

Huw Davies Gallery
22 June - 16 July 2017
Presented through the PhotoAccess Indigenous Photomedia Artists Program

Mill Binna
Leah King Smith & Duncan King Smith



Image: Leah King Smith, *First light* (detail), 2017, pigment inkjet print

Vessel: Object of reception, for holding, carriage, of containment. A dish, a dilly bag, a pitcher, a pod. Like a pair of hands, cupping space. Hands and, by extension, the body, are better suited to gesture, to opening and releasing, but also holding and grasping. They express in movement the tensions that the vessel expresses in stasis. For a vessel is at once outside and in, expansive and contractive all at once. Opening its bulging surface to view and to touch, what we sense in the outer limits are the contours of an internal space. Like gestures that cannot be fixed in time, the vessel is deceptively spatial, at once present and absent. Philosopher and sinologist, Francois Jullien writes of just such an ambivalence when he observes a particular sort of presence in the landscape painting of the Chinese literati tradition, 'which withholds instead of displaying, which turns inside out to become absence...'¹. *Mill Binna* (see hear) awakens the understanding

¹ Jullien, Francois (2009). *The great image has no form, or the non-object through painting*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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that these shimmering relations of interior and exterior, visible and invisible, are the enlivening forces of the human as well as the object being.

Yet the vessel, taken as a cultural object, is a herald of its own demise, for as it contains, so it comes to be contained, in turn, within the belly of the museum. Here it dwells as an artefact, a surface of culture, divested of its deep interior, no longer holding, but being held. In *Mill Binna*, Leah and Duncan King Smith address this loss, not by filling them up but by inscribing them, from the outside, with human gesture. Leah's fluid almost liquid avatars, of ochres and oxides, deep black and sheer white, suggest that spirit may indeed be an earth thing. They move as if movement preceded matter, or were its very definition, precipitating the illusion of matter. The beauty of these beings is that they are uncomplicated by mechanisms of articulation. There is no cause for the gesture, but the gesture itself, no instrument of their rhythms, but the rhythms themselves. In the contraction and release that is the pattern of each gestural sequence – pulling, leaping, swimming, dancing – we begin to see that matter is no more, no less than the enlivening tensions felt likewise in the constancy of the tides, stretching in, releasing back, and in all of nature, in what Jullien, again, has described as a 'respiratory logic'². Beneath the mesmerising and calm authority of these fluid beings, the vessels begin again to breathe.

Where does the looking stop and the hearing begin, in a world where *Mill Binna* is given as a single utterance? For if matter reveals itself in time, as gesture, so too does sound, emerging in time as texture, as time's texture. Where the idea of a song, in contemporary culture, is presented and consumed as a sort of object, it has no more interior life than the rarefied museum vessel. But in his sound work, Duncan releases the interior of the song, through fracturing and dispersing the melodic object, creating resonances rather than generic images for the ear. The difference, Jullien defines this way: 'Resonance opens onto infinite vibration, while reproduction soon dries up on the surface'³. This reimagining of sound, grounded within a network of environmental recordings, completes the coherent structure of *Mill Binna* which might be imagined as the mesh: the steel mesh upon which the vessels have been fashioned; the digital mesh over which the avatars glide, and the temporal mesh upon which sonic textures thicken and disperse. What to make of this congruence? The mesh is the very weave that positions interior and exterior as relational and indefinite, rather than explicit and fixed. It is the fluid difference between seeing and hearing. Mesh is the porous substance, the medium, like skin, that allows for the regulating alternation of a 'respiratory logic'.

Sharon Jewell (PhD), June 2017

Sharon Jewell is an artist and writer, and teaches visual art at Queensland University of Technology

2 Ibid

3 Ibid. p114

Leah King Smith & Duncan King Smith | About the artists

Leah King Smith is a Bigambul descendant, visual artist and lecturer in the School of Creative Practice (Creative Industries) Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane. Leah's career as a photo and digital media artist encompasses solo, collaborative and group exhibitions, community engagement, dance performance, theatre production, international cultural exchanges, book cover and story illustration and experimental film and video work. Leah's current practice includes 3D animation technologies within a transdisciplinary collaborative praxis. Leah's work is held in numerous Australian public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of NSW and the Queensland Art Gallery.

