



# TEN YEAR SHOW

17 JUNE – 10 JULY 2021  
STATION | MELBOURNE

## STATION

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# STATION

## A DECADE OF STATION

A decade – ten years – is a milestone by virtue of its signalling of a goal reached. In 2021, STATION turns ten, and this feels like an achievement worth celebrating. But this *Ten year show* is not so much a celebration of the gallery's physical existence, but rather of the people – artists, arts workers, collectors, friends – who have formed the STATION community, and without whom the gallery itself wouldn't exist.

At its heart are the artists STATION represents and exhibits. We believe passionately in our artists and our respect for their practice is unwavering. They are our core focus and the fulfilment of their ideas and ambitions is central to the gallery's objectives. Over these past ten years that group of artists has expanded, contracted, shifted and evolved, as has our audience. STATION has been privileged to surround itself with inspired minds who share our dynamic outlook and passion for our artists.

As we move into the next decade, STATION aims to continue supporting, presenting, publishing and promoting artists with integrity and rigour; pushing boundaries and borders, and exposing our artists to international markets; while always striving to be a place of opportunity, education and engagement for our artists, staff, and visitors.

On our tenth anniversary we want to say, to our artists and those we consider part of the STATION family, to our dedicated and driven team across Melbourne and Sydney, and to our loyal community of supporters: thank you for helping us celebrate this milestone.

We look forward to sharing the collective achievements of the next ten years as our future ambitions unfold.

– Jane Hayman and Simon Hayman

# STATION

## **It seemed like an idea at the time.**

In real terms STATION was made from a few galleries. If I had to use a collective noun to describe STATION it would be a compression of galleries. This compression was born from a contraction, the 2008 one. From that contraction came great unease and rapid unpredictability, and one way for galleries to survive contractions is to enter into compressions. So here you are, a compression evolved.

My part in this evolution began with Uplands Gallery in Melbourne's Chinatown. I used to think Uplands Gallery was a gallery, but now it's been gone for a decade I know it wasn't. Uplands was a community that represented things that were important to the community. Things that community defined as valuable and special. It was also an experiment that was as joyous as it was terrifying and sad. A thing to be proud of.

Commercial galleries by design have skin in the game [grab a copy of the Nassim Taleb book of the same name for more info] in comparison with other non-mercantile parts of the art world. Specifically, the artists and gallerists and their partnerships cannot separate from the consequences of their actions, with each decision made regarding a forthcoming exhibition possessing risk that a non-mercantile entity does not. An unexpected consequence of this is that commercial galleries have evolved to possess clear, concise articulations of their reason for being – the others remain made up of an awkward cacophony of reasons, motives, structures and systems (perhaps as a result of their structure being rooted in academic modernism that was built on possessing no risk).

When I say 'it seemed like an idea at the time', I am reflecting on the period we began planning Uplands Gallery in 2000 (which evolved into KALIMANRAWLINS, then into STATION). It's because I know with Uplands, we never considered the outcomes, we never had a plan, we never had a strategy, a goal, or even a benchmark. At the time you feel you do, but now I can see it from a distance the beauty of it all lies in the truth that we didn't. Whether it was a good idea or a bad idea we didn't know, I still don't, and I hope I never do; it was just an idea, one that makes me want to pinpoint and name the magic and wonder that filled all our minds while we ran together as fast as we could all those years ago.

I was trying to come up with a collective noun to describe Uplands Gallery. In an unexpected turn of events, I thought of this line from Shakespeare's Sonnet 43: 'When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see, For all the day they view things unrespected.'

A wink of unrespected.

– Jarrod Rawlins

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In 2011, I relocated to Melbourne after running a gallery in Sydney for ten years. I wasn't oriented towards a specific direction when I made the move but, upon landing, it became inevitable I'd be involved in the establishment of a new commercial gallery. That venture became STATION.

What struck me about Melbourne was the sense of community within the art world. This encompassed everyone from artists, collectors, curators, art students, writers, small and large institutions and art services, to simply those with a keen interest in art. I've lived in New York for five years and there's nothing like that here. There are micro-communities distributed throughout New York, with limited crossover, punctuated by extreme transience. I do enjoy that though; it makes everything kind of anonymous and less provincial. But Melbourne's tight-knit community provides trust, friendship, depth and warmth to its art scene. It's perhaps a city like no other.

