

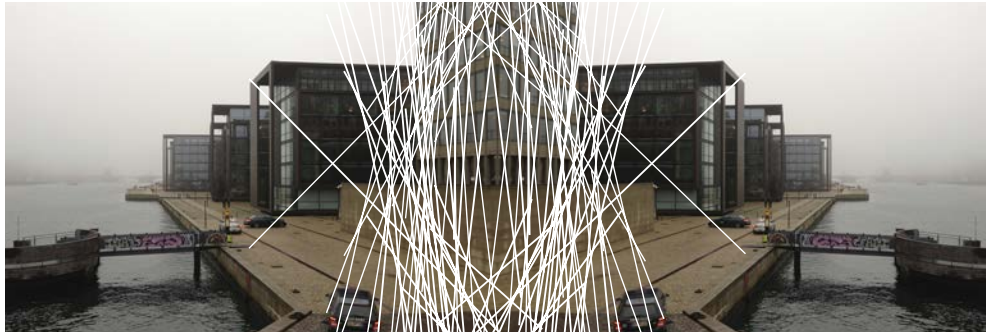


SARAH ROBSON :
SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS



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Foreword by Jackie Dunn



Absens 2014
Artist Book #5

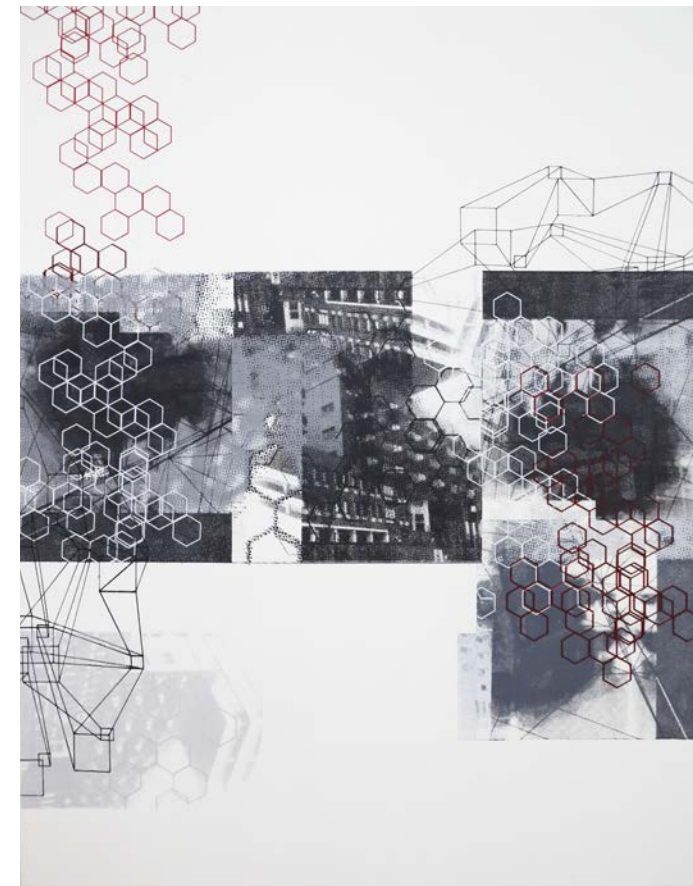
FOREWORD

I first came to know Sarah's art in the mid 1990s when curating a public collection, continuing to research and acquire her work into the early 2000s; then some years later, during my time at MAG&M, inviting her to stage this major solo exhibition. From the very first encounter I was struck by the elegance and beauty of her deceptively simple, deceptively cool, works. Works that were in fact so *complex*, one could not even decide whether to call them paintings or sculptures, and so *warm* that they made insistent reference to both our world and our bodies.

Revisiting her work now for 'Spatial Interventions', I note that in 2001 I wrote: 'Sarah Robson's painted and polished wall pieces are elegant exercises in form that reflect her interest in exploring space and the dynamics of perception.' It strikes me 'elegance' was the epithet that I always felt best fitted the work, and I now find myself examining my own fascination with the suitability of the word to Sarah's practice.

As always, a definition up front helps. Elegance is most often defined in relation to notions of grace and refinement, but also of restraint. 'Refinement' and 'restraint' are interesting in relation to Sarah's work as they are not only outcomes, but processes; processes the artist actively develops as she polishes – *re-fines* – concepts as much as planes, all the while restraining herself by imposing on her working practice the sorts of formal limits and constraints she believes help 'avoid the chaos of indecision'.

However, it is a slightly different definition of elegance that I find most productive for an understanding of Sarah's work: that used by mathematics to speak of the simplicity – some say the *surprising* simplicity – and inevitability of either method or proof. Succinctness is usually at the heart of examples that are deemed elegant, as is originality; a further marker of elegance in mathematics is evidence that a proof or solution might be generalized to solve a set of related problems.



Cumulus I 2014
Silkscreen Monoprint
Acrylic & Lasceaux paste on Stonehenge paper 76 x 57cm



Cant V, Cant II, Cant VI 1995
Oil on canvas 147 x 147cm

This latter offers an important insight into Sarah's work: problems are endlessly posed, with constraints self-imposed, in order to 'solve' the specifics of the formal relationships of each piece, but the solutions ripple out amongst an endless series of related problems. Indeed, in discussing this exhibition with Sarah, she recommended a book of recent interest to her, Bryony Fer's 'The Infinite Line: Remaking Art After Modernism', and spoke of Fer's proposition that seriality and repetition may be ways of conceiving an artist's whole oeuvre.

I was impressed by Fer's thoughtful text for a number of reasons, not least for drawing from it, perhaps wrongly, my own insight into Sarah's practice. Firstly, Fer helped remind me that seriality and repetition are not stultifying, but speculative and generative of new ways of both making and looking at art.

Secondly, her teasing out of artists' explorations of infinity through repetition (from Piero Manzoni to Agnes Martin) reminds us that while 'minimalist' repetition aids in destroying the auratic qualities of the art object – its quasi-holy uniqueness – it also helps with a new conception of infinity. Infinity, in the post-modern world, is no longer divine, nor symbolic, and not necessarily even abstract. No longer transcendent but *material*, infinity is explored (artistically), somewhat paradoxically, by the imposition of formal constraints and the act of working within and against them.

Moreover – and here the larger leap from Fer's thinking to mine – Sarah's interest in the infinite extension of space and time is not only about a formal aesthetic exploration, but a much bigger holistic one. Her works *work* because she examines infinity by making objects that force an understanding of them, and of our experiencing them, *in the world*; connected spatially and temporally.

