

JONATHAN NICHOLS (b. 1956, Australia)

Jonathan Nichols is an artist, independent curator and writer born and raised in Canberra and based in Melbourne. He began painting in the early 1990s after studying sculpture at the ANU and the University of NSW. Jonathan's paintings are most often based on figures he paints directly from the computer screen in the studio. The figures might be taken from photographs he has taken himself or images found on the internet, but there are many mediating stages in the painting process that follows. Jonathan is concerned with a painting's painterly character and its particular history. He builds a muted palette of tonal browns and greens, blue greys and warmer hues, and his works on paper, canvas and fabric are generally small to middle sized. Figures are never larger than life, and this rule or gesture in his practice links to the general scale of his painting and the painterly movements within each work.

In the past, Jonathan's works have been described as 'seeing at a distance' – paintings where the world is seen at a distance. More recently, the works have transitioned. Figures and paintings are no longer 'real' scenes but rather suggest that paintings can themselves be living models of the world. For example, his most recent works join the figures of shop mannequins with figurative images he sources from the history of painting. The finished paintings collage strange hybrid shapes and hierarchies of figure and painting relations. In a reference to his time living in Singapore, Jonathan uplifts certain painterly gestures in the work of Chinese artist Wu Guanzhong, whose work is on permanent display at the National Gallery Singapore.

In 2022 Jonathan published a book of interviews with six artists (including Boedi Widjaja from Singapore and Noor Mahnun Mohamed from Malaysia) titled *Walking with Ghosts: Six Conversations about Painting*. The book unfolds as a story about painters and painting that reflects the conversations that happen in studios and between painters themselves.

Early in his career, Jonathan cofounded Melbourne artist-run initiatives The Green Door (2005), Lovers (1998–99 and 2014) and Stripp (1996–98). Recent curatorial projects include Learning to Leave at the VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne (2014). Jonathan has been invited to curate an exhibition of Southeast Asian contemporary painters at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) later this year.

Over a period of 12 months in 2012–13 he was an artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan, Kuala Lumpur, and for six years until the end of 2019 he lived in Singapore. In late 2022 Jonathan submitted his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertation to the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

Jonathan has participated in group exhibitions in Australia at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, National Portrait Gallery, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Geelong Gallery and Bendigo Art Gallery, among others. He has held solo exhibitions in Kuala Lumpur, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

EDUCATION

- 2018–2023 Doctor of Philosophy, Victoria College of the Arts, University of Melbourne
- 1989 Graduate Diploma of Arts in Visual Arts, NSW Institute of the Arts (now UNSW Art & Design), Sydney
- Lyle Cullen Memorial Award for Visual Arts, Institute of the Arts, Canberra (now ANU School of Art & Design)
- Emerging Artist Award—Sculpture, Institute of the Arts, Canberra (now ANU School of Art & Design)
- 1985–88 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)—Sculpture, Institute of the Arts, Canberra (now ANU School of Art & Design)

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 (forthcoming) Yeo Workshop, Singapore
- 2022 *Walking with Ghosts*, VCA Artspace Gallery, University of Melbourne
- 2014 *Frank Gardiner*, Lovers, Melbourne
- 2013 *18th Rimbun Dahan residency exhibition*, Rimbun Dahan, Kuala Lumpur
- 2008 Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
- All I know about her*, Helen Maxwell Gallery, Canberra
- 2007 *paradise*, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
- 2005 *painting*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
- 2003 *new painting*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
- 2002 *paintings*, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

One painting and seven watercolours, Photospace Gallery,
ANU School of Art, Canberra

- 2001 *forgetting pictures*, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 2000 *anonymous pictures*, 1st Floor Artists' and Writers' Space,
Melbourne
- 1999 *Mary, Mary*, Lovers, Melbourne
- 1997 *whiteboard*, Stripp, Melbourne
- 1996 *prey*, Stripp, Melbourne
- 1994 Studio 12, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 1992 *Good intentions are inevitably punished*, First Draft West,
Sydney
- Genuflexion*, WINDOW, Sydney
- 1990 *Explaining our pictures*, EMR Gallery, Sydney
- 1989 *Return*, City Art Institute Sculpture Studio Gallery, NSW
Institute of the Arts, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Innate*, Yeo Workshop, Singapore
- 2017 *Patrick Pound: The great exhibition*, NGV Australia, Melbourne
- 2016 *Painting. More painting*, curated by Max Delany, Hannah
Mathews and Annika Christensen, Australian Centre for
Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- 2013 *Imprint: Growing up planned*, curated by Virginia Rigney,

