



Petr Hrel  
Borges sequel 1977-78 (detail)

Andrea Blundell / Nadine  
Christiansen / Nick Stephenson  
Mute/geoman/Zone three 2000

Guan Wei  
Floating No.46 1998

Philip Hunter  
Untitled 1985

**Fictions**  
Presented by Monash University Museum of Art  
Curator: Kirrly Hammond

10 September – 9 October 2008  
Switchback Gallery  
Gippsland Centre for Art and Design  
Monash University, Churchill  
Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Catalogue published by  
Monash University Museum of Art  
August 2008 Edition 500 ISBN 978-0-9804877-4-9  
Catalogue design: Yanni Florence  
Photography: Christian Capurro

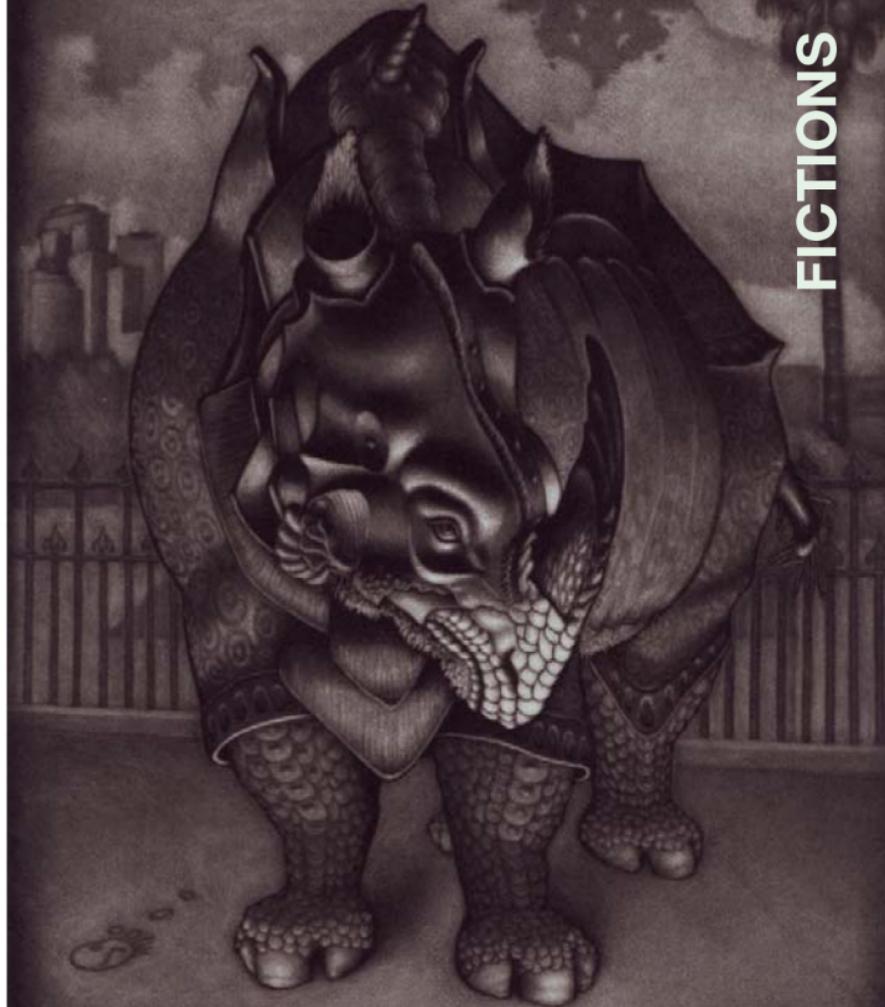
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Moya McKenna  
Come and go 2005 (film stills)

Cover  
Gregory Harrison  
Das Einhorn 2007



## FICTIONS

Kirilly Hammond

In 1515 Albrecht Dürer created an image of a rhinoceros that was to be copied and emulated for the next four centuries. Dürer's image was in fact, pure fiction, as the rhinoceros had not been seen in Europe since the third century AD.<sup>1</sup> The distinctive ornamentation of his amour-plated animal with a small spiral horn on its back was based on a loose description from a Portuguese newsletter.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, his magnificent, albeit fictitious, rhinoceros remained in German schoolbooks until the early 20th century.

