

VOICING

DÉCOR DRIVE

JOHN MEADE

REG PRESTON

MEREDITH TURNBULL

JEREMY EATON



*Lovely open fruit
with great
delicacy.
Racy,
fluid and
easy to like*

hit at the cat of frey Deeny

*... as 45 Meade...
... the indie...
... Sevigny...
... the move...
... the early...
... paper...
... in tweeds...
... wools...
... dily, trend...
... Nicole...
... idson and...
... ave made...
... style.*

RITA

THE FIRST IN A FOUR PART SERIES



D É C O R D R I V E
INSPIRED INTERIORS

RITA 4: Décor Drive *Installation view*, Foreground Meredith Turnbull, Reg Preston Middle Ground, Jeremy Eaton, Meredith Turnbull, John Meade and Reg Preston Wallpaper Meredith Turnbull



Sublimated *eroticism* steers the STYLE AGENDA in a chic, backstreet Fitzroy space

By STAFF WRITER Photographed by RITA



When RITA arrives at this unassuming, ex-light industrial space the door is ajar and the residents, who have requested to remain anonymous, are absent by prior arrangement. This is unusual, the article won't feature anyone pulling their best awkward lean against a deskilled terrazzo countertop, but I'm all for innovation even, no, *especially* in the interior design publication industry.

'We don't want to get in your way' they told me in the email thread that led up to today. At the time I assumed, being a compact space, the 'way' referred to was physical (there is simply nothing worse than someone hovering expectantly in the corner while you're trying to experience an interior and its objects...). They did mean that, but also the psycho-spatial 'way' necessary for unfettered interpretation.

'We find (...) identity and its (...) baggage of built-in rationales often-as-not obstructs reading, even as it does, admittedly, provide a scaffolding alibi for some homes and their interior (...) choices.' (To understand is to forgive, right? - Ed.)
In any case, we're personally just not that interesting.'

Whether or not I agree, I am delighted to see that the awkwardly positioned WFH desk to my right is uninhabited.

The space, thirty square metres give or take, is cool, crisp, mostly lacking signs of life. Gridded domestic downlights, white walls

Meredith
Turnbull
Image Décor
Panel - pink,
2023,
digital prints
on photocopy
paper

and little else, apart from the aforementioned work-from-home set-up and even that is relegated offside in a liminal nook.

The room, and by extension its owners, literally privileges objects. Its centre is entirely occupied by a conglomeration of artist's furniture, imposing pottery, sculptural forms, and a curtain sans window. In the near-background are two collaged friezes pasted directly to the walls; the esteem for décor is such that almost no allowance is made for inhabitation (practical furniture anyone? Crazy! Right?.) Like all the best interiors—from Como to the Loire Valley—one can sense a binding intention for this collection; an aspiration toward something other than its parts.

While the owners may be mysterious, the identities of the artists are available and, I must confess to spending some time post-visit deep in research to unravel this encounter.

The curtain, by local artist Jeremy Eaton, features a semi-figurative abstraction (Ed: *make up your mind LOL*). Printed in a warm sepia on a tactile, if humble cotton fabric, is an interlocking pattern that repeats a swirling entanglement of fiery astral bodies resembling exotic fruits in cross section, bonded by flame-like tendrils and incorporating one plainly defined phallic shape amongst the mini-maelstrom. An outcome of focused research, this fabric recreates a pattern designed for Alcorso by the artist James Gleeson, and produced as part of an artists-as-designers series in the 1940s. This is kitchen table forensic reconstruction *par excellence*. This imagery has been painstakingly reassembled from archival slides and photographs recently uncovered by Eaton in the National Library of Australia's archives, embargoed for the twelve years since Gleeson's death. The images documenting this fabric are almost always partly occluded by Gleeson's nude lover, Frank, used as a feature backdrop to set the tone for their own homespun, eroticaesthetic glamour shoots. (So, we're glimpsing the dark side of Frank's moon? - Ed.)

Eaton's fabric work was included in *Fairy*, a project that reinvigorated the obscure interior of the pavilion in Fitzroy Gardens by gathering artists around the gravity point of Ola Cohn's *Fairy Tree*. Coincidentally, Reg Preston, the potter responsible for the forms I am about to tackle, was initially inspired by Cohn to pursue sculpture. After travelling, dreaming of an artist's life, and returning to Australia, Preston made the call to conform his creativity to pottery, with the level-headed goal of surviving in the antipodean economy. (Gotta love a historical segue - Ed.)