Canberra Contemporary Art Space

- 2011 *Schnittmengen/Intersections*, Emmanuel Walderdorff Galerie, Cologne
- 2010 *Present tense: An imagined grammar of portraiture in the digital age*, curated by Michael Desmond, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
Fletcher Jones art prize, Geelong Gallery, Victoria
- 2009 *Figuration now*, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
The Shilo project, curated by Chris McAuliffe, the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne
Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
Arthur Guy memorial painting prize, Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria
- 2008 *Selected gallery artists*, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
Big group, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
- 2007 *New deities: Art and the cult of celebrity*, curated by Catherine Wolfhagen, Devonport Regional Gallery, Tasmania; Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney, and tour
- 2006 *New objectivity*, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne
Salon, Bett Gallery, Hobart
Reflections in a golden eye, curated by Kate Barber and Jan Duffy, Linden—St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne
ABN AMRO emerging artist award, ABN AMRO, Melbourne and Sydney
- 2005 *'I'm travelling light' ... 'No, no, you don't travel light'*, curated by Deborah Ostrow, Spacement, Melbourne
Gallery show, Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne

Re:thinking, curated by Quentin Sprague, Bus Projects, Melbourne

Four dudes, Dudespace, Melbourne

Salon des refusés, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney

Into the quadrangle, RMIT Project Space and Spare Room, Melbourne

Tales of the city, curated by Claire Mitchell, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

2004

Fletcher Jones art prize, Geelong Gallery, Victoria

The decadence of the nude, Ocular Lab, Melbourne

2003

Redlands Westpac art prize 2003, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney

Scratch the surface, curated by Lisa Byrne, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, and Logan Regional Art Gallery, Queensland

Heat, curated by Kevin Wilson, Noosa Regional Gallery, Queensland

1st Floor final, 1st Floor Artists' and Writers' Space, Melbourne

Modern portraits, curated by Kirsten Rann, Ord Minnett Gallery, Melbourne

2002

Art on paper II, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

2002 Geelong contemporary art prize, Geelong Gallery, Victoria

The Robert Jacks drawing prize, Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria

ATM: Intersections of technology, art and life, curated by David O'Halloran, Glen Eira City Gallery, Melbourne

2001

Afterglow: Painting now, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

Love don't live here anymore, Blaugrau, Sydney

Mary Mary fire walk with me (collaboration with Raafat Ishak), West Space, Melbourne

- 2000 *Paintings are ace*, curated by Clare Firth-Smith, Linden—St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne
- 1999 *Handle with care*, curated by Lisa Young and Megan Evans, Steps Gallery, Melbourne
- 1998 *Sundowners* (collaboration with David Franzke and David Jolly), Stripp, Melbourne
- 1997 *Wer schützt uns vor Hansi?*, KR D, Cologne
- 1996 *Snow show*, Stripp, Melbourne
- Fuss*, Galerie Constantinople, Queanbeyan, NSW
- Things in you (watch your business)*, curated by Bala Starr, Basement, Melbourne
- Abstraction now*, curated by Simeon Kronenberg, Geelong Gallery, Victoria, and tour
- 1995 *0055 29334 Art hotline*, curated by Mark Titmarsh, Performance Space, Sydney
- Carlos Ras*, Studio 12, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 1994 *John Doe*, curated by Louise Paramor, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- Zac Patafta*, 108–110 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- Group show*, Arts Victoria, Melbourne
- 'High heels' or 'The best shoes in Paris'*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 1993 *(un)authorized duplication*, curated by Anna Nervegna and Roisin O'Dwyer, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- Fascination*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- Emergency*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

Via crucis Australis, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

1992

Liebe und seele, Campbell Street Studio, Sydney

0055 29334 Art hotline, curated by Mark Titmarsh, Bond Store, Sydney

Supermart, Blaxland Gallery, Melbourne

1991

The decade show, curated by Julie Ewington, Canberra School of Art

Drawings, EMR Gallery, Sydney

1990

Art dock: Contemporary Australian art, curated by Annie Roses, Noumea

1989

Social romance, EMR Gallery, Sydney

Fresh art, curated by Felicity Fenner, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney

4 sculptors, First Draft, Sydney

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2014

Curator | *Learning to leave*, Trevelyan Clay, Eliza Dyball, Tim Johnson, David Jolly, Michelle Mantsio, Moya McKenna, John Spiteri, Anca Rujoiu, Quentin Sprague and Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, the University of Melbourne

2012–15

Editor (2012–13) | stamm.com.au online publishing project

2012

Curator | *S.A.A.P.*, Trevelyan Clay, Oscar Perry and Kristina Tsoulis-Reay, Lowrise Projects, Melbourne

2009

Curator | *Mac*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

Curator (with Hannah Mathews) | *Alicia Frankovich: Lungeing chambon*, Beyond the Green Door, Melbourne

Curator (with Hannah Mathews) | *Bradd Westmoreland's wall*

painting, Beyond the Green Door, Melbourne

Curator (with Hannah Mathews) | *Deb*, Beyond the Green Door, Melbourne

2004 Curator (with Raafat Ishak) | *The decadence of the nude*, Karen Burns, Raafat Ishak, Jonathan Nichols, Sangeeta Sandrasegar, Vivienne Shark LeWitt, Lara Travis and Stephen Zagala, Ocular Lab, Melbourne

1998–99 Curator (with David Jolly) | exhibitions and events with Jon Campbell and Adawo, Nadine Christensen, Raafat Ishak and Ocular Lab, Andrew McQualter, Derek O'Connor, Anne Schneider, Cameron Robbins, Michael Stevenson and Slave Pianos, Lovers, Melbourne

1997 Curator | *Feeling machines*, Lyell Barry, Nadine Christensen, Robert Cleworth, Raafat Ishak, David Jolly, Mandy Ord, Jacinta Schreuder and Darren Wardle, Stripp, Melbourne

Curator (with David Jolly) | *'High Heels' or 'The Best shoes in Paris'*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

Curator | *Zac Patafta*, 108–110 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

1993 Curator | *Fascination*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

Curator | *Emergency*, studio exhibition, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne

GRANTS AND ARTIST RESIDENCIES

2012–13 Artist residency | Rimbun Dahan, Kuala Lumpur

2010 Studio residency (Liverpool) | Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

2003 Artist residency | Caulfield Grammar School, Melbourne

2002 Artist residency | ANU School of Art & Design, Canberra

- 1998 New work grant (with Stephen Zagala, to research ni-Vanuatu sand-drawing) | Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council
- 1997 Studio residency (Los Angeles) | Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council
- 1993–95 Studio residency | Gertrude Street Artists' Spaces, Melbourne
- 1994 Project grant | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- 1991 Project grant (field trip to urban South Pacific) | Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council

PUBLISHED WRITING BY JONATHAN NICHOLS

Painting Politics — Jon Chan in conversation with Jonathan Nichols, exh. cat. iPRECINATION, Singapore

Walking with Ghosts: Six Conversations about Painting. John Spiteri, Boedi Widjaja and Audrey Koh, Christoph Preussmann, Noor Mahnun Mohamed, Moya McKenna, David Jolly.

Talking with Jonathan Nichols. Published in association with the exhibition *Walking with Ghosts*, VCA Artspace Gallery, University of Melbourne, 2022

'[Hany Armanious: Relative nobody](#)', *Fifty artworks from the Monash University Collection*, Monash University Museum of Art, 2017.

'Walking the slow angles' (with Quentin Sprague), *Learning to leave*, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, the University of Melbourne, 2014.

Essays, interviews and reviews of contemporary art, published by stamm.com.au:

'[Against nature—Charles Lim and “Sea state”](#)', Nov. 2015.

'[Free action: Marco Fusinato](#)', Sept. 2015.

'[Taking notes](#)' (Terry Smith, *Speculations on anonymous materials* exhibition, Boris Groys), Aug. 2015.

'[Modern zombies](#)', July 2015.

'[Chua Mia Tee's Singapore](#)', Dec. 2013.

'[Xmas: Jordan Marani](#)', Oct. 2013.

'[John Aslanidis—New York noise](#)', Aug. 2013.

'[Default: “Everyday rebellions” \[Emily Cormack, curator\] and Frances Stark](#)', June 2013.

'[The cultivator: Hou Hanru](#)', May 2013.