Gregory Harrison extends this rich history by bringing Dürer's rhino to life in 21st century Melbourne. In delicate tones, his mezzotint *Das Einhorn* 2007 imagines the beast facing the viewer, lit dramatically from below. Standing in a city parkland, the rhino is a lost relic of an exotic past. A companion print is Harrison's own imaginary creature, *La Licorne* 2007, which is drawn from Musée de Cluny's tapestry *La Dame à la Licorne*. The unicorn has long been the subject of mythological tales; here it rests in front of Collingwood grain silos, with a Rorschach inkblot hovering in the clouds above. Harrison's eerie and vivid imagery brings inner dreams and collective tales to life.

Filmed with a Super 8 camera, Moya McKenna's stop-motion animation reveals the secret machinations of objects in her studio. These are the subjects of McKenna's paintings, brought to life in defiance of *nature morte*. A pearly bead transforms into a mannequin's head, which then disappears into a set of drawers assisted by disembodied arms, sinister in their stilted movements. Otherworldly and eccentric, McKenna's film shares an aesthetic sensibility with Czech filmmaker Jan Svankmajer; their unexpected and surreal juxtapositions of animated objects are rich fodder for the imagination.

This idea is played out literally in a suite of *Exquisite Corpse* drawings from the Monash University Collection.<sup>3</sup> Following the early 1920s Surrealist game of artistic collaboration, several people compose a drawing or phrase collectively on folded paper, whereby none of the participants have any idea of the nature of the preceding contribution. In this case, three individual images are assembled to create one composition, with unexpected and striking results. The artists here include Andrea Blundell/Nadine Christensen/Nick Stephenson; Julia Gorman/Leah Schnaars/Sarina Lirosi; and Matthew Johnson/Philip Hunter/Guy Benfield. All have collaborated to create images which tell their own stories, drawing surprising conclusions and

connections.

Whilst living in Paris between 1977 and 1978, Petr Herel created an extraordinary series of etchings titled *Borges sequel*, inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' *Fictions* (1944). Rather than directly illustrate Borges' short stories (which in themselves are 'notes on imaginary books'<sup>4</sup>), the prints act as a sequel to the texts. They demonstrate Borges' evocative prose and express the artist's purely imaginative responses which range from the macabre to the overtly erotic. Demonic creatures populate the surreal images, as genitalia are transformed into dancing birds and avorting stringed instruments. These technically beautiful works incorporate delicate scratches and loose sketches in the borders, which are perhaps a form of notation or automatic drawing, in direct response to Borges. Herel's is a refined aesthetic in which the details are quietly subversive.

Precursors of Herel's distinctive imagery can be traced back to the grotesque imagery of the 15th century, when the decorative ornamentation of texts evolved, leading to the invention of fantastic creatures that combined human and animal elements.<sup>5</sup> The collages of Nick Mangan, and the collaborative works of Gracia Haby and Louise Jennison, also follow this lineage. Constructed from disparate found imagery, and often embellished with ink or graphite, these works feature bizarre creatures, organic structures and improbable narrative sequences. Haby and Jennison's artist's books draw the viewer into an intimate, alternative world of inquisitive bears and birds that rule Paris.

Whether through studio props, found images or prose, artists draw on a myriad of sources to provide inspiration for their work. It is the way in which those materials are translated and reconfigured that is here of interest. Revelling in the freedom of artistic invention, the works in *Fictions* are brought together for the ways in which they suspend our everyday realities and prompt contemplation of the nature of creativity and imagination.

<sup>1</sup> Giulia Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his legacy*, The British Museum Press, London, 2002, p.283.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit.*, p.285.

<sup>3</sup> These works were donated to the Monash University Collection by the Bendigo Art Gallery following the exhibition *Celebrating the Exquisite Corpse*, curated by Anonda Bell in 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, 'The garden of forking paths', *Fictions*, 1944, in Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, Andrew Hurly (trans.), Penguin, London 1999, p.67.

<sup>5</sup> Antony Griffiths, *The Grotesque: Ornamental Prints from the British Museum*, South Bank Centre, London, 1995.



Peter Ellis  
*Homage à Picabia* 1980

Nick Mangan  
*Untitled #11* 2006

Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison  
*Rouen; just passing through* 2007 (detail)



## List of works

Andrea Blundell / Nadine Christensen / Nick Stephenson

*Mute/geoman*/Zone 2000  
Pegasus print, gouache, office labels

Julia Gorman / Leah Schnaars / Sarina Lirosi

*—You'll never see my body*/Bootlegs 2000  
watercolour, gouache, mixed media, inkjet print

Matthew Johnson / Philip Hunter / Guy Benfield

*Sage/Two spleens/Sneaker pimp* 2000  
graphite, pigment, gouache, pen, pencil  
A suite of collaborative drawings from the exhibition *Celebrating the Exquisite Corpse*  
each: 70.0 x 50.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Gift of the Bendigo Art Gallery, 2008

