



KATE SHAW

Art15 London





Front Cover

*Circadian* (2015) acrylic and resin on board  
120cm diameter

Inside front cover

*Lucid* (2015) lenticular print on acrylic, edition of 5  
120cm diameter

# KATE SHAW – LUCID DREAMING

Kate Shaw's mindscapes are toxic. Their syrupy forms stick to the outer layer of the unconscious, infiltrating the senses like a candy coated infection. And so, despite their shiny, saccharine integuments, the virtuality embedded within these worlds is one of a more somber presage.

The Melbourne-born artist's constructed worlds of dreamlike, psychedelic vistas evoke a sort of wonderment and dizziness — a vertigo of the infinite — so often associated with notions of the sublime. Though, these visual cues of romantic sensibility — typically, depicting vast mountain ranges surrounding valleys, many of which cradle pools of water — are almost too stereotypical if considered superficially as a subject. But, that's kind of the point: the sublime at play here is mere myth, a simulated precarious fantasy programed into modern culture's collective unconscious.

In *On the Sublime*, Longinus, writing sometime in the 1st century CE in Ancient Greece, noted, "for the true sublime, by some virtue of its nature, elevate us: uplifted with a sense of loud possession, we are filled with joyful pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing." About nineteen-hundred years after Longinus, taking a cue from the Ancient Greek poet and 18th century philosophers Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, Romanticism swept across the Western world, inspiring artists to latch on to some suitable, external object deemed "sublime."

For Burke, the sublime was anything that is so vast and Other that it seems, by its very existence, to threaten the annihilation of the observing subject; in other words, one is witnessing a thing whose inner meaning is one's own annihilation. Kant then made an interesting shift from Burke's argument, saying that an experience is sublime if it involves the deliberate subordination of oneself to some force or category that is supposedly greater than oneself: mountain peaks, storms at sea, John Milton's description of Hell in *Paradise Lost*, and infinity are the notable examples used by Burke and then by Kant in their discussions of the sublime.<sup>1</sup> Occurring along a threshold — characterized by an instability between the perceiving mind and the perceived object, and which then catalyzes a sense of the uncanny — this diagnostic loss of self was typically expected to be swift and fleeting, whereby the self would soon uncoil and recover.

Be as that may to the idealistic tenets of Romanticism, the 20th century witnessed a time in which the insistence upon the forms of the sublime began to take on a more artificial quality, marked by an adherence to the speed of capitalist progress, along with its technological developments and fashion trends promoted by advertising agendas (i.e. Surrealism's absorption into the cultural mainstream in the mid-1930s). Now, fast forward to today's modern world — a world where technology has altered the idea of the sublime, in which it is marketed as terrifying and awe-inspiring in the limitless unknowability of its potential; it's a world positioned as a stagnate interval, where the boundaries between self and object are crumbling at the wayside. It is the synthetic fabric fashioning the veil of this world that is taken up by Kate Shaw as her subject.

In her series "Uncanny Valley" (2014), as with much of Shaw's work, the organic and the artificial — the toxic — are bound together via a course of collision, though, fluently rendered in such a way that the seemingly dichotomous relationship is in congruence. This feature is made palpable by way of Shaw's process, which involves the careful manipulation of fragments sourced from poured marble acrylic paint. Once they have been arranged within the collage's planned composition, Shaw then applies layers of resin with an airbrush.

"Uncanny Valley" references to the uncanny valley hypothesis, which states that as a robot's appearance is designed to look more like a human, some people will exhibit more positive and empathetic reactions towards the Artificial Intelligence (AI), that is, until it starts to look too much like a human. Then, the possibility of hostility and/or pronounced indifference directed at the AI increases substantially. Where this familiarity dips into creepiness is referred to as the "valley." However, as the robot's appearance starts to reverse, looking less like a human, the interaction typically becomes favorable again.

The collages' titles in the series — like *Ravine*, *Dell*, *Cove*, and *Canyon* — reveal that the scenes that compose "Uncanny Valley" underscore representations of specific geological features. And not just any geological feature — these are structures of regions with accentuated dips and depressions, notably delineated with aqueous embodiments.

