

wyndham gallery art

EXPERIMENT



Exit Strategy detail by Merryn Trevethan – Acrylic on Perspex

Anne Scott Wilson and
Merryn J Trevethan

OCT 31st to DEC 2ND

Artists are by their nature experimental. They try new things and explore new techniques to create work. Contemporary Art has often been rejected in its own time only to be found centuries later on the covers of interior decorator magazines and used in fashion shoots. What was once shocking and controversial becomes the status quo. But within the closed doors of the studio do artists experiment or are they confined to the conservative trends of their art dealers or the expectations of the art world? Sometimes the very success of an artist early in their career constrains them as they fear that what made them successful must be adhered to and this makes them repetitive and unoriginal to themselves.

William Kentridge, a highly successful Sth African artist claims that the studio should be a safe place to fail and that failure is a vital part of making good work. I would suggest that if you can't fail then in a way you can't succeed because your work is tied to an idea of what is successful and lacks true creativity. Creativity comes from nothing. If to create means to make something new, you must start with nothing or perhaps better said, from an emptiness, from which emerges something that has never been. If it comes from something it is 'changed' not 'created'.



Fly Rhythm 1 by Anne Scott Wilson
Pin Hole Camera Digital Print

This is not to say that we are never influenced by what has gone before. However there is a space in the artist's experience, a space of quiet emptiness from which comes great work. Being able to find the time and environment to experience that space is the challenge of all artists. Time equals money so many artists struggle to balance their need to survive financially with their desire to spend all their time in the studio. The studio is different for every artist. For some it is a traditional artist's studio like Merry Trevethan's, covered in images and objects of creations. A messy place but the mess is fruitful. For others like Anne Wilson it is what she calls her 'beudio' which is her studio in her bedroom where her computer sits and hums while she renders her latest video. For all artists the first space they create in is in their mind.

Ideas float in from who knows where or are stumbled on in the act of doing something else. Washing the dishes or swimming is always good for me, allowing a simple action to release me from purposeful thinking.



Experimental light drawings by Anne Scott Wilson

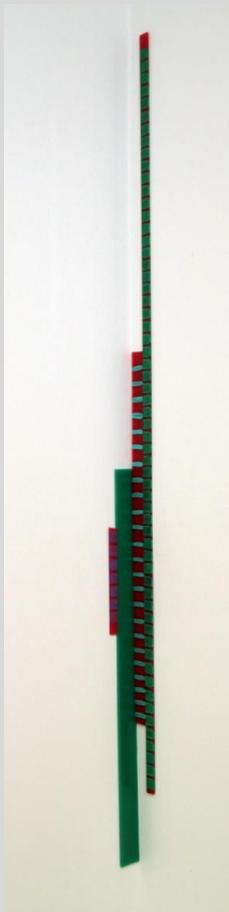
EXPERIMENT is an opportunity to play in a gallery, a privilege usually only available in the one's private studio space. Merryn spent the week turning the downstairs section of the gallery into a painting that surrounds the viewer. Rather than limiting herself to the two dimensional plane she has used the floor, walls and roof in this installation.



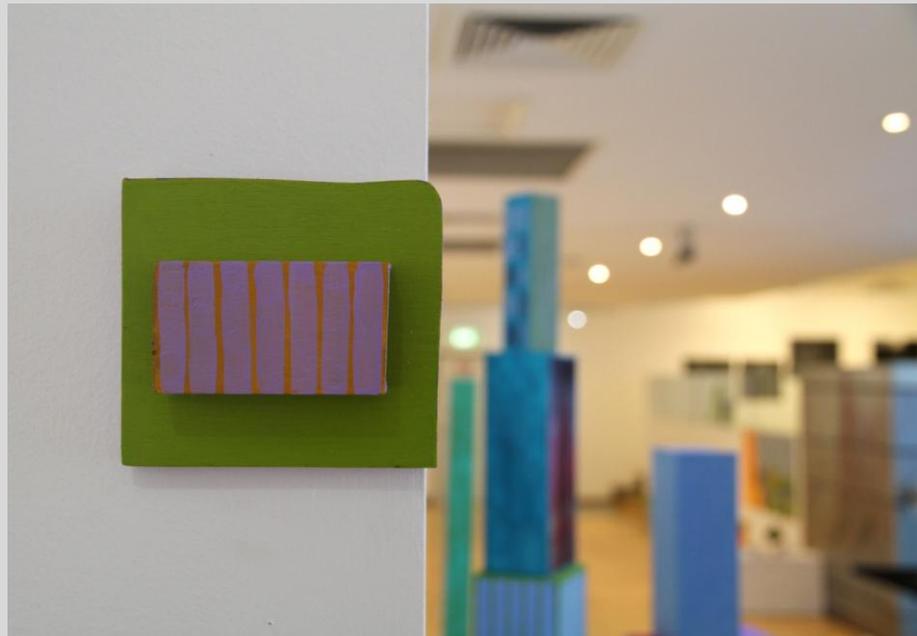
Exit Strategy detail by Merryn J Trevethan
Installation view

Her work, usually presented in two dimensions has eased off the picture plane and expanded the field of vision. Colours catch your eye in odd corners that are usually unnoticed. Forlorn wall spaces next to a red emergency phone, always rejected by the curator, are central sites for a major piece. Viewers are teased up the stairs to

the gallery by corners of acrylic placed outside the gallery confines, as if the artwork has made its escape.



