

Petr Hrel
Borges sequel 1977-78 (detail)

Andrea Blundell / Nadine
Christiansen / Nick Stephenson
Mute/geoman/Zone three 2000

Guan Wei
Floating No.46 1998

Philip Hunter
Untitled 1965

Fictions
Presented by Monash University Museum of Art
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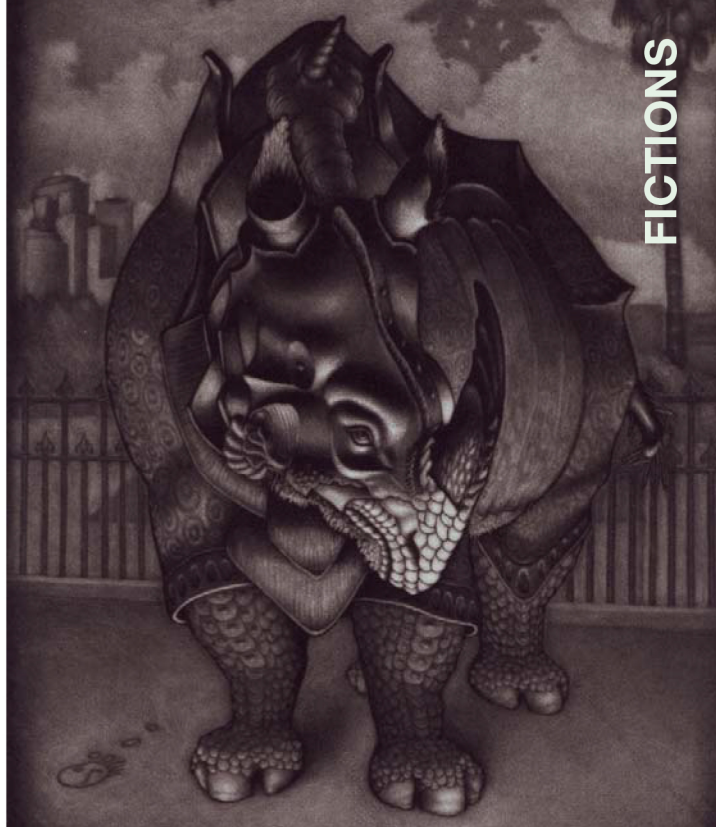
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Moya McKenna
Come and go 2005 (film stills)

Cover
Gregory Harrison
Das Einhorn 2007



FICTIONS

Kirrily Hammond

In 1515 Albrecht Dürer created an image of a rhinoceros that was to be copied and emulated for the next four centuries. Dürer's image was in fact, pure fiction, as the rhinoceros had not been seen in Europe since the third century AD.¹ The distinctive ornamentation of his amour-plated animal with a small spiral horn on its back was based on a loose description from a Portuguese newsletter.² Remarkably, his magnificent, albeit fictitious, rhinoceros remained in German schoolbooks until the early 20th century.

Gregory Harrison extends this rich history by bringing Dürer's rhino to life in 21st century Melbourne. In delicate tones, his mezzotint *Das Einhorn* 2007 imagines the beast facing the viewer, lit dramatically from below. Standing in a city parkland, the rhino is a lost relic of an exotic past. A companion print is Harrison's own imaginary creature, *La Licorne* 2007, which is drawn from Musée de Cluny's tapestry *La Dame à la Licorne*. The unicorn has long been the subject of mythological tales; here it rests in front of Collingwood grain silos, with a Rorschach inkblot hovering in the clouds above. Harrison's eerie and vivid imagery brings inner dreams and collective tales to life.

Filmed with a Super 8 camera, Moya McKenna's stop-motion animation reveals the secret machinations of objects in her studio. These are the subjects of McKenna's paintings, brought to life in defiance of *nature morte*. A pearly bead transforms into a mannequin's head, which then disappears into a set of drawers assisted by disembodied arms, sinister in their stilted movements. Otherworldly and eccentric, McKenna's film shares an aesthetic sensibility with Czech filmmaker Jan Svankmajer; their unexpected and surreal juxtapositions of animated objects are rich fodder for the imagination.