In the triptych *Gorge*, a rocky, mountainous terrain shelters a reflective body of water, which produces a mirror image of the jagged marble shapes enclosed around it; here, the uncanny is a topological mirage. *Glacier*, too, is quite efficacious and provocative in regards to the uncanny sublime: the form's asperous contours, containing marble icy blues, is projected as a simulacrum of itself within the depthless transparent pool of water that sits directly below its terrestrial base.

In a footnote to his essay "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud provides several anecdotes describing the sensation of coming across one's double. One story, as relayed by the psychoanalyst, describes how, while on a train trip, the washroom door between his cabin and the one adjacent swung open, and another traveler appeared to be entering into Freud's compartment from the washroom. Thinking this person had mistaken Freud's cabin for his own, Freud jumped to explain to the man his error, only to then realize that he was looking at his own reflection in the mirror attached to the open washroom door:

I can still recollect and I thoroughly disliked [my reflection] appearance. Instead, therefore, of being frightened by [my] "double," I simply failed to recognize it as such. It is not possible, though, that [my] dislike of it was a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction which feels the "double" to be something uncanny?<sup>2</sup>

In this anecdote, Freud felt an uncanny effect over the confusion of the relation between himself and the image as well as the space from which he perceived the image, or, perhaps even more so, when he interpreted the reflected image as spatial extension. A similar sensation is experienced when encountering *Glacier* — jarringly, if it wasn't for the thin transparent veil representing water, the form and its reflected counterpart would be difficult to distinguish between the categorizations of more "real" and less "real."

The reflected surfaces represented in "Uncanny Valley," present throughout Shaw's body of work — in spite of their reading as "water" — are depthless. For, we are unable to see beyond their reflector planes. The rhizomatic field of the digital realm reverberates with the smooth orchestration of Shaw's static deluge of hyper, schizophrenic swells of color; her collages map the planated topography of a culture constantly looking at and predicated by the screen. Similarly, Shaw's utilization of fragmentation throughout her work finds itself in line with a postmodern preoccupation of the coming to terms with a world saturated in images.





*Liminal* (2015) lenticular print on acrylic, edition of 5  
120cm diameter

# KATE SHAW – LUCID DREAMING

In recent art, the modernist notion of the fragment as a microcosm has given way to a willingness to let fragments be fragments, to allow partiality to exist. As in the case of Bruce Nauman's awkwardly dysfunctional formalism, wholeness is something that can only be played with, and the image of wholeness only a paltry comment on the lost utopianism of modernism. It is a bit comparable to a kind of acting out of socially expected norms, the presentation of a false "true self," long after the notion of a unified psychological mind has given way to the standardization of the schizophrenic model.<sup>3</sup>

In Shaw's work, both the whole and the fragment spring onto the scene as if in conspiracy with one another. After she cuts up and arranges the layers of marble paint within her composition, the traces of an overt collage aesthetic are consummately glossed over to the point where the image can be mistakenly perceived as a whole rather than a composite of cut-ups.

While attending the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in the early 1990s, Shaw's art school education was dictated by staunch formalist instructors whose teaching championed the pedagogic ghost of Hans Hoffmann, one of the major influencers on Clement Greenberg's formalism and, therefore, the boy's club that became the New York School. Shaw's use of tripped out, lurid colors can be seen as a reaction against a modernist drive to transparency — one of the Enlightenment's epistemic fetishes — so pervasive within the white-walls of her university education as well as the institutions of culture at large.

To Shaw, color is Other. Creeping about the wasteland of Western culture's latent ideology is a chromophobic impulse, a fear of corruption or contamination through color.<sup>4</sup> For one, it's associated with mind-altering substances and psychedelia. Historically, this chroma aversion can be traced back to Ancient Greece: Plato and Aristotle deemed pigment a drug, a *pharmakon*, an occult substance that, like poetry, could stimulate unaccountable change, therefore, they wished to excise it from the *polis*.<sup>5</sup> Roughly 2,400 years later, the relationship between drugs and color still hasn't changed too much; however, the fear of its capabilities has, in a diluted sense, been remedied via the antidote of popular culture (one can now be a hippie for halloween or buy a cheap psychedelic poster without taking even a drop of acid).

