

**craft**  
50 YEARS | Victoria



13 FEBRUARY – 20 MARCH 2021

**Fresh!**

**Craft Victoria respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the place now called Victoria, and all First Peoples living and working on this land. We celebrate the history and contemporary creativity of the world's oldest living culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

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## **Making Love with Your Hands**

Memories of my final year of art school, now that I think of it, mainly consist of parties. Talking to strangers, sharing opinions and often saliva. Heady days of sweaty dancefloors and close encounters. No masks, no QR codes, no responsibility. Reflecting on this current year of graduates I have the abrupt realisation that their art school memories will be very different to mine. This year, instead of experimenting with new tools or substances, many students found themselves staring at their phones or their ceilings or experimenting with zoom backgrounds.

It's not all bad! There are many 2020 silver linings, to be sure. It's been a year where the whole entire world seemed to take up making something. As a way to fill the endless hours at home. Killing time, marking time. All of a sudden, us artists had skills that people were interested in. What do we do once we have baked all the sourdough and finished all the puzzles? What makes life meaningful? All of a sudden, art became more

about the process of making love with your hands. As Zadie Smith describes it in her essay *Something To Do*, from 2020; 'Although the most powerful art, it sometimes seems to me is an experience of going-through; it is love comprehended by, expressed and enacted through the artwork itself.'

Last year the world turned inwards, to think about ourselves as vessels, as conduits, as connectors and creators rather than just consumers. Keeping one's hands busy to still the mind. Fighting fear by quite literally cultivating hope. Themes of self, intimacy, domesticity, time and vulnerability have emerged as glowing zeitgeist from our collective world quarantine.

2020 graduates show an interesting mix of intense determination and quiet vulnerability. As we all know, just to get out of bed this year was an achievement. We felt lost at sea for weeks on end, finally turning to our hands to find our way through. As poet Kae Tempest describes it in their recent book *On Connection* from 2020; 'When this happens, I need creativity to reconnect me, even if it's the last thing I want: a creative connection brings a person closer to themselves when they have started to drift.'

In this exhibition we see all these ideas come to life. The appreciation of domestic memory and celebration of our confines in Faye Butler's- *The Danse Macabre* and Belle Thierry's *Within*. But also, the idea of the self as both a vessel and a net to be cast or a fragile, curvaceous container in Lovie Smith's *Kā pu te ruta, kā hao te rangatahi* and Jess Graham's *Bulge*.



Respect, joy and thanks for the simple beauty and rituals in our interior surroundings and design has also been celebrated in Bolanji Teniola's elegant walnut and brass *Oubre Coat Stand*. We also see the unmade bed as muse in the joyful *Latch, Punch, Weave, Tuft, Sleep* by Anna McGirr.

ABOVE Jess Graham *Bulge* 2020, unfired and bisque fired ceramic. © and image courtesy Jess Graham

But it's not all furnishings and vessels either. Never before has our interaction with machines and digital design been so ever-present or relevant, which is reflected in Julien Comer-Kleine's minimal compositions of steel, electrical components and autonomous sound.

Finally, as we begin to tenderly emerge into the brave new, post-covid world, practices like that of Mia Beauchamp's will begin to take hold. *Making | Makers* is surely the path to the future; participatory, community-oriented fashion production. Let's all make art we can wear and use and share between us.

From the outset, 2020 seemed like a loveless wretch. On closer inspection of her collective outcomes, she has made us artists realise that we have such a gift. A true occupation. Something to do with our hands, a way to appease the fear through keeping on making. We always knew it deep down, but this year we all realised that the best way to still the overactive, overcomplicated mind is to keep the hands busy.

**Tai Snaith,**  
Artist, author and mother living on  
Wurundjeri country.

Finalists



Anna McGirr Punch, *Weave Tuft, Sleep 2020*, hand-dyed merino wool and acrylic yarn. © and image courtesy Anna McGirr

Anna McGirr



**Bachelor of Fine Arts**  
Victorian College of the Arts

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Snippets of information, dialogue and soft textures inspire Anna McGirr's work. Her sculpture and video practice explores visual storytelling of lived experiences.

