

Colour  
is Enough







3.

# Colour is Enough

The exhibition *Colour is Enough* presents recent bodies of work by Arts Project Australia (APA) artists Wendy Dawson, Ruth Howard and Julian Martin within a broader context of Australian monochrome painting and sculpture. For the purposes of this exhibition, the notion of 'monochrome' extends beyond what a work of art looks like to position 'monochrome' as a dynamic philosophical approach to making art that has persistently asserted its relevance in Australia over many decades. The works in this exhibition articulate an understanding of the physicality and materiality of colour - a potent visual expression that is inseparable from its conceptual ambitions.

In monochrome works of art there is no single focal point. Unlike the process of reading words on a page, there is no direction for where to start or finish. Viewers are not called to progress from one section to another, but rather to engage with the totality of a single colour. In these works, understanding and experience is based on 'consuming' the whole work of art - at once. In monochromes, colour is its own entity that is distinct and independent. Related to (but not beholden to) form, colour is enough. Nothing else is needed for it to challenge, move and energise.

Wendy Dawson's monochrome works on paper employ a hybrid methodology of drawing with paint. Taking a repetitive gestural approach to mark making, white sheets of paper are coloured in their entirety using acrylic paint-based pens. Dawson's vigorous application of paint suggests an understanding of colour that is deeply connected with energy and the processes of simultaneously revealing how the work is made and concealing the whiteness of the paper.

The process of concealment is also apparent in Ruth Howard's sculptures which are modelled in clay before being drenched in single coloured glaze. Howard's decisive layering of colour over her already obscure forms amplifies their abstract quality. Colour, in these objects, functions as a unifying device that consolidates other sculptural elements such as the texture and shape. Consistent with the density of the clay form, Howard's glaze has a tactile buttery quality that suggests that colour can have its own 'mass' and 'weight'.

At first glance Julian Martin's monochrome pastel drawings appear as fields of flat colour. Closer inspection of their powdery velvet surfaces reveals subtle shifts in tone that suggest the soft mystical realm of dreams. Martin pushes the pastel across the entire sheet of paper gently pressuring its chalky residue into the tooth of the paper, allowing the colour to become one with the fabric of its support. Committed to focusing on the purity of colour there is no distraction of form other than the scale of the paper. Bleeding off the edges of the work, Martin's use of colour suggests both a sense of completion and the possibility of extension.

Through this exhibition, the works of Wendy Dawson, Ruth Howard and Julian Martin (and indeed other APA artists) can be inserted into the history of monochrome art in Australia. For too long, art history has taken its cues from mainstream exponents leaving little or no room for artistic voices that may fall out outside of its structures. Considering its connections with silence, contemplation and transcendence it could be argued that monochrome art has its origins outside of the intellectual scaffolding of contemporary art. The works in *Colour is Enough* highlight the relationship between the monochrome and self-expression and allude to the possibility of colour as a form of self-portraiture. Often simple in execution and complex in interpretation, these works have a physical and symbolic presence that embodies the

ideas and values of their respective makers.

Curator and writer Barbara Rose describes the monochrome as being '*simultaneously fullness and void, a moment of silence in a world of noise. It goes nowhere and everywhere, it is specific and universal, tangible and immaterial. It is the ultimate paradox.*'<sup>1</sup> In this exhibition, the paradox, which Rose articulates, arises from an interaction between eye and mind; between sensation and knowledge. It emerges from a consideration of the monochrome in relation to an awareness of how life is experienced.

Suggesting a community of practitioners, the monochrome works of Mikala Dwyer, Jackson McLaren, Aaron Martin, Ron Robertson-Swann, David Thomas, Renee Cosgrave, Eleanor Louise Butt, Lachlan Stonehouse, Nancy Constandelia, Rox De Luca, David Serisier, Louise Gresswell, Madeline Simm, John Nixon, A.D.S Donaldson, Hayden Stuart, Hootan Heydari, Barbara Puruntatameri, Sam George & Lisa Radford form an important aspect of *Colour is Enough*. Although monochrome painting and sculpture may not necessarily be the main aspect of their respective practices, their works demonstrate an understanding of the power of a single colour. Collectively their work in this exhibition provides a glimpse into the breadth and depth of monochrome art in Australia. Individually the works highlight the ways in which each artist engages with the symbolism, vibration and materiality of colour. Some of the artists in this section have been creating monochromes for decades, exploring the relevance and resonance of their practice across social change and shifting values. The presence of emerging artists in this exhibition points to an understanding of monochrome as open and unfixed in time. The mix of emerging, and senior artists suggests a lineage of cultural expression that has transhistorical and transcultural currency.