Femininity too, as expressed through color, is Other. In his book *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor points out the etymological significance of color as Other:

Color has always meant less-than-true and the not-quite-real. The Latin *colorem* is related to *celare*, to hide or conceal; in Middle English, "to color" is to embellish or adorn, to disguise, to render specious or plausible, to misrepresent. Color, then, is arbitrary and unreal: mere make-up.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, if color is cosmetic, it is also coded as feminine. And, these days, artificially enhanced femininity is displayed ubiquitously — walk by the make-up counters in department stores and you'll surely witness older women paying to look younger and younger women paying to look older. The splashy vibrance of Shaw's fragmented marble paint compilations, often interspersed with daubs of glitter, are portraits of a forged psychology that can't resurrect itself from the kaleidoscope of simulated identities and experiences. Aspects of psychedelia are still very much alive, but it's also been tightly boxed up and stamped with a price tag, in which "are you experienced?," warps into "want to buy an image of this experience?" The same goes for femininity-as-product, where the body is coated to give the illusion of depth, ignoring the interior beneath the constructed facade.

Produced from a month-long residency in Reykjavik, Shaw's series "Fjallkonan" (2013), translating as "Lady of the Mountain," takes its name from the female incarnation of Iceland. There is an urgency within these paintings. Where "Uncanny Valley" seems to convey a sense of distance, much like a static image on a screen, "Fjallkonan" comes across as aroused and animated. Asdis is both absorbing and terrifying: bright reds, yellows, pinks, and slime green seem to almost pop out of their two-dimensional confines, while the rock terrain, surrounding a pool of reflective water, comes across as a dynamic duality where elucidations of molten rock and hard, jagged earth form a mighty defense.

Also emphasized by Shaw, in our world, nature has been constructed as Other. Like the United States' alienation and mythization of Native Americans, Shaw's native country of Australia occludes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' relationship with "land" and "country." For, in modern Western culture, the idea that nature is separate from humans has informed the dominate ignorant understanding of nature. Shaw's experience in Iceland was formative: the land and the people that inhabit it seemed to intertwine in a favorable alchemy.

This virtuousness is easily detectable in the short video, *Fjall* (2013), edited from footage taken during her residency in Iceland, Shaw blends close-up shots of her marble paint pours with the Icelandic shoreline. The tone is meditative: people are seen in states of halcyon introspection and casual, low-tempo interactions with others as they observe the dramatic scenery and listen to the gentle, though assertive, rhythm of the sea's current as it meets the rocky shore. Fused with the spectacularly soothing ambience of the landscape, Shaw's paint pours, despite their bright and vivid acrylic hues, move across the screen with a quiet natural sway. With *Fjall*, Shaw, by synthesizing the natural environment with a synthetic material, is evoking that, in their most essential form, things behave in similar ways.

Kate Shaw's hallucinogenic vistas map a topography of the sedated mind conditioned by modern culture. Their toxicity embedded within their flatness envisions a world that threatens to become a glossy veil, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density. Along this plane, the natural is in jeopardy of becoming a screen memory to itself, in which the world of our mind and the world at our peripheries will collapse into one. There is terror in this annihilation, yet, it's also sublime.

---

Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (New York: Hackett Publishing Co., 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), 248.<sup>3</sup> See e.g. R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Ballantine, 1967). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, & Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking, 1977; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), is perhaps the best text on the schizophrenic model.

<sup>4</sup> See David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See Jacques Derrida, "Pharmakon," in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2000), 52.

**Jacquelyn O'Callaghan** *Jacquelyn O'Callaghan is an art critic, editor, and designer based out of Atlanta, GA and New York, NY.*

# BIOGRAPHY

Born in Sydney, Australia 1969. Lives and works in Melbourne and New York.

Kate Shaw holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours from RMIT University and a Diploma of Museum Studies from Deakin University.

She has held solo exhibitions in Australia, New York and Hong Kong and has presented work in group exhibitions in Auckland, Beijing, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Reykjavik, San Francisco, Seoul and Tokyo.

