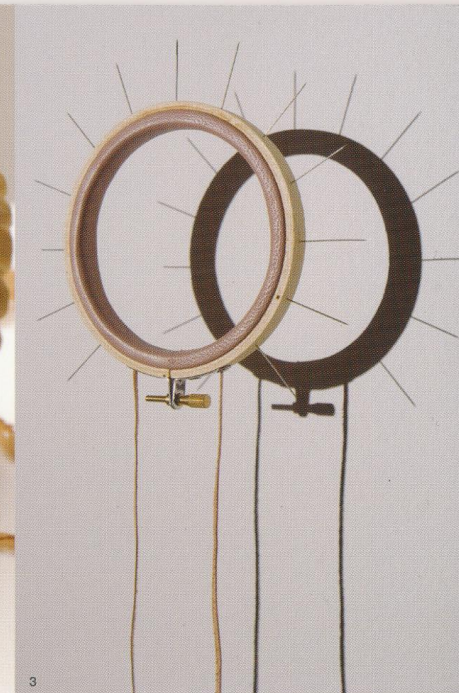
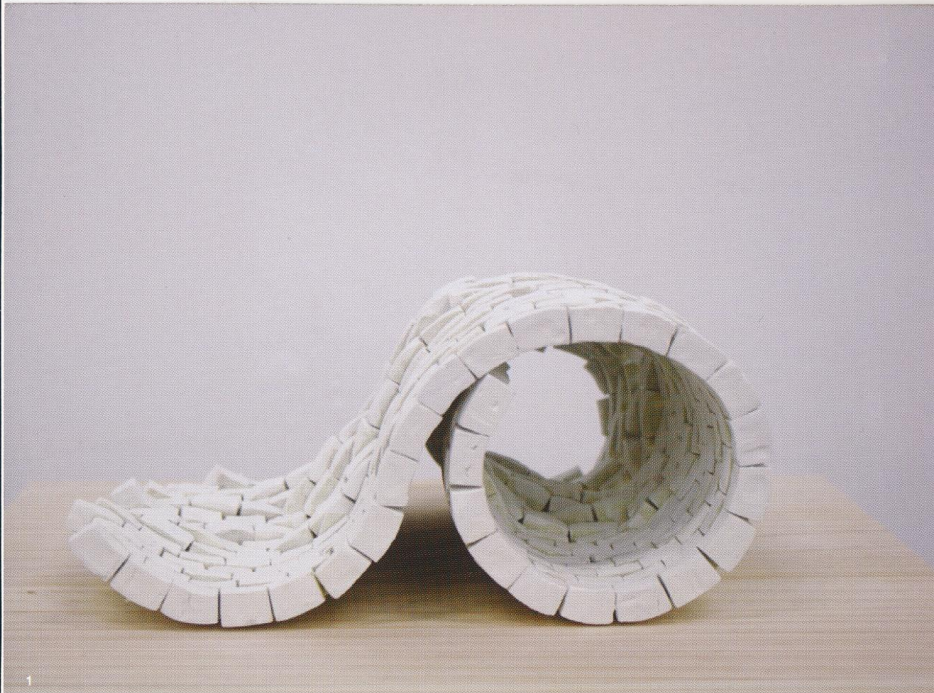




# critical craftings

Sophie Bottomley | Linda Clark | Amy Cochrane | Sally Colpoys  
Michelle Knowles | Sophie Loxley | Chris Mills-Kelly  
Curated by Beata Batorowicz





As part of the *Unleashed* graduate exhibition series, *Critical Craftings* brings together a diversity of innovative practices by seven emerging artists from Queensland. While these works are eclectic and diverse in visual form, ranging from performance to jewellery and chocolate sculptures, they are interwoven by an understanding that there is a craft to criticality within art.

This understanding of craft encompasses a carefully considered combination of content and finesse in craftsmanship, where the work's meaning and significance resonate beyond its creative discipline. As the work hovers between traditionally designated categories of art and design, it presents an uneasy space in which it is to be read – provoking, luring and engaging contemporary audiences of all kinds. In applying a unique and unconventional interweaving of craft, design and contemporary art, such artworks offer fresh perspectives on what constitutes the notion of craft within contemporary culture.

