

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release MARCH 2017

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CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL THE EXTRACTIVE FRONTIER: MINING FOR ART

Co-curated by Beverly Knight (Alcoston Gallery) and Dr Clare Wright (La Trobe University)

18 – 26 March 2017



Alcoston Gallery is delighted to announce our exhibition in the 2017 Castlemaine State Festival.

Co-curated by Beverly Knight (Alcoston Gallery) and Dr Clare Wright (La Trobe University) **The Extractive Frontier: Mining for Art** exhibition explores how colonial history can be viewed as a series of frontier encounters based around extraction, through the removal of resources. How are the economies of extraction (social, commercial, creative and political) reflected in art? In this exhibition, the artists will explore both the artistic heritage and contemporary manifestations of the act of 'digging' in former and current mining towns. What is found and what is lost in the process of excavation? Taking mining as a metaphor, the artists explore themes implicit in the act of mineral exploration and exploitation: scarring, layering, excavating, prospecting, exchange, power, custody, resources, home, land, destruction and renewal.

The exhibition draws upon existing and new works presented across 3 venues:

Castlemaine Art Museum
Castlemaine Market building
Lot 19

Including paintings, photographs, sculptures, ceramics, works on paper and multimedia works by artists from places as geographically and culturally diverse as Yirrkala, Castlemaine, New Guinea, Melbourne and Queensland.

Exhibiting Artists:

Chris Barker
Miriam Charlie
Gunybi Ganambarr
Selby Ginn
Jacky Green
Taloi Havini
Naomi Hobson
Judy Holding
Julie McHale
The Hermannsburg Watercolourists

Shirley MacNamara
Nathaniel MacNamara
Karen Mills
Yhonnice Scarce
Greg Semu
Mumu Mike Williams
Dean Smith
Damien Wright
Bhonula Yunupingu

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Shirley Macnamara and Nathaniel Macnamara, Cu, 2016, Hand coiled copper wire and raw copper 22x25x25cm



Naomi Hobson, Black, White, Gold, 2016, , Synthetic polymer paint on linen, 148 x 208 cm. Framed

Shirley Macnamara (image above left) worked with her 12-year old grandson **Nathaniel Macnamara** in exploring an abandoned copper mine near their home at Mount Guide Station, Queensland. Shirley Macnamara wove copper wire found at the site into coils to construct an empty vessel, which illustrates the deep hole at the mine. Her grandson Nathaniel Macnamara interpreted the "snappy gums" that grow on top of the hills around the mine, transforming the found raw copper into tree-like shapes at the top of the sculpture. This object is also a reminder that the trees take decades to grow, and destruction by mining is felt for generations to come.

Macnamara draws inspiration from her beloved bush country, using natural materials in her artwork, which she sources from her landscape, including Spinifex, bone, feathers, copper and ochre. Her art has been collected nationally by numerous institutions, in particular the Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art.

Naomi Hobson's (image above right) striking new large-scale painting *Black, White and Gold 2016* tells the story of how non indigenous and indigenous people of Coen far North Queensland came together to look for gold. Black, white and gold refers specifically to the mine sites and camps at Blue Mountain or Birthday Mountain (Patha Muta). Through her innovative and abstract work, Naomi presents her deep connection to her country, her grandfather and culture.

Penny Byrne's *Veins of Gold* (Image below left) presents a reconstructed platter and figurine. Byrne makes visible the hidden veins of gold that run through the country, whilst also referencing the gold that ran through the veins of miners and prospectors in Australia during the 1860s. Born in Mildura and currently based in Melbourne, Penny Byrne's sculptural works are politically charged, highly engaging and often disarmingly humorous.



Penny Byrne, Veins of Gold, 2017, restored antique soft paste porcelain blue and white gilded platter, ceramic gold miner, epoxy resin, gold powder in the Japanese kintsugi



Dean Smith, installation view of Gold Terrace, 2016, Fine Stoneware, matt crystalline glazes, glass enamels, fused and applied gold leaf, 34 x 54 x 10 cm

Ceramic artist **Dean Smith** (Image above right) is working with clay and porcelain, crystalline glazes and precious metallic lustres, including platinum and gold. Smith currently lives and works in Central Victoria, where the raw post-mining landscape has a strong influence on his work. Smith has been the recipient of several major local and international ceramic awards. Smith's work is held in collections throughout Australia and internationally.

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Judy Holding's (hero image page 1) painting, *Sentinel of the Goldfield*, depicts a cockatoo as a guardian figure, watching stoically as thousands of years of careful husbandry is destroyed by mining and the natural world meets its death. This heretic activity resulted in a clash of civilisations, with no regard for the destruction of the original inhabitants of the natural world. Holding's large, life size sculptural series 'Tree near the Mine site', exhibited at Lot 19, is based on mined landscape of Castlemaine and field trips since the 1980s to Escarpment country surrounding the Ranger Uranium Mine in the N.T.

Taloi Havini is an interdisciplinary artist born in the autonomous region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea of the Nakas clan Hakö people. Working in ceramics, photography, printmaking, video and mixed media installation, her practice centres on the deconstruction of the politics of location, and the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Havini is collected nationally and internationally. Her photographs for this exhibition are base on the Panguna mine and have been exhibited nationally in public galleries.

A key artwork of the exhibition is the cross-cultural collaboration between Melbourne furniture designer and maker, **Damien Wright**, and Yolngu man, **Bonhula Yunupingu**, member of the Gumatj clan of North East Arnhem Land.

Bala Ga Lili is comprised of two components, expressing the shared experiences, techniques and sensibilities learned in the Ganyagara workshop, in the shadow of the bauxite refinery in North East Arnhem Land. Damien explains: "Our task was to find a sculptural and poetic language, as well as a combination of European joinery and Yolngu craft skills, to understand and impart our bond, forged across the expanse of a vast continent".



Damien Wright and Bonhula Yunupingu Bala Ga Lili 2016, Wunhakali (Other side), Gadayka, Copper wire, epoxy resin, Tung oil finish



Taloi Havini, Sami and the Panguna Mine II, 2009, Inkjet print, 80 x 120 cm

The biennial Castlemaine State Festival began in 1976 through the vision of Berek Segan AM OBE. It has grown to become Australia's flagship regional arts festival receiving over 40, 000 in 10 days. The Festival preceded any other Victorian arts festivals and has been unique in its scope and diversity, and in its impact on the social and cultural fabric of the Mount Alexander Shire and environs. The Festival program has encompassed visual arts, music, theatre, opera, and dance and has been a major contributor in connecting people and developing enterprise within the regional community. Castlemaine is home to the richest shallow alluvial goldfield the world has ever seen and now renowned for the arts.

The Extractive Frontier: Mining for Art exhibition also offers the opportunity to acquire the works created in response to the curatorial premise, for enquiries please contact Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.

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