

CRITIC'S CHOICE

CURATOR **LISA SLADE** SHARES WITH YOU FIVE ARTISTS SHE IS WATCHING RIGHT NOW, INCLUDING THREE NEW DISCOVERIES MADE WHILE GETTING TO KNOW THE ADELAIDE ART WORLD.

Relocating to Adelaide to take up the post of project curator at the Art Gallery of South Australia has introduced me to a new art scene and a fresh set of faces. This selection includes three of these new discoveries, as well as one artist from the East Coast who I have been keeping an eye on for a few years now, and a recent find at the 2012 Indian Art Fair in New Delhi.

NANDAN GHIYA

The transformation of tradition was a recurring theme in the work exhibited at the 2012 Indian Art Fair in February and **Nandan Ghiya's** installation at Exhibit320 proved no exception. Born in Jaipur, Ghiya grew up in a family of art dealers but initially trained in fashion. Titled *Virtually Extinct*, his installation alluded to the Rajasthani tradition of portraiture. It involved pixelating, via paint, the faces of those captured in the images collected from various parts of his home state of Rajasthan. The effect is akin to the digital distortions that occur when uploading content to the internet. This illusion is extended to the frames, which are a hybrid grafting of several different profiles. The collision of traditional portraiture with the visual interface of the internet bears particular weight in India where the ancient sits alongside a burgeoning technology industry and Ghiya is well placed to respond to this unfolding visual economy.

Nandan Ghiya, *VIRTUALLY EXTINCT 3*, 2011. Acrylic on photographs, 83.8 x 73.7cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND EXHIBIT320, NEW DELHI



ARIEL HASSAN

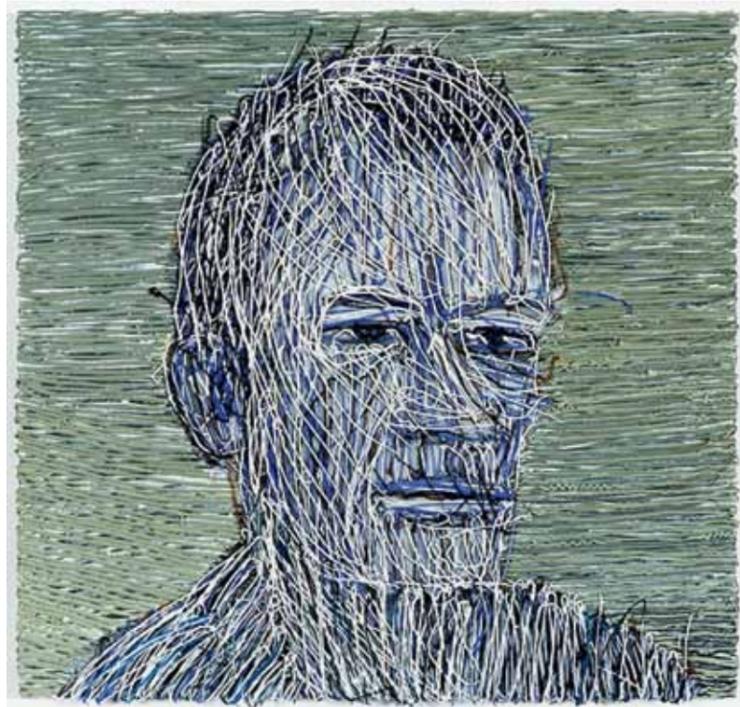
Proudly a painter, **Ariel Hassan** also makes sculptures, photographs, installations and, recently, sound-based work. Even when exploring these various practices, Hassan thinks and works like a painter – his recent sculptures began as paintings in vertical space, untethered from the mechanics of mass. It is fitting that these sculptures, rhizomatic in form, were inspired by an aerophyte, an airborne plant from his native country of South America. Born of the air, Hassan's sculptures are paintings by another means. This same sense of dialectical tension (espoused by **Hegel**, one of Hassan's preferred thinkers) pervades all of his work. What look like poured, painterly abstractions are painstakingly painted fields of figuration – they are trapped time, with each painting concealing the hundreds of hours it takes Hassan to recreate the random flow of paint on a surface in the strokes of a number one paint brush. The results are marbled, coralline and endlessly suggestive surfaces and, like the viewer, Hassan is drawn to the incompleteness, the ambiguity of process and meaning. In his words, "what keeps me interested in the work is that I don't fully know what it is yet". That and the capacity of painting to both proffer and stave off madness.