Inaugurating a gallery is really hard work, but highly recommended if you enjoy working with artists (or are unable to be one yourself) and have an aptitude for sales. STATION was not your regular new gallery venture, however. It was built on the foundations of a well-loved space within the Melbourne art scene, which merged with an established gallerist who'd migrated to the city from elsewhere. The ingredients were atypical, so it was a mixture of trepidation, timing, enthusiasm, opportunity, experience and fate from the outset.

A gallery is ultimately the sum of its artists, and STATION was blessed to work with great artists from the start. Sure, a handsome space might help with courtship, but without solid artists and the nuanced context they create via interweaving with one another, a gallery has no tone, character or attitude. A gallery with a good exhibition program is like an engaging story. It's rich with meaning. The best galleries are often ones where you recognise the dealer's taste in the artists they show. Don't take this as a sound financial strategy if you want to open your own space, but it's a fact.

My highlights at STATION were always introducing artists from my hometown of Sydney to Melbourne. As a gallerist, this is exhilarating – to present exhibitions of artists to new audiences in the hope you ignite a conversation. I employed this model in my Sydney space, where I almost exclusively exhibited artists from Melbourne in its formative years, which gave me a connection to the city I cultivated over the next decade.

It's vital as a gallerist to believe in your artists and assert opinions with authority, even if those around you think and say otherwise. Convincing others was always the most enjoyable part of my job as an art dealer. If New York does one thing incredibly well, it's that it can convince the world of anything, because it simply believes it to be so. That's one of the greatest lessons I've learned living in this amazing city. Take note, this is an indispensable skill if you ever aspire to be a gallerist. Trust your instincts, believe in your artists deeply, then drive the narrative so others believe it too. It's not hard to do.

I congratulate STATION on the stunning milestone of its tenth anniversary. It was a very proud moment in my career to contribute to the project at the outset. I look forward to its continued growth and expansion, as it now enters its second decade embracing the mantle as one of Australia's leading and most influential galleries.

– Vasili Kaliman

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## **ALCHEMIST AESTHETICS AND POST-MINIMALIST MUSINGS TWO STRAINS WITHIN A PETRI DISH**

To introduce new strains, or variants, is an act of experimentation – perhaps out of a desire to adjust Nature’s evolution or to simply understand and explore the possibilities of change. It presents the birth of something new, well placed within the known context of an established organism or lineage, a new recruit within an already familiar system. The organism of contemporary art is full of strains – with post-Modernity offering an accelerated uptake – made up of countless concepts and material concerns. Such variants are perhaps best discerned within the makeup of a gallery’s exhibition program, or as a more familial example, within its list of represented artists. With microscope in hand, two strains predominate within the recent history of STATION, two strains that are informed by and part of the familiar organism, but also point to the new.

The first has a longer lineage, both in the canon of art and of the Gallery itself – thinking of the ‘Great White Hunter’ (Robert Hunter) – but the diversity of materiality, gesture and concept attributed to its artists presents new strains to the well explored organism of one of the 20th century’s key avant-garde footings. This strain, best labelled as post-Minimalist musings, is apparent in the art of Consuelo Cavaniglia, Patrick Lundberg, Sam Martin, Jonny Niesche, Michael Staniak and Jake Walker, each of whom offer a new variant of a variant. Commonalities of light, form, space, the sublime and phenomenology seem central to Cavaniglia and Niesche, where the history of Los Angeles’ Light and Space movement seems to have found a new Australian home; each presenting some of the more architecturally aware exhibitions in the gallery’s history. While Lundberg and Martin’s love of language manifests in their definitive gestures, marks on discrete surfaces like runes reciting concrete poems or an endless weft thread connecting one gesture to the next. Their surfaces are varnished and solid, layered and soft, playful yet philosophically rich. Then to Staniak and Walker, whose materiality talks to the tactile and earthly, where hand-moulded and free-formed forms are utilised within both the framing device and picture plane. Their works brim with a vibrancy articulated within thick gestures and sometimes total monochromatic obedience. These odes to minimalist moments are presented with great diversity, but also a contextual harmony. A balance perhaps best articulated in mid-2018 when Lundberg and Niesche each presented two works that echoed the sensibilities seen in two of Hunter’s near-monochrome paintings – the antithesis of Ad Reinhardt’s all-black paintings of the 1960s: white. Filled with diagonal, vertical and horizontal geometric formations, Hunter’s paintings were paralleled by Lundberg’s meticulous markings. Whereas Niesche’s colour field compositions spoke to a recognition and evolution of the plane Hunter was so committed to, simultaneously we discovered the hues found in Hunter’s formations now vibrating and expanded in Niesche’s distorting colour combinations.

