



Upper level, 164 Longueville Road Lane Cove NSW 2066
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Open Tue – Fri 10:00am – 4:30pm & Sat 10:00am – 2:30pm

soft tongues, gritted teeth

JACK BALL, HOLLY BATES, HANNAH BRONTË,
CHELSEA FARQUAR, CLAUDIA NICHOLSON and LUCY
WHITELAW

19 February – 8 March 2025

When it comes to *soft tongues, gritted teeth*, a U-HAUL relationship springs to mind. For those of you who aren't familiar with the term, it stereotypically describes lesbians that fall in love and move in together outrageously quickly after the first date. With two-weeks to pull this exhibition together, there was a palpable sense of being swept into a rapid, whirlwind romance. The generative forces of a tight-knit community of queers and allies was felt; a community I am forever indebted to.

Featuring artists from across Australia, *soft tongues, gritted teeth* presents artworks as a chorus of queer voices, reverberating to blur the bounds between the individual and collective experience. Drawing from the line "strong to my enemies, tender to those I loved and respected" from Leslie Feinberg's preeminent queer text *Stone Butch Blues* (1993), the exhibition acknowledges the intersectional core of the queer experience where intimacy, tenderness, ferocity and resilience mingle together. Navigating personal narratives and queer ecologies, the artists pose counter-heteronormative ways of being, connecting and communicating; collapsing harsh edges as a refusal of linearity. Reckoning with queer (in)visibility, questions are posed surrounding what is held within our bodies, what of this we choose to share, and how this is externalised. Through various artistic outputs, the artists playfully and tenderly explore the body, gender, desire, power and kinship to offer affective encounters with queer intimacy and resistance.

Queerness in its porous, polymorphic and fluid nature is itself an act of resistance. It is distinctively non-distinct. Constantly changing, it plays hosts to an active negotiation between this and that, either or neither. Embodying queerness as not only a subject but a methodology, many of the artists offer the proposition: how can we reside in the blurry in-between spaces?

Artist **Lucy Whitelaw** has inscribed on glass personal musings on the fluidity of queer embodiment and the subtleties of desire. The work changes depending on your positionality, where there are moments of reveal and conceal. Floating amongst

these watery thoughts, her work intimately considers the slippages that occur when attempting to articulate something that is innately liquid in nature.

Similarly, **Jack Ball** plays with their own visual vocabularies to elude and resist fixed assumptions of bodily representation through photography and collage. Ambiguity is a tactic used by Ball to navigate trans representation and the liquidity of gender, melding the boundaries between abstraction and figuration. Capturing their body in playful performances and through using camp aesthetics, they examine self-assemblage and forms of queer embodiment.

Explorations of the body, gender and language are further seen in **Holly Bate's** video work, which sees the artist perform in drag as Freddie Mercury to Queen's 'Body Language'. Drawing on her personal history and queer identity, Bates conveys the complexities of being a feminine lesbian yet identifying with masculine popular figures. Since the 1950s, many of these pop stars were seen as 'Dykons', majorly influencing butch dress, sensibilities, and self-image. Through playfulness, the work aims to confuse, arouse and subvert in its heightened saturation of hyper-masculinity, comedic erotic gestures, and appropriation of sexual power. Drag is an inherent part of queer culture and forms part of the non-verbal communication that is expressed through the body.

Further exploring the use of guises, **Chelsea Farquhar** creates intricate sculptures using traditional techniques including blacksmithing, lead lighting and costuming to contort or abstract the body and the bodies of her friends, who often serve as models. Here, performativity is used to reckon with power of representation, sexuality and the nature of violence and power. Referencing kink aesthetics and fetishisation, Farquhar provocatively alludes to gimp masks, concealing the wearer's characteristic features. The mask's anonymity becomes a catalyst to project notions of queer visibility, fugitivity, desire and intimacy.

Artist **Claudia Nicholson** reconfigures archived home videos to examine the role of memory in constructing diasporic identities and for collective remembrance. Void of a linear narrative, the assemblage of videos (made mainly for partners over the years) bleed into one another as a recount of Nicholson's own personal lived experiences as a queer Colombian-born artist now residing in Australia. Evoking a sense of yearning and nostalgia, the artist shares their connection to place and fleeting moments spent with kin and community.

Hannah Brontë's technicolour works incite a spirit of collectively and healing. A medium that sits between protest and promotion, these posters aim to empower the queer community and incite the sensation of collectively, kinship and 'chosen' family. Offering affirmations and reminders, Brontë actively seeks to make queer individuals feel seen and validated, collapsing the singular to offer a community founded on support, connection and resilience.