'[New ACCA](#)', Apr. 2013.

'[Group portrait: Atul Dodiya](#)', Mar. 2013.

'[Traumatic acts and therapeutic structures: A few ideas in, around and associated with Stamm](#)' (with Amita Kirpalani), Dec. 2012.

'[Kate Smith's empire](#)', Nov. 2012.

'[John Spiteri](#)', Oct. 2012.

- [‘Konnichiwa Osaka. National Museum of Art, Osaka’](#), Sept. 2012.
- [‘Bradd Westmoreland—wet’](#), Aug. 2012.
- [‘An interview with Azam Aris’](#), July 2012.
- [‘Rafaat Ishak’s “decadence”](#)’, June 2012.
- [‘Atlas: Andrew Hurlle’](#), May 2012.
- [‘Background/middle-ground/foreground: Speaking about art’](#) (with Hannah Mathews), Apr. 2012.
- [‘Doom and gloom: Ronnie van Hout’](#), Mar. 2012.
- ‘Anthony Pelchen: Kuang Road prayer’, *Anthony Pelchen: Kuang Road prayer*, exh. cat., Horsham Regional Art Gallery, Victoria, 2013.
- ‘Stupid as a painter’ (with Melanie Flynn), *S.A.A.P.*, exh. cat. Lowrise Projects, Melbourne, 2012.
- ‘Folk’, *Mac*, exh. cat., Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2009.
- ‘Altitude: A conversation between Jonathan Nichols and Helga Groves’, *Helga Groves: Microclimate*, exh. cat., Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, 2009.
- ‘Andrew Browne—night pictures’, *Night pictures 2*, exh. cat., Lister Gallery, Perth, 2007.
- ‘Demonology’, *Just a feeling: Brent Harris: Selected works 1987–2005*, exh. cat., the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, 2006, pp. 15–17.
- ‘Derek O’Connor’, *Del Kathryn Barton, Cathy Blanchflower, Derek O’Connor, Monika Tikachek*, exh. cat., Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne, 2004, p. 14.
- ‘Derek O’Connor’, *Derek O’Connor: Recent work*, exh. cat., Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne, 2004.
- ‘Report—“All this and heaven too”—Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art 1998’, *Globe E*, no. 8, 1998.
- ‘Mono Poly’s pathos—Matthys Gerber’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1998, pp. 21–2.
- ‘Helen Fuller: Shed tears’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1998, pp. 6–7.
- ‘Report—“Documenta X”’, *Globe E*, no. 7, 1997.
- ‘Deborah Ostrow: It’s a beautiful day’, *Globe E*, no. 6, 1997.
- ‘A picture of insecurity—LA’s Lari Pittman’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1997, pp. 6–7.
- ‘A truncated conversation with Derek O’Connor’, *Fuss*, exh. cat., Galerie Constantinople, Queanbeyan, NSW, 1996.
- ‘Natural heat, simulation, or just addiction—Deborah Ostrow’, *Where to from here*, exh. cat., Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, and Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, 1996.
- ‘18 portrait paintings—Louise Paramor’, *A4–95*, 1st Floor Artists’ and Writers’ Space, Melbourne, 1996.
- ‘Breathing in evil—Paul Quinn and Alison Weaver talking with Jonathan Nichols’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1996, pp. 10–11.
- Lewis Ryan (pseud.), ‘MDF I luv you: “Ruins in reverse”’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1996, pp. 22–3.
- Louis Ryan (pseud.), ‘A certain fussy order: “Fashion, décor, interior”’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1995, p. 13.
- ‘Higher voices—Richard Grayson’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1995, pp. 21–2.
- Louis Ryan (pseud.), ‘The mistress—Susan Norrie’, *Broadsheet*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1995, p. 17.
- ‘Islands in the stream—boat sinking’, *Art Monthly Australia*, Sept. 1990.