Kate Shaw's recent solo exhibitions include *Blue Marble* (Turner Galleries, Perth 2015), *Eternal Surge* (PointB, New York 2014), *Stardust in our veins* (Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne 2014), *ART 14* (Fehily Contemporary, London 2014), *Uncanny Valleys* (The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong 2014), *Luminous Worlds* (Gippsland Art Gallery, Victoria 2014), *Fjallkonan* (Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne 2013), *Auckland Art Fair* (Fehily Contemporary, Auckland 2013), *Nightingale*, (Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney 2013) *Wilderness of Mirrors* (Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney 2011) and *Liquefaction* (Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne 2011). Recent group exhibitions

Currently her work is touring throughout Asia as part the Asialink curated exhibition *Vertigo* including MOCA Taipei and POSCO Seoul. In 2014 was awarded a residency in New York supported by the Australia Council for the Arts at Point B Worklodge. Her was featured in the ABCTV documentary 'Conquest of Space' and 'Spectrum' Index Book, Barcelona. Her work was also included in 'Landscape and its Psyche' published by University of NSW. Urban Art Projects commissioned large-scale murals for Macquarie Centre, Sydney, which were launched early 2015.

In Australia, Shaw has exhibited at the UQ Museum, Macquarie University Museum, Art Gallery of NSW, Gertrude Contemporary and 24hrArtSpace. She has also exhibited extensively through the US, most recently 18 x 8, New York, Point B, New York (2014), Dreamtime, Mirus Gallery, San Francisco (2013) To Deny Our Nothingness, Brooklyn Gallery, New York (2013) Flowers for You, Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, New York (2013) Space Oddity, S Cube Gallery, Laguna Beach, California (2012) Missing Link Residency Unlimited, NY (2012) I found it, I broke it, I stole it Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, New York (2010) Lumen Stanton Island Atlantic Salt Factory, New York (2010) Possibility of a Painting Chelsea Hotel, New York (2010) and NADA, Miami, Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, Miami (2010).

Shaw has received several grants from Arts Victoria and the Australia Council for the Arts. She has undertaken residencies at Point B, New York (2014, 2013, 2012, 2010), Flux Factory, New York (2010) and Residency Unlimited, New York (2010). SIM, Reykjavik, Iceland (2013), 24hrArtspace, Darwin (2009) and Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne (2009).

She has been a finalist in numerous art prizes including: Nomination for the Prudential Eye Award (2015) The Redlands Prize (2014); The Arthur Guy Prize (2013); The Gold Award (2012), John Fries Memorial Prize (2012); John Leslie Memorial Prize (2012, 2003); Wynne Prize (2014, 2012, 2011, 2010); Substation Contemporary Art Prize (2012), Royal Bank of Scotland Art Award (2010); ABM AMRO Emerging Art Award (2007, 2006) and winner, Artists Wanted, painting category, New York (2012).

Shaw's work is in the collections of the University of Queensland Museum, Macquarie Bank, Westpac Bank, RACV, Royal Sydney Golf Club, Museum of Brisbane, Artbank and private collections in Australia, London, Hong Kong, Singapore, USA and France.

*Kate Shaw would like to thank Mia Salsjo, Bernadette Keys, Sue Doyle and Richard King.*





*DejaVu (detail - 6 panel work, piece 4.)* (2015) aluminium, acrylic, resin, mica, gold and silver  
dimensions variable 120 x 180cm



*Morpheus* (2015) acrylic and resin on board  
120cm diameter



# CURRICULUM VITAE

**Abridged CV – for more information please see  
[www.fehilycontemporary.com.au](http://www.fehilycontemporary.com.au)**

Born Sydney, lives/works Melbourne and New York

---

## EDUCATION

- 1997 Diploma of Museum Studies, Deakin University, Melbourne
- 1994 Bachelor of Arts, Fine Arts Honors (Painting) RMIT University, Melbourne

