

National ACT Canberra life

This was published 4 years ago

Highlights from a rich and varied Canberra art scene in 2018

Peter Haynes
December 19, 2018 – 12.00am

Save Share A A A

The Canberra visual arts scene in 2018 was as rich and varied as one could ask; a richness and variety that one comes to expect as normal in our culturally fertile and diverse national capital.



Derek O'Connor, *Paris '68, 2017 (detail)* in *At home he's a tourist* at Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Gorman Arts Centre.

It is very difficult (impossible?) to select just five exhibitions that I regarded as my highlights and indeed I am unable not to include at least a mention of exhibitions/artists outside that group. The Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS) exhibition program began with the continuation from November 2017 of Derek O'Connor's *At home he's a tourist*.

I have followed this artist's work for many years and he never fails to reinforce a well-deserved reputation. I said of this special exhibition that it was a "visual tour de force" full of power and aesthetic seduction. Its memory remains strongly with me.

A very different exhibition but equally enthralling was Brenda Croft's *heart-in-hand*.

The exhibition was a tribute to the artist's mother and a continuation of her investigations into her family and its mixed heritage. The almost encyclopedic collection of objects and images associated with her mother's life demanded close investigation and observation. It was the opening of a private life through the objects that constituted that life's experience and value that struck a chord and impacted on each viewer (in equally private and personal ways). The evocation of the meaning of an individual life was given universal significance in this elegiac exhibition.



Brenda L Croft *Dot 21 and Joe 33 Cooma 1959, 2018* in *heart-in-hand* at CCAS Gorman Arts Centre.

Another exhibition at CCAS that stayed with me was Shoeb Ahmad's *broken-binary-brown*, a moving and challenging installation dealing with profound and cathartic personal change.



Hayley Lander, *The Great Forgetting (detail)* in *Softly calling* at Form Studio and Gallery.

AFR [↗](#)
Unlocking new revenue streams through energy
Sponsored by Origin Zero
Advertisement

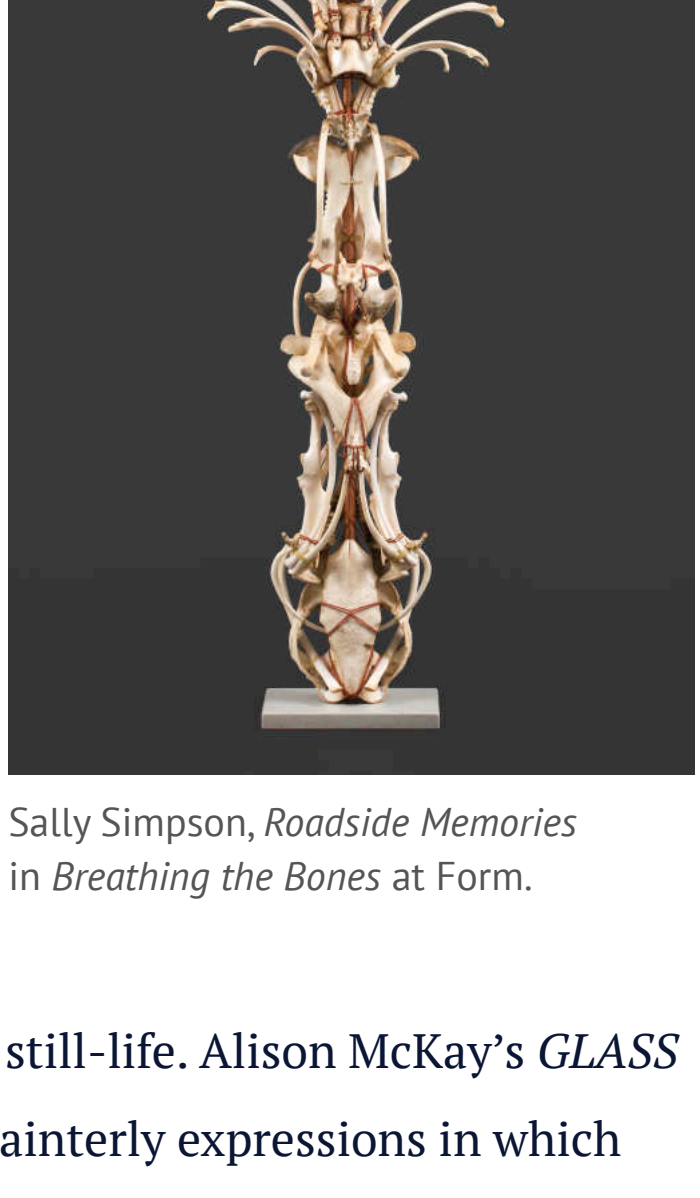
FROM OUR PARTNERS
AFR [↗](#)
Transforming workplace culture through shared purpose
MedHealth