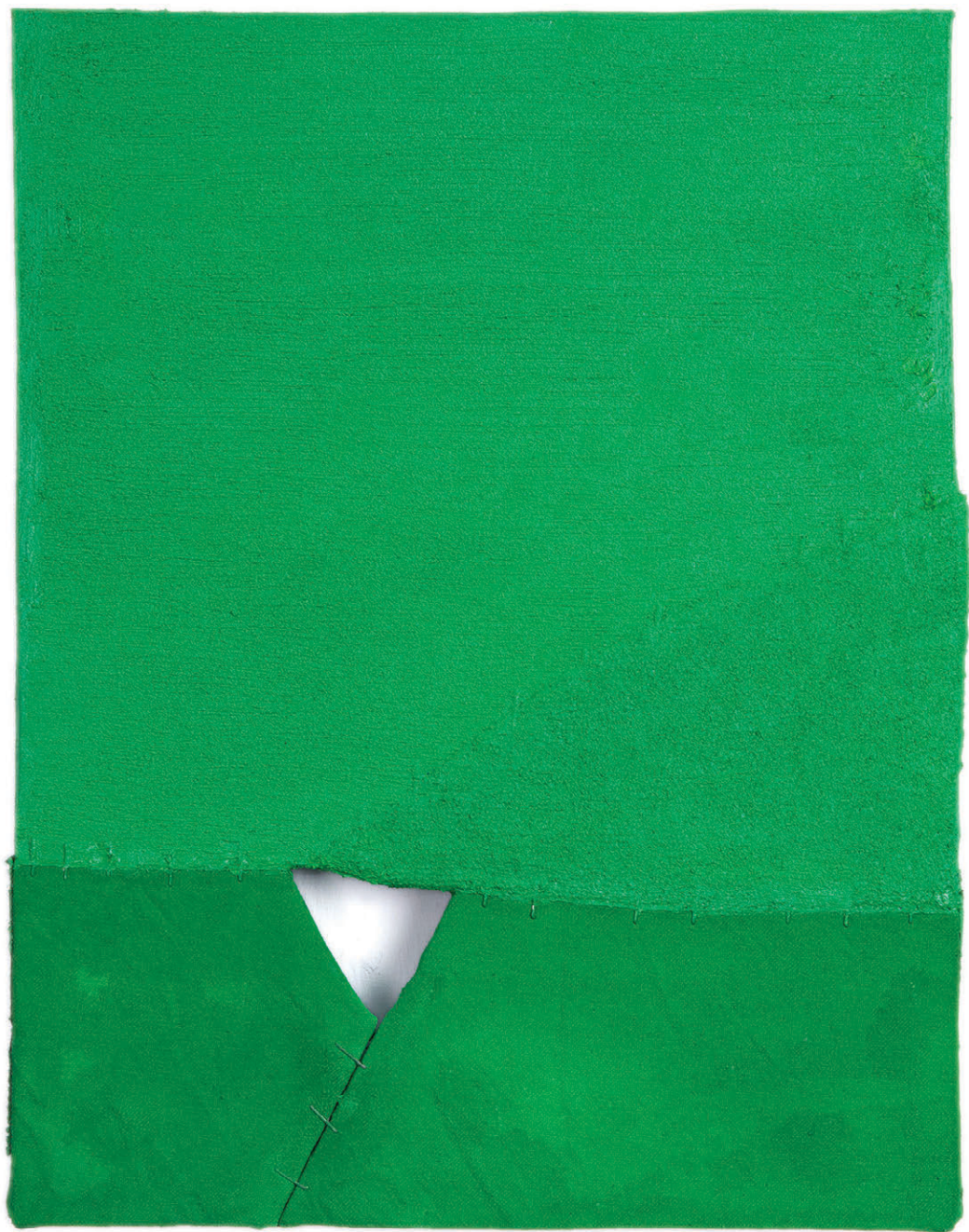
Some of the works in this project embed the monochrome with a range of personal interests associated with time, place,