Through memory tracing she writes personal and partially fictional narratives in poetry, prose and script, texts which inform her hand-tufted textile works created from found, recycled and hand-dyed wool. *Latch, Punch, Weave, Tuft, Sleep* (2020) is inspired by the intimacy of messy linen, unmade bed covers and the imprint of where bodies once lay. She combines different weaving techniques and practices to ambiguously represent and negotiate the loss of memory and the acceptance of past trauma; brought to the surface through a year spent working within the setting of a domestic bedroom. Instinct directs her delicately chosen colour palette as she finds beauty in the quiet appreciation of life, creating cosy multimedia installations.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Anna McGirr is a visual artist from regional NSW, currently based in Narrm/Melbourne. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Victoria College of Arts in 2020. Working across moving image, photography and textiles, McGirr has a phenomenological approach to her practice where she visually explores, represents and distorts her own lived experiences. She attempts to comfort the viewer through soft textures and familiar stories. McGirr has been in multiple group shows, including at the VCA student gallery, the George Paton Gallery, BLINDSIDE and Buxton Contemporary.

Anna McGirr *Punch, Weave Tuft, Sleep* 2020, hand-dyed merino wool and acrylic yarn. © and image courtesy Anna McGirr

Belle Thierry



**Bachelor of Fine Arts (Ceramics)**  
RMIT University

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*Within* (2020) is composed of a series of fragments which capture impressions of the built confines that the artist spent isolation within. The series highlights the intimate nature of this spatial experience, capturing details of the domestic space including the corners, intersections, fittings and mouldings. Indexical pressings have been made using two different materials; porcelain and aluminium. Both are delicate and fine yet malleable, allowing the material to take on the form and detail of the process of pressing. These engagements are recorded through photographing the fragment in its architectural context and by removing and keeping the sculptural fragment intact.

The *Within* (2020) series contains both the notion of absence and emergence. This exploration of architectural space not only evokes thoughts, emotions and memories of place but ultimately examines the experience of self.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Belle Thierry is a Narrm/Melbourne based visual artist whose practice incorporates elements of ceramics, sculpture, and mixed media. A recent graduate from RMIT's Bachelor of Fine Arts (Ceramics) at RMIT, her work juxtaposes materials such as ceramic and metal to convey narrative and explore material affect on light, shadow, and space. Materiality is a critical aspect of Thierry's practice - each material chosen is shown in its most authentic state, highlighting its integral qualities, and not detracting from the beauty of its own temperament. Her most recent work explores material engagement with architectural space. These engagements or 'Fragments' act as vessels for emotions, contemplations and memories of place.

Belle Thierry *Glass* 2020, porcelain, from *Within* series.  
© and image courtesy Belle Thierry

**Bolaji Teniola**



**Associate Degree in Design (Furniture)  
RMIT University**

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The *Oubre* (2020) is a playful take on the classic coat stand and an exercise in asymmetry. Its slender but rounded form comprises two turned hangers, juxtaposed on each face, a spun brass key-drop bowl and hand-formed elongated brass holster for your broom, on the opposing side. Brass elements elegantly complement the warm tones and high figure of the American walnut, combining to present a visual delight and timeless look and feel, allowing the *Oubre* (2020) to sit comfortably in any home.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Bolaji Teniola is a Nigerian-born Narm/Melbourne based interdisciplinary designer with experience gained in the Netherlands and Indonesia. A recent graduate of the Associate Degree in Furniture Design from RMIT University, he also holds a Bachelor of Industrial Design (Honours) from RMIT University. Teniola aims to traverse various mediums, exploring materials and processes in search of pragmatic solutions that place equal importance on functionality and aesthetic appeal. His past works have been featured and exhibited in Dutch Design week 2017 and Fringe Furniture 2020.

Bolaji Teniola *Oubre Coat Stand* 2020, American black walnut, brass. © Bolaji Teniola, photographer Callum Kent

**Faye Butler**



**Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)  
RMIT University**

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The known, usual, normal of our everyday routine was pulled out from under us when pandemic struck in 2020. We were tossed into an unstable pause when we found ourselves in lockdown; disengaged and isolated from family, friends and sometimes livelihood. While many spent the days within domestic spaces, neighbourhoods around the world committed to the *Danse Macabre*, whirling grimly outside our front doors.

The tea set, a symbol of domestic normality and routine, celebrating the customary coming together of community has become superfluous in this new form. Made from vitreous enamelled copper mesh and decorated with a variety of surface treatments, it isn't practical; unable to hold liquids or foodstuffs it can no longer be used in familial service. However, each vessel can be viewed as a metaphor for self, containing the memories and emotions of a troubled year.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Faye Butler is an emerging artist from Narm/Melbourne. In 2020 she completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at RMIT. Working primarily with copper mesh and vitreous enamel, Butler includes stitching, photographic decals, vintage embroidery and other found materials to construct vessels and jewellery that reflect on the changing role of women in the home. Correlating the situation of the anonymous housewife of the mid-20th century to her own within the unprecedented COVID-19 time, her work evokes expressions of identity and memory.

