

IF THE FUTURE IS
TO BE
WORTH ANYTHING

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This publication was published on the traditional country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land.

We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

This catalogue has been published to accompany ACE Open's most ambitious exhibition project to date—*If the future is to be worth anything: 2020 South Australian Artist Survey*. Over the last twelve months we have worked as a curatorial team, undertaking state-wide research and studio visits in the pursuit of representing the breadth of art practice and critical perspectives emerging from South Australia's artistic communities. A total of ten artists, collectives and art support organisations were ultimately invited to develop new work which could take any form: experimentation and creative freedom was encouraged at all times during this process.

There is no disputing that practice is affected by the context and conditions in which an artist finds themselves, and that art has a pronounced capacity to reflect specific moments in time back to us. Influential Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor once stated "Artists see things, they reflect upon them and try to find ways in which their ideas and art can explore the eternal conundrum of the human condition."¹ This catalogue is being published six months after daily life in Australia was (and continues to be) disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic; a global crisis that, by its nature, reverberates everywhere and has challenged our accepted ways of living and thinking, bringing with it a sense of existential uncertainty that is unprecedented amongst younger generations living in Australia.

Across 2020 we have witnessed art-making adapting and responding to this transformed landscape—a new environment that encompasses varying forms of physical and social isolation, alongside the emergence of multifaceted digital interfaces. As a result of gallery shutdowns, delayed programming and travel restrictions, artists have also been operating at greater distance from the cultural institutions and audiences that cultivate, contextualise and champion their cultural value. Rather than be overtly burdened by what has been lost in this process, we approach our new moment in time with an understated sense of optimism. In fact, this moment has brought into sharper relief the pinpointed curatorial impetus behind *If the future is to be worth anything*, which is predicated on understanding the way culture is formed, how art is made and what counts as art.

Foreword

Patrice Sharkey, Artistic Director, ACE Open
Rayleen Forester, Curator in Residence, ACE Open

Thinking about the future, participating artist Emmaline Zanelli recently speculated on, "...whether this time of worldwide lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic will create a shift, provoking artists to make work about their own community, their small radius of daily life, their own memories ... I hope after being forced to stay in their own zone, artists will emerge with a new intrigue [for] their locale."²

We agree and have already noticed practice recalibrating and shifting away from the formal structures to which we are accustomed towards a more collaborative spirit that privileges the sharing of knowledge and fostering of comradeship. Just like our invitation to the artists participating in the 2020 South Australian Artist Survey, we ask audiences and readers to embrace the unknown, care for those surrounding them and imagine our collective potential.

*

Sitting alongside the exhibition is this 78 page catalogue, which has been collaboratively designed by local publishing house Have You Seen Him. The three main aims of the catalogue are to extend the dialogue around each artist's practice through text and image; create connections between South Australian artists and leading Australian curators, writers and cultural voices; and, most significantly, produce a lasting document that captures the range of important creative activity emerging from our state.

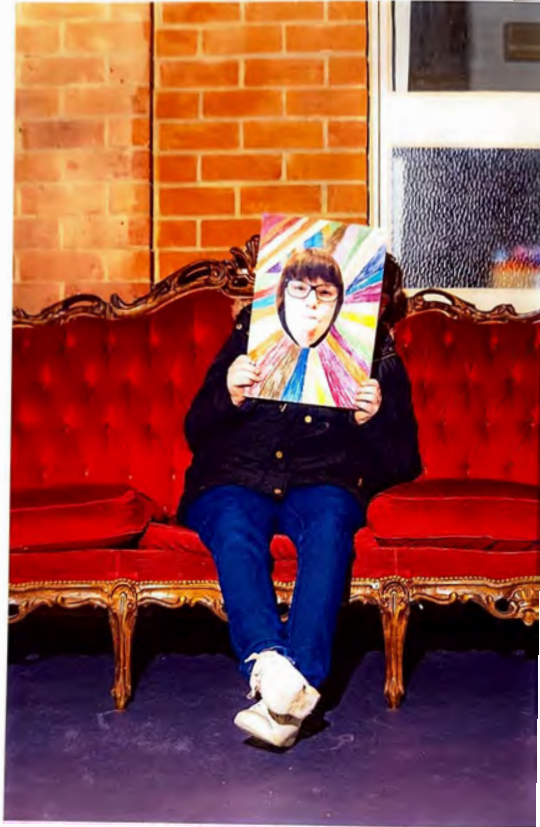
The 2020 South Australian Artist Survey is the sum of many parts and began with a major fundraising campaign in 2019 supported by Creative Partnerships Australia's Plus1 initiative which raised \$80,000. The campaign was driven by a significant donation from Candy Bennett and Edwina Lehmann, and the total figure was met as a result of individual donations from an additional 150+ supporters (who we gratefully list on page 78). It is this collective investment that seeded the project, and ACE Open is buoyed by the fact that we have a community who cares about South Australian contemporary artists as much as we do.

