup> like works and include allusions to archaeology, vessels and objects of militaria. The third group responds to the figurative, narrative and *spolia*.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> The British Museum, Academia in Venice, the Cathedral in Orvieto, Palazzo Altemps, Palazzo Massimo and numerous Roman museums and sites

<sup>108</sup> In 2017 Frieze and the Venice Biennale, White Cube, Saatchi Galleries, the Serpentine.

<sup>109</sup> In a studio of the British School at Rome in 2013, designed in 1900 by Sir Edward Lutyens expressly for a sculptor. These studios provide for a sense of immersion at the recent end of the Rome's long history.

<sup>110</sup> Papal insignia often set in relief above entrances in Rome, as illustrated in Chapter one.

<sup>111</sup> Reused stone from earlier architectural works, often inscribed and carrying the significance of antiquity into its new placement.

The final section of the chapter addresses works that synthesise and adapt these investigations and conclusions in the form of commissioned architectural works in Brisbane and a site-specific work in a Townsville gallery space.

### Earlier Related Work:



Fig.27 Bruce Reynolds *left: Wynnum Pool with Brush* ( various woods from 85 Haylock Street, Wynnum)1986.  
*right: Cast and Elevation* (cast in-situ concrete, linoleum, Axminster carpet, laminex.) 2001Brisbane magistrates Court, Brisbane.

On arrival in Queensland from Europe, my first relief, *Wynnum Pool with Brush* (1986), was made from pieces of the timber house that I had started to repair and alter. Like collage, it was assembled from selected components with some paint removed and none applied.<sup>112</sup>

In 2002, an eight meter blade wall, *Cast and Elevation*, was conceived as a collage with embedded elements of the suburbs cast into the wall and imprinted with carved hardboard sheets — drawings in relief— sharing surfaces with recent *spolia* in the form of linoleum, Axminster and Laminex.<sup>113</sup> These two works, along with *Tread* 2009, summarize previous excursions in relief where the materials suggested the level of spatial compression that would indirectly inform the research that followed and is accounted for here.

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<sup>112</sup> I have worked with collage and assemblage for many years. My first solo exhibition was of 22 collages titled *Thin Objects* at Bitumen River in Canberra 1981 which gave rise to assemblage in subsequent shows. Some collage and relief printing of the moulds accompanied the relief works making up this research.

<sup>113</sup> *Cast and Elevation* 2002 . Brisbane Magistrates Court and later also in *Tread* 2010 - cast from rubber tyres and polyurethane components.

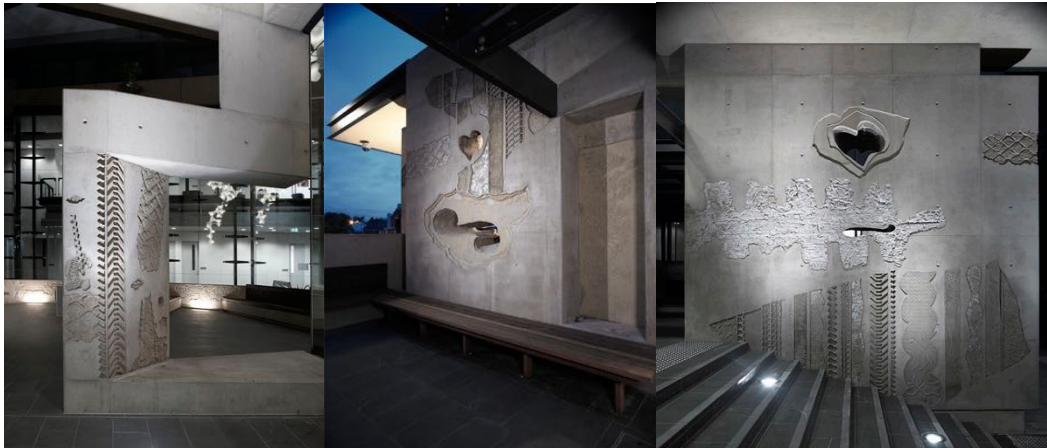


Fig.28 Bruce Reynolds *Tread* 2009 (cast in-situ pigmented concrete) Ipswich Magistrates Court

*By extracting and thus isolating the concept of form from its dialectic with its other, it in turn tends toward petrification. At the opposite extreme, Hegel too did not escape the danger of such ossification.” —Adorno *Aesthetic Theory* pg. 354*

### **Carving as Drawing and Form from Ornament**

The initial intent was to investigate the relationship between two and three dimensionality, more specifically posing the question: What if surface preceded the object? What if motif preceded form? These works investigate the duality of surface, image and pattern with physical processes and the object—another approach to negotiating the two and a half dimensional. Put another way, they use relief to investigate connections between decoration, sculpture and collage, all of which preserve gestural action and promote speculation.

Drawing here meant carving with an electric chainsaw or blade to remove material from a 20mm thick sheet of closed cell foam. The material imposes limits and a method of organizing the physical space of the relief and can only be cut or marked with specific techniques. Carving rapidly created a surface with voids and troughs, motif and gesture in negative space to be cast to generate form from surface. The carving required a certain focus coordinating physical gesture and tool according to the behaviour of the material. In this way, numerous moulds of motifs and patterns were accumulated for reuse, linking periods and places remembered with the shortcomings and disjuncture associated with an overwhelming

exposure to diverse cultural forms and motifs. For example adjoining references to the Baroque and Seljuk had no predetermined sequence and would be interpreted in the negative, in reverse, so a final composition was unknown.

These works involved bending carved sheets towards three-dimensional form to produce shallow reliefs in plaster— colourless, bone-like objects, calcium carbonate, the material of shells, coral, limestone and eggshells- the youthful, modest and prosaic cousin of marble.<sup>114</sup> They became initially shield like then vessels.

The earliest piece took on the form of an incised war shield, ironically delicate in plaster. *Shield* represents an improvised, personal account of history; an unintended, but recognizably defensive shape— incised and scarred. Pieces consciously alluding to human or ceremonial military forms followed: greaves, the cuirass, a carapace – shells, residue of conflict. The carapace or shell is a transformative object, changing man to warrior or even hero. This reading is a reflection of David Malouf having brought earlier Homeric themes into focus with his imagined account of Ovid in exile.<sup>115</sup>



Fig.29 Bruce Reynolds *Carapace* and *Greave I* and *Greave II* in *David Malouf and Friends* at the Museum of Brisbane 2014 cast pigmented plaster.

<sup>114</sup> Marble is still not entirely forgiven since Pater. The carved fifteen millimetres thick polyethylene sheet can still be torn bent or cut.

<sup>115</sup> D. Malouf “*An Imaginary Life*” 1978 published by George Braziller is about relearning from a child, in the wilderness where previous knowledge is useless. I also had several conversations with Malouf himself when he was in Brisbane.

### Three Vessels from the Second Group.

The intention in these works was to give a non-prescribed form to existent surfaces (the same relief carved sheets of polyethylene foam) and to further assess how two and three-dimensionality can relate to each other, beyond the traditional ornamentation of a pre-existing object. Making a cylinder from a flat sheet and interrupting that form with a concave intrusion formed *Archaic Vessel*, by filling with plaster. The self-imposed limitations of such tasks invite decisions that prioritize and summarize aspects of complex research, reducing many options to just one or two. In this case the tube form that was initially reminiscent of the Seljuk towers of Central Asia (in a preliminary cast piece). They became more obviously vase like.