Faye Butler *Danse Macabre* 2020, enamelled copper.  
© and image courtesy Faye Butler

Jess Graham



**Bachelor of Fine Arts (Ceramics)**  
**RMIT University**

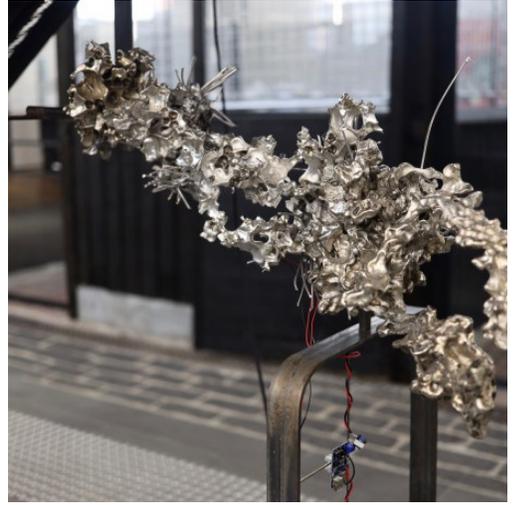
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*Bulge* (2021) portrays the beauty of the human body and its natural physical curves and contortions. Speaking to insecurity and vulnerability, the sculptural vessels celebrate the curvaceous beauty that all human bodies possess as well as the sense of vulnerability felt when one's body is exposed. Each piece's intentionally large and open rim allows viewers to peer inside. This openness metaphorically gives permission to the viewer to explore the inner parts of our bodies that are normally concealed. This encounter aims to help us become more comfortable with our insecurities so we can be willing and able to share them with others. Various naturally coloured clay bodies have been used, while the unfired and bisque fired nature of the clay highlights a sense of fragility of both the human form and the clay vessel to remind viewers of the possible damage or harm that can occur when one is exposed, open or vulnerable.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Jess Graham is a ceramicist based in regional Victoria. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Ceramics) at RMIT in 2020. Predominantly working in functional wares, she occasionally explores more sculptural vessels. Using a combination of hand-building techniques, Graham creates pieces responding to the form of the material, embracing the natural clay body. Recent work focuses on praising body positivity and vulnerability of self.

Jess Graham *Bulge* 2020, unfired and bisque fired ceramic.  
 © and image courtesy Jess Graham

Julien Comer-Kleine



**Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)**  
**Victorian College of the Arts**

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*Molten Dialogues* (2020) is an autonomous sound work that considers objects and materials as ongoing operational sites of ecologies. Through the recognition of the natural forces that occupy certain materials, experimental metallurgical processes examine their inherent nature as moving, transforming, and shifting forces in complex systems of relations. Through compositions of steel and embedded electronic components, a framework forms upon which these objects and their inherent ecologies can be given a voice or sonic agency, allowing them to form dialogues within themselves and their surrounding environment.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Julien Comer-Kleine is a Narrm/ Melbourne based artist who recently graduated from a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2020. Formerly a dancer and dance choreographer, Comer-Kleine primarily creates sound works and installation pieces. He works from his home workshop.

Julien Comer-Kleine *Molten Dialogues* 2020, aluminium, mild steel, various electronic components. © and image courtesy Julien Comer-Kleine

BELOW Lovie Smith | AM - The Hold, The Bind, The Link, The Vessel  
2020, copper, sterling silver, pounamu varied.  
© and image courtesy Lovie Smith





Lovie Smith



**Bachelor of Fine Arts (Gold & Silversmithing)**  
RMIT University

*'Kā pu te ruta, kā hao te rangatahi - As the old net piles up on shore, the new net goes fishing. The taura [pattern, or model] of the old provides the basis of formation for the new. The new time dictates changes in both the structure and form of the new net, and also in the choice of fishing ground. By casting it to sea, the old net may tell us even more than we dare hope for. The care taken is reassuring. It is the fishing exercise that now commands our attention, and this must be executed in the same spirit in which the old net was prepared and made.'*

– Piri Sciascia, Maori Writer

Building of identity is an ever-changing process. It requires humility, adaptability, and constant self-evaluation. Inspired by the artist's personal and intergenerational experiences, this series of work considers conversations on identity and the politics of belonging. The artwork *I AM - the hold, the bind, the link, the vessel* (2020) reflects on the building of one's identity through connection and community, while *Cut from a different cloth* (2020) explores identity through disconnection. *The Bond* (2020) culminates the conversation between the two.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Lovie Smith is a Māori artist from Aotearoa/New Zealand currently based in Narm/Melbourne. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Gold & Silversmithing) at RMIT in 2020. Her practice observes and responds to the liminal space between 'culture' and 'the contemporary' to connect her past and her present. This in-between space has become a foundation in her practice to explore conversations on identity, resilience, place and the politics of belonging. To Smith, materiality is the vessel for her findings, thoughts and ideas to culminate.