Traveller [↗](#)
Take to the tracks to see Australia
Sponsored by Journey Beyond

SMH [↗](#)
The importance of protecting your vision
Sponsored by Specsavers
Advertisement

At Form in Queanbeyan the two stand-out exhibitions among a number of terrific others were Hayley Lander's *Softly Calling* and Sally Simpson's *Breathing the bones*. Lander's beautiful gentle paintings were concerned with the fragile balance between man and the natural environment. Through beautifully modulated images, simple compositions and a finely nuanced palette she imparts her message as well as celebrating the power of the painterly medium.

Sally Simpson's *Breathing the bones* also carried a message – the complexity of each individual's relationship with her environment. Her drawings, gently delineated onto the paper, are insistently eloquent and imbued with a seductive intimacy that underscores an underlying sense of immanence that permeates the entire exhibition. Simpson's sculptures express of unnamed liturgies and this is reinforced by her commanding understanding of scale and of the expressive power of her chosen materials. A special exhibition indeed.

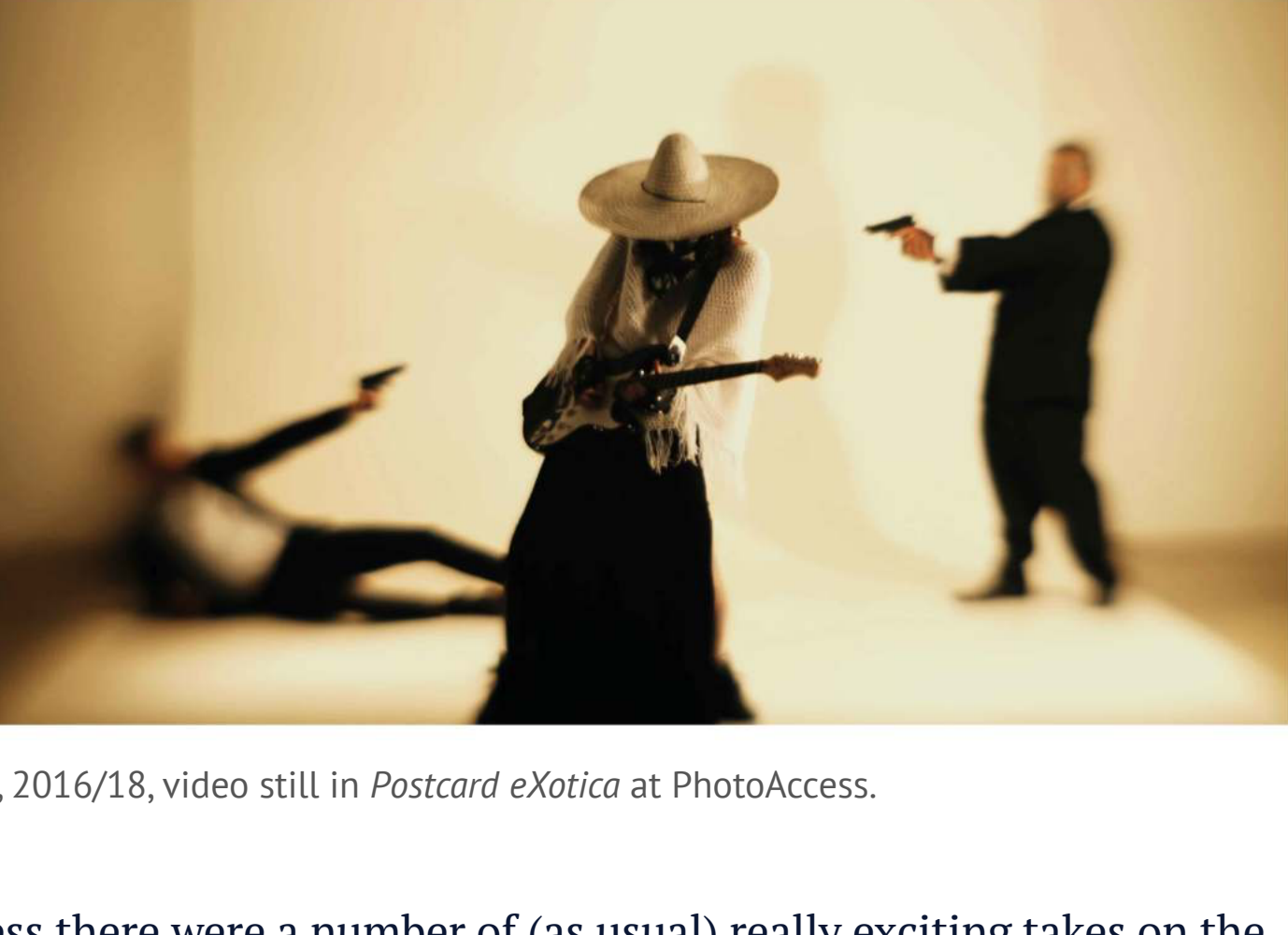


Sally Simpson, *Roadside Memories* in *Breathing the Bones* at Form.

Also at Form were two exhibitions that celebrated the ongoing relevance of the painted still-life. Alison McKay's *GLASS works* and Kim Shannon's *The Gift* were joyous painterly expressions in which the activity of putting paint onto the canvas was as much celebrated as the subject-matter being painted. The joy of painting was also seen in Kerry McInnis's

Whisker's Creek, a paean to a place much loved.

I know I am pushing my selection but it would be remiss of me not to mention the really beautiful printed works by Heather Burness that were part of *Water Drawn*.



Diego Ramirez, *Postcard eXotica*, 2016/18, video still in *Postcard eXotica* at PhotoAccess.

At PhotoAccess there were a number of (as usual) really exciting takes on the photographic medium in a number of formats. For me the absolute high point was Diego Ramirez's *Postcard eXotica*, a 30-minute "cinematic re-enactment of a collection of found photographs" Presented as a moving collage of postcards, vintage film extracts, contemporary video and documentary films, its elision of form and content was visually and thematically enthralling; the potency of its message clever, pointed and current.