Fig.30 *Archaic Vessel* cast pigmented plaster 2015

This improvised approach to assembling the mould, anticipated form, proportions and the location of motifs. The resultant solid form addressed the question “could one decorate a form before the form came into being?” I was covertly empathizing with ancient Greek potters. Subsequently, I determined to improvise a large *Krater* from the base up, in an additive

process starting with a more contrived, constructed mould at the bottom and adding sections in five successive casts. The resultant vessel appears partially complete, however the role that the relief surface has taken is clear within this quasi-functional object. The pervasive form of the vase or vessel and their histories contain the possibilities of new readings for the forms. The scale and readings of the relief (relative to the forms) were of continuing interest.



Fig.31 *left: Krater* 2015. cast pigmented plaster *right: Archaic Vessel* 2015 cast pigmented plaster and *Neapolitan Stereo* 2015 installed in *Oxiana* 2016 Pop Gallery, Woolloongabba

The final vessel sought a compromise between a single sided relief and an object in the round. *Skyphos* is a double-sided relief, arrived at in response to *Krater*. It is a shallow two-sided form, part vessel, and part picture; pigmented with a Sienna tinted arabesque on one face, a dark grey shape incorporated into the reverse face. Both shapes are subservient to the activated surfaces and the straightforward assertion of the material form. Each face depicts bay crabs and prawns that scavenge, and are preyed on and are intended to link Moreton Bay now with the Mediterranean of antiquity. Its form was constructed in three pours: one for each face and one for the base. *Skyphos* refers to another utilitarian Greek vessel, a bowl. The outcome sought clarification of subject and object in the context of its support. Its tentative, compromised existence in the round is a challenge to the nature of the surface, begging the question that sculpture often poses: what is this object's relationship to function? To viewer,

to the lived space? In addition, from that: what is the meaning of representational imagery in this non-functional non-pictorial context.<sup>116</sup>

The work confirmed the breadth of possibility associated with these dualities and indicated that the wall and its history as a site for the pictorial was a useful anchorage not only for the pictorial but also for the functional, which is interwoven with the physical. A large space appeared between an ornamented bowl and a sculpture. The indications were that the inquiry was too wide and that a return to the wall would be useful. Monoprints and other works on paper produced at this time confirmed this. The earlier *Shield* pointed away from objects in the round, back to single-surfaced wall pieces. Hence *Accrual* and *Unification*, both wall works, immediately followed the vessels.



Fig.32 *Skypbos* 2015 cast pigmented plaster

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<sup>116</sup> This returns me to Fried's famous point about objecthood which evokes questions about representation and support, function and the separation of art from life and what is the role of decoration in this.

## Response to the Eighteenth Century

*Accrual* (2015) and *Unification* (2015) are both heavy, fragile shield-like forms, burdened with surface relief. Their purpose was to directly commit the absorbed motifs of Eurasia to relief as a reflection of the history of interaction between East and West— in other words, to interpret history and impossible complexity in concrete terms in a specifically constricted format in order to reveal the potential and limitations of cast relief. Their form suggests papal *stemma* or coats of arms, recombining carved components on an authoritarian form of identification once common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Made one after the other, sections of moulds were accumulated in separate, serial castings to provide widely varying motifs. A type of relief cast collage, responding to the Baroque and the antique was achieved by interchanging the moulds as sections of the works were cast and composed, by ripping, cutting and re-joining pieces of the moulds before casting.



Fig.33 *left: Accrual* 2015 cast pigmented Hydrocal. *right: Unification* 2015 cast pigmented Hydrocal.

First an undulating profiled wooden armature was built to accommodate the polyethylene mould pieces and to produce a concave surface confining the liquid state gypsum to the shape of a Tiepolo ceiling panel, still shield like in size. Pigments<sup>117</sup> once traded on the Silk Road were used to distinguish each pour incorporating casts from different moulds in stages of accumulation, interlocking components of image/structure/composition, the various motifs interrupted and embedded like little territories achieved through conflict.

This method of combining and embedding image/objects in a conglomerated geology, allowed a piece to contain its own history, able to be read or unravelled by its visible process of production.

Papal signifiers like the Barberini bees, (which came to signify Barberini looting) were embedded along with molluscs and less recognisable shapes and patterns. Ambiguous markers of historic despotism and those without meaning were mixed and fixed in a process that demotes potentially heroic symbols and images to an equivalency with bricks, dragons, insects or drapery, reassigning a hierarchy of values and shuffling the chronology of events.

*Man of Letters* tested another configuration of form and image conceived as a generalization of portraiture and representing the Enlightenment's revised concern with the ancient. Initially modelled on Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet 1694-1778), and his contemporaries Winckelmann and Captain James Cook (1728-1779), it combines four distinct components of relief: a collar cast from sheet plastic, two sections of hair and a slightly convex ovoid cast from a carved memory of Roman stucco ceiling decoration.<sup>118</sup> Each component takes on shapes determined by the liquid state of the plaster rather than having been confined to shaped moulds. The motifs of wig, collar and face are interlocked and mutually overlapping, slightly concave elements that follow a ratio of depth to width to establish the form logically in its relief space. The components are joined by pouring modified gypsum, seeping through between chain-sawn curls and arabesques from a blade, solidifying as part of the final image, underlined by the collar cast from the creased plastic bag that previously held the plaster. The well-mannered wig, the stylized vines, the artificial collar together a fanciful construction of

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<sup>117</sup> Yellow ochre, red Sienna and ultramarine blue carry their own sub plot of history and geography.

<sup>118</sup> Vila Farnesina rooms are preserved in Palazzo Massimo and other Roman ceilings were observed at Ostia and the baths at the forum in Rome .

what is formally organized and historically misremembered. It attempts to focus on the tension between the vague and the tangible, the particular and the general, history and the modern as well as pattern and form.



Fig.34 left: *Man of Letters II* 2015 right: *Coronet Sconce (Sconce IV)* 2015

### *Sconces*

The sconces directly approached drawing a wall dependent object in three dimensions in a form that continues the 18<sup>th</sup> century frame of reference. Functional (in an archaic sense) yet an abstraction (originally from acanthus, still growing wild and curling as they wither around Rome), their gestural composition and materiality speak to an architectural context, wherever that may be. Like John's numerals and targets, they are both a thing and a representation. Collectively, they are also petrified gestures of figuration alluding to drapery and inviting a reconsideration of the functional, the figurative and the decorative.

The technique used liquid *Ultracal*<sup>119</sup> on a galvanized steel frame with cloth as the vehicle for suspension and manipulation. The setting time dictates the speed and the adhesion of the

<sup>119</sup> A form of modified gypsum, stronger than plaster.

material to its frame so the sculpting is performative and somewhat improvised. This heightened the voice of the material previously contained on a mould surface. The second sconce made more of the cloth with stronger reference to its Baroque ancestors and their gestural origins in gilt bronze or carved wood. The third and fourth sconces incorporate *spoilia*; draped figures previously cast then used as a central motif within their form increasingly aligning performative gesture and figuration. They attempt to evoke a wistful neo-classical past.

### *Neapolitan Stereo*

The Baroque interest in optics and perspectival deception suggests another way of considering relief's spatial ambiguity. The intent with *Neapolitan Wall* and *Neapolitan Stereo* (2015) was to counter this idea— inherent in the use of perspective and its reference to optics— with the opaque materiality of the irregular shaped object. The pattern employed on the stone façade of the Neapolitan Church of Gesù Nuovo (originally a palace) was carved in single point perspective and cast twice, allowing the fluid material to determine the shape of each.