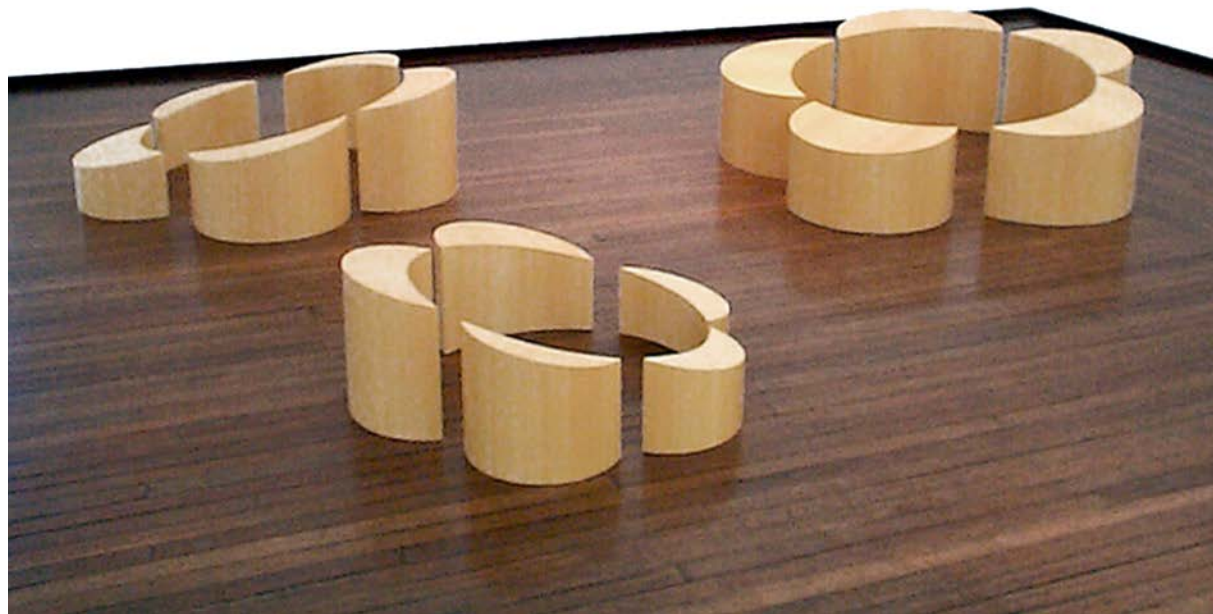


Untitled 1992
Blue steel with oil on canvas
28.5 x 38.5 cm

By experiencing edges, spaces, perceptual boundaries, relationships and limits, we are drawn into an awareness of other sets of relationships, and of our place in the world actually and metaphorically. *What could be more elegant than that?*

It's interesting that Sarah has recently been researching creative thinking at a deep academic level. She is looking at the subjective element that necessarily arises – but is often lost in traditional objective studies of creativity – when the researcher of creative activity is also the active participant (the artist). This has led Sarah, I believe, into a profound questioning of how we think about art in relation to both temporality and subjectivity, and also importantly, into an understanding of the critical function of intersubjectivity in the way art works. Intersubjectivity, after all, has always been Sarah's business: how *she* as subject, acts on matter which *we* then, as subjects, experience in and with the world. That she does it so *elegantly* – surprisingly simply, with original insight, and with ramifications for wider formal, and human, problems – is her special gift to us.

Jackie Dunn, 2014



Slide 2002
African Ash timber veneer
dimensions variable



Eclipse #7 2013
Timber with polyurethane
5 parts 83 x 81 x 32cm

SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS: THE MAGNITUDE OF ABSENCE

In 1994 I wrote an artist's statement; re-reading this statement 20 years later I realized that few of my core concerns had changed. The questions have become more directed, knowledge has been gained and my fascination continues. The work evolves and develops at an uneven pace but the thread that links one piece to another is always present, although not always overt. In my work I isolate elements and remove distractions in order to examine the richness of a single interaction, form with space, light with form, suspended moment through implied movement and static containment of potential energy. The work presents an opportunity to observe these interactions and glimpse the mechanisms that mirror our human experience of life. We live a concrete existence partnered by the abstract yield of our mind – the tangible with the intangible, the sensory with the imaginary. In my work this dual relationship of the physical to the abstract is created through the forms, shaping and coaxing forth the presence of the immaterial.

In 2008 I returned to the two-dimensional realm of the print and since then have continued to develop works on paper alongside my sculptural pieces. The differing mediums only served to highlight the consistency of my inquiries and how stillness and space give form to our imagination. This suspension of movement, our own or within the artwork, allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints to be explored within each encounter with an artwork. There has been much written about change as being the only constant and the dynamic state of our



Red & Blue 1992
Ink on carved plywood
9 panels 39 x 48cm

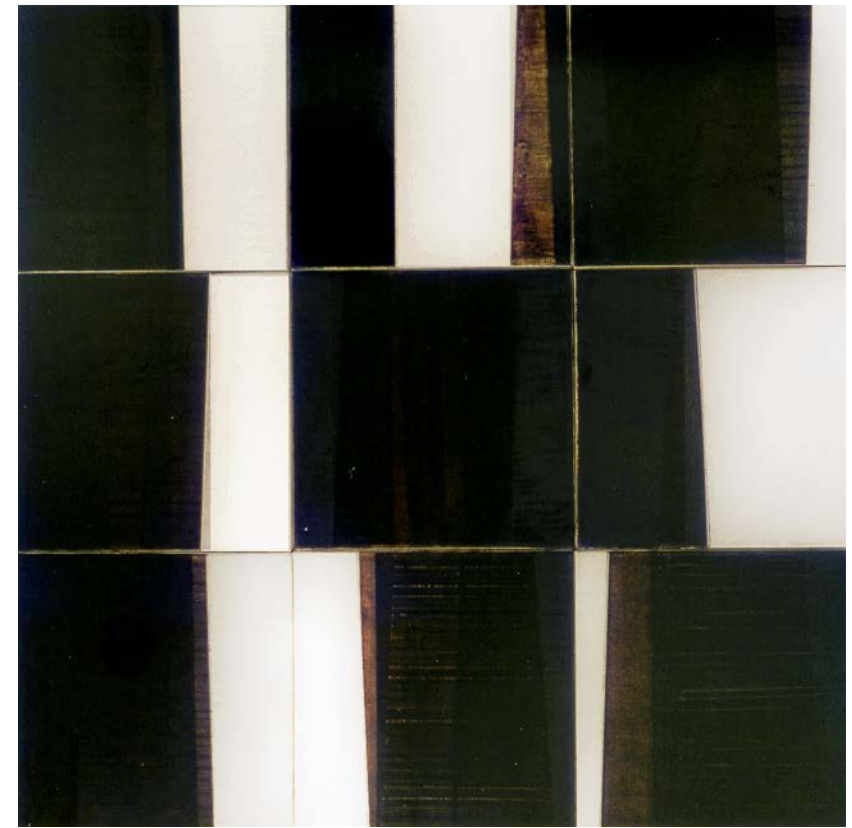
universe and ourselves within it, yet with my artworks I see their static forms as an invitation to look beyond their boundaries, to explore the connections they awaken and the infinite world they inhabit.

Time, space, the nature of perception and the unity of opposites have been the primary and ongoing concerns throughout my artistic practice. They are the fundamental building blocks of our experience of life, inextricably linked in a seamless dance – the very essence of what ‘to be’ is. As our methods of investigation become more complex, so our understanding of nature expands, revealing greater and greater levels of complexity and increasingly intricate patterns of correlation. In society we tend to separate and quantify at the expense of understanding the interdependency and evolution of life.