Eyes wide open
by Merryn Trevethan
Acrylic on Perspex



Too big to fail by Merryn J Trevethan
Acrylic on Perspex

She sites one of her influences as ‘a world saturated with imagery’ and says her work attempts ‘to make sense of this flood of visual data’. Space left between the works in the gallery become part of the work. What, in some exhibitions, is the space around a work that focuses the eye on the object, is occupied by Merryn’s composition, making the gallery walls the white shapes of the work.

Peterson and Ring in *Contemporary Painting in Context* discuss this approach to painting as installation

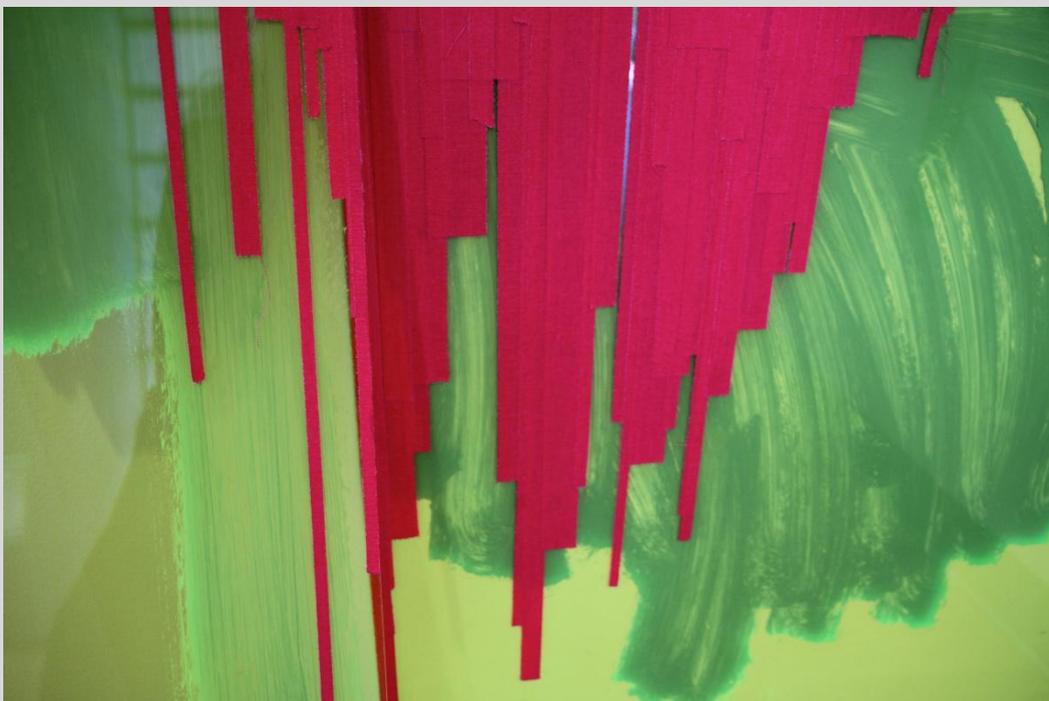
“It invites the viewer to experience and read it as a spatial environment, an installation with countless cross references among its elements and a multiplicity of vistas that overturn traditional pictorial perspective. But at the same time it also urges the viewer to contemplate and read each painting as an individual image. It goes without saying that this requires multitasking and thus a greater than usual oscillation between the details and the whole of a single picture. To conclude, the installational display of paintings turns painting into something more complex, intertextual, contradictory and- last but not least- more spatial than we have been used to” 1.



It couldn't last for long by Merryn J Trevethan
Acrylic on Perspex

Abstraction is akin to the kind of emptiness discussed earlier. It defies meaning and presents the viewer with an experience of being with the work and speculating, divining their own meaning, looking for recognisable clues. For Merryn there is no narrative when she makes the work, it is a case of experimentation, feeling her way through her paintings until it looks right. Bob Nickas puts it this way.

“now with the daily flood of images, when millions can lift up a cell phone and “make a picture”, abstraction can be seen as an antidote.”².



Shares plummet by Merryn J Trevethan
Acrylic on perspex

In contrast to the abstraction that Trevethan explores is the work of Anne Scott Wilson. A photographer and video artist, she is interested in the relationship between analogue and digital technology and how time is mediated differently by these two

mediums. Her earlier career as a dancer at the Queensland Ballet informs her connection to the body in these works. Using a pin hole camera to record images she is replicating the technology of the human eye. With no interest in reproducing reality, as was the intention of the early pinhole camera users, she explores the lens less camera as a conduit for her bodies experience of the world rather than her eye. Holding her camera against her body she captures movement and light in images that could be a Lloyd Rees painting rather than a photograph.