As a pair, they reference stereo vision and the convex optics of lenses, intended to highlight the light source and the space in front of the work— the viewers' space as additional to the pictorial and physical spaces. Their duplication depicting two walls directing us to the third wall, implies a perceptual trick. Looking into the distance, we are aware of where we stand.

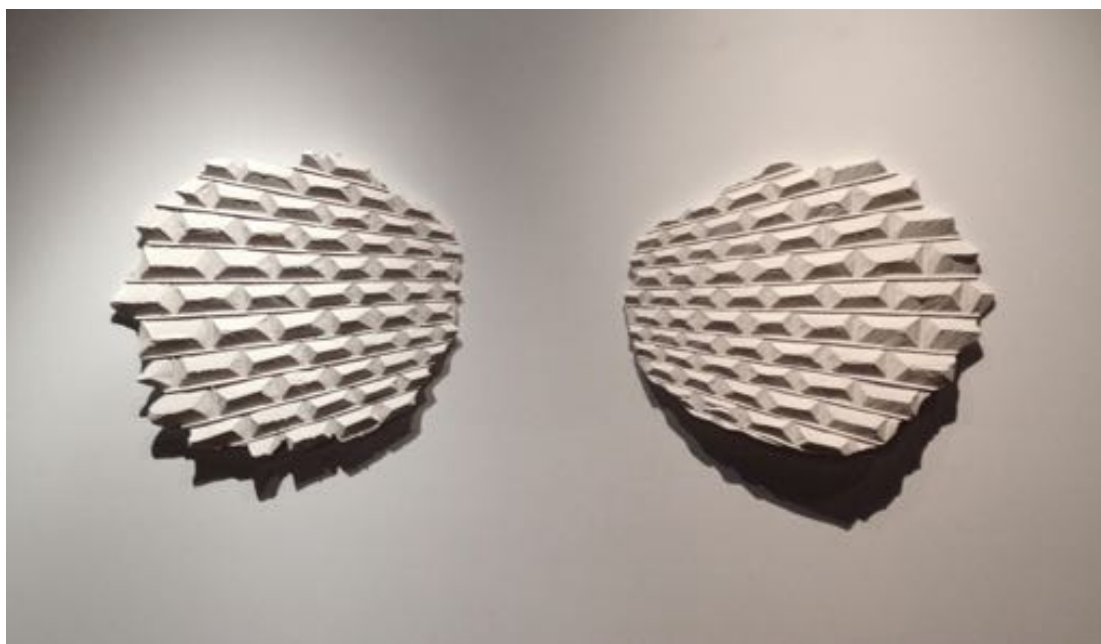


Fig.35 *Neapolitan Stereo* 2015 installed at *Oxiana* 2016 at Pop Gallery, Woolloongabba.

## Narrative and *Spolia*

The intention in these works was to test allusions to narrative, to imply broken moments in longer stories in relief while considering the landmark precedents of *Trajan's Column*, the *Parthenon Frieze* and the reliefs of Persepolis.<sup>120</sup> The aim was also to resonate ancient stories and violent events in remixed depictions and in new contexts. The inclusion of narrative in relief, reflecting themes of conflict from contemporary news sources as well as historic ones, required the development of characters beyond the established vocabulary of pattern and motif.

*Arbor* is an investigation into the setting for figuration—the question of figure - ground relationships and pictorial space. When does the setting become a character?

It was made in three pours, firstly the grey tree based on the Milanese relief from the cathedral exterior in Candoglia marble that I photographed in 1985 and that stayed with me as a contradiction - tree as marble. The pour approximately formed the tree's outline. This oak is engulfed by Queensland tree species (genetically much older) that make up the back ground, becoming foreground. The plaster was controlled by regulating its viscosity and through measured distribution on moulds of a Hoop pine and a Livingstone palm.

I strategically drilled holes through this piece, to encourage the second pour of the white, wet mix to move into areas between the branches as well as around the tree, physically interlocking and visually enveloping the subject. The third pour tinted with sienna pigment, partially repeated the image of the pine and palm extending the subject from the one original tree to a represent a small grove or arbor composed of very different tree types as might appear in a city's botanical garden. The impenetrable pictorial space was reinforced with the tension between the devices of overlapping, relative scale (large versus small) and the reversal of colour use by placing the warm colour at the back, cool grey in the foreground.

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<sup>120</sup> The landscape format of the Portonaccio sarcophagi and earlier Parthenon friezes climax in the 190 meter spiraling narrative of Trajan's Column.



Fig.36 *Arbor* 2016 cast pigmented Hydrocal.

An oak tree from Milan Cathedral, figures from *the Forge of Vulcan* (1611) by Adrian De Fries, draped and headless figures from Hatra, Assyrian *Lamassu* and centaurs were cast both individually and together as actors in events with mixed historical references designed to suggest the interlocking of past and present. Vulcan pitted against centaur, hammer smiths overlaying damaged draped figures, antagonists ossified with protagonists— small figurative personifications of power and conflict, ornamental rather than monumental, their pastel tints and scale evoking domestic ornament.



Fig. 37 *Little Centaur, Draped Figure, Blue Swingers, Little Lamassu* 2015 cast pigmented Hydrocal

Their references are to the smashed statues of Hatra, draped classical figures and Isis videos of the destruction in Iraq and Syria at Mosul, Nimrud, Nineveh, Hatra and Palmyra<sup>121</sup>. They were cut with blades and the chainsaw in negative then precast for rearrangement in various configurations.

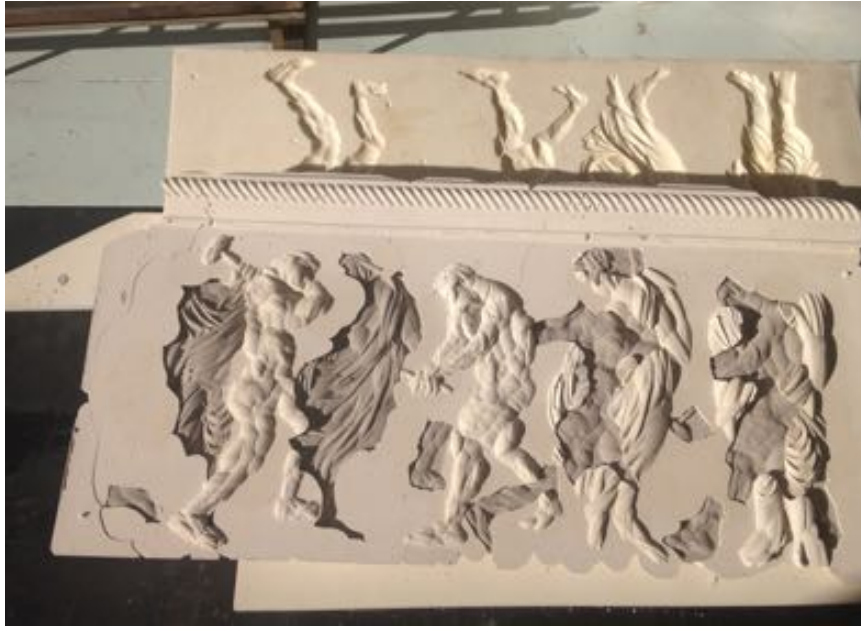


Fig.38 *Hammer Frieze* 2015 lying on its mould.

The space before a work; the viewer's space, was given further consideration through the investigation of the frieze form and related representations of time in relief. Longitudinal compositions of varying poses are overlaid and animated with the viewer's participation. Processional narrative and the frieze have been partnered for millennia. In *Hammer Frieze* and *Cornice Frieze*, the figures are both animated and arrested while presenting what might appear to be a section of narrative from a greater whole.