Lovie Smith *Bond* 2020, whale bone, kauri gum, sterling silver. © and image courtesy Lovie Smith

Mia Beauchamp



**Bachelor of Fashion (Design) (Honours)**  
RMIT University

*Making | Makers* (2020) is an investigation into the ways of encouraging creative engagement within regional Australian communities in order to make creative practice more accessible to people living in rural and remote locations. Exploring the relationship between regional Australia and the fashion system, this body of work applies theories of social innovation, participation and making in order to introduce inclusive and accessible design opportunities into the broader Australian landscape.

With a focus on heritage and contemporary crafting techniques, as well as fully fashioned knitting, this work utilises responsive making methods to see materiality be constructed, manipulated and transformed, in turn, influencing the creative outcome; a body covering. *Making | Makers* (2020) intends to broaden the scope for who can engage in craft practice and produce fashion, by educating and cultivating social support in new design spaces.

**BIOGRAPHY** / Mia Beauchamp is a recent fashion design graduate from RMIT University whose work includes a strong focus on social, ethical, and sustainable design practice. With a primary focus on making creative engagement opportunities accessible to broad communities, Beauchamp's work incorporates an interdisciplinary approach to socially engaged design. Merged with her strong technical understanding of patternmaking, knitwear development and intricate traditional and contemporary craft techniques, is a community-based approach to design which emphasises inclusive, alternative and culturally aware innovation. As an emerging fashion practitioner, Beauchamp hopes to contribute her knowledge of social design innovation and detailed making techniques within the contemporary design landscape.

Mia Beauchamp *Body Covering 1* 2020, © Mia Beauchamp, photographer Darcy White

Presented annually since 1993, *Fresh!* showcases the energy, skill and innovation of some of the best graduating students from craft, design and fine art disciplines throughout the state. *Fresh!* provides an important opportunity for graduates beginning their career as makers. The exhibition fosters the potential of graduating students and provides an insight into new directions of contemporary craft.

## SELECTION PANEL

Craft's invited team of professional craft practitioners, curators and industry experts attend graduate exhibitions within tertiary and TAFE institutions across Victoria. From these exhibitions, the freshest works that explore contemporary craft and design practice are selected to become part of the Fresh! exhibition program.



ANA  
PETIDIS



DANIEL  
POOLE



ELIZA  
TIERNAN



LOUISE  
MEUWISSEN



YU  
FANG CHI



ZHU  
OHMU

## PRIZES

### The John Wardle Architects Craft Prize

\$1000 Cash Prize. Judged by Partners Meaghan Dwyer and James Loder



### The Design Files Emerging Maker Award

A photoshoot, interview and feature on The Design Files website. Judged by Lucy Feagins, Editor and Founder of TDF



### The Future Leaders Award

A philanthropic initiative promoting leadership, achievement and potential among young Australians. Cash prize of \$1000. Judged by Dr Helen Sykes AM



### Sofitel Melbourne On Collins Prize

An exhibition in their exclusive gallery/foyer space, valued at \$3000. Judged by Clive Scott, General Manager, Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, and Lisa Warrener and Donald Williams, Global Art Projects



### Rose Chong Costumiers Prize

An exhibition in the Gertrude Street shop window. Judged by Rose Chong, Owner of Rose Chong Costumiers



# craft

50 YEARS | Victoria

COVER Belle Thierry *Corner 2020*,  
porcelain, from *Within* series.  
© and image courtesy Belle Thierry

BACK Mia Beauchamp *Body Covering*  
3&4 2020. © Mia Beauchamp,  
photographer Eamonn Pinnuck

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HOURS  
Monday to Friday, 11am-6pm  
Saturday, 11am-4pm  
Closed Sunday & public holidays

Craft Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Craft Victoria is assisted by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. Craft Victoria is also assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

**CREATIVE VICTORIA**



Australian Government



Australia  
Council  
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