The second strain tends towards a group of artists whose rigorous conceptualism is played out through manifold ways of crafting, adapting, programming, growing, combining and distorting (among other things), all in a desire to obtain their own artistic Philosopher’s Stone. The alchemist aesthetics of Zac Langdon-Pole, Clare Milledge, Sean Peoples, Joshua Petherick, André Piguet, Marian Tubbs and Isadora Vaughan link to an Arte Povera intuitiveness towards materials, while the thinking of such writers as William Gibson, Édouard Glissant and Marcel Mauss, and concerns surrounding anti-humanism, ecology, speculative realism and globalisation also ring true. At the material level, fragments of meteorites (Langdon-Pole), gallium (Piguet), mycelium and beeswax (Vaughan) are elements these artists utilise, then mould and re-form to their own artistic will – in combination with other rare materials in the case of Langdon-Pole; melted down and wielded as a painterly gesture in Piguet’s hands; or through Vaughan’s innovation, turned into livings forms of a modernist-like lineage. Further to this, the likes of Petherick

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engage material and conceptual artifice to disrupt perception, presenting objects and video works evoking both the familiar and the occulted, while Peoples' 3D-printing cauldron conjures works from board games and alternate histories to technically-perfect fruition. These complex and distinct undertakings, explorations of materials and techniques are tantamount to their underpinning conceptual concerns, their intricate and exhaustive narratives. Narratives such as those explored through Milledge's shamanic-like engagement with ecology via a fieldwork methodology that sees her collect, re-organise, transform and re-present information and material within her paintings, textiles and performances. The 2015 exhibition *Pestilent Unground; Epidemic Openness* was the collective debut for all bar one of these artists, where the aforementioned themes and qualities appeared in abundance, offering a context for these at once similar yet divergent artists. *Pestilent Unground; Epidemic Openness* was concerned with unique strains of its own: the unknowable, the speculative state of contemporaneity, and an openness to the outside – themes that its exhibiting artists continue to court.

Behind these two strains is a scientist, a neoteric, experimenting with an established organism housed within a Petri dish, poking and prodding, focusing and refocusing the microscope with the desire to explore and understand a number of artistic strains and new contexts – a worthy endeavour made even more valid by the continued recognition of the organism that birthed the study.

– Jack Willet

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I regularly revisit the conditions under which works arrived at the gallery. Persistent amongst these memories are those marked by either a dissonance or uncanny correlation between the mode of transport and their cargo: there was that gargantuan Mullumbimby moving truck whose cavernous interior was empty, save for a selection of glass panes huddled in a blanketed corner; a sutured tarp strapped to a ute tray that cached members of a plaster pipe proletariat; a diminutive postage box from which a constellation of small celestial spheres would spawn, with mathematical precision, across an entire wall.

Coming in from that small street that plays host to a seemingly perennial wind tunnel, works were stewarded in from transit, often directly from the hands of their makers and the sites of their creation. I wondered about works as they were held in shrouded and swaddled abeyance, in pauses that signalled the beginnings and endings of histories and bookended the environments they inhabited. Transit serves to slow the metabolic rate of art until it reaches its destination. Works arrived as scions, or fontanelles – soon fusing to generate new conditions, collections, encounters.

Art still functions in a freighted, latent state. Akin to the suspended fate of Schrödinger's cat, or simply the notion of how things exist when they are not observed, a sort of superposition of states is imparted onto works when they are moved from one place to another. They are at once a packable and shippable object – a line item with materials, mass and a customs value – and a vessel harbouring innumerable hours of emotional, educational and physical work; a particular vehicle for universal ideas, replete with qualities that trigger deep-seated reactions in their audiences and custodians.

This idea amplified when extractions were made from packing materials and the practicalities of displaying their contents took hold. A protracted suspension of dual states occurred in those moments I found myself tweezing downy feathers onto a fleet of bird wings protruding from the wall; fashioning a Greek chorus of Cinefoil theatre masks; ritualistically lighting and extinguishing a candle suspended in a mirrored, triangular prism; misting a pod of airplants; or cradling a ceramic teardrop sage before it took up residence on its salvaged stool. Physically interacting with art necessitates a reckoning with the material and conceptual slippages that exist between object and idea.

There was a time when I saw one of the gallery's directors airborne after being thwacked with a rogue truck door (care of the aforementioned wind tunnel). They landed spreadeagled on the supine crate of a large painting that, after a brief sojourn in the stockroom, was about to be shipped to Berlin. A sort of involuntary, haptic acknowledgement of its intermittent dormancy; a farewell.