Motifs and events are components of narration. The role of narrative in relief has been pivotal in its longevity and in its decline. It prompted further contemplation of the greatest narrative

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<sup>121</sup> In its blackest moment, ancient and contemporary converged with the beheading of Khaled al-Asaad, an archaeologist and head of antiquities for the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Palmyra

relief, *Trajan's Column* and led to the incorporation of the individual figures of conflict derived from various times and places (Roman and Greek mythology and recent events in Iraq and Syria) in a panel suggestive of a larger landscape with cypress and hills in *Column (section #1)*.<sup>122</sup> It was conceived as a module to be repeated as additional episodes, hung one on top of another in the manner of the column relief that spiralled upward. Here the spiral is reduced to a single frame.



Fig.39 *Column 2015 (section #1)* 60cm x 100cm Hydrocal, carbon, ochre.

Additionally, several figurative compositions were cast from single carved works; for example *Terrain with Coronet* (2015) and *Struggle (after Michelangelo)* (2015), that incorporate a crown and statue that interrupts the intestinal wrestling of Michelangelo Buonarrotti's earliest sculpted work, a relief of the battle of the centaurs indirectly derived from the Roman sarcophagi in Pisa. Michelangelo's composition orchestrates the movement of the eye across the work, linking pictorial space and time with links between characters as they act out the works

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<sup>122</sup> *Trajan's Column* 107 to 113 AD, a copy of which dominates the Architectural courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The relief winds 90 meters around its support which is 30 meters tall.

constituent episodes. *Struggle* (2015) is not Donatello's pictorial theatre space but a surface of writhing bodies interrupted by the submerged headless draped figure from Hatra and a foreign crown lending the apparently fragmentary panel a pretence of authority. Its overall form is contained top and bottom with cable motif, its sides peter out inconclusively.



Fig.40 *Struggle* (2015) (after Michelangelo Buonarroti) and *Terrain with Coronet* 2015

The intention in making *Cornice Frieze* was to consider the containment of narrative elements of relief within a fragment of a frieze wall, or architectural element and to reflect on incomplete or indefinite forms. This objective emerged from *Struggle*, *Hammer Wall* and *Centaur in Weekender* and reappraised the architectural /narrative relationship with its ability to speak of a greater absent whole. They continue the embedding of precast elements within objects and surfaces interrupted by earlier events or other places. This incorporation of previous histories occurred in the inclusion of *spolia* in Roman and later Italian architecture, usually marble set in marble. I hypothesized that resonance of components within a work might imply a similar relationship by extension between the work and its third space.



Fig.41 *left: Cornice Frieze* 2015 mould with precast characters positioned prior to casting and  
*right: Cornice Frieze* 2015.

The research at this point collectively suggests an archaeological timeframe and a speculative interpretation of history (albeit one with many familiar elements), placing greater emphasis on forms that continued to question the image/object relationship. Narrative in this context adds to a sense of incompleteness, while the duality of what has been discussed as the pictorial and the physical can be understood as depiction and existence, since each object produced contains depiction within it and each depicts an artefact or object symptomatic of an incomplete or damaged set—substantiating its own history, its own existence. The narrative has therefore moved outside of singular contained depictions to the set of fragmentary works that require a wider, even more speculative reading of a fictitious but vaguely familiar history.

Epistemologically, this may be obvious—a chain that links relief to a familiar maxim that also connects back to Fred Orton describing Johns work as “a perpetual oscillation between subject and surface.”<sup>123</sup>— between idea and object, depiction and existence (pictorial/physical) — think/am.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted by Greg.Org <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/05/23/everything-in-sight>

## *Veiled*

Following earlier attempts to link historical ideas to pictorial outcomes in plaster, I responded to an image from a Canadian artist in my instagram feed of a veiled bust in storage, covered during studio maintenance. It is an image both prosaic and timeless. It is and isn't art. I remade the photo as a cast relief.

A month previous, I had carved a bust after a Roman portrait in order to most directly confront the figurative aspect of relief's depictive space. I then cast it as a negative in order to observe the illusion of tonal reading when a directional light source comes from the opposite direction, transforming negative to positive space. This negative was used as a mould jacket and lined with a thin membrane to mimic the shrouding of the bust and its identity in the original photo by Frieso Boning (1958-2016).

*Veiled* has a sense of airless compression from the meeting of liquid and the negative space moderated by three different membranes. It is half pillow and half corpse made from an iphone photograph of a sculpture into negative relief, addressing transposition and moderation.



Fig.42 *Veiled* 2015 in Woolloogabba studio

*Coronas* (2016) is another configuration of the duality previously expressed as the pictorial and the physical. *Coronas* reverses the early works improvisation, executing a plan conceived to examine the integration of two types of pattern, two types of inserted elements that I have come to regard as *spolia*: precast crowns and linoleum shapes from Brisbane houses.

The contained undulating convex surface in the shape of a Tiepolo canvas with a shared surface of alternating graphic and relief elements, forgoes the compressed pictorial space of depictive relief in favour of the decorated image/object, semi-official emblematic ornamental residue— part Chelsea Barracks, part Coorparoo.

Its modesty of means negotiates a theme familiar to all of the artists discussed in this paper, the theme of failure and triumph. It is a secular, domesticated, and urbanized version of the papal *stemma* that are attached to buildings and herald the patronage of the various popes in Rome.<sup>124</sup>



Fig.43 *Coronas* 2016 pigmented Hydrocal and linoleum with precast elements.

<sup>124</sup> Retrospectively and incidentally, I also see it as autobiographical.



Fig.44 *Coronas 2016* with precast elements arranged face down on composition of patterned surfaces prior to inserting the linoleum pieces. The curved armature of plywood is visible upper centre and the washed lino pieces are drying on the ground near the buckets. The amalgamation is completed with several pours of pigmented modified gypsum.

### Outside:

The progression of research culminated in an architectural frieze as the third of a series of three publically sited commissions in Newstead, on the northern edge of the Brisbane CBD. I had introduced the clients to relief in the first commissioned work by incorporating it in a secondary role.

The three works were interspersed in a development that includes four apartment towers, and saw relief in three different roles: as ancillary to a freestanding sculpture titled *Covalent Bond*; as architectural decoration cladding columns and marking a street entry titled *Confluence*; and overseeing an atrium and contributing to the street view of the building titled *Oceania Frieze*.

*Covalent Bond* is the first of three stages consisting of a freestanding sculpture in a small public use courtyard between the Waterloo Hotel and a development including four apartment towers. The principal form of vertically stacked components sits on a polygonal podium that references Pisano's *Fontana Maggiore* (1278) in Perugia's Palazzo dei Priori. Cast relief panels surround the podium and adjacently form the vertical faces of cast in situ concrete benches. This dialogue within the site attempts to integrate the space sculpturally and architecturally.

The cast relief represents the only hand-made surfaces in the building and probably for a considerable distance. These surfaces contribute personalization and commitment that is frequently absent in a newly completed urban space. There is a speculative aspect in this context, which follows from the nature of the development itself, economically and socially.<sup>125</sup>



Fig.45 *Covalent Bond* 2015 stainless steel, cast relief, aluminium and enamel 5m x 2m x 1.2m

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<sup>125</sup> Such commissions are subject to good faith from all parties. Preconditions influencing the work include the building construction methodology that presses for late installation and site minimal site access. Art is not commonly included on a project management spread sheet and may still only reluctantly be accommodated under the contractual pressure of completion schedules. In other words, off site fabrication is assumed.