Last but not least, we give thanks to the many other supporters and collaborators who have made the project possible. In particular, thank you to Thomas McCammon and Tyrone Ormsby of Have You Seen Him, as well as the ten writers for their incisive and exploratory essays featured in the catalogue. The biggest thank you of them all goes to each of the artists in the exhibition, it's been an enormous pleasure to play an active role in the development of your new work. Thank you for sharing your practice with us.

ARTIST

TUTTI ARTS

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Tutti Arts
by Dr. Belinda Howden

Tutti Arts is an independent inclusive multi-arts organisation with a vision to take the work of artists to the world. This is underpinned by a deep sense of community that seeks to address the social and professional isolation of learning disabled artists. Tutti does this through providing skills development that enables individuals to build strong creative relationships, develop their own collectives and networks, and realise how far they can take their work. Since 2005 Tutti has offered a vibrant, collegial studio environment where new and emerging artists can explore and develop their individual practices in drawing, painting, sculpture and digital media with professional artists. In 2017, Tutti Arts was awarded Arts South Australia's Ruby Award for Sustained Contribution by an Arts Organisation. Of the 300 artists who participate in Tutti's Brighton, Port Adelaide, Mount Barker and Barossa Valley programs, over 60 are visual artists.

In 1997 a small choir of singers gathered in the historic halls of Minda in Brighton, South Australia, marking the humble beginning of Tutti Arts. Taking its name from the Italian musical term meaning *everyone*, today, Tutti Arts is a far-reaching arts organisation, spanning music, performing and visual arts, dance, film and radio, for South Australians with learning or intellectual disabilities.

Tutti Arts established its visual arts program in 2006. The program has since become an industrious, highly professional endeavour involving sixty-five artists drawn from across the state. Its focus is neither therapeutic nor didactic. In fact, artists must apply with a portfolio of works. Rather, the program is striking in its commitment to the careers of its artists. To visit Tutti Arts studios today is to observe a productive and innovative art centre with artists loyally committed to the daily habits, practices and rituals of creative exploration.

Tutti artist Tessa Crathern best typifies this artistic steadfastness, in person and in practice. Crathern attends the studios four days a week, re-training herself to draw with her left hand after suffering tendonitis; her works on paper reflect a diaristic approach. Her obsession with pattern, line, colour and repetition is methodical, each drawing a daily entry in a larger calendar of works. The recent addition of photographs from Crathern's own childhood doubles down on the psychological framework of journaling, where subtle shifts in palette can be read as 'blue days', 'green days' or 'pink days'.

The passage of time is also a focus for James Kurtze. His latest sculptural assemblage; a "kooky time travel rocket clock" inspired by childhood memories, describes Kurtze's recurring nostalgia for the redundant technologies of his youth. His bower-bird-like collection of iPods, outdated iPhones, Nokia flip-phones and VHS paraphernalia reflects Kurtze's fascination for screen media and the moving image. As an avid filmmaker himself, Kurtze is among one of the founding members of *Sit Down Shutup and Watch*, a learning disability-led festival showcasing films and new media made by artists with learning disabilities, and the first of its kind in Australia.





