



12-22 Jun 2018

Jen Bowmast / Natasha Matila-Smith  
Barbara Smith / Leafa Wilson / Lynda Wilson

# Sleight of Hand



# Sleight of Hand

Wendy Richdale  
Curator—Ramp Gallery  
2018

**Sleight of Hand** is a term commonly associated with magic, trickery and the art of misdirection. A skill of cunning where dexterity, combined with showmanship, produces illusions that make an audience gasp with wonder. But trickery to one is the display of skill to another—years of repetition, learning and development culminating in a precise moment. When bringing this exhibition **Sleight of Hand** together, I found myself thinking of the magical moment of collision during the act of making art. The artist's magic occurs in the production of something new, (hopefully) something larger than the sum of its parts: a culmination of an artist's skill at manipulating materials and ideas combined with the exploitation of a material's potentiality. The alchemy of the artist's sense of play is what enables the viewer to see (in part) what the artist does. **Sleight of Hand** provides an opportunity to experience these moments, bringing together makers that explore their chosen medium with playfulness and rigour in equal measure; suggesting an alternative way of experiencing and looking at the world around us.

The five artists in **Sleight of Hand** work in different media but all explore potentiality and moments of transformation in their practices. The exchange between materials, ideas and intuition are played out by each of them. This urge to make and transform arguably speaks to larger needs we all face; the need to find a sense of place and of belonging. In this fast-paced digital and global world of ours, moments of quiet where transformation is observed and experienced, can create this feeling. Organising perceived disorder can make one feel at home and part-of, rather than adrift in space. The gallery in **Sleight of Hand** is a utility room for presenting art, but equally, it becomes a site for enacting exchange and thereby cultivating a sense of place and belonging. The artists have connections between each other, some new, some long-standing. The process of developing an exhibition and of having their work presented together also develops new threads of belonging. As a viewer, your part in this process is important too. The way you walk through and pause in the ether generated, the connections you make, the impressions you feel, all embody and enable a new moment of belonging.

Natasha Matila-Smith  
**His lips pink and swollen**  
poly-velvet blend  
banner, spray paint  
2018

Natasha Matila-Smith  
**The scent of you stays with me**  
poly-velvet blend  
banner, spray paint  
2018





Left:  
Leafa Wilson  
**Remnant of Priest  
Performance**  
various  
2015

Centre:  
Barbara Smith  
**For the time being**  
porcelain  
2018

Right:  
Leafa Wilson  
**Remnant of This Aint  
No Disco Performance**  
various  
2017



Above:  
Leafa Wilson  
**Remnant of Priest  
Performance** (detail)  
various  
2015

Right:  
Barbara Smith  
**For the time being** (detail)  
porcelain  
2018

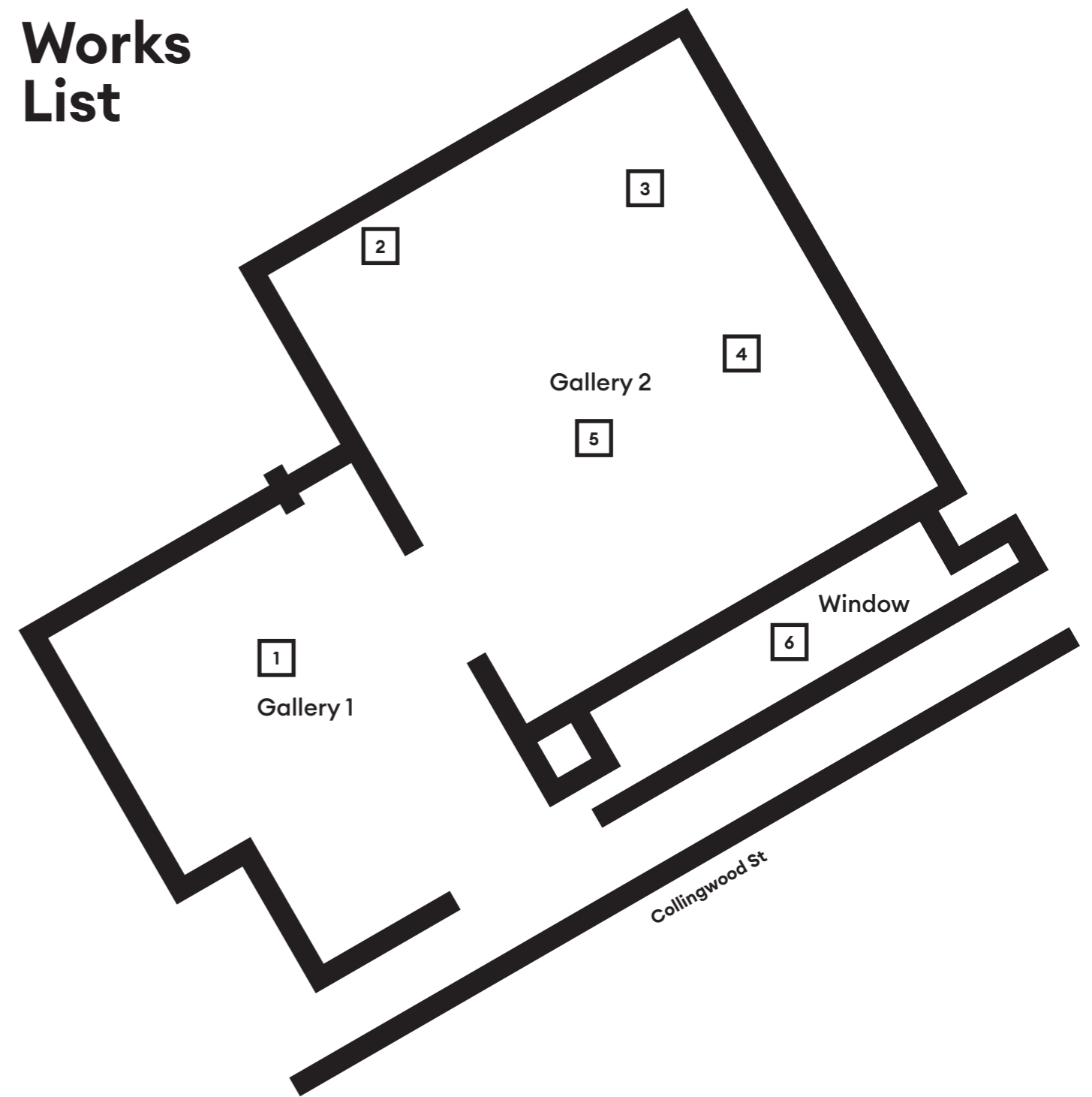
Below:  
Lynda Wilson  
**Moths drink the tears  
of sleeping birds**  
clay, cotton thread  
2018



