JAMES MAKIN GALLERY



# **EMMA COULTER: INFINITE SYSTEMS**

15 JUN - 02 JUL 2023

"In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral spread of a single surface. In the overall regularity of its organization, it is the result not of imitation, but of aesthetic decree." Rosalind Krauss, from her essay The Grid.

Emma Coulter's artworks have been seen wrapped around infrastructure projects the size of a city block. They have been constructed as window interventions on museum buildings. Yet others have materialised as doors within commercial art fairs in 19th century hotels (the Hotel Windsor, on Spring Street). This places her firmly within the area known as "the expanded field of painting." Emma is an award-winning international artist who has also exhibited for many years in different commercial galleries, as is the case with her current major exhibition Infinite Systems, at James Makin Gallery.

Born in Belfast, by the age of two Emma was living in Melbourne, and shortly after, Brisbane, with her family. With hindsight, her early academic career at QUT can be seen as a perfect launchpad for her current passions. She studied first Fine Art, then took a second degree in the Built Environment. But she credits her decision to undertake her masters degree at the VCA in Melbourne, almost fifteen years later, for expanding her vision and her ambitions.

"My time at VCA was a period of intense immersion, and one of rapid progression, and where I first commenced my ongoing series of 'spatial deconstruction', works." Her discoveries included Rosalind Krauss's hugely important essay on "The Grid" that reinforces the democracy of the picture plane; the pioneering work of Bridget Riley; Jim Lambie's coloured-tape floor installations and stand-alone sculptures; the American Sarah Morris, who must seem like a long-lost but recently found twin sister; and in Australia the giants of modernism and minimalism, including female pioneer artists Margel Hinder and Inge King.

By this time Emma had long since evolved from the gestural abstraction of her earlier work to a more hard-edged abstraction that expanded into immersive spatial environments. The terms "minimalism" and "deconstruction" are often used in art writing but carry counter-intuitive meanings from what one might think. Minimalism is not about "quantity" but is about a certain "quality". Deconstruction is not about "taking things apart" but bringing very different elements together. Emma Coulter does both magnificently.

A staunch feminist with a strong belief in gender equality both at work and in the home, she is committed to breaking down hierarchies within architecture particularly, but also in the art world. In 2019 she was selected to construct an astonishing visual environment – a painting that you could walk into – in the New Woman exhibition at the Museum of Brisbane. This celebrated a century of women artists of Brisbane origin and included Tracey Moffatt, Judy Watson, Gwendolyn Grant, Davida Allen, Pamela See, and Olive Ashworth. Emma's work in this exhibition was a commission for the Dome Gallery called *spatial deconstruction #21 (portals)*. Of this major work, curator Miranda Hine said, "the painting doesn't submit to the room. We step into the painting." While Art Guide Australia wrote, in words that chime with this current 2023 exhibition at James Makin Gallery, "In her practice, Emma sees colour as a conceptual idea that through arrangement, placement, proportion and geometry can be manipulated to create deliberate outcomes."

There are 15 paintings on display here, and five new sculptures. Additionally, there will be a site specific, painted work, in the gallery. Taken in its totality, this exhibition will give spectators an overview of the artist's oeuvre.

Many techniques have had to be learned over many years to produce work of this quality. The sculptures have been brought to life through a mix of 3 dimensional computer aided drawings and the precision of laser cutting. As with a number of leading contemporary painters she uses a mix of enamel paints and acrylic house paint. From these, she synthesises her own chromatic language. And she still keeps experimenting. She is about to make her first foray into using precast concrete, which will doubtless please her father who has a precast factory in Brisbane.

As I look at this new body of work, unbidden I start thinking about music. Why is this? Perhaps it is Emma's use of a strictly limited palette of five, seven, or sometimes nine colours. From these, an infinite variation of combinations can be conjured, as with musical scales. And the beauty of it is that each work is totally unique, yet part of the same grand symphony. Then I think about the dazzle painting of ships in the First World War, a disguise to evade and confuse enemy radar. There is a feeling of trompe l'oeil somewhere in the mix too. I'll have to think about that and make a return visit – something I always advise with any art exhibition. It's amazing how different each work can look at a second or third viewing. The artwork hasn't changed, its atoms are exactly the same, but in an alchemical way something in your brain, heart and perception has. This is why art has such a lasting presence, whether in the home, the museum or on the streets.

As Sophia Cai wrote in the current issue of Artist Profile magazine, "Whereas site-specific works or public art might involve multiple steps of pre-planning and input from other parties, Coulter admits that it's the 'immediacy of painting that I love,' which allows an artist to pick up a paintbrush and go. The relationship between the artist and painting is intimate in this way, as the work can be created in an entirely self-contained manner." As we conclude our conversation about this exhibition, Emma tells me "I'm interested in the way colour and paint, especially in these domestic-scaled paintings and sculptures, open up my work to new audiences." I'm sure they will.