The seating was previously specified to be rendered, painted block work or solid cast concrete.  
The form of the sculpture is based on a stack of vessels. (the district was a long term storage depot).

The technical method was adapted from the preceding research in response to the intimate nature of the urban, architectural space, a refuge adjacent to one of Brisbane's city arteries. The material used for the relief components was a modified gypsum product with added sand. Casting this coarser, waterproof material, containing an acrylic resin for exterior durability required an adapted method.<sup>126</sup> Their images of crustaceans implicate the site with another time scale. They connect thematically with the two following stages.



Fig. 46 *left*: Component with cast panel for *Covalent Bond* 2015  
*right*: Relief panels in its base and adjacent cast benches territorialize and integrate with the site.

*Confluence* (2017), the second stage, consists of the decoration of two existent concrete columns distinguishing the street entry. The task is essentially archaic. Broadly, it is defined by the hierarchical relationship between client, architect, builder and artist, which in turn is defined by the economy of urban development. This structure of patronage echoes much earlier relief production.

Fronting one of four mainly residential towers, *Confluence* sits above the subterranean junction of the nineteenth century Stratton Drain that still connects the filled in swamp of Newstead to

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<sup>126</sup> Lower viscosity when pouring and the coarser detail required for reading in a larger space informed the carving of the moulds, which also needed to be low relief, avoiding prominent and sharp elements with regard to perceptions of public safety.

Moreton Bay and the Coral Sea. Across the street is *The Triffid*, an enduring, well used music venue. The site is therefore at the junction of a foyer of white leather and marble, a drinking hall with music and the runoff from both to the Bay.



Fig.47 left: Digital simulation of the proposed design centre: Installed work at night right: South column in daylight

The north column is encircled with high relief of folded, polished stainless steel, connecting form with ornament, graphic with physical.<sup>127</sup> The southern column is clad with organic, low relief imagery derived from the marine organisms of Moreton Bay and informed by proto geometric Greek pottery as well architectural capitals. Both columns incorporate painted metal skins encasing the façade's structural elements.

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<sup>127</sup> This element was refined to address the softening of extremities (removal of pointed ends) exposed to public contact and to resolve a fixing system that minimizes on site installation requirements.



Fig.48 Early drawings for *Confluence 2017*

*Oceania Frieze* is ten meters long, in five panels. Approximately six meters above the ground, its elevated, suspended form conceals a cistern and suggests a *cantoria*<sup>128</sup> where, rather than serving a choir, its soundtrack is running water from a water feature.



Fig.49 *Oceania Frieze* 2017 (detail of central section) in Newstead, September 2017 glass fibre reinforced modified gypsum and concrete.

The frieze is a reconsideration of the ancient panoramic, filmic form that comes with some expectation of narrative: a battle with victory uncertain. Events take place amongst the

<sup>128</sup> A cantoria is a balcony specifically accommodating a choir. Copies of Della Robbia's and Donatello's *Cantoria* are in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

imagery of *cephalopods* (squid, octopuses<sup>129</sup>) and *medusozoa* (jellyfish) that vastly pre-date our species and suggest an older theme.



Fig.50 Detail of right section *Oceania Frieze* 2017 after nearby tiling and before the builder's water feature .

A large octopus approaches a decorated vase. The octopus is the most intelligent invertebrate, ancient, arabesque, mercurial, decorative and common food source. Paired, they are intended to suggest slippage between culture and nature, to evoke our debt to the distant Mediterranean as well as to the adjacent Coral Sea — presenting local content as exotic. Micro and macro marine biology migrate to and from the surface of the vases that they have adorned. Animals are stylized in mirrored shapes of polished steel set in the white cast gypsum-concrete. The paradox of animated compositions in a static frieze, an opaque fossilized surface, is an ancient dramatic device, here amplified by its relationship to the passing commuter traffic on a principal artery. Perhaps it will eventually accrued readings of the work that invite contemplation of the animals depicted ( the giant jellyfish, the rampant octopus) and of their narrative, revealing aspects of the familiar, the exotic and the absurd in the form of a reminder of our relationship to the ancient life forms from the bay.

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<sup>129</sup> The octopus, “the body itself is protean, all possibility” it “lives outside the usual body/brain divide”. Peter Godfrey-Smith. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/15/other-minds-peter-godfrey-smith-review-octopus-philip-hoare>

Following preliminary studies in ink on paper, the moulds were cut and carved in foam through direct drawing with chainsaw and blades. These were ripped, cut and reassembled as composite images for the moulds for each panel in a similar manner as the initial paper collaged studies made from ripped and glued ink drawings. Digital compositions were rescaled and revised as alternative compositions.



Fig.51 *left to right*: Octopus drawn in its own ink, carved mould, studio photograph and Minoan pot 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

A proprietary formula gypsum based casting material (Trinic) reinforced with glass fibre) offered a way of achieving light-weight panels for the anticipated difficulty of installation conditions. Closed cell Polyethylene foam was chosen to enable directness of gesture to counter the frozen final form of relief with a fluid, interpretive carving process that offers the immediacy of small-scale drawing. The foam yields even more easily to blade than to the electric chainsaw. I am unaware of anyone else having used this process for mould making. It has enabled the reuse and recombining of moulds. Working in the negative may dissuade those who would avoid the unpredictable or the interventionist nature of the process that sits between industrial production (it is a largely repeatable system akin to printmaking) and the hand made. The process of casting the frieze is, like Houseago's method, predictably physical. A thousand kilograms of material were mixed and poured by hand into the five panels. Several of the panels incorporate water jet cut stainless steel shapes enlarged from ink drawings. The mirror polished steel and matt white gypsum are colourless and contrasted while sharing a flush continuous surface.

The moulds for Panels 3 and 4 included areas of polystyrene that are dramatically impacted by acetone solvents applied to chemically dissolve polystyrene into organic shaped voids and surfaces of cellular character with low predictability in rates of corrosion that determine the depth and shapes representing sponges and corals.<sup>130</sup> Their eroded voids were cast as positive organic forms that occur amidst flat flush laser cut stainless steel shapes.



Fig.52 *Oceania Frieze* prior to installation *left*: panel #1 showing a large jelly fish, the oldest multi organ animal. *right*: panel #5 flush shapes of water jet cut mirrored stainless steelin contrast to the gypsum cast surface.

Both *Oceania Frieze* and *Saturation Point* lay on a flat white ground — ambiguous spaces that relate to the building as support.<sup>131</sup>

The work’s architectural context is an external three-walled atrium open to Anne Street designed to acknowledge the traffic entering the CBD. Primarily viewed from the atrium but also from within the building, its length requires movement as well as duration for a full

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<sup>130</sup> This chemical corrosion is the basis of Rudolph Stiegel’s works made by walking over polystyrene in solvent drenched boots.

<sup>131</sup> This was foiled in the case of *Oceania Frieze* when the large wall above it was tiled without design input, removing any useful relationship with the frieze. From this comes a desire to contribute early in the design process, to affect the site more and particularly to reduce the ubiquitous dependency on cladding and to engage instead with the structural material to respond with less mediation to the site rather than contribute to the “seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed”. - Rem Koolhaas *Junkspace* *OCTOBER 100*, Spring 2002, pp. 175.