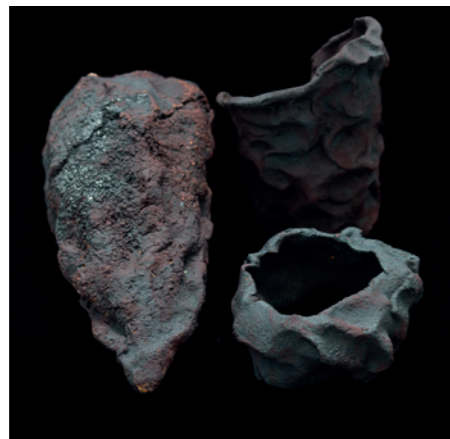




# Works List



Jen Bowmast  
**Artefacts of the Future**  
 bronze, clay, perspex,  
 resin, steel, voice, wood  
 2018



## Gallery 1

1. Jen Bowmast  
**Artefacts of the Future**  
 bronze, clay, perspex,  
 resin, steel, voice, wood  
 2018

## Gallery 2

2. Lynda Wilson  
**Moths drink the tears of  
 sleeping birds**  
 clay, cotton thread  
 2018
3. Leafa Wilson  
**Remnant of Priest  
 Performance**  
 various  
 2015

4. Leafa Wilson  
**Remnant of This Aint No  
 Disco Performance**  
 various  
 2017
5. Barbara Smith  
**For the time being**  
 porcelain  
 2018

## Window

6. Natasha Matila-Smith  
**His lips pink and  
 swollen;  
 The scent of you  
 stays with me**  
 poly-velvet blend  
 banner, spray paint  
 2018



## Jen Bowmast

Within Jen Bowmast's art practice, encounters with clairvoyants are catalysts for intuitive making with bronze, ceramics and craft materials. These artefacts become transitional objects between one place and another reflecting the moment of exchange between artist and reader during esoteric meetings. Displaying the collection **Artefacts of the Future** in this exhibition also draws Jen's desires for exchange into the open, with the installation of these works happening in dialogue with other artists from this show. This exhibition is also the site of secondary exchange, between reader and audience, with the performance work **The Offering**. A shared moment witnessed and facilitated by the object; the act of reciprocity in making and encountering work is played out.

## Leafa Wilson

As an artist, curator and writer, Leafa Wilson (Vaimoso/Siumu) is also revered for her experimental performances and multi-media installations under the nom de guerre 'Olga Krause'. Leafa's practice lingers around the boundaries of indigenous thought and Western ideologies. Her works are founded on protection-of the brown body in Western art spaces and the potential that is created by the act colonising of her German birth name, Olga Krause with her brown body. Leafa's works in this exhibition are the artefacts of past performances, speaking to the powerful gestures just out of view. Her objects in this exhibition may trigger an emotional response—perhaps familiarity or repulsion.

## Natasha Matila-Smith

Natasha Matila-Smith (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hine) often deals with social exchanges and anxieties, across installation and digital contexts. Her work has an intimate and obsessive quality exploring amongst other things, understanding and expectations of intimacy, lust and romance, and societies assertion of these expectations onto the self. By showing these two works in **Sleight of Hand**, Natasha's work speaks to the desire to carve out space and to connect with others. Her works on fabric conjure a sense of fragility yet are bold gestures, presenting intimate moments in such a public and easily consumed space.

## Lynda Wilson

Lynda Wilson continues to playfully create artefacts and beings from imaginary worlds that straddle a line between the sinister and the absurd. With a practice that also examines the blurry line between craft practices and contemporary art, her work is always a delightful mix of technical skill and playfulness. Lynda's current work **Moths drink the tears of sleeping birds**, steps even further toward the abstract but still evokes a sense of place and other-ness through her obvious skill and craftsmanship that appears to talk to an other-worldly history.

## Barbara Smith

Barbara Smith's practice is squarely founded in the exploration of materials. Rather than focusing on the heroic and spectacular, she notices the potentiality of small everyday moments. From the process of continued exploration, a body of work emerges that investigates materiality with the lightest of touch, intuitively unveiling the miraculous in the ordinary. Barbara's current work **For the Time Being** explores how the transformative act of naming, conjures subjective associations and meanings. It begs the question—how does one understand that which cannot be easily named?