

Thought begins, again, anew.

Emerging Contemporaries 2023 - exhibition essay

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In *What is Philosophy?*, first published in English in 1994, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari conceptualise the work of art as a 'bloc of sensation' - genuinely capable of creating something new by means of generating the *feel* or *sensation* of something different. And this something different might, just *might*, open up other ways of thinking, living, speaking, and acting. As Simon O'Sullivan writes, art "can be the seed of something genuinely new. In an increasingly homogenised and homogenising neoliberal present that offers only more of the same - a present that overcomes all options - these points of difference can become politically charged" (2016 p.82).

This chance for sensation takes place at the surface: it exists in the very material of the artwork, from "the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal, the crouch of Romanesque stone, and the ascent of Gothic stone" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994 p.166). The *surface* is where the maker and the audience meet and exchange via the medium of the work of art itself, made possible through the skill and style of the artist. Intermediary yet immediate.

Emerging Contemporaries opens a window onto this intimate process which takes place between the artist and their craft, their intentions and their material, the sides of these terms becoming increasingly blurred and increasingly connected. From this, a fluency emerges - a style or consistency, a *process*, of which the artists shown here are just at the beginning of. The exhibition is brimming with potential, for the artists and spectators alike.

Art inspires thought, and thought begins, again, anew. Traditional conceptions of 'thought' and 'knowledge' restrict these to some pre-existing 'pool' of which we are tasked with accessing and extracting from. Whilst noble, this limits the world to what already exists, uncovered or not. But when the world is re-viewed instead as being radically open and constructed, as taking place in process and in place, thinking instead becomes capable of creating genuine novelty and change. Art becomes tasked with the germination of such radical opportunity, and politically the current state of affairs begins to look a little less impenetrable.

That encounter with the new, that fresh and excitable feeling when an idea pops into your head (how could it ever have *not* been there?) is a rare treat: there is no way of telling where such moments will spring from, what will trigger them, where we will be, what time of day, or in whose company. And there is no telling just where the idea will go - written down perhaps, or carried into conversation, across dinner tables and groups of friends, changing the tone of your morning coffee or from finding new pleasure in sitting in front of your favourite vista. That *Emerging Contemporaries* might provide such a micro-rupture speaks to the intimate relationship between the artist and their material, that malleable surface tension which might provide a different configuration of the present - the *shimmer* of a beginning, again, anew.

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written on these capacities in cinema, and her current PhD project is thinking this through fashion and style.

Christian Sirois is a curator, artist, and cultural geography PhD candidate at UNSW Canberra, as well as the gallery and exhibition manager at Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre. His research is centered around curation, affect, and cultural conservation through creative and multisensory fieldwork methods, exploring the types of knowledge that can be produced when we engage with sensory networks as epistemological systems.