– Deirdre Cannon

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## **STATION: Ten years of actuality.**

Imagine ten years in the life of an organisation, not from a chronological perspective of past to potential future, but as a pulsating entity of outward rippling effect. In an attempt to describe such a thing and its ten years of actuality, I have identified the most notable elements and divided them into those that have remained unchanged – the constants – and those that are mutable – the variables.

### **Constants.**

*The building situated at 9 Ellis Street, South Yarra.* A vanilla brick warehouse, once housing a sail fabricator and now fitted out in a design by (a young) Edition Office – simple and economical yet elegant in the use of materials. It continues to elicit compliments from first time visitors, who marvel at a contradictory ability to be vast, yet invitingly warm. It is porous: the office and its various conversations leak into the exhibition space; gallery one, peaks through to gallery two. Light and sound seep across all the spaces. We have nothing to hide and everything to share.

*Jane and Simon Hayman.* The voracious enthusiasts of Australian contemporary art, made more potent by the pairing. Their energy is boundless and support unwavering. I dare you to spend any more than 48 hours with them on an art focused expedition...trust me, it is exhausting.

*A culture of collaboration.* Resonating in the DNA of STATION, this culture can be attributed to the unusual circumstances under which the gallery was formed. Not beholden to the singular vision of an eponym or founder, STATION has always contended with the need for its actions to be informed by many voices. We hope and strive for this consideration to incorporate the largest nexus of associations around STATION. It will always remain a value to which we are very committed.

*A coterie of loyal supporters.* Key collectors, writers and museum curators and directors (you all know who you are) have championed the gallery from the beginning. We still rely on and draw from you the positive affirmation that propels the project forward. Thank you for your ongoing support (and the occasional borrowing of expensive AV equipment).

### **Variables.**

*The STATION team.* Currently consisting of the most impressive cohort of caring, dedicated, highly educated and whip smart gallerinas (I unashamedly and openly admit the bias in my opinion): Nikki Berriman, Laura Couttie, Ellinor Pelz, Nikki van der Horst and Anna Bellotti. Also acknowledging the significant contributions of previous team members: Mariam Arcilla and Grace Partridge in Sydney, and Deidre Cannon, Jack Willet, Vasili Kaliman and Jarrod Rawlins in Melbourne.

*The sites in which we exhibit.* We have expanded geographically as we push beyond the bounds of Ellis Street. To Sydney, into our very own gallery, distinct from Melbourne in its grand Victorian architecture and domestically scaled space. To art fairs and projects around the world: Auckland, Los Angeles, Berlin... and beyond. An elemental driving force has been to provide pathways for our artists to enter in a global discourse. Ten years of effort and we are still working on it!

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*Our audiences.* Ever changing and expanding. Being in new places helps expand reach, but the most important thing if you want newcomers to engage is for an exhibition program to be interesting and gallery staff welcoming. The sale of a work to a collector is a wonderful thing. The artist is paid for their efforts, which sustains their future of their practice, and the artwork finds a new home, from which it may have a resonance with those who encounter it on a daily basis. But collectors (as much as we love them) are not the only audiences we serve, and acquisition is not the only activity we cultivate. When supporting an artist towards realising and staging an exhibition we hope for it to have the greatest affect possible. Our approach to enabling this is simple: an enthusiastic welcome to all visitors and a willingness to engage in conversation and answer any question.

*The artist community around STATION.* This community is why we exist and is central to everything we do. Clear cut definitions never really hold and I have to confess that within this 'variable' there are some 'constants'. Of the 70+ artists included in this *Ten year show*, nine were also included in the inaugural exhibition, *First Show*. These artists make up a list of constant stalwarts with the STATION experience: Daniel Boyd, Jon Campbell, Steve Carr, Jon Cattapan, Tim McMonagle, Tony Schwensen, Renee So, Michelle Ussher and Ronnie van Hout. The community of artists around STATION has continued to shift. All in all, so far, at its various sites, there have been almost 200 STATION exhibitions including the works of over 100 artists. It is around these exhibitions and artists that all of our activities persist.

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To our close family of STATION artists with whom we work and communicate constantly, and the many additional participating artists that we also embrace as part of our community, we convey with the greatest sense of appreciation, a deep gratitude for your contributions to this special and celebratory exhibition. Thank you very much! We could not be happier.

– Samantha Barrow