This idea is played out literally in a suite of *Exquisite Corpse* drawings from the Monash University Collection.³ Following the early 1920s Surrealist game of artistic collaboration, several people compose a drawing or phrase collectively on folded paper, whereby none of the participants have any idea of the nature of the preceding contribution. In this case, three individual images are assembled to create one composition, with unexpected and striking results. The artists here include Andrea Blundell/Nadine Christensen/Nick Stephenson; Julia Gorman/Leah Schnaars/Sarina Lirosi; and Matthew Johnson/Philip Hunter/Guy Benfield. All have collaborated to create images which tell their own stories, drawing surprising conclusions and

connections.

Whilst living in Paris between 1977 and 1978, Petr Herel created an extraordinary series of etchings titled *Borges sequel*, inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' *Fictions* (1944). Rather than directly illustrate Borges' short stories (which in themselves are 'notes on imaginary books'⁴), the prints act as a sequel to the texts. They demonstrate Borges' evocative prose and express the artist's purely imaginative responses which range from the macabre to the overtly erotic. Demonic creatures populate the surreal images, as genitalia are transformed into dancing birds and avorting stringed instruments. These technically beautiful works incorporate delicate scratches and loose sketches in the borders, which are perhaps a form of notation or automatic drawing, in direct response to Borges. Herel's is a refined aesthetic in which the details are quietly subversive.

Precursors of Herel's distinctive imagery can be traced back to the grotesque imagery of the 15th century, when the decorative ornamentation of texts evolved, leading to the invention of fantastic creatures that combined human and animal elements.⁵ The collages of Nick Mangan, and the collaborative works of Gracia Haby and Louise Jennison, also follow this lineage. Constructed from disparate found imagery, and often embellished with ink or graphite, these works feature bizarre creatures, organic structures and improbable narrative sequences. Haby and Jennison's artist's books draw the viewer into an intimate, alternative world of inquisitive bears and birds that rule Paris.

Whether through studio props, found images or prose, artists draw on a myriad of sources to provide inspiration for their work. It is the way in which those materials are translated and reconfigured that is here of interest. Revelling in the freedom of artistic invention, the works in *Fictions* are brought together for the ways in which they suspend our everyday realities and prompt contemplation of the nature of creativity and imagination.

¹ Giulia Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his legacy*, The British Museum Press, London, 2002, p.283.

² *Op cit.*, p.285.

³ These works were donated to the Monash University Collection by the Bendigo Art Gallery following the exhibition *Celebrating the Exquisite Corpse*, curated by Anonda Bell in 2000.

⁴ Jorge Luis Borges, 'The garden of forking paths', *Fictions*, 1944, in Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, Andrew Hurly (trans.), Penguin, London 1999, p.67.

⁵ Antony Griffiths, *The Grotesque: Ornamental Prints from the British Museum*, South Bank Centre, London, 1995.



Peter Ellis
Homage à Picabia 1980

Nick Mangan
Untitled #11 2006

Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison
Rouen; just passing through 2007 (detail)



List of works

Andrea Blundell / Nadine Christensen / Nick Stephenson

Mute/geoman/Zone 2000
Pegasus print, gouache, office labels

Julia Gorman / Leah Schnaars / Sarina Lirosi

—You'll never see my body/Bootlegs 2000
watercolour, gouache, mixed media, inkjet print

Matthew Johnson / Philip Hunter / Guy Benfield

Sage/Two spleens/Sneaker pimp 2000
graphite, pigment, gouache, pen, pencil
A suite of collaborative drawings from the exhibition *Celebrating the Exquisite Corpse*
each: 70.0 x 50.0 cm
Monash University Collection
Gift of the Bendigo Art Gallery, 2008

Peter Ellis

Homage à Picabia 1980
etching on paper
43.2 x 37.5 cm (plate); 81.0 x 60.5 cm (sheet)
Edition 6/10
Monash University Collection
Gift of Professor Jenny Zimmer, 1994