My most recent body of work translates these concerns into a discussion of the environmental difficulties we are facing, the future we are creating for our children, exposing the layers of intricacy that constitute a whole, introducing the notion of absence to elucidate presence, substituting solidity and permanence with fragility and transience – what losses must we incur before we take note and enforce positive change. Is it only through absence that we can value the present and if so how do we alert ourselves to what is present before it becomes a mere memory, and reconstruction the only alternative. My work offers a meeting point where the two worlds collide, a horizon line where the surfaces converge to reveal the unity of the physical and abstract. The arts facilitate this meeting point offering the viewer or audience an entry point from one world into the other, generating the diversity that nature and creativity thrive on.

Carbon is an element associated with both life and death, creation and destruction – a symbol of strength, lightness, technology and organic diversity. These symbolic and physical attributes hold the key to our past and our future. This newer body of work represents its molecular compounds by printed geometric ‘drawings’ of the structures they form. Carbon’s symbolic connotations denote the omnipresent and critical role that it plays in our lives and the interconnections that exist within our physical universe.

Historically, artists such as Joseph Beuys and Colin McCahon expressed their environmental and social concerns, questioning the nature of existence and the need for synergy between



North - South 1993/4
Oil on canvas 9 panels 120 x 120cm

humanity and nature. The new works of my own form a continuum of these concerns, reinforcing their continued relevance. Figuratively they merge the image and the metaphor, the real with the unreal. Literally they meld the painter and the sculptor within me, giving rise to new possibilities of expression and engagement with the viewer.

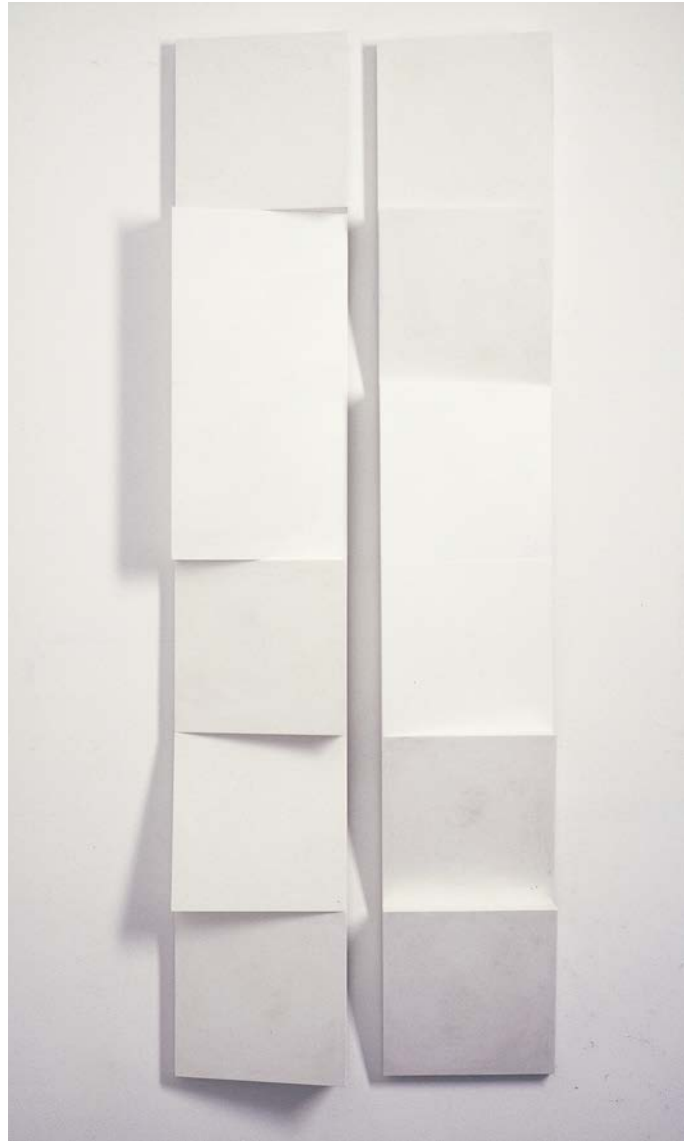
The threat of consumerism brings into question the very role of an artist: creator or co-contributor? Yet the role of the artist as social commentator remains valid, and the expression of beauty is still a reminder of what is important to preserve and what is important to feel. These latest artworks help me make sense of two decades of work: they give voice to the complexity of an instant, the layers of meaning fused to form the richness of a single moment, a breath in the life of the universe, a beat in the heart of our soul – the infinite in the magnitude of absence.

Sarah Robson 2014

SELECTED WORKS 1994 - 2014



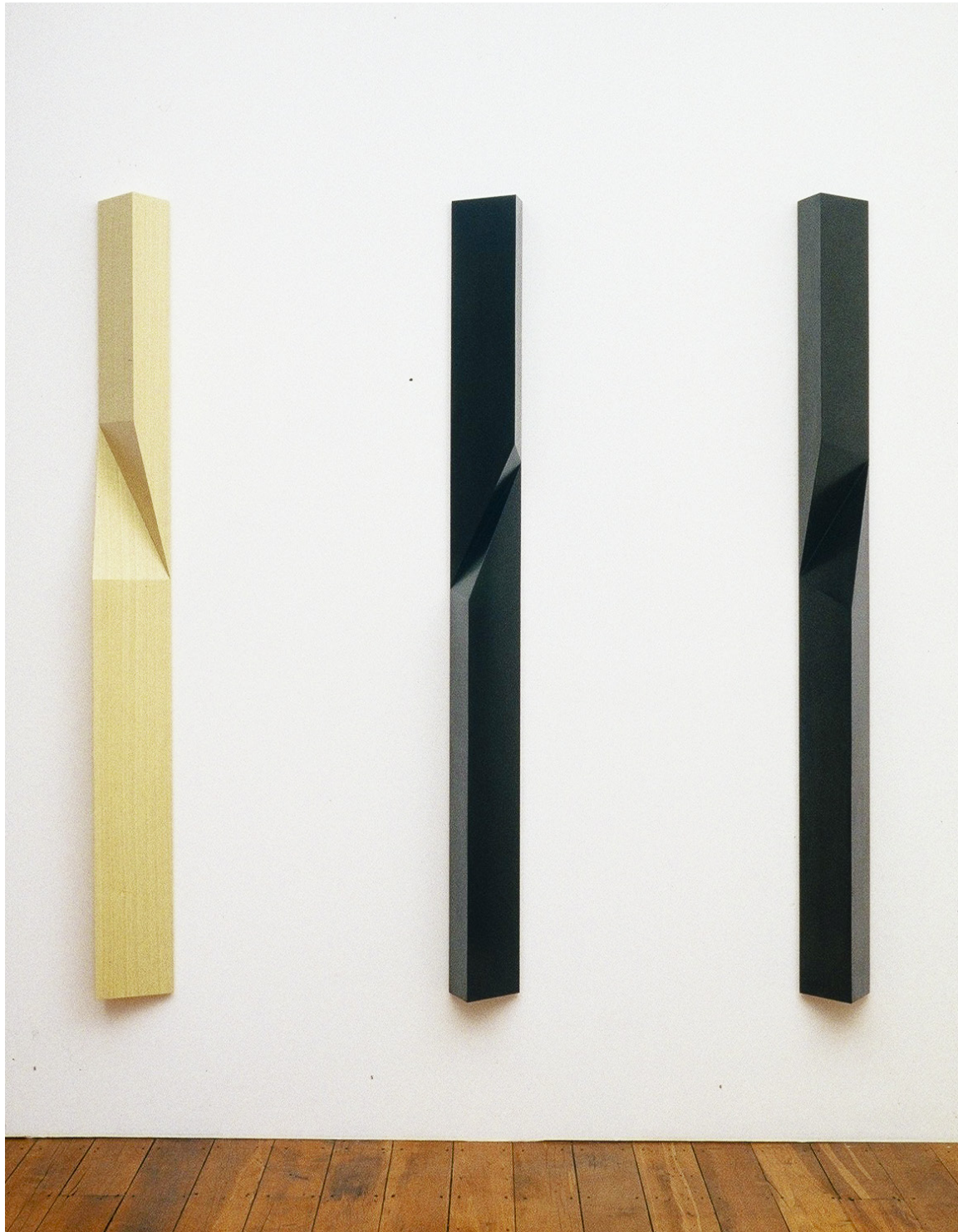
Calais Deviations 2011
The Residence, College Street Sydney