Dr Peter Hill is an artist, writer, and independent curator



SPATIAL DECONSTRUCTION #14 (SPECTRUM) 2015.

300 x 300 x 240cm synthetic polymer paint on architecture

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, Southbank, Melbourne

Exhibited as part of Coulters VCA Masters graduating exhibition, 'beyond painting' 2015

Photography: Emma Coulter

<sup>1</sup> As defined by theorist John A Walker in Art Since Pop (Thames and Hudson, 1975)

<sup>2</sup> The 1987 *documenta* in Kassel, Germany, was the paradigm-changing exhibition that ushered in Deconstruction as a movement

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, this strategy of "dazzle camouflage" was suggested to the Admiralty by artist Norman Wilkinson to deter German U-boats. Rather than trying to make a ship vanish on the ocean waves, he developed a radical camouflage scheme that used bold shapes and violent contrasts of colour. His purpose was to confuse rather than conceal (BBC website).



#### SPATIAL DECONSTRUCTION #23 (RESILIENCE), 2021 to 2023.

spatial deconstruction #23 (resilience), 2021 to 2023 synthetic polymer paint on precast facade 120 metres long x 7metres height (wraps Swanston St and Flinders Lane facades) Commissioned by Metro Tunnel Creative Program + Cross Yarra Partnership

CITY SQUARE, Melbourne, Australia Curated by Global Arts Projects

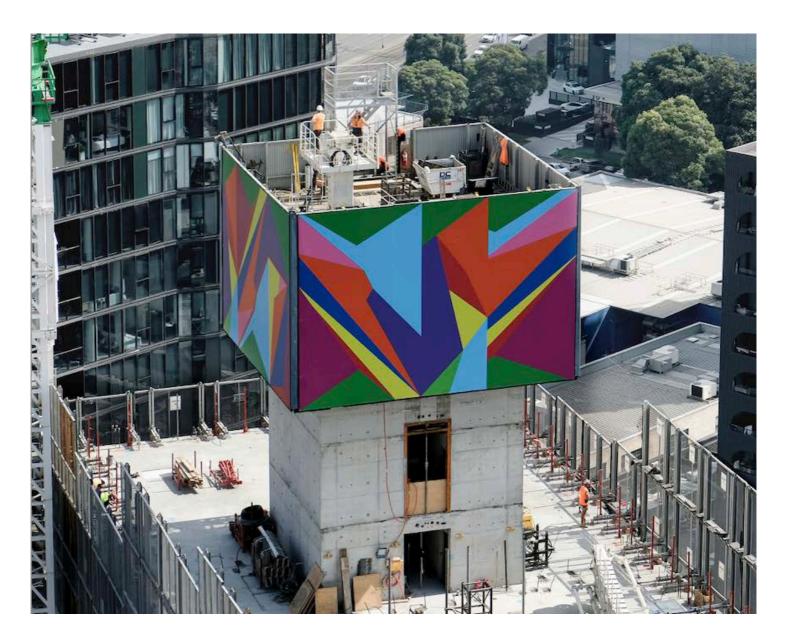
In the heart of Melbourne's CBD, Coulter's 'spatial deconstruction #23 (resilience)', was commissioned by the Metro Tunnel for its' Melbourne, City Square acoustic shed location, from 2021 to 2023.

Through a painted intervention on the building facade, awarded through a highly competitive process, Emma Coulter, created a unique site specific work, extending upon her series of spatial deconstruction works that she has been making since early 2014.

The site-specific work, aimed to reflect the social context of this time of crisis in Melbourne's' history, during the global pandemic. A time from March, 2020, to October, 2021, when Melbourne is said to have been the most locked down city in the world.

Through highly chromatic, warped, geometric sequences that traverse a whole city block, the work was intended by the artist, as a gesture of resilience and hope, for Melbourne's diverse communities. It was often featured as a backdrop to the news, and daily covid counts, acting as a page holder for this unique period in Melbourne's history.

Photography: Charlie Kinross, courtesy of Metro Tunnel Creative program.



SPATIAL DECONSTRUCTION #28 (THE GRID), ephemeral gallery in the sky work, 2022 to 2023, 700x 900 x 900cm, pigmented ink on vinyl

## CREMA X THE EIGHTH x EMMA COULTER

As a prelude to Coulter's permanent public artwork for CREMA the Eighths mixed use development located in the Domain precinct, South Melbourne, Coulter's work, SPATIAL DECONSTRUCTION #28 (THE GRID), was commissioned to wrap three sides of CREMA's jumpform tower, whilst the building was under construction.