Preston's trio of vases represent, to my mind, three instances where the maker has sublimated the relentless erotic drive into semi-suggestive, more or less polite positivities. They 'pass' as craft, innocuous and respectable to the casual observer, and can be found in the bread-and-butter public collections of Powerhouse and the National Gallery of Victoria; but, really, what we have is pottery as the acceptably effaced volume of the libido. Three contradictorily assertive orifices, each taller, more protuberant, more-or-less 'lippy' than the last. Erected from soft, primordial clay to a hard stoneware body, they present as vases, but equally as sex toys, even if they would be awkward to get physically 'involved' with. The high-sheen black tenmoku glaze of one recalls stretched PVC, while the slow-flowing opaline of another is not far off semen. Some will call this a 'bad reading'—perverse to the standard institutional alibi. However, in this constellation, I can't help but feel justified. Let me support the argument.

Where Preston circles the erotic drive, chained to his potter's wheel, accompanied only by the spectre of his desire (Ed: or should that be *Ghost?* LOL), John Meade's trio of 3D-printed maquettes veer into a head-on collision with psychoanalytic models of sensual desire. They are more diagrammatic, less embodied, and in that sense at an intellectually alienated distance from the felt ideas they explore; anyone who has ever tried book-learning



sex will be able to relate.

The tongue, which is also a tunnel, reveals a regular, crystalline digitally printed structure; smooth and evenly surfaced, no papillae picking up tang or sweetness, a tongue too rigid to lick. Alongside is a nipple-and-hoop, the amber resin a close match in opacity and hue to a baby's dummy. Based upon Lacan's diagram of the drive as an unending, unsatisfiable organisation of suckling push and pull. Desire here is a rim always seeking but never obtaining its object; schema made physical. This object brings me closer to understanding Lacan's conception of the Drive, by providing a sculptural diagram to feel my way through it, but stops short of didacticism. Like all the best stylists this refusal to fully disclose a logic is characteristic of the space—intention apparent, but left open-ended. Objects are never more tactile than when touch is off-limits, I chuckle to myself. Like being welcomed to a buck's Spearmint Rhino, we're warned to never touch the performers.

In light of these pieces, we understand Preston's work as the shape of a striving drive, the positives thrown off a

“really, what we have is pottery as the acceptably effaced volume of the libido.”

shape-changing force. The objects of a frustrated sculptor, always compromising toward use value.

Last of Meade's *Objects to live* by and lowest on the display hierarchy, is a clutch of eggs. Those ovoids that deliver life through the torus of the body, fundamentally speaking. Procreative consumables. I can't help but think of *segg*s, the homophone commonly used to avoid the wrath of social media censor bots. Nothing more to say here, who doesn't want grouped seggs in the living room?

Continuing my gaze downward I encounter Meredith Turnbull's sculpture-table-picture-tables— they refuse to settle in a single category. Complex but not complicated; the right-angled pair display pastel-keyed schemas for organisation—the tetris geometry of an archive's stacked acid-free boxes, each in ration to its designated object. This grid seems to have decided the placement of the pottery and sculpture they support, and I am reminded real power comes from below. The third piece, once a wallwork, here reconfigured for the floor, combines the languages of collection, documentation, and découpage. Strips of imagery and text torn from old magazines, encyclopaedias and design periodicals,

merge sculpture, fashion and artefact into a disordered history. There is an attitude and attention to objects and their role—we can't see, but still sense, the blue-gloved hand of the object conservator just out of frame. The dialogue of painting, photography, collection and functional objects combine in harmony—a steady hum in the key of the room. The pillar-like wallworks, also by Turnbull, take my eye upward stretching my neck and opening my chest. I love when spaces move the body. Are these pictures showcased on a wall or wallpaper ready to receive pictures hung atop them? This play, a confusion of fore, middle and back grounds, is anti-hierarchical, something gently unresolvable to muse on while sipping the negroni. I can imagine finishing a little too quickly in just this kind of room, at just this time of day... (*Okay, your attention slipping, time to wrap this up* - Ed.)

I'm mentally exhausted, but it's a good feeling. To be honest, covering interiors isn't usually so involved. Being left with only my capacity to read a room and follow my instincts is novel. Which leads me to wonder, where are the books? The standard personality test of many a domestic interior – and the joy to any nosy visitor left alone for a moment—is missing. It's perhaps for the best. I suspect these shelves would be more *The Sexual Life of Catherine M* than *Better Homes and Gardens*, and I've done enough highbrow-sexy reading for one day.

Jeremy Eaton
Contraposto Frame,
 Reg Preston *Jug*
 Meredith Turnbull
Ensemble



RITA 4: *Décor Drive*
Installation view, Image above. Meredith Turnbull,
The edible woman Reg Preston, *Jug* Image 2
 John Meade, *Prototype for Nighttime #2* Bottom
 Image Installation view





D É C O R D R I V E

13 OCTOBER - 4 NOVEMBER 2023

SUTTON PROJECTS, 230 YOUNG ST, FITZROY VIC 3065

JEREMY EATON
JOHN MEADE
MEREDITH TURNBULL
REG PRESTON

CURATED BY RITA: ANDREW ATCHISON & JEREMY EATON