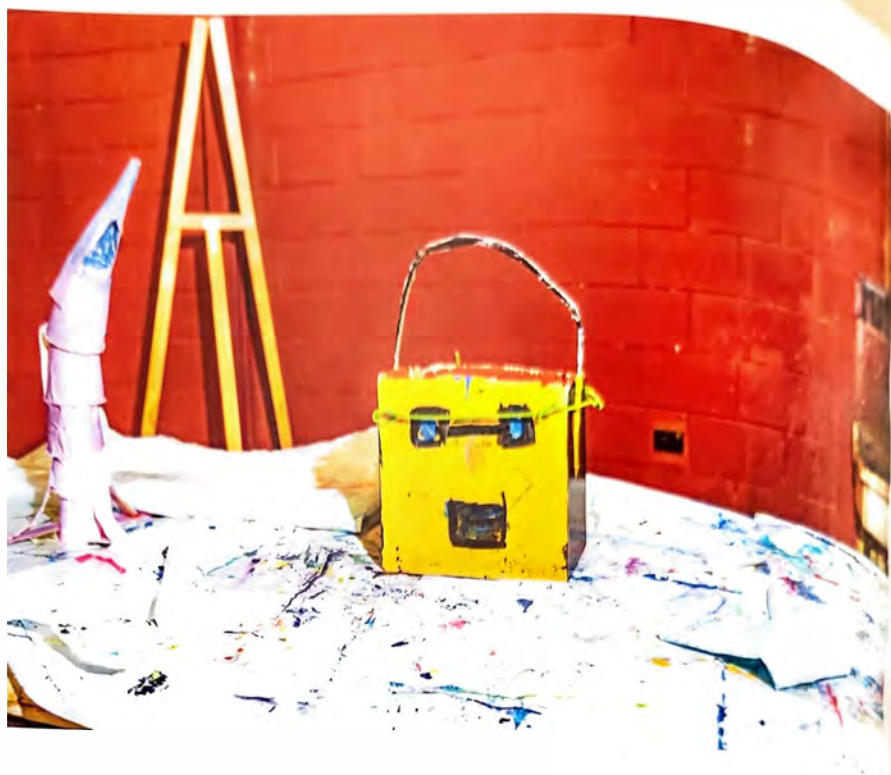
William Gregory has also made a foray into moving image, having translated his pencil drawings into animation. His latest series depicts orgiastic groupings of women in the style of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1484-86). The characters' playful gestures and Gregory's cartoonish handling bring folly and frolic to a long tradition of the reclining female nude.

A suite of watercolour and pen and ink works on paper by Ellese McLindin take on play in a far more abstract sense. McLindin's cartographic treatment of the world around her—suburbia, cityscapes, aeroplanes, domestic gardens—produce dreamlike topographic scenes, playfully surreal in their vibrant colourwashes and soft, fuzzy-edged geometry.

For Jackie Saunders, the world around her is underpinned by her connection to Country. Her mother is an Ngarrindjeri woman and her father a Wirangu man; Saunders describes herself as 'saltwater meets desert'. The cobalt blue and bright orange of Saunders' two large-scale canvases speak to this relationship. Her meditative black brushstrokes twin the surfaces of both paintings, with mark-making that echoes the reverberation of wind across water and sand.









Kurt Bosecke, also working in acrylics, has taken up the subject of prehistoric time. In particular, extinct and exotic birds. The dodo, an Australian masked owl, flamingoes and a cassowary, among others, are brought together in an impossible confluence of birds in his latest large-scale painting, reminiscent of the seventeenth century *wunderkammer* treatment of still-life painting. The collapsed pictorial and temporal space of Bosecke's work, and its competing horizon lines and multiple perspectives, also describe a kind of *horror vacui*—fear of empty space. Paint and posca pens compulsively treat every inch of the canvas, even if simply to apply white paint to a white surface.

The diversity of mediums and subjects explored by Tutti artists reflects the program's artist-led philosophy. On any given day the studios bustle with artists working across painting, printing, digital media, soft sculpture and drawing. Their individual practices reflect this highly contemporary, cross-disciplinary approach; their material innovations arise from its daily structure and stewardship. As the program has matured and expanded over the past fourteen years, it has remained committed to its name. Tutti continues today as a place for artists to gather, to coalesce around the habits and practices of creativity and be supported in the pursuit of their ideas.

Dr. Belinda Howden is an arts writer and researcher, and recent newcomer to Adelaide.