---

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Blue Marble*, Turner Galleries, Perth
- 2014 *Eternal Surge*, PointB, New York
- 2014 *Stardust in our Veins*, Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne
- 2014 *ART 14*, Fehily Contemporary, London
- 2014 *Uncanny Valley*, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2014 *Luminous Worlds*, Gippsland Art Gallery, Victoria
- 2013 *Fjallkonan*, Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne
- 2013 *Auckland Art Fair*, Fehily Contemporary, Auckland
- 2013 *Nightingale*, Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney
- 2011 *Wilderness of Mirrors*, Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney
- 2011 *KIAF*, Sullivan and Strumpf, COEX, Seoul
- 2011 *Liquefaction*, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

---

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Synthetica*, Wangarratta Art Gallery, Swan Hill Regional Gallery, Counihan Gallery, La Trobe Regional, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery (curated by Claire Anne Watson)
- 2015 *18 x 8*, PointB, New York
- 2014 *Art is...*, Horsham Arts festival, Horsham Regional Gallery, Victoria
- 2014 *Sublime Point*, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, NSW (curated by Carrie Kibbler and Graham Kime)
- 2014 *Pattern*, Glen Eira Gallery, Melbourne (curated by Diane Soumalis), Conquest of Space, COFA Gallery Sydney (curated by Andrew Frost)
- 2014 *In Your dreams*, Counihan Gallery, Brunswick
- 2014 *Vertigo*, touring with Asialink to Indonesia, Taiwan and Korea (curated by Claire-Ann Watson [catalogue])
- 2013 *New Horizons*, Gippsland Gallery, Victoria (curated by Simon Gregg)
- 2013 *Spatial Dialogues: Keitai Mizu*, Shibuya, Tokyo (curated by Larissa Hjorth)
- 2013 *Sim Sal a Bim*, SIM, Reyjavik, Iceland
- 2013 *Dreamtime*, Mirus Gallery, San Francisco

- 2013 *To Deny Our Nothingness*, Brooklyn Gallery, New York (curated by Carolina Puente)
- 2012 *Everywhere but Here* Blindside, Melbourne
- 2012 *Flowers for You*, Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, New York Inspiring Artists: Recipients of NAVA Grants Maitland Regional Gallery, NSW (curated by Cheryl Farrell [catalogue])
- 2012 *Mangae*, Korean Women's Art Association, Parliament House, Sydney
- 2012 *Space Oddity*, S Cube Gallery, Laguna Beach, California
- 2011 *Seeing to a Distance*, Level 17 Artspace, Melbourne (curated by Amanda Morgan)
- 2011 *New Psychodelia* University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane (curated by Sebastian Moody, [catalogue])
- 2011 *Together in Harmony* for 50 Years, KWASS, Korea Foundation Culture Centre, Seoul
- 2011 *Arboreal*, Macquarie University Gallery, Sydney (curators, Rhonda Davis and Andrew Simpson [catalogue])
- 2011 *Inhabit Fiesta*, City of Brisbane Laneway Festival, Brisbane

---

## COLLECTIONS

- Artbank
- Macquarie Group Collection
- Museum of Brisbane
- Rochampton Regional Gallery
- Royal Sydney Golf Club
- Royal Automobile Club of Victoria
- University of Queensland Museum
- Westpac Collection
- Private Collections Australia, New Zealand, US, UK and Korea