Each artist is represented by a series of works or an installation, to mark a passage of time in their critical endeavors. Their works are multi-layered in meaning and apply aspects of the handmade to transcend disciplines, creating transitional spaces between theatre and art performance, jewellery and sculptural objects as well as architectural forms and installation, to name a few.

Coming from an architectural background, **Sophie Bottomley** transports the viewer into new interior spaces through the creation of intricate sculptural forms. These works investigate a sense of play and tension through their delicate balance between architectural

solidity and layered fragility. Her constructed objects challenge perception through the interplay of positive and negative space. Repetition also plays a strong role in offsetting the irregularity of forms and emphasising the carefully constructed means, to create visual rhythms within the work.

Methodic processes of layering, irregular forms and similar use of materials are encountered in **Linda Clark's** *Puzzle totem* (2009). The work explores systems of logic that become methods of mapping and understanding creative thinking strategies. Like a child's puzzle we can assemble random thoughts and occurrences to make creative understandings of the complexities of our immediate environment. The viewer becomes active in conjuring up new meaning through the triggers of artistic process and creative logic. This idea is poignantly reflected in *Non Negotiable Grounds* (2010) which consists of rings that are wearable dispensers of words. Stimulated by word association games, Clark constructs these rings as artistic devices for the wearer to unlock creative logic. Clark's devices are deliberately open ended, allowing the viewer to complete the artwork through their own associations and prescribed meaning.

Similarly as sharp are **Amy Cochrane's** intricate jewellery works and small sculptural objects. Cochrane's exploration of materials presents an intriguing visual dialogue between nature and the man made. In *Six axes* (2010) there is an engaging interplay between the works pertaining to elements of the real and that of a small object. For instance, Cochrane's axe blades have been sharpened with due caution, allowing them to cut through the miniature tree stumps. The works are as visually unnerving as Cochrane's approach is playfully serious. This is further



emphasised through the artist's attention to the presentation of the works and the combination of diverse materials this adheres to. Among the many works, *Gum tree bud earrings* (2008), involve intricately made earrings being pierced through bark. Cochrane's works hover between jewellery, small objects, sculpture and installation art practice.

The work of **Sally Colpoys** lures you through its use of familiar materials yet interjects strong commentary in relationship to the social constructs of motherhood. Her own experience as a mother influences the use of domestic materials and processes such as food and sewing. These domestic codes are mixed up and interjected with text to reveal the contradictions and absurdities of these social constructs. They challenge gender roles and power relationships within the home and question when unconditional acts of love and labour are socially masked, silenced and undermined. Through the coupling of subject matter and critical discourse we are lulled into familiarity yet confronted by the way in which it deconstructs conventional views. *Push me/pull me* (2009) combines commercially available child harnesses and calf weaning collars. These works simultaneously conjure thoughts of love and protection, harm, maternal ambivalence and the pressure to both bond with and separate from the child.