In-situ cast concrete, as an alternative example, provides the opportunity for a considered response in cast relief to the fabric of the building, as opposed to associating with the retrofitted surface finishes that are the dominant visible areas of contemporary architecture.

reading of its detail.<sup>132</sup> An analysis of this high traffic location shows the architectural design addressing complex criteria that serve client, construction company and council, recalling Lefebvre’s “illusion of transparency” in social space as well as Rem Koolhaas’ *Junkspace* — “held together not by structure but by skin...conditional space”.<sup>133</sup> The artwork’s invitation onto the site too is conditional and understood by the architects attempting to counter Lefebvre’s identified illusion. Their constraints implicitly become the foundation of the artist’s commission.

*Oceania Frieze* awaits the establishment of the perceived space that Soja stated results from a synthesis of openness and critical exchange with the physical, knowable and conjectural, imagined, conceived aspects of experiencing the work in context. The attenuated accumulation of events: individual, collective, and serial represent this ongoing completion; what Adorno referred to as *metaxis* or shared response<sup>134</sup>.

*Oceania Frieze*, contained within what was once considered a genre, is simply a new work rather than a new model. Rodin’s *Gates of Hell* was also a new work rather than a new model. This is frequently so in institutional commissions, however the immodest comparison fails because the *Gates* were much closer to the genre’s decline than *Oceania*, a century later, unexpectedly retrograde and mediating formal quietude with personal response.

Here relief risks condemnation by association with commercial enterprise seeking validation beyond council approval. *Oceania* seeks engagement in Soja’s *third space* — a union of the public and particular space, the formal and socio-political. It is an idealistic, optimistic gesture within the development. These works have sought to respond and engage; acknowledging the perils of their circumstance.

Contrary to Krauss and Winckelmann, relief in a frieze is a time-based work no less than a short film. In spite of Hildebrand’s insistence on single viewpoint simultaneity, from Trajan’s

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<sup>132</sup> The inclusion of an art work had been anticipated while its final position on the site was arrived at collaboratively with the architect and client. This position and its form suggested the nature of the relief undertaken, although the eventual usage of the space and its architectural finishes were unknown.

<sup>133</sup> Rem Koolhaas *Junkspace* *OCTOBER 100*, Spring 2002, pp. 175

<sup>134</sup> This social view of art in public is a reminder of sculptures renamed or relocated in a changing urban context. The stability of much contemporary architecture is now unconvincing. For example the award winning *Neville Bonner Building* was destroyed as this frieze was installed. <sup>134</sup> At the same time Kentridge’s and Houseago’s much larger works were installed and removed, further revising our expectations of art and site.

column to Rodin's *Gates of Hell*, the viewing intake of relief works is rarely instantaneous. How quickly can the viewer absorb the content of the Donatello choir relief? The awareness of stone and its representation (figures interacting) is subject to constant renegotiation, a series of events rather than an immortal instant.<sup>135</sup> Not only does relief reveal itself over time, its meaning accrues and shifts with re visitation within one lifetime and in history.

Winckelmann required contemplative views of sculpture from designed viewpoints. The frieze here remains in this sense incomplete, its third space still emergent. It is not yet entirely of its setting, retaining anonymity and undefended as public art often is, fortunate were it to be mentioned in architectural discourse. It has survived the course of council, client, constructors and engineers and been fortunate to have had sympathetic architects involved. It is the space and time in front of relief works that brings them nearer completion and determine relief's significance. The frieze exists over time as an accumulation of events, a small history.

*Saturation Point* at Umbrella Studios in Townsville August 2017 was painted, printed and cast in the gallery over four days.

Reflecting on Ranciere's understanding of art in history and the attenuated process of *Oceania Frieze*, *Saturation Point* was approached as a temporal work—episodic—rather than long term. The performative aspect of producing reliefs and imagery on the walls was only visible to the public incidentally. A conventional gallery opening followed the completed installation of work.

One wall was painted with an enlarged adaptation of an earlier drawing accompanied by an ultramarine print from a relief mould used previously in *Oceania Frieze panel #5*. A second

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<sup>135</sup> The unforeseen imposition by the city council of a pedestrian awning separating the atrium and artwork from the street and therefore from the passing traffic, has restricted or obliterated the medium distance views of the frieze. The opportunity for making the work stemmed from the councils desire for visually /culturally enriched spaces. I have responded to "an integrated public art strategic plan" and client briefing. The relevance of relief as a viable engaging form is acknowledged by all parties involved in the regeneration of the site. One concludes that even with the promotion of the artist into an empowered position of dialogue and decision-making, the authorship of space is largely administrative and even anonymous. The outcome remains contingent on how responsibility for the site is shared as well as how the artist responds. If there is a formula for success, its complexity involves faith as a modifier of regulation in the possibilities that emerge from the projects preconditions. The good faith of architects, clients, government and public art consultants go a long way towards achieving an integrated positive 'third space' which users of the atrium are yet to determine in the evolving relationship of the work and the fate of this little agora.

colourless wall opposite was hung with multiple casts from five moulds—some from *Oceania* and extending *East West Frieze* 2016 with a layer of marine animals over terrestrial. The installed show thus built on existing motifs and themes and countered the incongruity of depicted species with a repetitive rhythm of zoology with an evolutionary overtone.



Fig.53 A detail from the west wall of *Saturation Point* 2017 Townsville.



Fig.54 Detail from *Saturation Point* east wall 2017

Interplay between relief and painting and between depictive and non-representational imagery invited questions regarding these formal modes of representing land and sea as resources and motifs on the east and west walls that faced each other. A third shorter wall displayed an emblematic arrangement of relief components that offered a more composed and pointed reading.



Fig.55 Detail of the *Third Wall* from *Saturation Point* 2017

Thirteen hundred kilometres from the state capital, mining and beef exports define Townsville's wealth and fishing the reef defines its leisure. After one-month, the destruction of the work would leave it as a residual memory with its viewers. This focus on a specific audience and timeframe highlighted the work's dependency and the role of social development, nurturing and promotion as opposed to a fly in, fly out delivery. Limitations were obvious in responding through content and imagery to the location of an exhibition. The shift to a particular viewing public could benefit from several iterations and varying approaches in order to develop work as a series of events that more directly addressed this, to me, previously unknown audience. In this sense, the contrast with Kentridge's approach in Rome is informative.<sup>136</sup> *Saturation Point* highlighted a dependence on the physical and visual nature of the work in a larger art world context. and represented a significantly different paradigm.

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<sup>136</sup> The well attended events were the result of complex negotiation, large scale collaboration, assistance and patronage, although Kentridge later had the frieze prematurely removed in response to recurring graffiti. The work may have had Roman subjects but the long neglected walls are contested space.

## Conclusion

Where relief has become functionless, (no longer part of pediments or memorials) its conventions serve as masks (to paraphrase Adorno) and tools of an earlier code, a dialect that is not unfamiliar but whose distance imparts the attractiveness of the exotic begging to be re-worked in its new context. The persistent character of relief and the influences of its various contexts are especially significant today in the near absence of prescribed functions of genre. Relief invites reconciliation with history even as is it reemployed in what Monahan sees as a “violent regression”.

What has also been confirmed is that this relief is now associated with the mobility of artists responding to formal needs, according to their concerns, both personal (particular) and universal. By extension, it is relevant to many areas of contemporary art practice. Its dualist character aligns with the content of artists’ work while its physical, tactile forms contrast with the digital backdrop of urban life. Relief is an interface that invites viewers to complete it, that is, it enacts a spatial event that assimilates its context into its function. Artists gather in and scatter from this zone defined by between-ness and transition from historical and conceptual origins. Collectively, they reaffirm relief’s contemporary relevance.