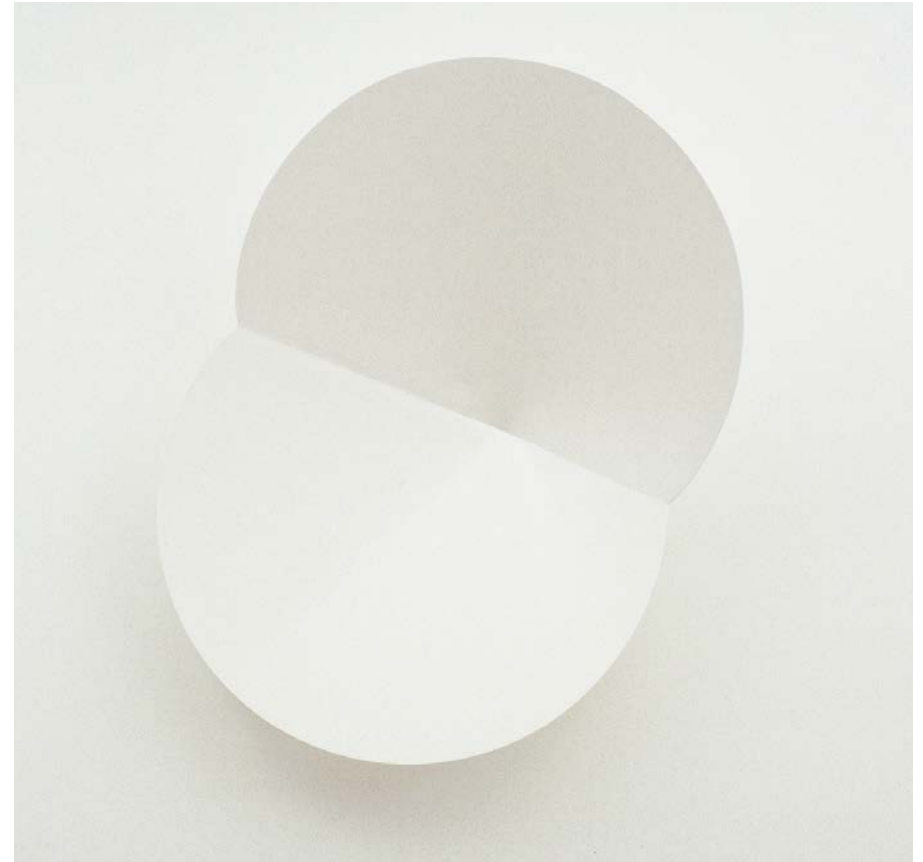
Meridian 1997
Acrylic & oil on MDF 2 panels 180 x 64cm



Installation view GITTE WEISE GALLERY *Lightscares* 1997 SYDNEY



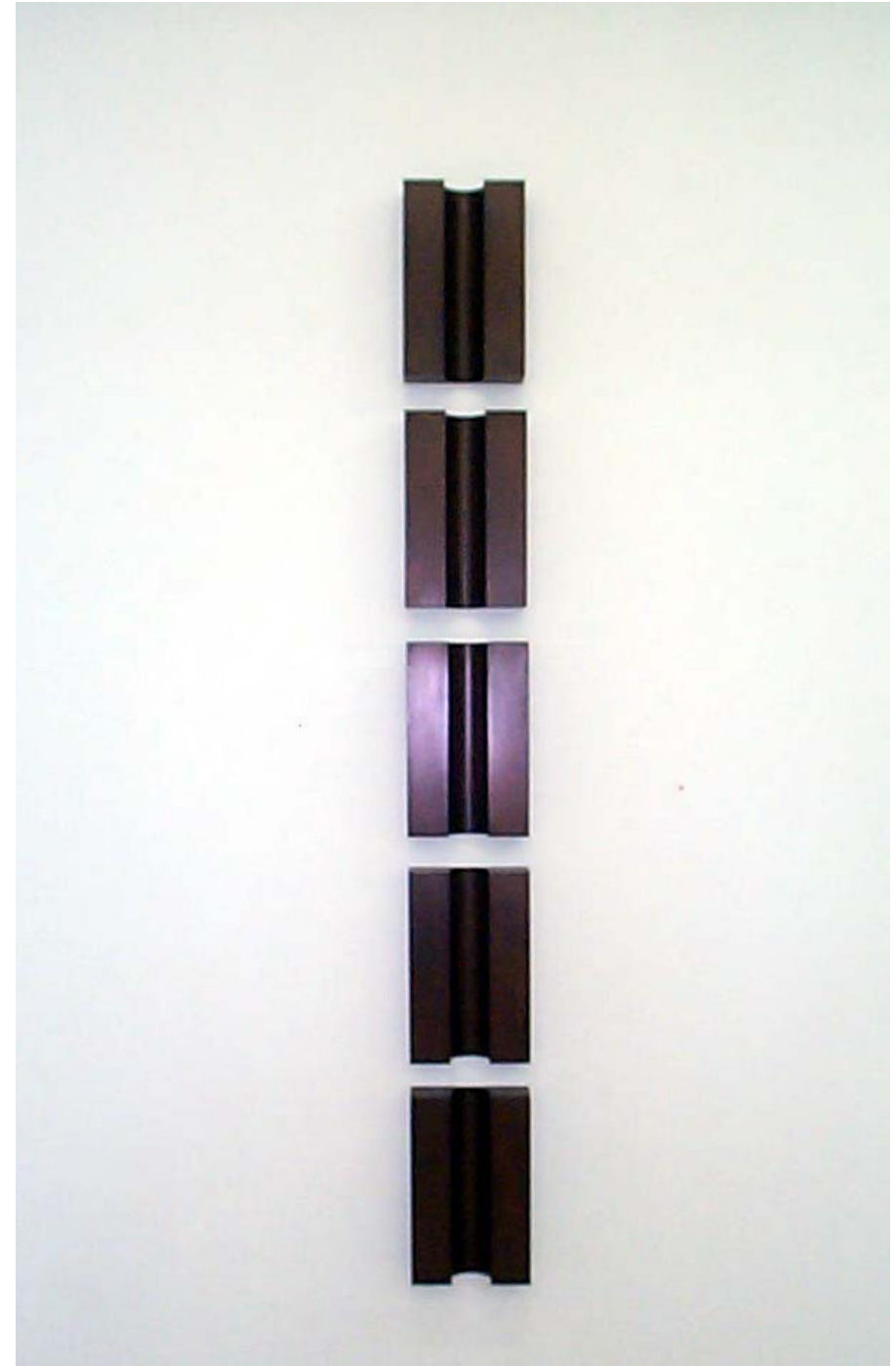
Installation view GITTE WEISE GALLERY *Inside Out* 1998 SYDNEY



