

NO WOMAN IS AN ISLAND

10 — 27 MAY, 2017
BLINDSIDE

Artists:

Carla Adams
Jessie Adams
Emily Besser
Clara Bradley
Frances Cannon
Jessica Cochrane
Zoë Croggon
Anna Farago
Kate Just
Anthea Kemp
Stephanie Leigh
Kim Leutwyler
Zoe Wong

Curated by
Sophia Cai

Essay by
Kathleen Linn

Printed by
Helio Press

Thank you
Mel Dixon
Kel Glaister
Malcolm King
Nikki Lam
Ashley Ronning
Caitlin Shearer
Grace Vincenzi



Zoë Croggon, *Dive #2*, 2013, c-type print, 80 x 83cm
Image courtesy the artist and Daine Singer

We see you, seeing us

Six quick sees

Seen I

Swimming through a thick goop

Enter **Carla Adams** and **Kate Just**. *An insidious, green goop surrounds them; at times they struggle to move under its dragging weight and slippery nature.*

This thick, prejudicial goop manifests itself on digital platforms such as Tinder or OkCupid with ease, revealing itself as unsolicited hatred, anger or dick pics. In her series *Men that have been mean to me on Tinder*, Carla Adams creates soft, stitched, sculptural forms; these portraits are of men she has met in the virtual world who have taken this opportunity to be misogynistic. With titles such as *Jacob (Just shut up and eat my dick)* (2017) and *Jackson (You say no but I know you mean yes)* (2017) hatred, domination and casual rape references seethe.

This goop sticks to who is active and passive, who is allowed to speak, to be angry, to have a sexuality and what that sexuality can be. For women, and anyone other than white, cis-gender men, the legitimacy of their sexuality is constantly questioned, dominated and discredited.

In *Furious* (2015) Kate Just explores female anger. The word “furious” glows in blue neon from the gallery wall. Anger is an emotion generally considered off limits to women in our society but is readily perpetrated against us. Just’s other work in the exhibition, *Bitch Fist*, is a kind of feminist ready-made (a fist-shaped sex toy purchased online), it forms a sign of female objectification, eroticism and references the fist of resistant power all at once.

Seen II

No Woman is an Island

The phrase “no woman is an island” speaks to the interconnectedness of all things, that nothing exists on its own. Zoe Croggon’s collage lends itself to this concept as it entwines originally disparate images concurrently bringing together different aspects of the female experience. In her collage, Croggon takes the trained body in sport or dance and places it side-by-side with images of the built environment. The disciplined body corresponds with, and bumps up against, the built environment’s disciplining and delineating force in our lives and our mindset, bringing the organic and inorganic into dialogue.

In *Ocean Selfie (selkie)* (2017) Jessie Adams poetically explores her body in motion in this digital photograph. She too delves into the idea of the interconnectedness between things - the body, movement, the ocean, the sun and the sensorial experience of her own body in the world.

Zoe Wong in *You’re a Good Chinese Girl* explores the intersection of her Chinese and Western heritage, reflecting on her experience of representations of Chinese culture within the Western pop-culture she grew up with. This photographic series examines the binaries our society still adheres to - male/female, East/West, Asian/Caucasian and Western/Other while exploring the floating space of Wong’s own experience of being in the world.

Seen III

Speaking in the feminine

Enter **Hélène Cixous**, who, in 1981 said ‘there are systems of censorship that bear down on every attempt to speak in the feminine.’ *This can be seen in the hierarchy ascribed to certain forms of making - handicrafts have previously been viewed as lesser than oil painting or large-scale sculpture. Feminist art has made a sustained movement towards reclaiming these mediums and elevating their status.*

Emily Besser traverses the space between the elevation of painting in history, especially the male-dominated Abstract Expressionist movement, and the traditionally feminine space of weaving and embroidery. Taking on a very personal quality, Besser’s *Loom Paintings* explore how painting can echo and incorporate the processes of weaving and embroidery work.

Anna Farago’s *Intensively Threaded* series of five hand-stitched textile works explores memory and place, forming a snapshot of a moment experienced by the artist. For Farago, these stitched works store feelings, thoughts and circumstances as a multi-sensory moment in time. Created slowly, through carefully contemplated stitching, they aim to incorporate the energetic spark of this lived moment.

Clara Bradley’s work *Aurophobia* (2017) is an intimate letter, an imagined dialogue, between the artist and her never-to-be-conceived daughter. This text-based work is printed on silk giving it a soft materiality that occupies a subtle activist space.

Seen IV

The gaze and its guises

Enter **the female gaze**; standing steadfast in her body manifest, she looks out at the audience as they, many for the first time, comprehend her. *The audience listens to what the female gaze has to say as she inhabits the power position around which narrative is framed, explored and conceptualised.*

Jill Soloway posits some possibilities for what the female gaze might be including: “being in feeling rather than looking at” or a “feeling seeing.” It is “we see you, seeing us”, it is about women wrestling away a point of view from our phallogocentric world. It is a questioning gaze that is about agency.

Seen V

Enter **Jessica Cochrane** and **Kim Leutwyler**. *With paint brush in hand Jessica Cochrane begins to expressively, and purposefully apply paint to a digital photograph of a young woman. The paint elongates her features, blurring and changing her expression.*

How often have you seen an image of a woman in art or in advertising and wanted to throw paint at it? Wanted to shout “No, no more! This isn’t us, this was never us and I now refuse to pretend this has anything to do with me being in this world!” This is perhaps the space Jessica Cochrane explores in her work.

Kim Leutwyler’s current work focuses on realist, portrait paintings of LGBTQI-identified and Queer-allied women, often women who have impacted her life in some way. Leutwyler works to reclaim the medium of portraiture from the canonical white, Western, male gaze and comment on the mutability of identity, gender and beauty within her work.

Seen VI

The natural world

Enter **Frances Cannon** and her poem *Mother Weed, Daughter Seed*:

Mother Weed grows between the cracks in the pavement
Reaching up and up and up
Trying to take a small glance
At her Daughter Seed as she
Flies away in the belly of a bird.

Frances Cannon’s highly personal work explores ideas around sexuality, relationships, intimacy and our feelings toward our own bodies. The above poem, written by Cannon, forms the jumping off point for her work in this exhibition.

Anthea Kemp creates abstract and organic landscapes. Her oil paintings draw on familiar locations and memory to explore place. These intuitive and expressive works are a being in, and experiencing of, the natural world from a female perspective.

Acquiescence 1” is a series of three sculptural forms that explores ideas around the female body, specifically the breasts and their bounceability. Stephanie Leigh’s interactive sculptural work allows viewers to touch, pull and bounce the breasts exploring objectification versus subject-hood, the female body, touch and consent with an element of humour.

The female gaze walks out of *Blindside* and back into the world. She is keen to explore and document the world through her own experience, recognising the multiplicity of perspectives, ways of being and versions of womanhood that exist. She is questioning the frame of reference for what has come before her and reshaping the future to speak in the feminine.

Kathleen Linn