Kiefer’s and Kentridge’s art does not resemble the younger Houseago’s nor Monahan’s. Their motivations and modes of arrival at relief differs: driven from painting, drawing, and performance. They share however, a consciousness of the significance of history and destruction in metaphor and method. Their discipline is not formally narrow but scattered, disparate and formed with personal intent and an awareness that formal stasis courts complacency— the adversary of each of these artists. Following Adorno’s observations, where once newness occurred within genres, now the new is more likely found between and external to them.<sup>137</sup>

The identification of relief as a zone of art practice assists in inquiring into the nature and extent of specialization and commitment in what were once discreet disciplines, such as sculpture. The stability and parameters of these are now widely questioned, where curatorial

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<sup>137</sup> Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic theory* Continuum 2002 pg. 308

priorities shift and institutions redefine their functions.<sup>138</sup> An understanding of relief also assists in the interrogation of shifting boundaries and their increasing permeability.

The much discussed art/life border is also permeable and soluble to the point that it is of diminished consequence. Art in schools and galleries continues in decline.<sup>139</sup> Artists are negotiating changes of context, locating work in a meaningful way without retreating further into the digital realm. The changing context of relief and its suitability for linking the universal with the particular occurs within a continuum that Lefebvre bracketed (some fifty years ago) with “a delirium of aesthetic saturation on the bourgeois side, and in an absence of aestheticism and a use of art as a politico-ideological instrument on the socialist side.”<sup>140</sup>

The scale of Lefebvre’s undertaking, effectively a four hundred-page primer for a long-term collaboration for change, demonstrates scope, ambition and difficulty in his commitment to theory. Adorno’s absence of a finite objectivity can be taken as endorsement and empowerment of irrational strategies but demand a particular fusion of the unreasonable and the correct in every case.<sup>141</sup> Together, with Ranciere’s assessment, Adorno and Lefebvre favour a dynamic, responsive sensitivity of perception in preference to any elusive formula. The incomplete, ongoing nature of their projects resonates with artists’ investigations between dimensionality, where specifics meet with the undetermined.<sup>142</sup>

Correspondingly, *thirdspace* is defined by the incomplete and ongoing with regard to the relief-site-time interface apparent in the varying circumstances of my works *Saturation Point* and *Oceania Frieze*. The unintended incompleteness of the *Belvedere Torso* reminds us of the seduction of ambiguity and speculation derived from our programmed needs. Thus our

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<sup>138</sup> For an example of recent (and continuing) reassessment of art boundaries, see Claire Bishop. *ARTIFICIAL HELLS Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* Verso London 2012 pg 27 where she brings us back to Ranciere and Juno Ludovisi, a kind of non art, art for all and later returns to Ranciere’s unchallenging definition of the artwork as a mediation, itself shifting between heterogeneity and autonomy. ie. Art as integrated with life or art as separate from it.

<sup>139</sup> <https://news.artnet.com/market/foot-traffic-galleries-new-york-1318769>  
<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/devastating-decline-arts-schools-surges>

<sup>140</sup> Henri Lefebvre *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes* translated by John Moore verso 1995

<sup>141</sup> The dialectics referred to by Adorno do not lead to positive definition through the negation of negatives but echo Lefebvre’s problematic axis of class.

<sup>142</sup> and where absolutes equate with the formulaic, as oppose to the strategic use of constants such as casting or drawing.

participation also accompanies incompleteness in relief's space. The tension of its dualities is similarly an opportunity for involvement where materials, form and narrative combine to explain relief's attraction of artists who seek negotiation rather than compromise in a space that gestures out towards its audience.

The identification of trends and trajectories emerging in a fractured art environment is problematic. Some trajectories evaginate and revise what had previously been determined.<sup>143</sup> Oceania Frieze for example, appears uncertain about its complicity in the denial of the anxiety associated with surfaces of pretence, where cladding creates urban spaces and temporal architecture— campsites masquerading as piazzas and palazzos.

However, questions inevitably emerged for me regarding this alternative, transformed space that is both real and metaphoric, How significant is the face-to-face experience of work that is the only handmade surface in an urban environment that is managed remotely and with anonymity? To what extent can the intimacy of labouring with physical materials save relief from becoming another veneer, another cladding? Since relief draws our attention to history and to ongoing revaluation of the past, it leads us to reimagine what Lefebvre and Soja saw as an interactive space.<sup>144</sup> It is a space shared with those interested in the overlooked and in the revision of how relief (and art) engages with a public beyond the art-fair, the biennale circuit and beyond Instagram?

I have come to relate the smaller, itinerant, irregular shaped pieces of the studio research to archaeology and fragmentation (influenced by Ranciere's view of Rilke's view of Rodin, when Ranciere was still thinking of Winckelmann's beloved and incomplete *Belvedere Torso*). They are episodic, interrupted— a broken set of investigations and reflections. I have recently come to

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<sup>143</sup> Once tidily categorized as a minimalist, the now recognized eclectic New York artist and writer Robert Morris paid homage to Rodin's "Gates of Hell" in his 1980's relief works. Whilst on record as regarding relief as 'unviable' as an art form, he exhibited relief works throughout the 1980's. His attraction to paradox is well documented. These works precede the relief discussed in chapters two and three. They are a shift from his pictorial-literary paradox to a pictorial-sculptural one. He got there via dance—he choreographed several produced works, his wife was a dancer and he viewed Jackson Pollock's painting as the product of performative dance— and yet is seen as a conceptualist. In this light we can look at Pollock and others as having arrived at relief too, as the intermediary between performance and graphic image making. Over stepping the pictorial with overlapping, shriveled globules and tentacles of paint, more physical than a conventionally integrated surface, they can be directly related to Kiefer's processes.

<sup>144</sup>“everything comes together... subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.” Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace*. Malden (Mass.): Blackwell, 1996. Pg57

acknowledge that in the transitional nature of practicing relief lies an element of transgression or subversion of the dominance of painting and sculpture and aspects of failure.

Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*<sup>145</sup> follows Ovid's banishment from Rome and his failure to adapt in the muddy space between East and West. Malouf described my plaster studio work that lead into this research, as

*suspended in fossilized time... the sense we get of their having been unearthed and preserved; dug up out of a past that is 'just yesterday' and in being frozen or fossilised is still close to what once was life and for the artist, a living and lyrical relic of his own life.*<sup>146</sup>

He could also have been describing Monahan's work. An alternate model of relief now might resemble the terrain wandered, as Einstein described, well suited to a melancholic time traveller for whom frailty and failure are affirmations of life and history.<sup>147</sup>

It is possible to align Carl Einstein's notion of modern art's 'groundlessness' (which does not mean a denial of history but a severance in the theoretical-fictional continuity woven by historians) with the wandering of many artists of this and the previous century and to find other manifestations of the nexus of failure, destruction, tabula rasa and creation.<sup>148</sup> The recurrent need in artists to re-excavate a deep history suggests that the modernist continuity

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<sup>145</sup> *An Imaginary Life* Random House

<sup>146</sup> David Malouf 'The Australian' 12:00AM May 8, 2014  
<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/malouf-and-friends/news-story/420c271fe3586c36d21489e575d0fe87?sv=f0659a5e102b79237d3e9d48c83dccc4>

<sup>147</sup> For Houseago, death and failure are inseparable from life.