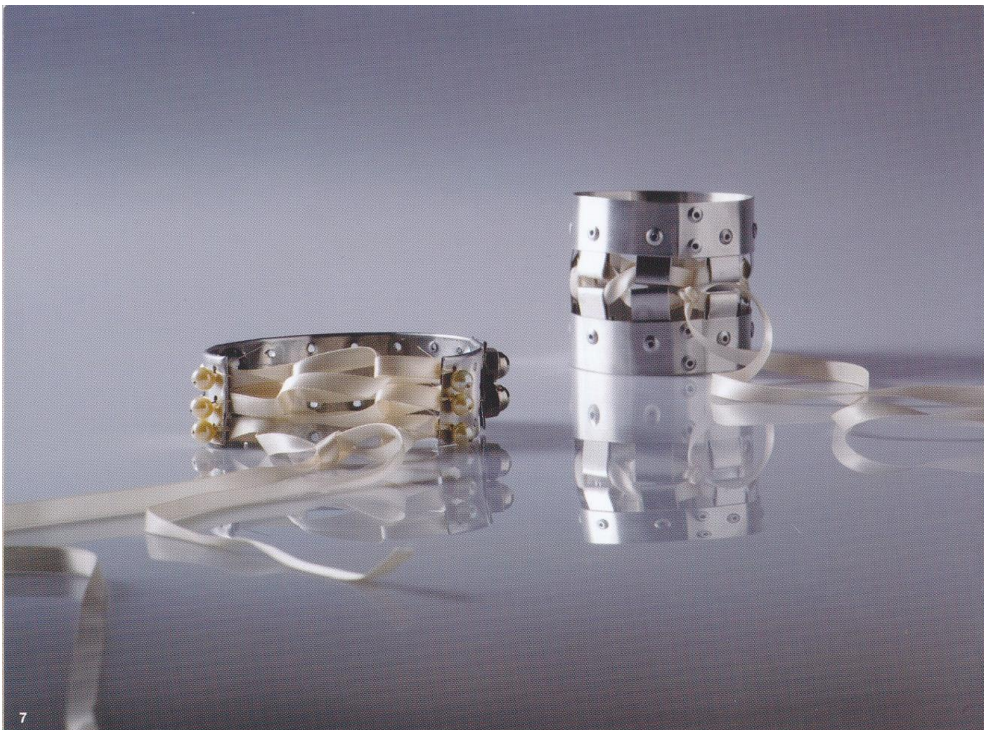
**Michelle Knowles'** *Objects for ascendance* (2010) is driven by a curiosity in belief systems, ritual and shamanistic practice that echoes an ongoing exploration of performance, video and photography in relation to the handmade object. Knowles' installation shifts the handmade object into a ritualistic artifact through performance. Although we do not witness this ritualised practice, we are presented with documents that allude to these actions. This work explores the

possible engagement between body, object and space as a way of reinstating a sense of re-enchantment within contemporary culture.

- A performance of **Sophie Loxley's** *Restricted* (2010) will accompany the opening of *Critical Craftings*. Based on the restrictive nature of Renaissance clothing, actors perform with satin ribbons attached to gloves and sleeves that cut across the performance space that the audience occupies. The audience then becomes an interactive element in the theatrical performance, restricted in their movements as much as the actors. The boundaries are blurred between performer and audience, art and craft, theatre and contemporary art.

The exhibition also includes artworks by indigenous Australian artist, **Chris Mills-Kelly**. Beautifully hand carved objects from camphor laurel, such as a baby bonnet and shoes, echo the uncomfortable conditions of Australia's Indigenous past through reflections of the Stolen Generation. There is a sense of duality that is present within her work. On one hand, you have the exquisite mastery of technique to create elegant and sophisticated objects. On the other hand, you have reflections of a chapter of Australia's history that is difficult yet highly relevant to contemporary debate. It is this balance between extraordinarily executed work and critical subject matter that creates the basis for this exhibition, *Critical Craftings*.

Beata Batorowicz, Curator *Critical Craftings: Unleashed 2011*



**IMAGES**

- COVER:** Sophie Loxley, *Restricted* (detail) 2010, aluminium, satin ribbon and dressing pins. Photo: Cindy Laine.
- 1 Sophie Bottomley, *Within two limits* 2010, air-dry modeling clay on pine stand.
  - 2 Chris Mills-Kelly, *Walk a mile in my shoes* (detail) 2009, camphor laurel wood, sepia tone photographs and mixed media. Photo: David Martinelli.
  - 3 Sally Colpoys, *Infant wearing collar #2* 2009, embroidery hoops, needles, pins, kid leather, fabric and lace. Photo: Cindy Laine.
  - 4 Michelle Knowles, *Object for ascendance*, 2010, deer antler, bone, sequins, feathers, googly eyes and tulle.
  - 5 Linda Clark, *Non Negotiable Grounds* (detail) 2010, brass, satin ribbon, ink, steel and wood. Photo: David Martinelli.
  - 6 Amy Cochrane, *Six axes* 2010, sterling silver and carved timber. Photo: Sam Lintern.
  - 7 Sophie Loxley, *Restricted* (detail) 2010, aluminium, satin ribbon and dressing pins. Photo: Cindy Laine.
  - 8 Chris Mills-Kelly, *Walk a mile in my shoes* (detail) 2009, camphor laurel wood, sepia tone photographs and mixed media. Photo: David Martinelli.
  - 9 Sophie Bottomley, *To escape from silence* 2010 (detail), paper on pine stand.
  - 10 Amy Cochrane, *Bone dry series* (brooch, ring, pendant) 2010, sterling silver, scrap tin, bone and stainless steel.