Blending autobiography and performativity, the artists in *soft tongues, gritted teeth* invite the viewer to encounter new modes of queer selfhood (self-making, self-belonging, self-positioning), intimacy, collectively and resistance. Queerness fundamentally resists being fully captured, although through these works it is made momentarily visible; presenting what exists within, beyond and between.

Sarah Rose

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CURATOR

Sarah Rose

Bio: Sarah Rose is a Gadigal/Sydney-based curator and arts worker, and is currently the Associate Curator and Executive Assistant, Artspace, Sydney. In recent years, Rose has collaborated closely with artists to produce 30 group and solo exhibitions. Curatorially, their practice reflects their interests into trace and imbued materiality, navigating the experiences that underpin our innate humanness, from its inherent dualisms to how these experiences shift between the singular and collective. Their current research is focused on representations of queer and gendered experiences, as well as technological interventions in museological spaces. They were identified as a curator to look out for in the 'Tastemaker' section of Art Collector Magazine's '50 Things Collectors Should Know' issue (Jan–Mar 2023), and their curated exhibition 'In the fibre of her being' (2021–22), Fairfield City Museum and Gallery, received a 2022 MGNSW IMAGInE Award. Rose has previously held positions at the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Create NSW, and is currently Coordinator of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia (CAOA). They are Co-founder and Project Coordinator for 'More Than Reproduction', an artist-run initiative for printmakers in Australia.

ARTISTS

Jack Ball

Bio: Jack Ball works with photography, collage and casting to create large scale sculptural installations that explore the pleasures of flexi and fluid materiality and desire. Ball's solo exhibitions include Heavy Grit at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (2024). Wind Chill at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (2021) and Tight Crop at Sydenham International, Sydney (2023). Their work has been shown in the group exhibitions Built Photography at the Museum of Australian Photography (2024), Love in Bright Landscapes, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (2021), the pleasurable, the illegible, the multiple, the mundane, Artspace, Sydney (2021), Here & Now17: New Photography, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth (2017), New Matter: Recent forms of Photography, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2016), Dusk to Dark, Queensland Centre for Photography, Brisbane (2014), and Primavera, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney (2013). Their work is held in the collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of Western Australia, University of Western Australia, City of Perth and Artbank. Ball is represented by sweet pea, Boorloo/Perth.

Holly Bates

Bio: Holly Bates is a Naarm/Melbourne-based emerging filmmaker and visual artist. Bates recently completed a Masters of Film and Television at the Victorian College of the Arts, graduating with first class. Her graduate film and directorial debut *House of Whoreship* premiered online on MIFF Play in 2022, with international premieres to be announced. Bates previously completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) degree at QUT in 2015, graduating with first class and two academic prizes. Bates has exhibited her solo work nationally at spaces such as BLINDSIDE Art Space, Boxcopy contemporary art space and Metro Arts Brisbane. Furthermore, she has showcased in her collaborative practice *Parallel Park* at spaces such as AIRspace Projects, UNSW Galleries, BUS projects, La Trobe Art Institute, Carriageworks and the 2021 Rising Festival. Bates has appeared in publications such as UN Magazine, Eyeline Magazine and recently was interviewed by VICE.

Hannah Brontë

Bio: Hannah Brontë is an Artist/Creatrix living and working on Kombumerri / Yugambah Country (Gold Coast). Birthing new worlds both literally and artistically is the spine of her practice. Much of her work correlates the treatment of the earth to the treatment of our bodies, specifically othered/ oppressed bodies. Within Brontë's work, which she describes as "dreamscapes" both Joy and Revolution are always holding hands. These dreamscapes explore what could be; melding and infiltrating what is. Hannah embraces multiple mediums including video, text work, textiles, photography and soundscapes, and combines these to create visually distinctive works with a kaleidoscopic lens.

Recently Brontë has included holistic, spiritual and physical healers as consultants for much of her work. These new bodies of work explore the five senses and their ability to shift the audience's energy. Aiming to both ground and lift audiences through the experiences depicted in her pieces. Brontë often leans into her Femme camp tool kit to alleviate the heaviness of much that is depicted. Always showing that in vulnerability lies strength. Brontë's work has begun unpacking intergenerational spiritual knowledge, which she feels is just the beginning of a new chapter. Her work deeply centers on exploring healing practices utilising the elements of the earth and expanding beyond the white box. Much of this chapter is influenced by her practice as a birthing Doula, Party Curator and DJ.