Alpha & Beta 1998
Acrylic on shaped plywood 125 x 90 x 37cm



Cadence 1999
Acrylic & wax on MDF 7 panels 155 x 196 x 25cm



Channel II 1999
Acrylic & oil on MDF 5 parts 228 x 25 x 10cm



Variation II 1999 Polyurethane on MDF 700 x 20 x 21cm

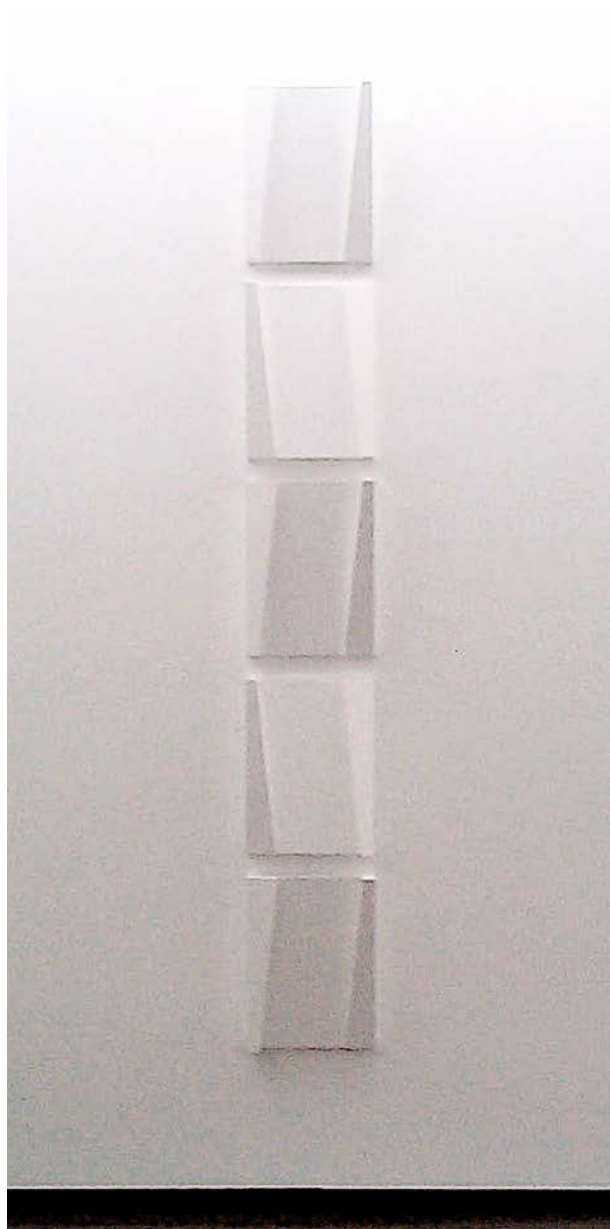




Untitled (Horizontal Channel) 2000 (detail)



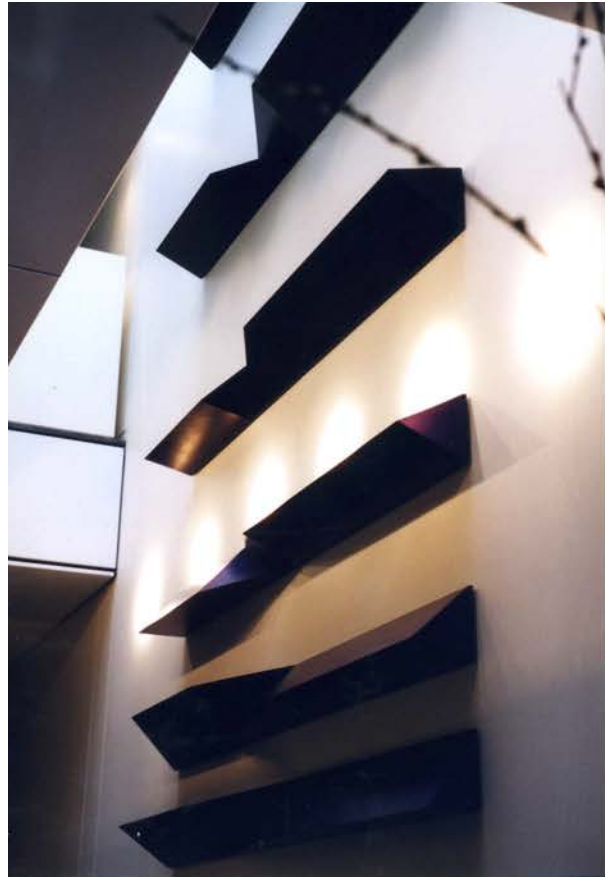
Untitled (Diagonal Channel) 2000
Acrylic & oil on MDF 9 panels 144 x 144 x 5cm



Untitled (White) 2000
Acrylic & wax on MDF 5 panels 249 x 33 x 10cm



Installation view GITTE WEISE GALLERY *Spring* 2000 SYDNEY



Watermark 1998
Box Cafe Collins Street Melbourne
Acrylic & oil MDF 9 parts dimensions variable