'spatial deconstruction #28 (the grid)', by Coulter, uses the reference point of the building grid, through a rules based approach to generate organic geometric patterns, activated though Coulter's highly chromatic palette. Ideas about the grid relate simultaneously to both the history of art, architectural organisation, and the urban planning of Melbourne.

Concepts for her permanent public artwork for this development Commissioned by CREMA projects through the City of Port Phillips Public Art policy, will be revealed later in 2023.

Photography: Adam King



### SPATIAL DECONSTRUCTION #26 (WINDOW INTERVENTION), 2020 to 2021.

spatial deconstruction #26 (window intervention), 2020 to 2021 ink pigment on vinyl adhesive polymer, aluminum composite panels, wood, existing window boxes

 $150 \times 150 \times 150$  cm each x 2 window boxes (South and West)

QUT ART MUSEUM, Brisbane, Australia. Curated by Vanessa Van Ooyen and Katherine Dionysius

As a selected alumni artist for QUT's fourth Alumni Triennial, Emma Coulter was invited to create a new site specific intervention, alongside an installation of her paintings + sculptures, at QUT Art Museum, in Brisbane.

Symbolising a connection between the educational and the institutional this intervention, 'spatial deconstruction #26', is an introvert/ extrovert structure, that simultaneously pushes out from the museum walls, into the public university, whilst retracting into the gallery space, through two highly chromatic, site-specific interventions, inserted in between the museum interior and exterior, on both the southern and western facades.

Whilst the two interventions are physically separated, the installation is one work, that can only completely be experienced through a transition around the outside of the gallery space and into the museum.

Context and perceptual optics challenge the audience to perceive the way, that we receive the work both physically and metaphorically, whilst this new work also represents a breakthrough work for the artist, in realising her painted spatial deconstruction works through a sculptural intervention.

Photography: Emma Coulter



### WILLIAM JOLLY BRIDGE, 2020

William Jolly Bridge Projection (multichromatic synaesthesia), 2020 light projection on bridge  $500 \times 50 \times 50$  metres

WILLIAM JOLLY BRIDGE, Brisbane, Australia. Curated by Tess Maunder + Pia Robinson

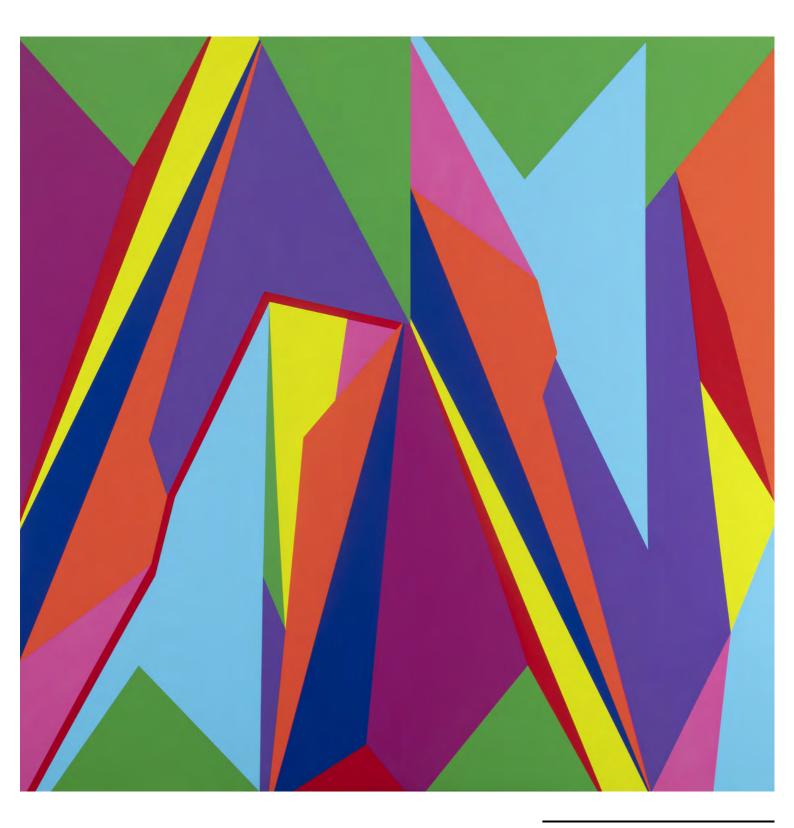
The artist was invited by Brisbane City Council to create this ephemeral site specific light intervention, which was created in response to the celebration of international women's tennis.

multichromatic synesthesia, celebrates the movement of the city, and the river, whilst deconstructing the unique form of this civic structure, during night fall, and the shared non hierarchical public space of the William Jolly Bridge.

