

TRUE LIES AND SUPERFICTIONS: MAKING SUPERFICTIONS REAL

29 JULY – 15 AUGUST 2015

PETER HILL



Paintforum International advertisement, 2018



Philip Guston at National Gallery of Victoria, March 2018

Superfictions exist in the gap between installation art and literary fiction. Peter Hill's first Superfiction was the *Museum of Contemporary Ideas* (1989 – ongoing), supposedly the world's biggest new museum on Park Avenue, New York. In time, it went through a *détournement* and emerged as *The Art Fair Murders* (1994 – ongoing) a mix of installation art, novel, and website (Superfictions.com). The next chapter of the Superfiction narrative is *True Lies and Superfictions: Making Superfictions Real* at **BLINDSIDE**.

From *The New Yorker*, March 16, 2018

By arts correspondent-at-large, Ernesto Malley

A week of exhibition openings, art auctions, conferences and artists' talks kicked off in Melbourne, Australia's cultural capital, on Wednesday night as many-years-in-the-planning *Paintforum International* finally got underway. With the winner of the world's largest painting prize still to be announced (18 March), and *Vault Paintfair 2018* opening at the end of the month in the Royal Exhibition Buildings (think Crystal Palace with palms), there is plenty to celebrate in the world of paint, canvas, and highly priced artworks (check out the \$4 million David Bradford at Heide Museum, and the \$6 million Marlene Dumas at TarraWarra, and that's even before the auctions begin).

If El Greco or Philip Guston is what turns you on, then head down to the NGV International. If you are into heavy metal colour, then ACCA's roof is straining under the weight of Jessica Stockholder's suspended white goods and automobiles, overpainted in orange, purple, and blue. In today's expanded world of painting, artists paint on *anything* including photographs, as you can see at CCP (Centre for Contemporary Photography) with stunning works by Arnulf Rainer, David Thomas, and Erwin Wurm. Complementing this is a season of films about painters at ACMI, including documentaries on Marlene Dumas, Jackson Pollock, Ian

Fairweather, Derek Jarman, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Paula Rego, Hermann Nitsch, Arthur Boyd, Picasso, Frank Auerbach, Yayoi Kusama, Neo Rauch, Peter Doig, Gerhard Richter, and the little known masterpiece *Blaze* about Slavoj Zizek's firefighter paintings made on the lids of old cigar boxes (he is also exhibiting his series of black lighthouses at the Old Melbourne gaol). Highlight of the painters' Film Festival will be the world premier of Julian Schnabel's movie *Ulysses*, the extraordinary length of which, at 24 hours, mirrors Joyce's narrative timeline in Dublin's sometimes not-so-fair city.

While *Paintforum's* international team of organizers are determined to "keep it visual", there will be plenty to talk about at the four day conference hosted by the city's four leading universities – Deakin, Melbourne, Monash, and RMIT, spread across all four campuses in a show of academic solidarity and collegiality.

At tram and train stations across the city, advertising the conference, giant billboards have become controversially quotable, as with guest speaker (and our own *New Yorker* art critic) Peter Schjeldahl, whose statement I lingered over this morning, at a station called Footscray, on my way to see Banksy's radical interventions in this hot-bed suburb of creativity where its new Museum of Contemporary Art (FMCA) is hosting *Paintforum International's* first \$1 million painting prize (see below for shortlisted artists).

“Oehlin offers an insight into why digital pictorial mediums can be exciting – and certainly are triumphant in global visual culture – but still fail to sustain intellectual interest or to nourish the soul.” It was hard to read beneath the sprayed comments of those who disagreed with this sentiment.

Arriving back at the iconic Flinders Street Station, I was greeted, can you believe it, with a huge electronic sign flashing a statement by the main pointman of painting Dave Hickey, that “Painting isn’t dead except as a major art. From now on it will be a discourse of adepts, like jazz.”

Over 70 commercial galleries around the city have come to the party, with many of its famous ARI’s (artist-run-initiatives) offering takes on the expanded field of painting that includes everything from relational aesthetics, video, sound art, and superfictions. Local Melbourne and Australian talent impresses, with works by Imants Tillers, Judy Watson, Mathys Gerber, eX de Medici, Euan Heng, Anne Wallace, Jon Cattapan, Jan Murray, Max White, Paul Zika, Renee Cosgrave, Peter Westwood, and the drawings of Patricia Piccinini. “Country Country – the doubling of Indigenous Art”, the biggest ever exhibition of urban and desert Aboriginal painting, more than backed up Ian McLean’s controversial book *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art* (IMA and Power Publications).