Watermark #2 2001
Private Commission Cast bronze & water 7 parts



Chord #1 & 2 2002 Timber with polyurethane 8 parts dimensions variable



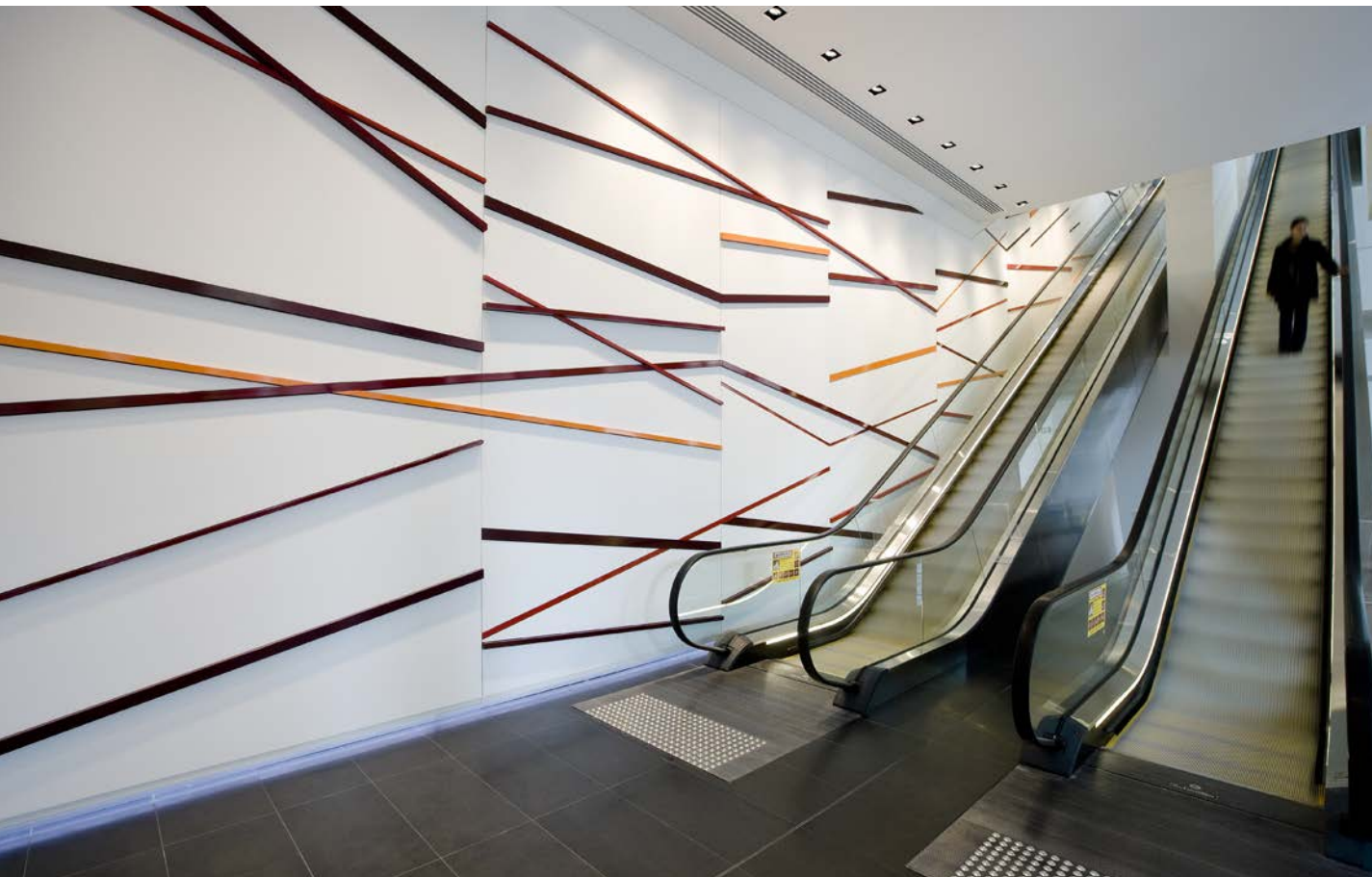
Eclipse #1 2002 Timber with polyurethane 15 parts dimensions variable



Left to right *Jumeaux #9, Cluster & Jumeaux #6* 2004



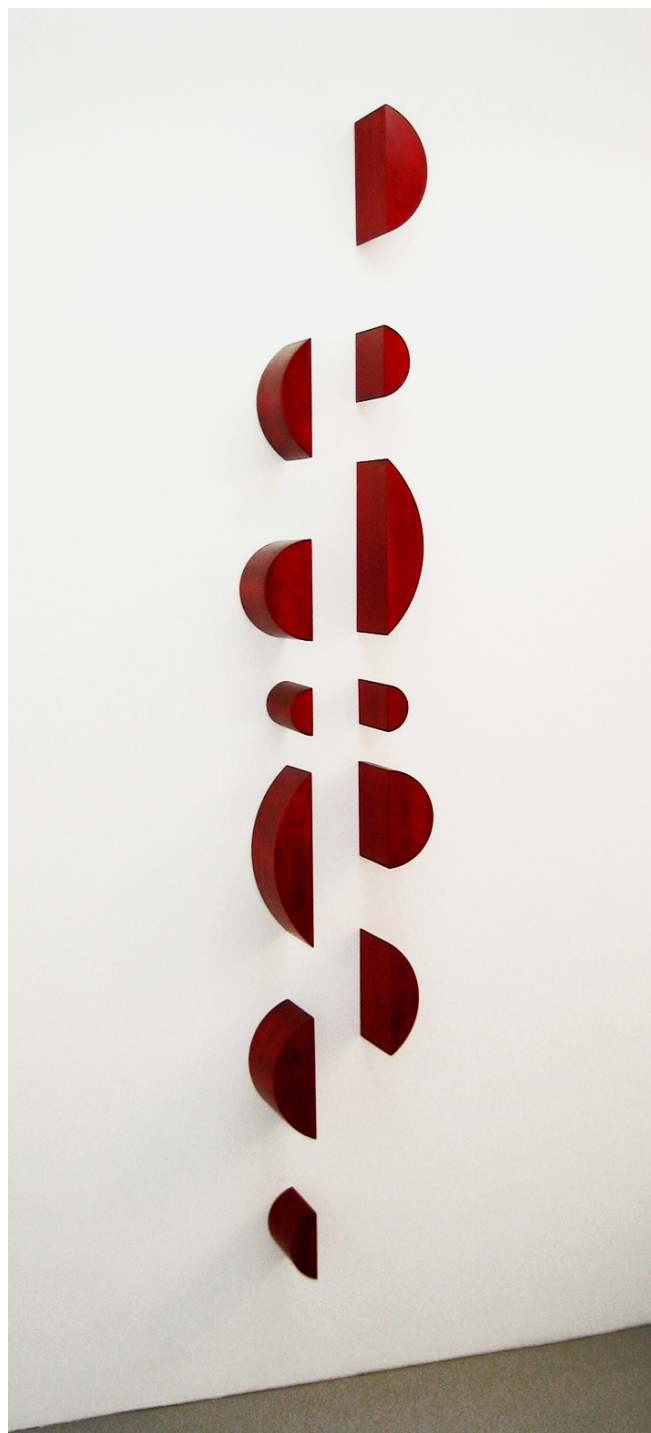
Level #1 2002 (detail)
Timber with polyurethane 8 parts 11 x 200 x 14cm



Wall Composition #4 2007
Main Entrance Lobby, 54 Goulburn Street, World Square, Sydney NSW



