

di allison — *the twilight of such days*



We are in a maelstrom of rapid change. Phrases flood our days and drip into our thoughts: *once in one hundred years, not since the second world war, since records began, tipping point, global pandemic, lock downs, housing crisis, climate crisis, political crisis, economic crisis...* Every era involves change, after all change is the only constant, but this is perhaps an era where the fast pace of change feels all encompassing: social, political, economic, technological, environmental. *The Twilight of Such Days* is, in part, a response to these shifting times.

The exhibition's title comes from the line, *the twilight of such day*, in Sonnet 73, a poem by Shakespeare, exploring the passing of time and the inevitability of change. Consisting of 53 new works, this exhibition continues my exploration of collage and paper-based techniques. Disruption, repetition, re-mixing and distortion all feature in this current body of work.

Sounds and Waves, 2023, features hand torn pages from a 1980s book on Australia's coastlines. Sections of coastline are combined to form a fictionalised version of our coast, staked and claimed with hardware nails, as if on stilts, preparing for the rising sea level predictions. The aesthetics of the design reference the famous Joy Division *Unknown Pleasures* album cover art, which itself is an image by academic Harold D. Craft Jr., of radio emissions from the pulsar CP 1919. A bay is sometimes referred to as a sound, so here, the words sounds and waves are a play on *sound waves*. Nature is constantly communicating, but are we listening, are we heeding those messages in this era of climate metamorphosis?

Other works in the exhibition also explore environmental and climatic concerns. *I am the Son and Heir of Nothing in Particular #1* and *#2*, 2023, take their titles from the UK band, The Smiths - a line from *How Soon is Now?* The lyric constantly crept into my thoughts while working on these pieces. *#1* and *#2* are analogue collages featuring hand cut and gridded squares of the *Earth and the Sun*, and the Earth and our Moon, respectively. Each is made of over 1300 arranged "cells", creating new celestial bodies where the Earth's form is altered, re-invented and warped. As a parent, I wonder what our son and heir will inherit of our Sun and air. What will be our gift to Nature and what will be our legacy?

Fault Line #1, #2 and *#3*, 2023, also distort and change these worlds: Earth/Sun, Earth/Moon, Earth/Earth. Here, the word *fault* blurs notions of geology and morality. For some there is an ongoing search for cracks and faults in the debates around climate. The act of tearing these images highlights the impacts we are having, the rearranging we are undertaking: removing, shifting, melting, transporting. In some ways, we are literally tearing strips off our planet. These celestial worlds feel immovable, constant, stable, certain. But, they too are vulnerable.

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Ice Storm, 2023, employs the nostalgic, ephemeral feel of the Polaroid™ print to convey the fragility of something, seemingly so permanent, in our own backyard: Antarctica. Here, a grid of eight prints tell of a possible plight. Drifting, cloud-like, as if above us, the frozen continent appears to dissolve and evaporate before our eyes, upon a darkening sky.

The artwork, *The Twilight of Such Days*, 2023, is a gridded and repeated image which creates a kaleidoscopic, fictionalised world. This strange, fractal-like environment blends, harmonises and weaves Nature with urban constructs. But there is ambiguity here - caught between day and night, a time of transition, is this a beginning or an ending? Dusk or dawn? *The Twilight of Such Days* highlights the dark and light, the macro and micro, and the interconnectedness of the web of life.

Swell (after Hokusai), *Since Records Began (after Hokusai)*, *Rising (after Hokusai)* and *Melting Point (after Hokusai)*, all 2023, form a series of paper-based works that transpose the wondrous and famous Hokusai woodblock print, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1831) into a contemporary context, where climate concerns are central.

Since Records Began (after Hokusai) grids repeated and manipulated images of the wave to form a graph-like work that measures the approximate sea level rise of the Earth's oceans. Since 1880, when records began, it is estimated that the world's sea level has risen 24cm due to ice melt and expansion through warming waters. It is poignant that only a few decades earlier than the first recording of such results, Hokusai had created his artwork. *Swell (after Hokusai)* takes 2280 hand cut pieces from four images of the wave and expands the scale of the original wave to form an exaggerated, singular image. *Rising (after Hokusai)* consists of sliced and arranged images, opposing each other, suggesting an imminent and climactic moment. This approaching crescendo is frozen in time - which we know cannot be. There will be an impact and a reckoning. Slices of the wave are interspersed with blank strips in *Melting Point (after Hokusai)*. Upon these litmus paper-like strips are long blue ink drips, suggestive of strange, inverted thermometers, measuring the rising temperature of our oceans.