Marzena Wasikowska's powerfully disturbing images of the impact of climate change on our world must also be cited as one of the highpoints of the PhotoAccess year.

2018 was an impressive showcase for the gallery scene in the ACT and pointed to the ongoing energy, diversity and depth that characterises the visual arts in Canberra, the region. I congratulate the artists and gallerists of our region and look forward to what 2019 brings.

Save Share License this article Canberra life Canberra

MOST VIEWED IN NATIONAL

- Fourteen lawyers, two Rich Listers out to fix \$3.5m plumbing bill
- Setka under police investigation over alleged sexual assault
- Opinion Everyone can have their opinion, but I don't need to hear from FredFkstone
- Point Cook couple faces court accused of harbouring a slave
- Former West Coast Eagles star jailed for two years over arson charge
- 'The stakes are incredibly high': Judge to rule on Roberts-Smith case

THE AGE RECOMMENDS

SMH [↗](#)

A genuine partner supporting the nation's businesses

If Australia's small and medium businesses are the engine room of the nation's economy, then...

Business [↗](#)

What to know if your fixed home loan rate expires soon

The record low rates early in the pandemic period are over. But there are still ways to get a...

Daily Life [↗](#)

She was one of my best friends. Without a word, she ghosted me

In place of where there should have been the shared vocabulary of our friendship, there was...

PROMOTED

A New Tip For Nail Fungus Found (Do This Every Day)

Stair Lifts | Sponsored Links (Take a Look at the Prices)

Genius Japanese Invention Cleans Everything in Your House

My reverse seachange column brought out the haters. Why are people so unkind?

When I met Rolf Harris, he was nothing like his celebrity persona

Handing over \$127 trillion: The greatest wealth transfer in history is here

Diabetes Is Not From Sweets! Meet The Main Enemy Of Diabetes

Thaksin's myth of invincibility shatters

A \$5 trillion could win you a \$3.7M beachfront apartment or the equivalent in gold.

Alone again, naturally: Survival show winner says they could have lasted 20 days more

Council to remove new trees after residents complain about views

The \$2b warning shot that threatens to change the internet