---

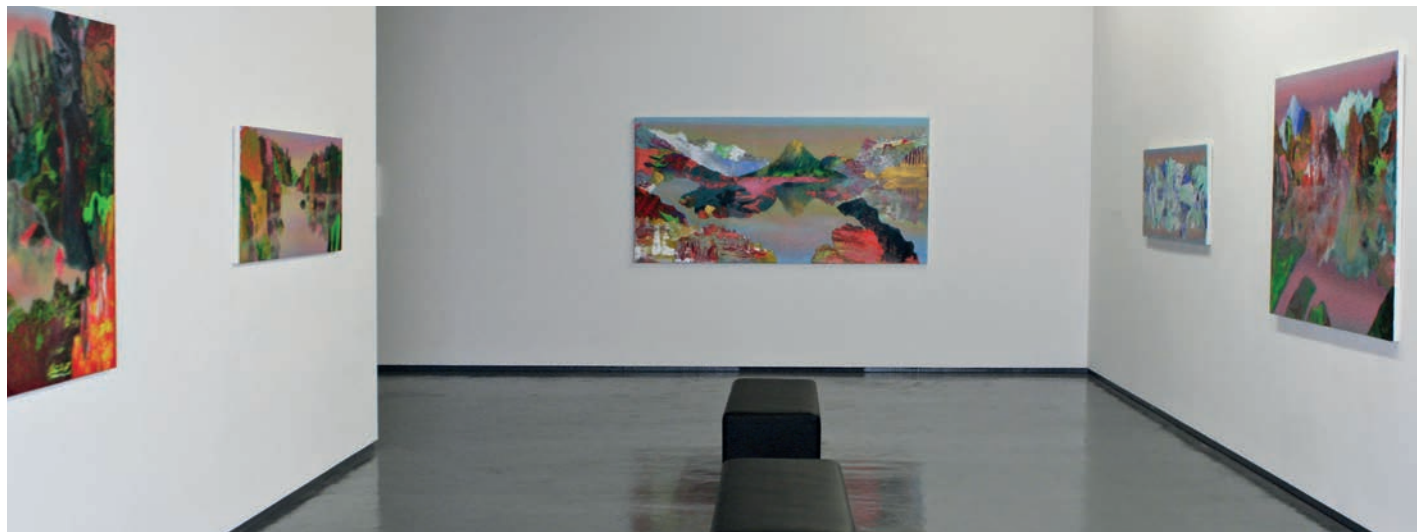
## AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2014 Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Finalist
- 2014 Australia Council for the Arts
- 2013 Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize, Bendigo Art Gallery, Finalist
- 2013 Dame Joan Sutherland Fund
- 2012 Artists Wanted 2011 Year in Review (Painting), New York, Winner
- 2012 John Leslie Memorial Prize, Gippsland Regional Gallery, Finalist
- 2012 John Fries Memorial Prize, Gaffa Gallery Highly Commended
- 2012 Gold Prize, Finalist, Rockhampton Regional Gallery
- 2012 Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Finalist
- 2011 Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Finalist
- 1998 Australian Film Commission



*Blue Marble* (2015) Lenticular print on acrylic, edition of 5  
120cm diameter





**Fehily Contemporary** is a contemporary art gallery established by Ken and Lisa Fehily, two passionate, dynamic collectors whose personal journey of collecting, supporting artists careers and the Australian contemporary art sector informs all levels of the business, enriching the experience for collectors and artists alike. Starting as a temporary space in an old warehouse in Melbourne city, the gallery has since expanded to a large, two-story premise in the Collingwood, where 21 represented artists from Australia, New Zealand and the United States regularly produce innovative and challenging art.

From its official launch at the 2010 Melbourne Art Fair, **Fehily Contemporary** has been dedicated to the exchange of ideas cultivated by art fairs in Australia and abroad. The gallery participated in the Melbourne Art Fair again in 2012. In 2013, the gallery participated in the 2013 Auckland Art Fair and the inaugural 2013 Sydney Contemporary Fair. In 2014, the gallery participated in Art14 London, START art fair, London and Melbourne Art Fair.

**Fehily Contemporary** has also remained committed to the local community, collaborating with the City of Yarra and Walk to Art for the Meet The Maker programs. In addition to local ties, **Fehily Contemporary** also reaches out to the wider Asia-Pacific region: in 2011, as part of the Melbourne International Festival, the gallery worked with Utopia @ Asialink to present the video work exhibition Intimate Publics.

**Fehily Contemporary** is unique in its approach of making the inaccessible accessible whilst maintaining integrity and credibility. Fehily contemporary works with collectors and the broader community to encourage participation in a supportive environment to excite and enthuse. Artists connect with collectors, collectors connect with curators and visitors learn to understand the art beyond hanging on the gallery walls. Fehily Contemporary understands that their artists contribute in a significant and meaningful way to a sophisticated interpretation of today's world.

---

Back Cover

*Somniloquy* (2015) acrylic and resin on board

120cm diameter



# FEHILYCONTEMPORARY

3a Glasshouse Road, Collingwood, VIC, Australia 3051  
+61 3 9017 0860  
ask@fehilycontemporary.com.au

F. I

[www.fehilycontemporary.com.au](http://www.fehilycontemporary.com.au)