

JONATHAN NICHOLS (b. 1956, Australia)

Jonathan Nichols is an artist, independent curator born in Canberra and currently based in Melbourne and Darwin, Australia. 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) in 2024.

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 (SINCE 2000)

- 2023 *The Inside of Painting*, Yeo Workshop, Singapore
 The Inside of Painting, Castlemaine Art Museum, Victoria
- 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

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND CURATED PROJECTS

2026 *Curator, Painting Itself*, Jon Chan, Un Cheng, Tang Dixin, Noor Mahnun and Chris Huen Sin-Kan, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth and Australian National University Drill Hall, Canberra

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

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

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

- 2009 *Curator, Mac*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne
Figuration now, Karen Woodbury Gallery, 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
- 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
- 1997 Curator, *Feeling machines*, Lyell Barry, Nadine Christensen, Robert Cleworth, Raafat Ishak, David Jolly, Mandy Ord, Jacinta Schreuder and Darren Wardle, Stripp, Melbourne

ARTIST RESIDENCIES AND GRANTS

- 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

PUBLISHED WRITING

Walking with ghosts: six conversations about painting, VCA, University of Melbourne, 2023
Painting Politics – Jon Chan in conversation with Jonathan Nichols, exh. cat., iPreciation, Singapore
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*, exh. cat., VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, the University of Melbourne, 2014

Essays, interviews and reviews of contemporary art, published by stamm.com.au, 2012-15

'Folk', *Mac*, exh. cat., Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2009

Academic

2023 Doctor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne

1989 Graduate Diploma of Arts in Visual Arts, UNSW Art & Design, Sydney

1985–88 Bachelor of Arts (Visual)—Sculpture, ANU School of Art & Design, Canberra