Peter Ellis

*Homage à Picabia* 1980  
etching on paper  
43.2 x 37.5 cm (plate); 81.0 x 60.5 cm (sheet)  
Edition 6/10  
Monash University Collection  
Gift of Professor Jenny Zimmer, 1994

Peter Ellis / Petr Herel / Miroslav Holub / Geoffrey Ricardo / Louise Weaver

*Traversers* 2 1993  
aquarelles printed by Martin King, Australian Print Workshop  
laser prints produced by Bashir Baraki, Pro-colour, Collingwood  
text set in Monotype Garamond by Les Petersen, Ratt Press, Canberra  
Designed by Petr Herel for the Centre for the Development of Artist's Books and Limited Editions, Monash University and the Australian Print Workshop  
61 pages, each 24.0 x 24.0 cm  
Edition 4/20  
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

Gregory Harrison

*Das Einhorn* 2007  
mezzotint (2nd state)  
artist's proof, edition of 22  
22.5 x 17.0 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

Guan Wei

*Floating No.46* 1998  
synthetic polymer paint on card  
22.5 x 31.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase 1999

Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison

*By the pricking of my claws* 2005  
lithographic offset print hand coloured with pencil, pen and collage  
8 folded pages, 18.8 x 18.8 cm  
Printed by Redwood Prints  
Edition of 16  
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

*The dubious clue; extinct animals sing the blues* 2005  
lithographic offset print, hand coloured with pencil, pen, fluorescent marker and collage  
8 folded pages, 14.8 x 18.8 cm  
Printed by Redwood Prints  
Edition 3/16  
Monash University Library Rare Books Collection

Philip Hunter

*Drawing No.10* 1998  
charcoal and corite pencil on paper  
60.5 x 76.5 cm (sheet)  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase, 1998

Untitled 1985

charcoal, pastel and chalk on paper  
49.0 x 64.5 cm (sheet)  
Monash University Collection  
Gift of Dr David Rosenthal, 2002

Nick Mangan

*Untitled #11* 2006  
collage and mixed media on watercolour paper  
83.5 x 64.0 cm  
Michael Buxton Collection, Melbourne

*Untitled #10* 2006  
collage and mixed media on watercolour paper  
83.5 x 110.0 cm  
Michael Buxton Collection, Melbourne

*La Licorne* 2007  
mezzotint (2nd state)  
artist's proof, edition of 22  
22.5 x 17.0 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

Petr Herel

*Untitled* 1975  
pencil on paper  
50.0 x 35.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Gift of Professor Jenny Zimmer, 1994

*Borges sequel* 1977-78  
etching, softground and open-bite on BFK Rives

Folio of 10 prints, each: 50.2 x 38.0 cm (sheet), 28.2 x 22.7 cm (plate)  
Published by Rudy Kornat Art Gallery, Sydney, October 1982  
Printed by Robert Dutrou, Atelier Morsang, Paris  
Edition 53/55  
Monash University Collection  
Gift of Sophie Herel, 2008

James Morrison

*The island* 2001  
oil on linen  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase, 2002

David Noonan

*Untitled* 2005  
etching, photo-etching, spit bite and aquatint, printed in 3 colours from two copper plates and one aluminium photo-etching plate  
Printed by Martin King at Australian Print Workshop  
64.0 x 45.0 cm (plate); 76.0 x 56.0 cm (sheet)  
Edition 15/45  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase, 2006

Ruth Waller

*The UnNatural History of Species Lost #* 1991  
charcoal on paper  
83.5 x 110.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase, 1993

*Untitled #3* 2006  
paper collage, ink and acrylic on watercolour paper  
51.0 x 41.0 cm  
Private collection, Melbourne

*Untitled (Mindgames)* 2007  
mixed media and collage on paper  
Three works, each: 51.0 x 41.0 cm (framed)  
Private collection, Melbourne

Moya McKenna

*Come and go* 2005  
Super 8 transferred to DVD  
colour, silent, 3 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc

*Come and go* 2005  
oil on canvas  
50.0 x 50.0 cm  
Collection of Peter and Mary Nicholson, Melbourne

James Morrison

*The island* 2001  
oil on linen  
100.0 x 100.0 cm  
Monash University Collection  
Purchase, 2002

David Noonan

*Untitled* 2005  
etching, photo-etching, spit bite and aquatint, printed in 3 colours from two copper plates and one aluminium photo-etching plate  
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