The call of a pardalote is a sound that connects me deeply to another time in my life and to the Central Highlands of Tassie, where I grew up. My father was a farmer, in a long line of Tassie farmers, with a strong connection to Nature and the land. I guess he could be called a twitcher but that wouldn't be a word he would have used. The local bird life was simply part of his surrounds - not something separate that some may define as a hobby. In the series, *40 Forty-Spotted Pardalotes (after John Gould)*, the Goulds' exquisite image of two pardalotes are digitally collaged with elements from our contemporary world. Fragments such as the Houses of Parliament, consumer goods, clear-felled forests,

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bird markets, roads and road maps all risk pushing these fragile beings off the page.

The idea of the making process is explored in the continuing series *10%* and in *Loves Me...*, *Phoney Club (after Hartas)* and *Ophelia's Asylum (after Van Gogh & Millais)*, all 2023. There has always been editing, alteration, even trickery in image making, but never has it been more possible and more convincing. These works alter imagery in an overt, analogue way with no intension to hide this intent. In *Ophelia's Asylum* the Danish noblewoman is poignantly set amidst Van Gogh's painting near the St. Rémy asylum. In *10%* each famous work becomes a kind of palimpsest - where elements have been "re-written" and editorialised through the cross-hatching of selected gridded segments on the historical image. This editing is done by hand, creating handmade "pixels". But do the "removed" pieces still exist in someway? When does an existing image become a new image? Does the original meaning of the work become displaced? When we create and share something do we relinquish our hold upon it, especially in light of the vast landscape of the digital realm?

Representations in historical portraiture influence the works *Languid (after Winterhalter, Ingres, Modigliani & Velazquez)*, *Upstanding (after Einsle, Bernadotte, David & Unidentified)* and *Self Reflection (after Collier)*, all 2023. In *Languid* we find a collage, of different reclining figures in remarkably similar poses, in which the images have been sliced and arranged to form a singular figure, in an exaggerated state of repose. This graceful, passive and flowing muse is in contrast to *Upstanding* where the subjects, in military garb, form a towering presence, a figure that is poised, in command, active. In *Self Reflection*, we wonder at the contemplation of the opposing twin figures as they possibly reflect upon their world and their place within it.

Cul-de-Sac, 2023 and *The Great Australian Dreaming*, 2023 touch on the complexity of urbanisation. In recent years, especially after the lock downs triggered by the COVID pandemic, we have seen a dramatic change in the economics of housing. Never, it seems, has it been harder to house our nation. *Cul-de-Sac* takes a repeated image from an urban street and collages it, in an organic form, across the canvas. *The Great Australian Dreaming* creates a grid suggestive of the traditional and much loved quarter acre block. The question of how to reconcile the needs of our cities and towns with the needs of Nature is a complex and urgent one.

Memories of the COVID lockdowns inform the work *In One Hundred Years*, 2023. A repeated self portrait, reflected in an analogue poppy field landscape of pills, taken during lockdown, creates a dreamlike, surreal world. Gridded and separated, the figure's hands are not evident. It was a time when touch was restricted and feared. Poppies evoke remembrance and pills,

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the urgent call to care and cure. For many, it was a time of introspection, a time to attempt to take comfort in our immediate worlds. Just over a hundred years earlier, in 1918, the extraordinary and controversial artist, Egon Schiele passed away during the global flu pandemic. *Egon's Hand*, 2023 and *Egon's Touch*, 2023 attempt to connect these two cataclysmic moments in human history, when the world was gripped by a global event. Fragments of Schiele's works are isolated and taken out of context. The exquisite and hauntingly beautiful hands by Schiele echo the human need for connection.

The artworks *Not Since the Second World War #1* and *#2* (both 2023), take the repeated image of tracer fire during the Second World War and abstracts it, creating an ambiguity. Increasingly, the direct, personal experiences of earlier generations during this period of history are becoming part of the past. Parallel to this, we are hearing phrases such as, *Not since the Second World War*.

People talk of an experience called the fog of war (attributed to Clausewitz), but perhaps there is also a fog of post-war, where flippant language about such events can be used to confuse and inflame. Without the measured responses from those who lived such experiences we risk a flippancy and casualness with such heated rhetoric, as some political tensions appear to rise. These two works have a sense of Optical Art about their form. Both feature a network of black and white lines where the seen and unseen are confused, where a radar-like pattern of threads overlay the scene, pinned like military markers on a strategic map.

The Drift of Days, 2023, a dreamy landscape of the Midlands of Tasmania is a captured slice of time. This vista is like a touchstone on the journey between the north and the south of the State. It is a view I often search for, one that feels somehow timeless, like a paused still from a road movie. Captured at twilight, it contains the recurring dichotomies throughout this exhibition, of the dualities of light and dark, beginnings and endings, of stillness and motion. But ultimately, for me, it is a reminder of the beauty of this place and the magic of the moment.

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