Fly Rhythm 5 by Anne Scott Wilson
Pin Hole Camera Digital Print

Strangely Scott Wilson dreams of being a painter and being able to reproduce an image with the skill and technique of an old master, however her painterly images would not belong to the world if she had mastered that technique. Elizabeth Day in her catalogue essay for 'Inside Out #2' a concurrent exhibition to this one puts a philosophical perspective on Anne's work.

'I am trying to create a sense of the phenomenological presence in Wilson's works that expertly manoeuvres itself and finds a way through some advanced technological processes in a new and original treatment of the 'painted' image'.³

An accomplished artist with countless exhibitions to her name both in Australia and overseas, Anne has not chosen the route of secure sales given by the certainty of consistent work. She has bravely continued to extend her practice into new territories which makes for intellectually rigorous work that has a ring of integrity to it. This suite of works has come from experimentation with the technology from the late 19th century, the pin hole camera. Anne made a large portable pin hole camera to show her students at Australian Catholic University the logic of the eye and its relationship to photography. From this experiment she became interested in the technique for her own work and her ongoing interest in light, movement and the body. Using her latest edition Canon 5D mark 11 she discarded the lens and with a

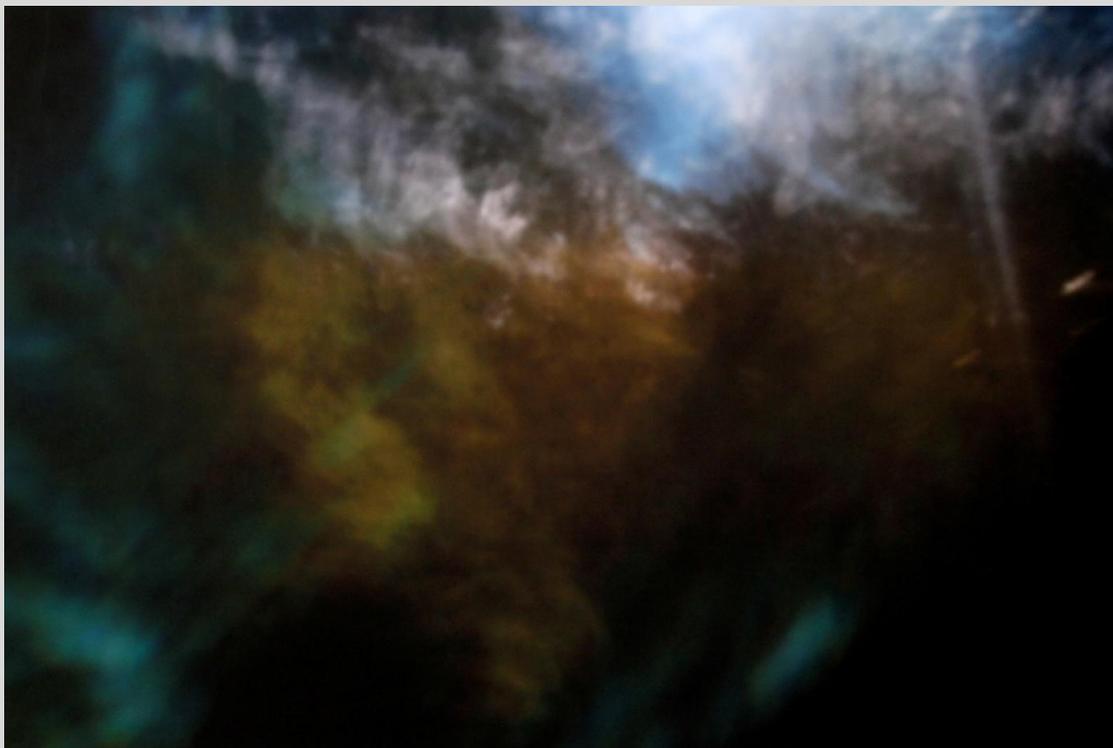
special 'pin holed' lens cap made these works capturing movement and light over time.

'By using lens-less photography, strong connections are in turn forged between time, space and movement, all of which relies upon the maker's bodily awareness to interpret light and space. Pinhole images are then direct representations of light recorded over a period of time. 'Drawing' a moment, the unknown becomes an important focus in the process, bringing the artist and viewer closer to a point of reflection.'

The work of these two artists in EXPERIMENT is very different, however they both push the boundary of their practice, risking failure to create new and exciting work. We can only thank them for their courage and wait a few years before their work is part of the mainstream. Artists often lead the way and do so without any acknowledgment of their role in society. I have often wondered what the world would be like if the people involved in the arts went on strike. We would have no music, television, films, fashion, interior decorators, magazines, designers and the list goes on. In fact we would live in a grey world with little but the colour of money to distract us from the daily grind.

Megan Evans
Visual Art Curator

1. Peterson, Anne Ring, Contemporary Painting in Context, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010, p.128
2. Bob Nickas, Painting abstraction: New Elements in painting. Phaidon
3. Elizabeth Day, Catalogue Essay for InsideOut #2 Published 2012 © Post Office Gallery, University of Ballarat



Fly Rhythm 5 by Anne Scott Wilson
Pin Hole Camera Digital Print