Chelsea Farquhar

Bio: Chelsea Farquhar is an artist and designer working on Kaurua Land, South Australia. She creates sculptures utilising non-traditional materials, such as silk, beads, glass, sunlight, horsehair and beeswax. Extravagant and flamboyant in nature, contorted or abstracted bodies often appear, as do friends, who serve as models (cast or photographed). Exchange and collaboration are important to Farquhar; as is working with traditional techniques, including blacksmithing, lead lighting and costuming, in idiosyncratic ways—inside and beyond the gallery. Recent exhibitions include Octopus 24: Ricochet, Gertrude Contemporary, 2024; In Other Words, KINGS Artist-Run, Melbourne, 2023; and How one should turn to stone, West Space Window, Melbourne, 2021.

Claudia Nicholson

Bio: Claudia Nicholson is an interdisciplinary artist based on Gadigal land (Sydney, Australia). Her practice examines psychic and physical connections to place through multidisciplinary forms of art making including painting, installation, performance and video. She is interested in creating acts of collective remembrance, exploring the ways in which we navigate the complexities of identity in a post-colonial context. In 2023-2024, Nicholson was the artist-in-residence at The University of Technology, Sydney and undertook a research and development program that culminated in a solo exhibition at UTS Gallery. In 2022, she was commissioned by the Sydney Opera House to develop new video work *The Deep Rivers Say It Slowly* for Shortwave Festival. In 2020, she was commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia to develop *Art Trail*, an art education resource for young people. In 2019, she was commissioned by Museum of Contemporary Art and VIVID Sydney to create a light up the facade of the MCA. Nicholson was the recipient of the NSW Emerging Visual Arts Fellowship (2017). Recent and current exhibitions include: *New to the Collection*, Campbelltown Arts Centre (2025), *If the Mountain Is Burning, Let It Burn*; UTS Gallery, Sydney (2024), *Same Same But Different*; Bankstown Biennale, Bankstown Arts Centre (2024), *Spot The Difference*, Penrith Regional Gallery, *Future in Focus: Contemporary Alumnae Artists*, UNSW (2024), *Braving Time: Contemporary Art in Queer Australia*, National Art School (2023); *Fulgora*, National Art School (2023); *Belonging*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2019). Her work is held in private and public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Campbelltown Art Centre, The University of NSW, and Artbank.

Lucy Whitelaw

Bio: Lucy Whitelaw is a multi-disciplinary artist living and working on Gadigal land. Her practice spans glass, text, photography, video and installation. Leading with a process-led practice, she approaches making through a queer theoretical lens, exploring the ambiguous nature of queer embodiment and subtleties of desire. They are interested in the relationships between the fluidity of thoughts, gestures of language and the ocean. Their work embraces the slippages with language and materiality, playing with a fluctuating intimacy.

LEFT TO RIGHT

1. **Lucy Whitelaw** *Shifting my thoughts into water,*
etched float glass, 50 x 70cm, 2023
2. **Jack Ball** *Shower scenes 5,*
Inkjet print on rag, framed, 70 x 93cm, 2019
3. **Jack Ball** *Shower scenes 4,*
Inkjet print on rag, framed, 70 x 93cm, 2019
4. **Jack Ball** *lux,*
Inkjet print on rag, aluminium pins, framed, 43 x 32 cm,
2021
5. **Jack Ball** *Magic marker 3,*
Inkjet print on rag, framed, 63 x 91cm, 2021
6. **Jack Ball** *Club wear 1,*
Inkjet print on rag, framed, 56 x 99cm, 2021
7. **Holly Bates** *Give Me (Body),*
two-channel video work, 4 mins 30 secs, 2016
8. **Chelsea Farquhar** *CMYK triptych,*
glass, screen printing ink, chain, solder, copper,
dimensions variable, 2024
9. **Chelsea Farquhar** *Glass hood,*
glass, solder, copper, ribbon, aluminium spikes,
dimensions variable, 2024
10. **Claudia Nicholson** *An old spelling of my name,*
single-channel HD video 12 mins 32 secs, original sound
by James Brown, 2021
11. **Hannah Brontë** *I LOVE YOU QUEER BABY,*
digital poster, 84 x 59cm, 2025
12. **Hannah Brontë** *I LOVE MY CHOSEN FAMILY,*
digital poster, 84 x 59cm, 2025
13. **Chelsea Farquhar** *Untitled (pink screen print),*
screen print on paper, 60 x 84cm, 2024