"I was always had this Fitzcarraldo-like desire to build these things that couldn't quite be done, I couldn't quite handle. Now I'm more conscious of it but looking back, this idea of the impossible, the possible idea of being an artist and dramatizing that." Houseago interviewed by Nora Lawrence at Houseago's studio on February 28, 2013.  
<http://houseago.stormking.org/>

Failure accompanies transition with others artists too: Kiefer, making lyrical a shared tragedy, lives in the present by reading about the past; George Baselitz, whose sculpture fails to overcome the singularity that repulsed 19<sup>th</sup> century critics; Rodin, whose Gates of Hell, after three decades of effort, fail to find a purpose beyond decoration. David Smith is a painter who makes sculpture (and in those terms, fails to make paintings, but incidentally, like Brancusi makes great photographs). Altmejd, accepting humanity's failure, builds his entire oeuvre on the inevitability of Armageddon. Kentridge, failed thespian, failed painter, in Johannesburg started the 'Centre for the Less Good Idea'.

<sup>148</sup> The ideal of a blank slate, a severance or fresh start is counter to the artist's inevitably accumulated cultural burden. Together, as with dualities discussed previously, they can produce a tension or ignition that benefits artists in their work. This is where the research started— with the overload of Rome and the whiteness of plaster.

may be a superficial collegiate and that reconnection with a deeper history is necessitated by earlier misconstructions.

In engaging with relief in this way, I have isolated it—its image and materiality, its representations in a transformed space so that it can be scrutinized. Relief serves to illuminate its adjacent areas of art making, where artists continue to reassess commitment to materials, disciplines and genres. In this way, relief contributes to the review of our assumptions about disciplinarity while interdisciplinarity as a label seems to have been of limited usefulness. Relief is ideally placed at the convergence of key issues in contemporary art practice to both illuminate and re-evaluate art from a position of material and technical expansion and with the focused interrogation that accompanies the resonance of history and relief's dualities in a manner beyond the possibilities of its 19<sup>th</sup> century circumstances.

Monahan was asked why he does not call himself a sculptor.<sup>149</sup> He replied “I finally agree to be an artist and now you wonder why I don't call myself a sculptor!” He continued “Relief has its own great history but got lost in our race to the expanded field. (Three dimensional) Space is too much for me!”

For some, including Monahan, two and a half dimensions are just about right. Relief represents a genre partially obscured by its own weighty history and by art's dissipating, cloudy embrace of a future made of everything, everywhere. Relief is ideally positioned as a conceptual and formal lens that with its dualities can highlight tensions and logic in art's use of space and representation. It is a compass to navigate genres, interdisciplinarity and history. It offers artists a means to obliquely approach formal questions (such as why don't you call yourself a sculptor?) and to negotiate metaphor and the physicality of materials with a language no longer set in stone.



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<sup>149</sup> Interviewed by Marta GNYP for ZOO <http://www.martagnyp.com/interviews/matthewmonahan.php>

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## List of works organised by exhibition

### Fixed

#### Jan Manton Gallery, Spring Hill (6<sup>th</sup> April – 7<sup>th</sup> May)

- Reynolds, Bruce. *Unification*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 130cm x 86cm x 13cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Atlantis (Skyphos)*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 56cm x 66cm x 26cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Hammer Wall (Neapolitan)*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 80cm x 55cm x 15cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Arbour*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 80cm x 70cm x 6cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Frieze with Cornice (Spoilia)*, 2015-6. Hydrostone and pigment, 80cm x 113cm x 25cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Blue Swinger (left) #1*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 37cm x 21cm x 2cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Blue Swinger (right) #1*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 37cm x 20cm x 2cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Draped Figure*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 37cm x 16cm x 2cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Blue Amphora*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 84cm x 61cm x 2cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Figure in a Landscape*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 55cm x 84cm x 7cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Coronas*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 95cm x 62cm x 12cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Struggle (after Michelangelo)*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 72cm x 87cm x 2cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Sconce #3*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 92cm x 76cm x 27cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Reconstructed*, 2016. Acrylic and linoleum on plywood panel, 45cm x 40cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Vase with Cypress*, 2016. Photographic print, enamel and linoleum on plywood panel, 45cm x 40cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Eastern Vase*, 2016. Linoleum on plywood panel, 45cm x 40cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Japan Vase*, 2016. Acrylic and linoleum on plywood panel, 45cm x 40cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Tank Street Hydria*, 2016. Photographic print and linoleum on plywood panel, 168cm x 103cm. Brisbane, Jan Manton Gallery.

## **Oxiana**

### **Pop Gallery Woolloongabba. 1st June – 19th June, 2016.**

- Reynolds, Bruce. *Man of Letters 2*, 2015. Plaster and pigment, 86cm x 60cm x 18cm. Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Krater*, 2015. Plaster and pigment, 76cm x 64cm x 66cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Archaic Vessel*, 2014. Plaster and pigment, 57cm x 36cm x 32cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Kylix*, 2014. Plaster, pigment and laminex tabletop, 76cm x 122cm x 5cm., Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Heraldic*, 2015. Hydrocal and pigment, 130cm x 85cm x 15cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Accrual*, 2015. Hydrocal and pigment, 126cm x 66cm x 14cm, Sydney, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Neapolitan Stereo*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 56cm x 72cm x 9cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Hindsight Compression*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 76cm x 78cm x 4cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Theory in Practice*, 2016. Hydrostone and pigment, 72cm x 66cm x 5cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *East West Frieze: Bull Yak Oak*, 2016. Hydrocal, pigment and hardwood shelf, dimensions variable, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Terrain with Coronet*, 2016. Hydrocal and pigment, 71cm x 50cm x 5cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Sconce #1*, 2016. Hydrocal and pigment, 94cm x 76cm x 26cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Sconce #2*, 2016. Hydrocal and pigment, 94cm x 76cm x 26cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Sconce #3*, 2016. Hydrocal and pigment, 92cm x 76cm x 27cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Sconce #4 (Coronet Sconce)*, 2016. Hydrocal and pigment, 92cm x 76cm x 29cm, Brisbane, POP Gallery.

## **Unification**

### **Wellington Street Projects Chippendale, N.S.W. April 29th – May 10th, 2015**

- Reynolds, Bruce. *Man of Letters*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 86cm x 60cm x 18cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Unification*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 130cm x 86cm x 13cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Heraldic*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 130cm x 85cm x 15cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Accrual*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 126cm x 66cm x 14cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Neapolitan Wall*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 56cm x 72cm x 9cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.
- Reynolds, Bruce. *Skyphos*, 2015. Hydrostone and pigment, 56cm x 26cm x 23cm. Sydney, Wellington Street Projects.

### **Publically sited works in Newstead**

Reynolds, Bruce. *Covalent Bond*, July 2016. Stainless steel, aluminium, enamel and cast hydrostone, 410cm x 110cm x 169cm. Newstead, Ann Street.

Reynolds, Bruce. *Confluence*, May 2017. Stainless steel, aluminium and enamel, 300cm x 88cm x 88cm. Newstead, Stratton Street.

Reynolds, Bruce. *Ocean Frieze*, 2017. Stainless steel, aluminium and paint, 300cm x 88cm x 88cm. Newstead, Ann Street.

### **Group Exhibitions**

*Cast By The Sun* The Hold, South Brisbane August 2015

*15 Artists* Redcliffe Art Gallery November 2015

*Plenty* Brisbane PowerHouse 27<sup>th</sup> September to 23<sup>th</sup> October 2016

*Bad Mannerism* Pom Pom Gallery, Chippendale, N.S.W. May 2018

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