

VISUAL ARTS FELLOWSHIPS: ROBYN BACKEN, LINDY LEE, HILARIE MAIS

14 November 2014 – 23 January 2015

Robyn Backen, Lindy Lee and Hilarie Mais were awarded Fellowships for two years to undertake ambitious new projects and develop their artistic careers. Fellowships are only granted once in an artist's lifetime with substantial support to research, reflect, create work, and expand their practice. Backen, Lee and Mais are all celebrated contemporary artists, working across drawing, projections, sculptural form and installation. The Australia Council has created a Fellowships Focus film to accompany the exhibition which profiles each artist's practice and their personal tips when applying for funding from The Australia Council.

ROBYN BACKEN



***Emptiness*, 2014**
charcoal, 220 x 330 cm

Robyn Backen is an interdisciplinary artist whose work makes connections between art, philosophy and science. She is known for installations that are technologically complex yet minimal in appearance. Her work often references systems, such as language, code and classification.

Backen's recent practise has evolved from extensive research into the acoustics of ancient *whispering architecture*. This phenomenon occurs when certain architectural features allow whispers to travel and be heard clearly in distant parts of the structure. The idea of the whisper as a formless and ephemeral version of speech has inspired Backen's site-specific work *Emptiness*. The charcoal wall drawing initially appears indecipherable, but when viewed from below, the elongated letters come into focus. Once de-coded, *Emptiness* poses a question and an answer in the form of a circular thought. 'How can one perceive the meaning of emptiness in the presence of a whisper?' is answered by a conundrum: '*Emptiness is form.....Form is emptiness*'. This paradoxical interpretation of form allows space for the contemplation of nothingness, meaning and existence.

Robyn Backen has exhibited widely in Australia and overseas since 1990. She has completed many large public commissioned artworks including *Delicate Balance* at Ballast Point (2009) and *Night Watch* at the ATO Building in Brisbane (2013). She is currently working on the international collaboration *Nomanslanding* to be presented in Sydney, Scotland and Germany in 2016. Backen coordinates the Masters of Studio Art at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. She was awarded an Australia Council Visual Arts Fellowship for the period 2012-14.

LINDY LEE



***Continents Drifting*, 2014**
bronze, 120 cm (diameter)

Born in Brisbane in 1954, Lindy Lee's practise traverses sculpture, painting and works on paper. Lee's work explores her Chinese heritage through the prisms of identity, selfhood and Zen Buddhism. "Almost all of my life I've been preoccupied with the nature of 'self' in the world. For me it has to do with being a divided self – Chinese and Australian – and the feeling of being neither this, nor that, but both."

Lindy Lee's recent bronze sculptures are inspired by Chinese 'flung ink' painting. In this ancient tradition, Buddhist monks meditate before splashing ink onto paper. The accidental nature of the ink mark symbolizes freedom from the ego. Lee's bronze sculptures build on this philosophy, allowing chance and elemental energy to influence the shape of each piece.



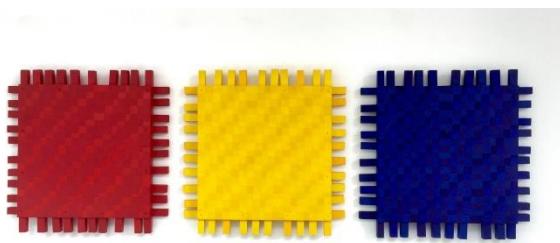
**Flame from the Dragon's Pearl:
Fluid as Ice, 2013**
bronze, 30 x 60 x 40 cm

**Flame from the Dragon's Pearl:
Open as the Sky, 2013**
bronze, 36 x 42 x 30 cm

Lee has exhibited her work nationally and internationally for over three decades. The University of Queensland Art Museum is currently holding a major survey exhibition of her work

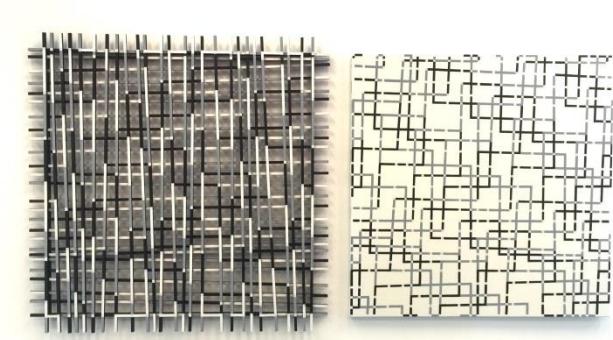
titled *Lindy Lee: The Dark of Absolute*, which will continue until February 2015. Lee has also been selected for the 2nd Kochi-Muziris Biennale, which will open in December 2014. Lindy Lee was awarded an Australia Council Visual Arts Fellowship for the period 2012-14.

HILARIE MAIS



RYB, 2012
oil on wood, 44 x 137 cm

Hilarie Mais was born in Leeds, United Kingdom in 1952 where she trained at the Winchester and Slade Schools of Art before moving to New York. She has lived and worked in Sydney since 1981 and is known for her grid-based structures, which define and partition space with their lines and shapes.



Mist III, 2012
oil on wood, oil on canvas
2 parts: 120 x 120cm, 136 x 136 cm

"Mist III" is a visually extreme example of Mais' work. With its relatively divergent forms, it is unlike the artist's usual use of structural homogeneity. The work brings together three of Mais' areas of interest: the historic culture of abstraction, the processes of growth in nature, and the Gestalt effect. The Gestalt effect is the capacity of our

minds to generate whole forms from unrelated visual elements. For example, in "Mist III" there are no complete grey lines in either the canvas or the wood yet our minds will automatically join the broken lines to perceive squares and intertwining lines.

Since 1974, Mais has exhibited extensively in the UK, Australia, the USA, Asia and Europe, including the Australian Sculpture Triennials (1984, 1987), Australian Perspecta (1985) and the Biennale of Sydney (1986, 1988). Retrospective survey exhibitions of her works have been held at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (1990) and the Drill Hall Gallery in Canberra (2004). She has been the recipient of a number of prizes and awards, including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2000. Hilarie Mais was awarded an Australia Council Visual Arts Fellowship for the period 2012-14.