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# REVIEW: Hatched @ PICA

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Reviewed by: Natasha Bloomfield  
Image credit: PICA

The Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts is currently presenting its 24th annual exhibition of *Hatched: National Graduate Show*, which showcases emerging Australian artists and a variety of works ranging from mechanised robotic dogs to laser cut paper skeletons to literal hand-painted paintings. The exhibition involves thirty-five of the top art graduates from twenty-two art schools across every state in Australia, with the most outstanding artist, this year Andrew Styan for *The Bell Buoy*, receiving the Dr Harold Schenberg Art Prize, a \$35,000 cash prize to further their career development. The artists focus on some of the most pressing contemporary issues of the century.



One of the most striking pieces for me, Dan McDonnell's *Ten Steins Licht* (section pictured below), is present in the central gallery space. The four paintings, created by hand instead of brush, examine uncertainty and the creation of new ideas in modern society. The bright reds, pinks, and yellows are distinct from the greys, but the continual movements of McDonnell's hands blur these pictorial distinctions and creates tension between the paintings and the physicality of the work. Whilst viewing the work, the high gloss of the paintings and the artificial lighting caused my reflection to be distinguishable in the image, and this displacement caused the 120cm x 90cm x 4cm mounted paintings to envelop me. The experience elicited a feeling of being found, and developed into an acknowledgement of being involved in something bigger than myself, something more important, something fantastic and unique that I was yet to fully understand.

Curator Nadia Johnson has spread the exhibition through a variety of spaces; light and dark, spacious and enclosed, visible from PICA's foyer and hidden behind curtains. The space that appealed most to me was the west wing on the first floor. To the left are the distant noises of Dominic Byrne's *I Hate My Guts* and *Spit Tips Triptych*, and to the right is the hum of the city, but the space itself is suitably quiet. It incorporates three white walls for work and the mix of filtered air, soft lighting, and extensive amount of space gives the works room to breathe. In this space, most bold is Mycko's photography series *Everything of Value. 1-3* (*Everything of Value. 2* pictured below) and across from it *My Father's Keeper(s), 1-3* of her *Inheritance and Loss* photography series.



Originally constructed as an installation, the series interrogates the material traces of her parents' lives through objects inherited by her after their death. The soft blue and white tones used in Mycko's *Everything of Value* and the familiarity of the domestic setting is comforting, but the unexpected patterns Mycko has placed the objects in, coupled with the strong and definite lines created by the silvers of the cutlery and colours of the tupperware, increases the unfamiliarity of the objects and promotes the contriteness of the dinner time tradition, and the strangeness of the objects without the presence of dinner companions. Viewing from a place similar yet also extensively distant from Mycko's, I attempt to piece together the lives of her parents from the photographs in front of me, and begin to understand that the artefacts left to her, these material reminders of loss, are ever important in preserving memories and fostering new directions.

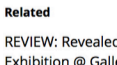
Dominic Byrne's pieces were perhaps the most confronting works for me. Set in a dark, confined room, the auditory stimulation emitting from five video screens was overwhelming. The screens depict a fist punch, spitting, a wine glass smashing, a man saying "Just let me finish my sentence thank you" with a drawn out "ence" and "you," and a man covered in blood alternating between "I hate your guts" and "I hate my guts," the looped tracks ranging from one second to seven minutes and fifty seconds. I found the sheer auditory input the most striking feature of the works, yet I was conscious that Byrne's pieces interrogated the screen as a makeshift audience, and therefore was intrigued to investigate the visual aspects of videos. The works utilise highly physical and intense actions, yet present on a flattened screen they appear somewhat lifeless and distant, and the artist becomes both trapped in his work and generating a second self. And even now, as I write this article on a screen without a present audience, the interlinking of the perceived self with artistic output, and a present yet absent digital audience, does appear ridiculously relevant.

*Hatched* is currently the only national graduate exhibition in Australia, and I was very humbled whilst viewing the result of the tireless work from the huge team involved, including Nadia Johnson, the selection panel, the PICA team, and the artists on the brink of their careers. From interrogating urban and environmental spaces, personal histories, and the artist's relation to their medium, the exhibition covers all topics, and the pieces have strong opinions to share. If you're a practising artist, a newbie with a hunger for all things creative (like me), or you're uncertain about the whole business but looking for a comfortable yet exquisite introduction, I would recommend you don't miss this exhibition.

In conjunction with the exhibition, PICA is also hosting a one-off dance performance with No Lights No Lycra Fremantle and featuring *Hatched* WA artist Liam Colgan entitled "No Lights No Lycra x PICA," on 4th June 7-8.30pm at the PICA Performance Space. Tickets to this event are \$5 at the door.

*Hatched* is exhibiting at PICA until 21st June 2015. Entry is free.

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