

Visual arts

Andrew Harper



A Site to truly behold

SITE

Eloise Daintree, Selena De Carvalho, George Kennedy, Amber Koroluk-Stephenson, Mary Scott, Nunami Sculthorpe-Green, Brigita Ozolins, Angus Thornett
 Curated by Jade Irvine
 Various Locations
 Richmond, Until October 6

Site is a marvellous, ambitious project that uses varying forms of contemporary art to dissect and examine the history of Richmond, a small town in lutruwita/Tasmania's Coal River region. Richmond is, in 2024, a tourist destination, with notably well-preserved colonial architecture, including a historically significant bridge, the oldest intact gaol in the whole country, and two churches: the Anglican St Luke's and the Catholic St John the Evangelist.

You could suggest that these elements nearly sum up all of colonial history, including nearby sheep farming and displacement inflicted on the mumirimina people, the original inhabitants of the region. There is much here to fuel artists, and many ways for artists to examine history.

Brigita Ozolins's work is an excellent starting point. Ozolins has placed large rose-coloured spectacles at various locations around the township, notably 'looking' at the significant historical structures. The point is made sharply that we view beautiful stonework like the Richmond Bridge and tend to forget that it was built by convict labour, and its presence allowed a significant level of colonial activity to occur. It's a strong work and it sets the tone – as we're being asked to look again, and understand the broader implications.

The video work of Angus Thornett also does a lot of heavy lifting here – a lot of regional history is unveiled and delivered in an even-handed manner that encourages the audience to make up its own mind. Thornett's inclusion in Site was a superb idea – he's a writer with a rich ability to synthesise small detail to hint at massive



Blind Site, by Brigita Ozolins, above; and one of Mary Scott's hauntingly beautiful pieces, left, are two of the pieces in the Site exhibition, now on display around Richmond. Pictures: Supplied

themes, but this is why Site works so well – curator Jade Irvine has bought in artists with clever practices, and made something cohesive.

George Kennedy's surprising work – a large drawing you are invited to walk on – in St Luke's church is so elegant and simple, while Amber Koroluk-Stephenson's inhabitation of the Richmond Gaol mixes in construction, records of convict garb and old wallpaper and the local lolly shop to suggest historical undercurrent.

Nunami Sculthorpe-Green's moving tribute to the mumirimina people places portraits of Aboriginal warriors and images of stone tools made with traditional materials in the town courthouse, subverting the institution.

While Selena De Carvalho's awesome

sound work – a rambling, evocative prose poem that guides you on a walk through Richmond – is a subversive marvel that suggests many threads and manages to create links between the works, acting as a counterbalance with the work of Thornett.

I was really struck by Mary Scott's work – she has really made something excellent with onethingintoanother. Scott's piece fills the Richmond Bakery with glorious, haunted drawings on the walls, tiny shoes dusted with charcoal and a disused oven brimming with blackened dust. This one is emotionally overwhelming and stayed with me more than any other work.

Finally, I need to applaud Eloise Daintree's endearing Dogs of Tha Mond. Daintree lived in Richmond and used to walk her dog, Roo there – and she has made simple stickers that celebrate her dog and many others she knew in the town. These stickers sit on bins and are really quite funny; I sort of love them.

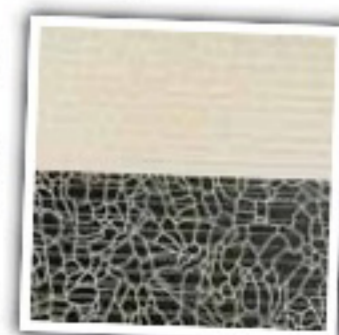
This is light, but it's crucial work, because after you deal with something heavy, something sweet is quite necessary.

THE LINE
 Bruce Thurrowgood
 Handmark Gallery
 Salamanca Place
 Until September 23

Meticulous to the point of obsession, Bruce Thurrowgood has upended his art practice and created a series of works that seem very unlike previous work from this singular talent. Thurrowgood's previous efforts have captured the play of light on shifting water but also described a method of painting and a formal strategy. This new selection of works takes Thurrowgood's way of making images and converts it into a world of pure speculation and experiment. It's intriguing though – you can still recognise how Thurrowgood makes a painting, and it's not as radical a leap of style as it first appears. The attention to detail that defined previous works is all still there; but these images are less about the subject matter than they are about the approach Thurrowgood has used to create them. It's a kind of very pure painting in a way – the idea of a subject has been left behind, but the approach Thurrowgood used to paint his subjects has not. It's as if he wanted to investigate other avenues, and thought to apply his existing skills in a new way.

The results are an alchemical invocation of the distance and the layers above and below points of the horizon. Thurrowgood has made works that revel in being two-dimensional – there's no illusion here that the perspective you see in certain works is anything other than painted. In fact the pastel palette he works with is unreal and yet very inviting, and while the flat surfaces, are covered with markings that suggest the ripple of water, they are not attempting to create an illusion.

The Line is a strange and beautiful set of unexpected works from an artist who likes to experiment with his work and long may he continue to do so.



Threshold by Bruce Thurrowgood.