Flight #1 2007
Lift Lobby, 54 Goulburn Street, World Square, Sydney NSW



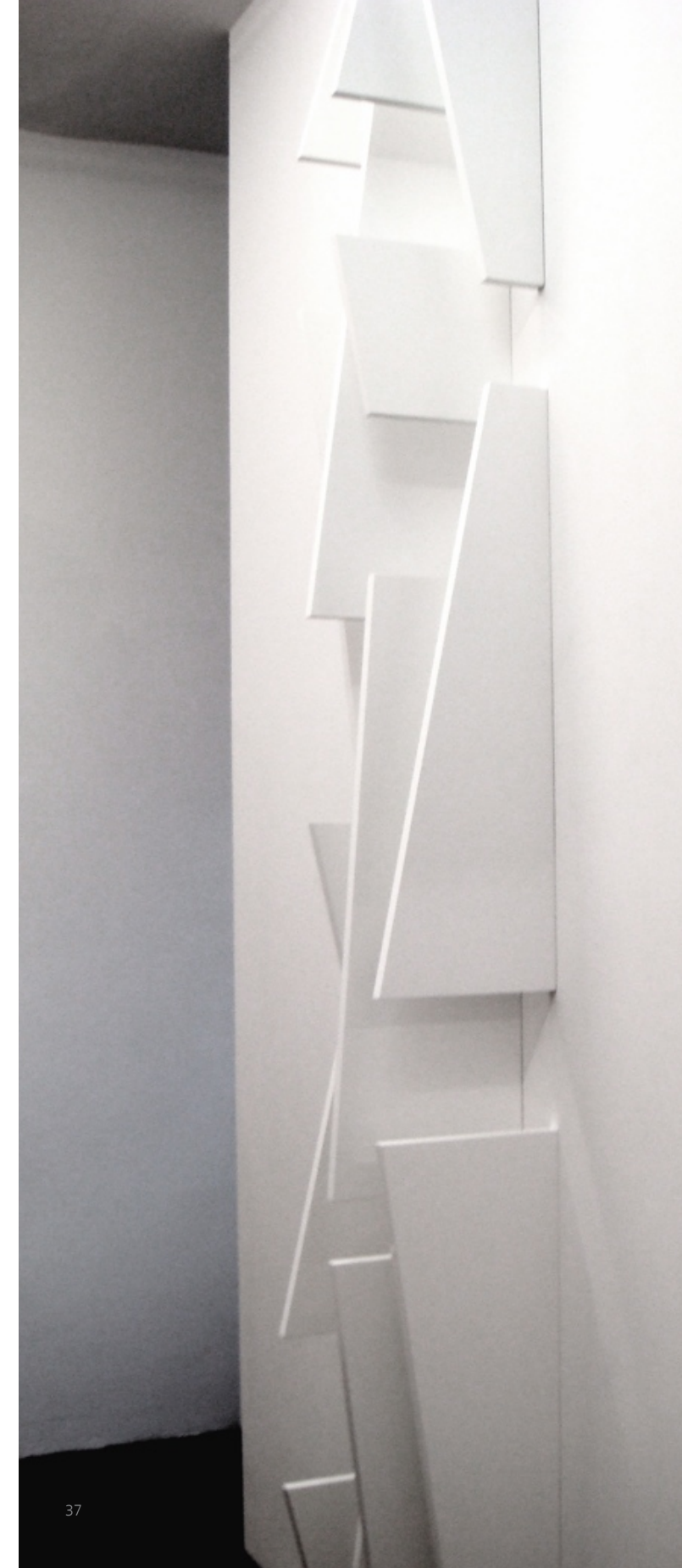
Zwillinge #3 2004
Stained timber with polyurethane 200 x 28.5 x 14cm



Implosion #1 - 5, edition of 5 2008
Giclee Digital Print with hand waxed finish 6 prints 30 x 21cm



Corner Topography #1 2007
Timber veneer on plywood 11 parts 96 x 116 x 164cm



Wall Division #1 2007
Polyurethane on poplar plywood
19 parts 356 x 62 x 31cm



Corner Composition #5 2009 Powder coated aluminium 15 parts dimensions variable



Corner Composition #4 2009 Powder coated aluminium 15 parts dimensions variable



Installation view GITTE WEISE GALLERY BERLIN at The Depot Gallery Danks Street
Infinite In All Directions 2010 SYDNEY



No beginning No End # 1 & 2 2009
Plywood with polyurethane 17 parts dimensions variable

BIOGRAPHY

1963 Born Canberra, ACT
 1982/84 Diploma of Visual Arts, Major in Painting,
 Canberra School of Art, Canberra, ACT
 2011/13 Master of Cross-Disciplinary Art & Design
 COFA, Sydney, NSW
 2014 Current - Master of Philosophy
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney, NSW

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

2011 Calais Deviations. College Street, Hyde Park,
 Sydney
 2007 Latitude East. World Square, Sydney
 2004 The Playfair Pool Feature Wall. Kambala, Sydney
 2003 Crown Promenade Hotel. Crown Casino,
 Melbourne
 2000 Hilton Airport Hotel. Melbourne
 1999 Altair. Sydney
 W-Hotel. Finger Wharf, Sydney
 Riverside Park, Sydney
 1998 Box Café. Melbourne

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

2014 *Spatial Interventions*, MAG&M Sydney
 2010 *Infinite In All Directions*, Gitte Weise Galerie at
 The Depot Gallery Sydney
 2008 *New Work*, Gitte Weise Galerie Berlin
 2004 *Identical/non Identical*, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Sydney
Zwillinge, Gitte Weise Galerie Berlin
 2002 *Eclipse*, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 2000 *Spring*, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 1999 *Sarah Robson*, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 1998 *Inside Out*, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 1997 *Lightscaapes*, ROOM 35, Sydney
 1995 *Studio Show*, Albion Street, Sydney
 1994 *Sarah Robson*, King Street Gallery on Burton,
 Sydney
 1992 *New Work*, King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney
 1990 *Isolate*, King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2012 Globalisation - Connections - Time. Kunsthalle
 Faust, Hannover, Germany
 2008 Simplex - Komplex, Universität der Künste, Berlin,
 Germany
 2008 Gained + Lost Day 29 February 2008, International
 traveling Project + Exhibition, Europe +
 Nth Africa
 2006 Absolut Secret Drawcard 06, National School of
 Art, Sydney
 2006 Rendezvous mit Gitte Vol 6, Part 1, Gitte Weise
 Galerie Berlin, Germany
 2005 Absolut Secret Drawcard 05, National School of
 Art, Sydney
 Rendezvous mit Gitte Vol 5, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Sydney
 2004 Sieben Künstler der Galerie, Gitte Weise Galerie
 Berlin, Germany
 A different group, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 Rendezvous mit Gitte Vol 4, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Sydney
 Contemporary Collections Benefactors, Art Gallery
 of NSW
 Melbourne Art Fair 2004, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Royal Exhibitions Hall, Melbourne
 2003 Re-Collection, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 Rendezvous mit Gitte Vol 3, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Sydney
 2002/05 Fathoming: Contemporary Australian Sculpture,
 Gold Coast City Art Gallery,
 Surfers Paradise, QLD - touring Queensland, New
 South Wales and Victoria
 10th Anniversary Exhibition, Gitte Weise Gallery,
 Sydney
 Contemporary Collections Benefactors, Art Gallery
 of NSW
 2001 National Sculpture Prize + Exhibition 2001,
 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT
 Rendezvous mit Gitte, Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney
 2000 Sculpture 2000 Access Gallery, Sydney
 Melbourne Art Fair 2000, Gitte Weise Gallery
 Stand 7, Royal Exhibitions Hall, Melbourne
 1999 Contemporary Collections Benefactors, Art Gallery
 of NSW

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS CONT.