Duncan King Smith is currently completing a Master of Fine Art degree in Music with the School of Creative Practice (Creative Industries) QUT, Brisbane. Duncan's career as a sound designer encompasses collaborations with a wide variety of artists and communities. To this current project he brings compositions drawn from his repertoire of original songs and extensive archive of environmental field recordings.

Image List

1. Leah King Smith, *Pulling a Rope 2*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
2. Leah King Smith, *First Light*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
3. Leah King Smith, *Landing*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
4. Leah King Smith, *Hunter Dancer Painter Warrior*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
5. Leah King Smith, *Floating*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
6. Leah King Smith, *Bellydance*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
7. Leah King Smith, *Walking*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
8. Leah King Smith, *Pulling a Rope*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
9. Leah King Smith, *Swimming to Edge*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
10. Leah King Smith, *Jumping Down*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
11. Leah King Smith, *Gold*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
12. Leah King Smith, *Left Walk*, 2017, pigment inkjet print, 42.0 x 59.4 cm \$600
13. Leah and Duncan King Smith, *Mill Binna*, 2017, installation (video projection, muslin, wire and plaster), NFS
dimensions variable, and two channel electroacoustic composition 9'12" [for sound sources see last page]

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Public Program

Join Leah King Smith, Duncan King Smith and Dean Cross for an artists in conversation event on Sunday 16 July at 2pm in the Huw Davies Gallery. Free event. All welcome.

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Image: Leah King Smith, *Hunter Painter* (detail), 2017, pigment inkjet print

Mill Binna, 2017 | Sound Sources

<i>Source</i>	<i>Date</i>
Magpie Geese, Serendip Sanctuary, Lara, Victoria, Woiworung / Wathaurung	18 August 1991
Breaths, Old Melbourne Gaol, Victoria, Woiworung	12 June 1988
Black rock cove, Cape Schanck, Victoria, Boonwurrung	15 March 1987
Brighton Beach sea wall, Victoria, Boonwurrung	April 1984
Night chorus Curlip Swamp, Orbost, Victoria, Kurnai	4 September 1991
Wind in weeds, Merri Creek at Donnybrook Rd., Victoria, Woiworung	October 1992
Treecreeper, Grampians, Victoria, Jardwadjali	29 October 1989
Construction site, State Library of Queensland, Yuggera	20 May 2005
Lyrebird, Jehosophat Gully, Kinglake, Victoria, Woiworung	11 August 1990
1st light, Rotamah Island, The Lakes National Park, Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, Kurnai	27 October 1984
Tide race, Wingan Inlet, Victoria, Kurnai	23 October 1991
Whipbirds, Border Ranges, Queensland, Bundjalung	16 September 2015
Calling in the goats, Goongerah, Victoria, Kurnai	December 1992
Whipbird, Brodribb River, Victoria, Kurnai	17 October 1986
Boobook, Rodger River, Victoria, Kurnai	5 April 1986
Pobblebonks, Grampians, Victoria, Jardwadjali	29 October 1989
Chimes (bolts from logging railway, Mt St. Gwinear, Victoria, Woiworung),	May 1987
Crows, Mitchelton, Queensland, Yuggera	March 2016
Casuarina wind and bird call, Lake Hardy, Big Desert, Victoria, Wergaia	24 September 1987
Frogs and cars, off Summerhill Rd., Merri Creek, Victoria, Woiworung	October 1992

Excerpt from Thistledown

“Thistledown, wedding gown...”

Excerpt from Third Hill

“Here come the living / with all their complications / gracious and giving.”

Excerpt from Ice Mountain

All music & lyrics - Duncan King-Smith, sung by Duncan and Leah King-Smith

All recordings - Duncan King-Smith