Ariel Hassan, *A Maniac's Model for Reduction of Fear*, 2012. Cast aluminium, stainless steel split pins, edition of 3, 169 x 99 x 92cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND GREENAWAY ART GALLERY, ADELAIDE



ALAN JONES

With a name like **Alan Jones** and a raft of material practices including drawing, painting and soft sculpture, one could be forgiven for thinking that there are several Alan Joneses in the art world. Despite his diverse material avatars, Jones's excavation of his personal history is relentless. This history includes his ancestor **Robert Forrester**, a first fleeter who, while working as a farmer in Windsor (where Jones spent his childhood), shot an Aboriginal boy but was never found guilty. This history and its unsettling reverberations in the more recent past have forged a gritty, realist edge to Jones's practice. He explores this in his series of paintings where family likenesses are conjured with textured paint applied by a caulking gun. Via this process, paint is tensely accrued on the surface and the relationship between figure and ground is destabilised, suggesting our uneasy origins. These portraits of his father, brothers and himself were exhibited at Blockprojects in Melbourne in the company of sculptures depicting British icons. Jones sees himself as complicit in a history of dispossession and continuing colonisation.



Alan Jones, *Darren #1*, 2011. Oil on linen, 88 x 92cm. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND BLOCKPROJECTS, MELBOURNE



Sue Kneebone, *Continental Drift*, 2012. Digital montage on acrylic, suite of 3, 35 x 45cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST

SUE KNEEBONE

Like **Alan Jones**, Adelaide-based artist **Sue Kneebone** mines her own family history to explore broader issues of cultural identity. In a recent series titled *Continental drift*, a large salt lake located north of the Gawler Ranges called Lake Gairdner, where Kneebone's great-grandparents ran a pastoral property, is the setting chosen for her unsettled narrative. These digital montages depict groupings of figures and animals arising absurdly, like ancient pillars of salt, from the lake. The figures are emblematic of Asia and Africa, two of the exotic lands, and people depicted in **JH Foley**'s celebration of empire and memorial to Prince Albert in London's Hyde Park. Made at the height of Queen Victoria's reign, the groupings are cast adrift in the Australian interior. In the artist's own words, they are "unsettling mirages floating at the far edges of empire". For Kneebone the figurative groupings allude to those seeking refuge in Australia, many of whom find themselves incarcerated in detention centres, out of sight and out of mind, in locations just as remote as Lake Gairdner. The series was created for Melbourne's Human Rights Arts and Film Festival and through these scenes of displacement and isolation, Kneebone articulates colonisation's enduring legacy.



AMY JOY WATSON

It seems that nominative determinism, the idea that a person's name can have considerable influence on who and what they become, is at work in the world of **Amy Joy Watson**. Based in Adelaide and a recent graduate of the Adelaide Central School of Art, Watson is a joy maker – her sculptures evoke pure delight. Crafted carefully from balsa wood, which is then stained with washes of watercolour before being hand-stitched together, her untitled series and the paroxysms of pleasure they elicit from the viewer, has propelled Watson onto a national and international stage in recent months. Like artist **Gemma Smith**, who has invented her own geometric neo-modernism, Watson finds fertile play in 20th century formalism. The tessellations of vivid colour where fertile forms escape the grid, and the helium induced hovering found in the balloon series, remind us that art can and should be fun.

Amy Joy Watson, *Untitled (balloon installation maquette)*, 2011. Balsa wood, watercolour, polyester thread, balloons, dimensions variable. COURTESY: THE ARTIST