1999 MCA Art Auction, Museum of Contemporary Art,
 Sydney
 Something for above the couch!, Gitte Weise
 Gallery, Sydney
 Outside Inside, Sir Hermann Black Gallery,
 University of Sydney Union, Sydney
 1998 The Bryan Niland Collection, Penrith Regional
 Gallery & The Lewers Bequest, Sydney
 6th Australian Contemporary Art Fair, Royal
 Exhibitions Building, Melbourne
 1994 Gallery Artists, King Street Gallery on Burton,
 Sydney
 4th Australian Contemporary Art Fair, Royal
 Exhibitions Building, Melbourne
 1992 Painting and Sculpture, King Street Gallery on
 Burton, Sydney
 1991 Microcosm, Gary Anderson Gallery, Sydney
 Agapé, King Street Gallery on Burton, Sydney
 1984 Graduate Exhibition, Canberra School of Art,
 Canberra
 Gallery 41, Braidwood
 1981 Bruce T.A.F.E Art Award, Canberra
 National Art Award, traveling exhibition,
 all capital cities

AWARDS

2011 Calais Deviations, College Street Hyde Park, UAP
 2007 Latitude East, World Square, Sydney, Multiplex
 Developments Pty Ltd
 2004 The Playfair Pool Feature Wall, Kambala, Sydney
 2003 Artists Creative Development Grant, Visual Arts
 Craft Board of the Australia Council
 1981 Bruce TAFE Art Award, Canberra

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

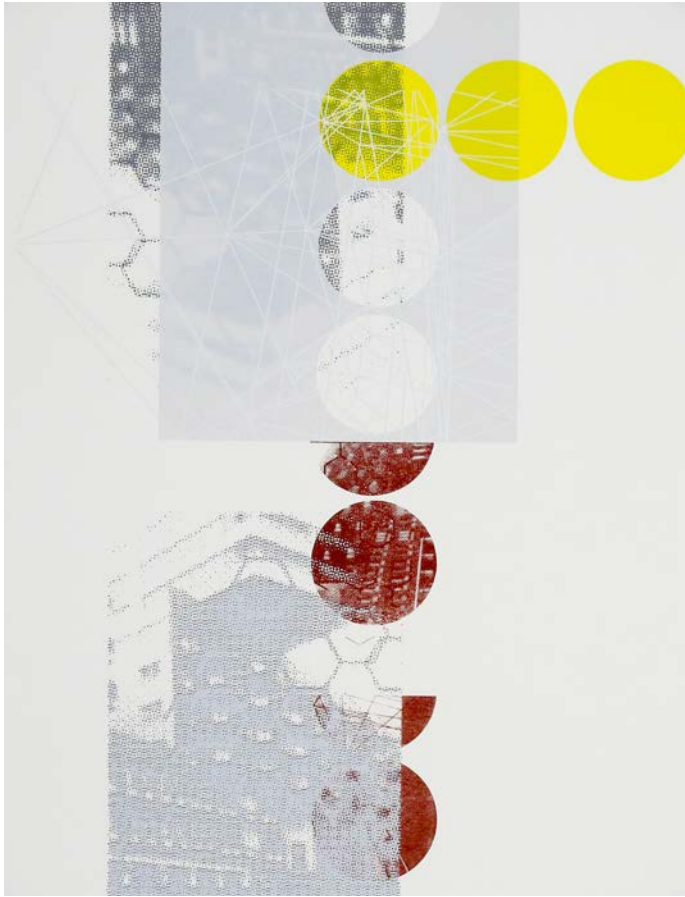
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; ARTBANK, Sydney;
 QANTAS, Bangkok, Thailand; QANTAS Wellington NZ; W-
 Hotel, Finger Wharf, Sydney; Crown Casino, Melbourne;
 M.O.C.A., Brisbane; Hilton, Melbourne; Riverside Park,
 Sydney.

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS & COMMISSIONS

Australia, New Zealand, Europe and United Kingdom

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2013 Martyn Thompson, Working Space, Hardie Grant
 Books : Melbourne/London
 2011 Paul McGillick, 'A World in Equilibrium' Indesign,
 Issue 44
 2010 Gina Fairley, "Sarah Robson" World Sculpture
 News Volume 16, Number 1, Winter
 2010 Joseph Brennan, "Precise Spatial Ambiguities"
 Australian Art Review Issue 23
 2007 Sense of Style : Space, NSW : Murdoch Books
 2004 Sally Coucaud, "Hidden Treasures" Art and
 Australia Vol 42 No. 2
 2003 Profile, The Manly Daily, August 5
 2002 Paul McGillick, Indesign, Issue No. 11
 Louise Martin-Chew, The Weekend Australian,
 June 8
 Sandra McLean, The Courier Mail, June 12
 Alison Kubler, *FATHOMING*, Exhibition Brochure
 2001 National Sculpture Prize + Exhibition, Catalogue,
 Australian National Gallery, Canberra
 Paul McGillick, "Silencing The Room" Monument
 Issue # 41, April/May
 2000 Art and Australia, Vol 37 No. 4, Pg. 591
 Bronwyn Watson, SMH Spectrum, January 8
 1999 George Epaminondas, SMH Ragbag,
 September 21
 Bruce James, SMH City File, September 18
 Sebastian Smee, SMH, The Galleries, September 7
 Bruce James, SMH Spectrum, September 4
 1998 Bruce James, SMH, July 14
 Sebastian Smee, SMH, Metro, July 10
 John McDonald, SMH, July 18
 1997 Bruce James, SMH, November 7
 1994 Lifestyle Design Series, Australia, May/June
 Elwyn Lynn, The Australian, January
 1993 Catherine Osborne, SMH, Good Weekend,
 January 9
 1992 Vogue Living, Australia, January
 1991 Art and Australia, Winter
 Interior Architecture July/August, Sept/Oct
 Ambiente, Germany
 1990 Jo Saurin, SMH Galleries, November 30
 Vogue Living, Australia, October



Spatial Equilibrium 10 (Constraints) 2014
 Silkscreen Monoprint
 Acrylic with Lasceaux paste on Stonehenge paper 75 x 57 cm

Sarah Robson

Sarah Robson has exhibited extensively since 1984 and has been awarded public and private commissions within Australia and overseas. She lives and works in Sydney and is currently researching creative processes for a Master of Philosophy.

Jackie Dunn

Formerly Director of MAG&M and Senior Curator of Artbank, today Jackie Dunn is an independent curator, writer, artist and teacher based in Sydney.

SARAH ROBSON: Spatial Interventions

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Cover :
Constraints I 2013
 Silkscreen Monoprint
 Acrylic with Lasceaux paste on
 Stonehenge paper
 28.5 x 37.5cm

Page 1 :
 Detail: *Constraints IV* 2013
 Silkscreen Monoprint
 Acrylic with Lasceaux paste on
 Stonehenge paper
 28.5 x 37.5cm

**With special thanks to Katherine Roberts,
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