emotion, identity, sustainability and gender. Clearly, the pictorial space of a single colour can be a big enough umbrella to encompass, evoke and extend complexities and concerns that lie in, of and beyond itself. Buddhist writer and historian L. A. Govinda, states '*Its nature is emptiness and because it is empty it can contain and embrace everything... Space is the precondition of all that exists*'<sup>2</sup>. The process of making a monochrome can be thought of as simultaneously filling space and making space. More specifically, the filling of a space via a monochromatic plasticity of colour creates a new space.

Like many of the artists in this exhibition, Wendy Dawson, Ruth Howard and Julian Martin make work in series and sequences. This process suggests an ongoing commitment to colour that links exploration and inquiry with infinite variation. Not distracted by the trappings of figuration and representation, their engagement with the possibilities of colour is focused and relentless. Along with the other artists in this exhibition, they are deeply engaged in filling in space and their use of colour is enough to create new spaces for speculation, anticipation and imagination. Given the local and global socio-political challenges that seem to characterise the 21st century, their work has an acute urgency. Each of the works in *Colour is Enough* can be considered as a '*a silent oasis of contemplation in the noisy overstimulated contemporary world of mass culture that is geared to ephemeral fashion and instant gratification.*'<sup>3</sup> Exhibited together, these works articulate a profound multifaceted love for all that colour is and all that it can be.

**DAVID SEQUEIRA | 2024**  
**Director, Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery**

1. Barbara Rose, *Monochromes from Malevich to the present*, 2006 p 80
2. Lama Anagarika Govinda is the author of the 1937 text 'The psychological attitude of early Buddhist philosophy and its systematic representation according to the Abhidhamma tradition' This quote is cited in Critchlow, *Order and Space*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1987 p3
3. Barbara Rose, *Monochromes from Malevich to the present*, 2006 p 9



4.



5.

# ARTS PROJECT AUSTRALIA

50  
YEARS

## EXHIBITION

COLOUR IS ENOUGH  
6 April – 18 May 2024

Curated by David Sequeira  
—

*Colour is Enough* presents recent bodies of work by Arts Project Australia artists Wendy Dawson, Ruth Howard and Julian Martin within a broader context of Australian monochrome painting and sculpture.



## ARTISTS

Julian Martin  
Ruth Howard  
Wendy Dawson  
Aaron Martin  
A.D.S Donaldson  
Barbara Puruntatameri  
David Serisier  
David Thomas  
Eleanor Louise Butt  
Hayden Stuart  
Hootan Heydari  
Jackson McLaren  
John Nixon  
Lachlan Stonehouse  
Louise Gresswell  
Madeline Simm  
Mikala Dwyer  
Nancy Constandelia  
Renee Cosgrave  
Ron Robertson-Swann  
Rox De Luca  
Sam George & Lisa Radford

## ARTWORKS

COVER & BELOW:  
Ruth Howard  
*Untitled 2023*  
glazed earthenware  
15 x 12 x 10cm

1. Julian Martin  
*Untitled 2023*  
pastel on paper  
38 x 28 cm

2. Wendy Dawson  
*Untitled 2023*  
paint pen on paper  
25 x 35 cm

3. Wendy Dawson  
*Untitled 2023*  
paint pen on paper  
25 x 35 cm

4. Louise Gresswell  
*Untitled (emerald green) 2022*  
ink and oil paint on canvas  
34 x 27 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Gallery 9

5. Mikala Dwyer  
*Lacey Lilac 2024*  
nail polish on canvas  
18 x 18 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
and 1301SW

SUPPORTED BY



COLLINGWOOD  
YARDS



LEONARD JOEL



OPENING HOURS  
Wed – Fri 11am – 5pm  
Sat 12 – 4pm  
or by appointment

Level 1, Perry Street building  
Collingwood Yards  
Enter via 35 Johnston St or  
30 Perry St, Collingwood

T+ 61 3 9482 4484  
@artsprojectaust  
gallery@artsproject.org.au  
[www.artsproject.org.au](http://www.artsproject.org.au)