Peter Ellis / Petr Herel / Miroslav Holub / Geoffrey Ricardo / Louise Weaver

Traversers 2 1993
aquarelles printed by Martin King, Australian Print Workshop
laser prints produced by Bashir Baraki, Pro-colour, Collingwood
text set in Monotype Garamond by Les Petersen, Ratt Press, Canberra
Designed by Petr Herel for the Centre for the Development of Artist's Books and Limited Editions, Monash University and the Australian Print Workshop
61 pages, each 24.0 x 24.0 cm
Edition 4/20
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

Gregory Harrison

Das Einhorn 2007
mezzotint (2nd state)
artist's proof, edition of 22
22.5 x 17.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Guan Wei

Floating No.46 1998
synthetic polymer paint on card
22.5 x 31.0 cm
Monash University Collection
Purchase 1999

Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison

By the pricking of my claws 2005
lithographic offset print hand coloured with pencil, pen and collage
8 folded pages, 18.8 x 18.8 cm
Printed by Redwood Prints
Edition of 16
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

The dubious clue; extinct animals sing the blues 2005
lithographic offset print, hand coloured with pencil, pen, fluorescent marker and collage
8 folded pages, 14.8 x 18.8 cm
Printed by Redwood Prints
Edition 3/16
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

If all the stars go out, I'll follow my nose home 2007

four colour lithographic offset prints and collage
portfolio of 8 pages, each 29.7 x 21.0 cm
Printed by Redwood Prints
Edition 2/10
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

Rouen; just passing through 2007

Found book (n.d.), collage, pastel and pencil
32 pages, 11.0 x 17.7 cm
Unique state
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

Das Einhorn 2007

mezzotint (2nd state)
artist's proof, edition of 22
22.5 x 17.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist

La Licorne 2007
mezzotint (2nd state)
artist's proof, edition of 22
22.5 x 17.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Petr Herel

Untitled 1975
pencil on paper
50.0 x 35.0 cm
Monash University Collection
Gift of Professor Jenny Zimmer, 1994

Borges sequel 1977-78

etching, softground and open-bite on BFK Rives
Folio of 10 prints, each: 50.2 x 38.0 cm (sheet), 28.2 x 22.7 cm (plate)
Published by Rudy Kornat Art Gallery, Sydney, October 1982
Printed by Robert Dutrou, Atelier Morsang, Paris
Edition 53/55
Monash University Collection
Gift of Sophie Herel, 2008

Philip Hunter

Drawing No.10 1998
charcoal and corite pencil on paper
60.5 x 76.5 cm (sheet)
Monash University Collection
Purchase, 2002

Untitled 1985

charcoal, pastel and chalk on paper
49.0 x 64.5 cm (sheet)
Monash University Collection
Gift of Dr David Rosenthal, 2002

Nick Mangan

Untitled #11 2006
collage and mixed media on watercolour paper
83.5 x 64.0 cm
Michael Buxton Collection, Melbourne

Untitled #10 2006

collage and mixed media on watercolour paper
83.5 x 110.0 cm
Michael Buxton Collection, Melbourne

Untitled #3 2006
paper collage, ink and acrylic on watercolour paper
51.0 x 41.0 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

Untitled (Mindgames) 2007

mixed media and collage on paper
Three works, each: 51.0 x 41.0 cm (framed)
Private collection, Melbourne

Moya McKenna

Come and go 2005
Super 8 transferred to DVD
colour, silent, 3 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc

Come and go 2005

oil on canvas
50.0 x 50.0 cm
Collection of Peter and Mary Nicholson, Melbourne

James Morrison

The island 2001
oil on linen
100.0 x 100.0 cm
Monash University Collection
Purchase, 2002

David Noonan

Untitled 2005
etching, photo-etching, spit bite and aquatint, printed in 3 colours from two copper plates and one aluminium photo-etching plate
Printed by Martin King at Australian Print Workshop
64.0 x 45.0 cm (plate); 76.0 x 56.0 cm (sheet)
Edition 15/45
Monash University Collection
Purchase, 2006

Ruth Waller

The UnNatural History of Species Lost # 1991
charcoal on paper
83.5 x 110.0 cm
Monash University Collection
Purchase, 1993