Beata Batorowicz would like to thank the **artisan** team, Kirsten Fitzpatrick, Simone Jones, Gabriella Szablewska; Simon Wright, Griffith University Art Gallery; Alice Lang, Courtney Coombs and Rachel Haynes, LEVEL Gallery.

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**Sophie Bottomley**

Sophie Bottomley graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane in 2010. In the same year she was a finalist in The GAS: Graduate Art Show + Espresso Garage Awards and won an Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society Award for Outstanding Studio Practice in Sculpture.

**Linda Clark**

Linda Clark completed a Certificate III in Visual Arts in 2007 and is currently studying a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. Clark has participated in group exhibitions including *Refried Dreams* (2007, TAFE College, Toowoomba), and *Curious Spaces* (2010, John Mullins Memorial Art Gallery, Dogwood Crossing, Miles).

**Amy Cochrane**

Amy Cochrane graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University,

Brisbane in 2010. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including *Future Nature: Biennial Emerging Artist Award Exhibition* (2010, Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery), *Revisiting the Australian Landscape: Interpreting the landscape on an intimate scale* (2010, Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland) and *Q150 Medallion Project* (2009, Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane). Cochrane's work is held in private collections and in the Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery Collection.

**Sally Colpoys**

Sally Colpoys graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Art from the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba in 2009 and received the Rosemary Lakerink Award for Excellence in studio work. Colpoys previously completed an Advanced Diploma of Ceramics at South Bank TAFE in 2004 and received an Arts Queensland Professional Development Grant in 2005 to undertake an artist in residence at the Jam Factory in Adelaide. Colpoys held her first solo exhibition, *(M)other's (M)ilk* at Attic Art Space, Toowoomba in 2009.



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### **Michelle Knowles**

Michelle Knowles graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual Arts) Honours, from Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane in 2010. Her work has been included in a number of group exhibitions including *Pixel Stitch* (2010, Accidently Annie Street Space, Brisbane), *Light Relief* (2010, The Block, Brisbane), *Drawn Apart* (2009, QUT Art Museum, Brisbane) and *I Used to Iron Once* (2008, Metro Arts, Brisbane). Knowles is currently an artist in residence at The Banff Centre, Canada.

### **Sophie Loxley**

Sophie Loxley graduated with a Bachelor of Theatre Arts, majoring in Theatre Studies and Visual Arts, from the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba in 2010. She assisted costume and wardrobe in a number of the University's productions, including *Twelfth Night*, *The Threepenny Opera* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and designed sets for Shake N Stir Theatre Company productions.

### **Chris Mills-Kelly**

Chris Mills-Kelly's interest in art was apparent from an early age, with drawing and making objects a favourite past time as a child. She started her tertiary art studies after having a family and completed a Certificate III in Visual Arts at Toowoomba TAFE College before moving to the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba where she is currently completing a Bachelor of Creative Arts.

### **Beata Batorowicz**

Beata Batorowicz is a Visual Arts lecturer in Spatial Construction at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. Batorowicz is nationally renowned for her textile and sculptural artworks which playfully unravel and retell western art history's grand narratives. She has been included in key Australian contemporary art exhibitions including *Fraught Tales* (2004, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne), *Gulliver's Travels* (2003, a national touring exhibition) and *Primavera* (2000, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney).