



Hannah Bertram

The Aisle of the Dead: Dust Rags

2015

Fourteen dusty rags used to clean one corridor of art works in the La Trobe University Museum of Art (LUMA) collections, displayed in Op-shop frames

Courtesy of the artist

Hannah Bertram

The Aisle of the Dead: Looking Performance

2015

Performance: 400 hundred artworks thoughtfully viewed

Installation: Desmond Norman *Isles of the Dead* (1966), oil on board, 61.3cm x 86.5cm. PowerPoint projection loop duration 20:44

Courtesy of the artist

Deidre But-Husaim

2015

The Special Goodness (Del Kathryn Barton)

Oil on maple panel

Courtesy of the artist and Hill Smith Gallery

Deidre But-Husaim

The Turn

2015

Oil on maple panel

Courtesy of the artist and Hill Smith Gallery

Daniel Boyd

Up in smoke tour #13 a + b

2011

Watercolour and archival glue on photocopy in Natural History Museum skull box

Courtesy of the artist and STATION, Melbourne

Daniel Boyd

Up in smoke tour #8

2011

Archival glue on photocopy in Natural History Museum skull box

Courtesy of the artist and STATION, Melbourne

Victoria Reichelt

Medical History

2014

Oil on linen

Courtesy of the private collection of Jane and Phil de Fegely

Victoria Reichelt

Flood 3

2014

Oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY + Dianne Tanzer Gallery

Penny Byrne

Jack and Errol – Melbourne Museum Bower Birds

2011

Porcelain, assorted items, epoxy resin, glass and wooden dome

Courtesy of the artist

Penny Byrne

Iceberg Water

2017

Bottled Iceberg water, porcelain Polar Bear, Swarovski teardrop crystal, epoxy resin

Courtesy of the artist

Survival Bias

Daniel Boyd

Penny Byrne

Deidre But-Husaim

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Victoria Reichelt

In the celebratory glow of success, under the bright spotlights of public attention, we admire our winners with an enthusiastic flair. We raise a toast to the inevitable outcome of quality and skill, happy to know that the ribbons, the medals and the trophies have found their way into the hands of the deserving victors. We know that trials and tribulations have been undertaken, but in the end, the cream has risen to the top and we can confidently rest our laurel wreaths on the crown of the triumphant.

While there is a time and a place to enjoy such achievements, there comes a corresponding obligation to assess the veracity of these victories. When the gateway to success is guarded by human choice it is also subject to human flaw. When the pathway of decision-making runs horizontally and vertically through institutional structures, the likelihood of inefficiencies and detours grows with every turn.

Survival Bias offers ways of understanding this in the context of art collections. Five Australian artists from across the continent provide us with ways of unpacking the nature of collecting, administration, and the act of representing our valuable cultural objects. The artworks here are loaded with information about how we look at art, what sort of objects we choose to collect, how we care for art, the aesthetics of order, the colonial influence on ownership and an array of spiralling concerns about having, holding and honouring. Indeed the exhibition itself, sitting as it does in parallel to a larger university collection show across the road, is a shadowed counterpoint to the floodlights of museum-grade institutionalism.

The title of this exhibition comes from the notion that we sometimes overlook things because we focus on the stories of success and miss the value in analysing failures or absences. *Survival Bias* is the mistake of concentrating on the people or things that made it past a process of selection and ignoring those that did not, typically because of their lack of visibility. Through the ideas in each of the artist's work and through the selection of these particular artists, this exhibition opens questions about imbalance, distortion, control and choice.

In this darkened space, the void of contemplative absences comes alive in cleaning-cloths of dust. The authority of audience is re-staged in institutional architectures as watcher becomes watched and image consumes consumer. The power structures of taxonomic control are released from archival skull boxes through collisions of ancient language and technological reproduction. Bureaucratic beauty balances compositional order against the entropic inevitability of natural forces. And narrative nuance is divined in a moment of temporal disjuncture in the marriage of contemporary commentary with cabinet curiosity.

We would like to thank the artists for their trust, and their works of beauty and intelligence; the artists' galleries for their assistance; and for the private lenders for their generosity.