At what’s known as the “Paris end” of this great city, the Windsor Hotel – recently renovated and encased in glass by its new billionaire Singapore owner – is also heavily involved in the launch of *Paintforum International* that promises to do for painting what the Munster Sculpture Project did for installation art and other 3D artworkers. The once-staid hotel now boasts that controversial 300 metre “breathing” tower that causes its profile to expand and contract with daily temperature changes. The billionaire owner, Lucy Kueh, is rumoured to be the “anonymous” donor behind the \$1 million painting prize that will follow the event around the world every year (one artist from the host city and another from the host country will always be included in the final ten painters, or so they say). As a tribute to Singapore being named 2019’s host of *Paintforum International* the largest ever exhibition of Singapore painting to leave the island state, curated by Ute Meta Bauer, Milenko Prvackia, and Bala Starr, spreads across all public areas of the hotel, including the cavernous lobby. The next year (2020) will be Scotland’s turn, and Melbourne is heralding this with the paintings of Flora Macdonald, winner of the 2017 Turner Prize, alongside stand-out shows of Steven Campbell, Callum Innes, Joyce Cairns, Alasdair Gray, Claire Barclay, and John Bellany.

With Spain’s recent bankruptcy and expulsion from the Eurozone, falling hotly on the heels of Greece’s violent departure two years ago, there has been immense interest in the exhibition *Aesthetic Vandalism* at MUMA, Monash University’s cutting edge gallery – recently tripled in size,

giving it the extra height needed to show monumental works. The centerpiece of this breathtaking exhibition, curated by Tate’s Marko Daniel, is Joan Miro’s large-scale burnt paintings, deliberately torched in response to the rise of Franco’s fascist regime. These are displayed hanging from the forty metre high atrium and can be viewed from both sides through the scorched canvas. Others artists exhibited here, with a creatively destructive bent, include Asgor Jorn, Michael Landy, The Chapman Brothers, Marina Abramovic (recently returned to her first love of painting), Jean Tinguley, Ai Weiwei, Hal Jones, Tracey Emin, bozo ink, Lucia Fontana, The Wrecking Girls, and Chris Bond.

The city’s three major auction houses are expected to see over \$750 million worth of international and Australian artworks go under the hammer in coming days. Masterpieces from Agnes Martin and Wayne Thiebaud, to Matisse and Luc Tuymans are behind the rows of *Learjets* choking the runways of Melbourne’s international airport.

Besides the aesthetics and the money, there’s also a lot of fun to be had here, and not just in the city’s labyrinthine and graffiti-decorated laneways. Down at Southern Cross Station is the most amazing artwork I have ever seen. Glasgow artist of all things psychotropic, Jim Lambie, has covered the bigger-than-Central Station concourse with his trademark rainbow-hued tape. This installation booked out the entire station’s advertising sites and retail outlets. And in between track announcements, the laid-back sounds of sixties West-Coast band Love, the artist’s studio music of choice, soothe the harried commuters with ear candy for the soul. It’s a gas, gas, gas!

The ten shortlisted finalists for the first *Paintforum International* \$1 million painting prize are: Ei Arakawa (Fukushima, Japan); Kristin Baker (New York, USA); Lucy Bleach (Hobart, Australia); Theaster Gates (Chicago, USA); Jim Lambie (Glasgow, Scotland); Jutta Koether (Cologne, Germany); Scott Miles (Melbourne, Australia); ‘Pages’: Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi (Tehran, Iran); Han Schuil (Amsterdam, Netherlands); Ian Woo (Singapore). Major selections of each artist’s oeuvre can be viewed until 4 July 2018 at the new Footscray Museum of Contemporary Art (FMCA).

MEET THE ARTIST | Peter Hill will be in the gallery every day – Wednesday to Saturday – at noon to discuss ideas with interested artists, curators, climate scientists, students, project managers, educationalists, and gallery visitors. Occasionally taking to the surrounding laneways for a discursive *dérive*.

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GALLERY HOURS Tuesday to Saturday, 12pm – 6pm

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BLINDSIDE is a not-for-profit artist run space. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the City of Melbourne.

