

## Road Trip

Juz Kitson, Fiona Lowry, Guy Maestri,  
William Mackinnon

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19 April – 14 May 2016

*Road Trip* is a group exhibition featuring the work of significant Australian artists Juz Kitson, Fiona Lowry, William Mackinnon and Guy Maestri. The show considers the long held presence of the 'road trip' in the Australian psyche and how it shapes our experience of the landscape.

The utterance of the phrase 'road trip' immediately conjures visions of escape, adventure and new horizons, but can also suggest disruption and potential adversity. Although lured by the beauty and freedom of the natural environment, we can sense the danger and mystery that our sometimes hostile terrain presents.

Contemporary engagement with the landscape is often mediated via the lens of the car window, which is evidenced in the works produced by these artists. Each artist in the show uniquely interprets the premise of the 'road trip' to produce a new series of artworks.

Juz Kitson's ceramic sculptural installations are exercises in contemporary shamanism; her mystical, often bodily sculptures are the result of her wanderings and travels through nature. She performs a kind of alchemy on her materials, which include porcelain, wax, bone, silk, animal pelts and hair, to produce her seductively captivating artworks.

Fiona Lowry's practice traverses portraiture and landscape, creating works that capture the beauty and haunting nature of the Australian landscape. Utilising soft pastel tones and an airbrushing technique, Lowry's distinctive works are inspired by both history and place.

William Mackinnon has represented the road in his paintings for many years and it is a key symbol in his oeuvre. His interest was initially sparked by memories from childhood, but has come to stand as a metaphor for how it feels to be in the world today. "I love being in the car careering through the landscape, with the radio or music on, in my little bubble, looking through the screen on the way somewhere. It fills me with sensations and ideas. It is like a little road movie every time."

Guy Maestri is known for his bold depictions of the landscape, which are painted en plein air and entails the artist translating scenes directly outdoors with rapid strokes of his brush. Maestri's strong sense of respect for the natural environment has become apparent in his portrayal of road kill in recent series.

*Road Trip* brings together these four acclaimed artists to present audiences with an opportunity to engage with their work at Jan Murphy Gallery.

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## Juz Kitson

These collections are a continuation of a major body of work, *Outside the Symbolic Order*, exhibited as part of 2016 Adelaide Biennial. The wall installations are all-encompassing and immersive coming together to create a potent taxonomic mix of materials collected while 'on the road' in the Australian landscape, from Tibooburra to Broken Hill to Sackville NSW and the streets of Jingdezhen China, the porcelain capital of the world.

These works explore the transience and impermanence of life, beauty and the grotesque through disconnection and re-examination of the fragmented body and objectification. Objects mimic the organic; they are soft yet stark, rounded though hard, warm and welcoming, the materials oscillate between strength and vulnerability of the human and animal condition. Forms delicately dangle, protrude and pulsate from the walls. I intend for these works to exist on their own terms, to invite the viewer in and challenge their perceptions. I want them to breath, to pulse, to extrude life.

Combining porcelain with animal pelts, hides, antlers, bone, tusks and husks along with wax, to push the boundaries of materialism and challenge the notion of how ceramics has been viewed in the past. These arrangements are exquisite and unsettling object meditations on the intimate relationship between being and non-being. All materials used within my practice have an inanimate quality about them, though by re-contextualising and re-inventing them it gives material a spark of life and new shapes start to emerge, continuing to provoke and question individual notions and celebrate the medium whilst unsettling and captivating the viewer.

## Fiona Lowry

A few years ago a friend who lives in the high country north of Jindabyne mentioned a tree near his place that has wild dogs hanging from it. I had never heard of anything like it and had to see it for myself. The drive to the tree takes you past the Gungarlin River a popular picnic spot for the early settlers and then onto Snowy Plain road where the landscape is silent until you see the dogs hanging in different states of decay, some are mummified and remain hanging for months before falling into the heap of other bones that scatter the ground. Dog trees go back to the earliest days of European settlement and this old Eucalypt has been in use for more than 60 years. The tree on a remote road in an otherwise magnificent landscape operates as a flash frame to the dark side of the Australian psyche, reflecting the foundational trauma and pushes against a romantic vision of the Australian landscape.

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### William Mackinnon

The road for me is like the gum tree or Kelly was for Nolan. It is part of my language that I have been working with for over a decade. It initially came from my life as a child moving between divorced parents. A road charged with emotion, both sadness and excitement. The road is a dynamic symbol or metaphor that allows me to communicate a lot of how it feels to be in the world today. People seem to understand those feelings of being alone in a car driving through the night. Seeing what is just in front. "I love being in the car careering through the landscape, with the radio or music on, in my little bubble, looking through the screen on the way somewhere. It fills me with sensations and ideas. It is like a little road movie everytime."

### Guy Maestri

I am currently completing one of my longer road trips, a residency in Victoria's Western District. The once "wool capital of the world", it is still a highly productive food bowl, and evidently, has been so for some twenty thousand years. The earliest evidence of farming on earth exists in this area. Farming has pulled the landscape into line. Has cleared it, prepared it and dressed it's soils. It is bucolic in a way, but with ancient undertones.