

Elizabeth Gower

EXHIBITION DATES:

1 – 29 August

OPENING:

Saturday 1 August, 4-6pm

Elizabeth Gower's circular collages on the lids of small cardboard cartons are composed from an extensive collection of multiple segments of printed papers retrieved from domestic and urban environments around studio locations. Collecting, collating and cataloguing ephemera from daily life is a methodology the artist established early in her practice, and the studio functions as a point of interruption in the 'life' cycle of the papers.



This immediate tactile connection with the material excesses and detritus of contemporary consumer culture informs the theoretical framework and conceptual understanding of her practice, and associates her work with ideas of recovery and re-purpose, sustainable practice and thrift strategies that critique excesses of mass production and the notion of impermanence. Collage processes, which include the collection and codification of material, enables Gower to directly reference contemporary culture by incorporating actual materials derived from it.

The quantity, availability and multiplicity of the mass-produced printed-papers and 'readymade' circular cartons mediate the direction and form of the works by simultaneously allowing spontaneity and imposing limitation. Repetition of elements also enables the reconfiguration of identical motifs into complex symmetries and geometric structures, which aestheticizes the waste material.

The scale of the 'Cycles' collages (11 x 11 x 1cm) is indicative of the necessity for portability, as the works were made 'in transit' during the artist's recent studio residencies at *PointB*, New York and *Laughing Waters*, Eltham, and at three temporary studios in Rome, Berlin and Collingwood.

The 'Cycles' series is an extension of two large-scale provisional installations '150 Rotations' Melbourne Now, NGV: Australia, and '356 Rotations' AC Institute in New York, which also re-purposed and aestheticized multiple paper units into hundreds of circular motifs. Re-evaluating and aestheticizing ephemera, critiques the 'systems of value' and precarious temporality of consumer culture, of which it is evidence. The inherent familiarity and transience of the residual material is archived through the process of collage, remains embedded in the work and resonates with Baudelaire's notion of finding 'beauty in the ruin'.

Gower has held over 30 individual exhibitions throughout Australia and overseas, including shows at Cite Internationale des Arts Gallery, Paris, 2007; Arthouse, London, 1997; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1991. Her most recent solo exhibitions include *365 Rotations*, AC Institute, New York, 2014, *Amor Infiniti*, AC Institute [Direct Chapel], New York, 2009, and *Genera series 09*, Longwood University, Virginia, 2009. Gower has participated in many major group exhibitions; *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2014; *Collage: The Heide Collection*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2013; *Baker's dozen*, UTS Gallery, Sydney, 2012; *Black elastic, two umbrellas, a mint leaf and wheels*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2011; *Instructions for Initial Conditions*, Drift Station & Parallax Space, Nebraska, 2010; *Extreme Beauty: Approaches to the Real*, Y3K, Melbourne, 2010; *Cubism and Australian Art*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2009; *Mesh*, curator Karee Dahl, The Art Gallery, National Institute of Education, Nanyang University, Singapore; including: *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968-2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002; *Australian Perspecta*, held at Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 1997 and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, in 1985 and 1981; *Isola Australia*, Gallery Lillo, Italy, 1984; and *European Dialogue*, 3rd Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales 1979.