PUBLISHED WRITING ON THE WORK OF JONATHAN NICHOLS

- Atchison, A, 'Jonathan Nichols', *Painting. More painting*, exh. cat., Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2016.
- Backhouse, M, *The Age*, 31 Mar. 2007.
- Butler, R, *The new objectivity*, exh. cat. Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne, 2006.
- Byrne, L, *Scratch the surface*, exh. cat. Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2003.
- Chapman, C, 'Three uses of photography', *Photofile*, no. 67, 2003, pp. 4–8.
- , 'Bette Davis eyes: "Scratch the surface" at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 162, 2003, pp. 30–2.
- Christensen, N (ed.), *rubik*, no. 8, 1999.
- Colless, E, *Oyster*, no. 37, 2001, pp. 52–3.
- Colman, F, 'Goya coloured vinyl—Jonathan Nichols', *Broadsheet*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1997, pp. 18–19.
- Coslovich, G, 'Judging the masters', *The Age*, 7 Sept. 2001, pp. 1–3.
- Crawford, A, 'New objectivity', *The Sunday Age*, 9 Apr. 2006, p. 30.
- Desmond, M, 'Technical terminology', *Portrait*, no. 36, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 2010, pp. 16–21.
- Desmond, M, *Present tense: An imagined grammar of portraiture in the digital age*, exh. cat., National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 2010, pp. 3 and 64–8.
- Delany, M, 'Jonathan Nichols—forgetting pictures', *forgetting pictures*, exh. cat., 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, 2001, pp. 14–15.
- Douglas, A, *Genuflexion*, exh. cat., and installed text, WINDOW, Sydney, 2002.
- Flynn, M, 'Colliding histories', *Figuration now*, exh. cat., Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne, 2009.
- Frost, A, 'The new objectivity', *Art Collector*, no. 36, Apr.–June 2006, p. 233.
- Gaynor, A, 'Decadence of the nude', *un Magazine*, no. 1, 2004, pp. 21–2.
- Gellatly, K, *Reflections in a golden eye*, exh. cat., Linden—St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne, 2006.
- Grishin, S, 'Strange, quirky and unforgettable works', *The Canberra Times*, 24 June 2008.
- , 'The changing faces of portraiture', *The Canberra Times*, 21 May 2003, p. 24.
- Hood, C, 'Animal archives', *Photofile*, no. 45, 1995.
- Hansen, D, 'Interpretations of paradise', *The Age*, 23 Mar. 2007.
- , 'Whorls of oil', *The Age*, 7 Apr., 2006.
- Holt, MA, 'A declaration of independence', *Into the quadrangle*, exh. cat., RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, 2005.
- Kirpalani, A, 'The crying game', *Jonathan Nichols. 18th Rimbum Dahan residency exhibition*, exh. cat., Rimbum Dahan, Kuala Lumpur, 2013.
- Kronenberg, S, *Abstraction now*, exh. cat., Geelong Gallery, Victoria, 1996.
- Loughrey, F, 'Parker posing', *Black + White Magazine*, no. 60, 2002, p. 10.
- Low, LA, 'Bubble trouble', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18–19 May 2002, p. 13.
- , 'Lords and ladies', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19–20 July 2003, p. 12.
- Mantsio, M, '[Jonathan Nichols plays David Morse and Viggo Mortensen](#)', stamm.com.au, 2013.
- McAuliffe, C, 'Jonathan Nichols—"Pram"', *RACV Art Collection*, Melbourne, 2005, p. 27.
- McDonald, J, 'Hanging offences', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7–8 May 2005, pp. 28–9.
- O'Connell, S, 'Anonymous paintings—Jonathan Nichols', *Like, Art Magazine*, no. 13, 2000, p. 47.

- Rank, K, 'Reflections in a golden eye', *Artlink*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2007.
- Rigney, V, *Imprint: Growing up planned*, exh. cat., Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2013.
- Roses, A (ed.), *Art dock: Exposition d'art contemporain*, Noumea, 1991, p. 62.
- Smith, R, 'Scratch the surface', *Muses*, June 2003, p. 18.
- Timms, P, 'Abstract views', *Herald Sun*, 24 July 1996.
- Titmarsh, M (ed.), *0055 29334 Art hotline 1992–95*, exh. cat., Art Hotline, Sydney, 1995.
- Travis, L, 'Apricot girl', *paintings*, exh. cat., Kaliman Gallery, Sydney, 2002.
- Williams, D and C Simpson, *Art now, contemporary art post-1970—book 2*, McGraw-Hill Publishers, Sydney, 1996, pp. 164–6.
- Zagala, S, 'There's history here', *Into the quadrangle*, exh. cat., RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, 2005.
- Zagala, S, L Travis and K Burns, *The decadence of the nude*, exh. cat., Ocular Lab, Melbourne, 2004.