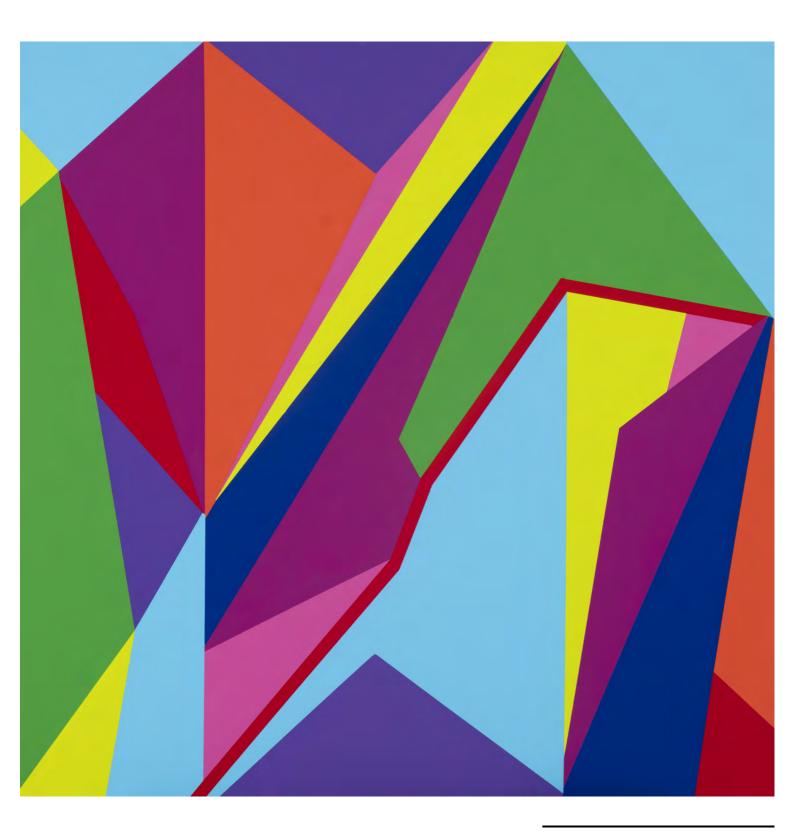
Photography: David Sandison



EMMA COULTER
mystical grid, 2023
167 x 167 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER
parallel structures, 2023
167 x 167 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen



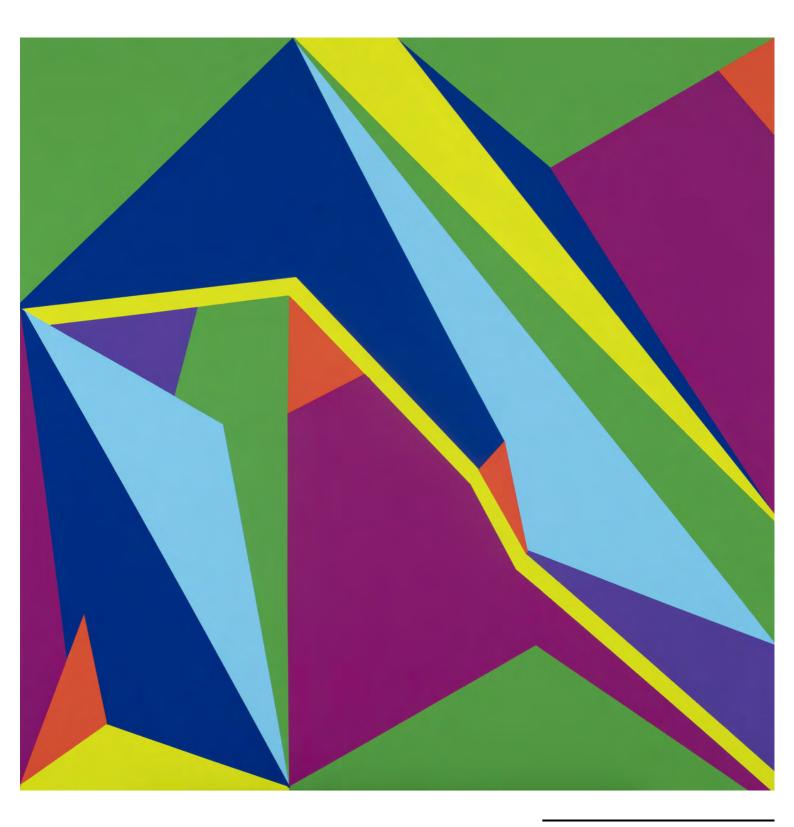
EMMA COULTER chroma confluence, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



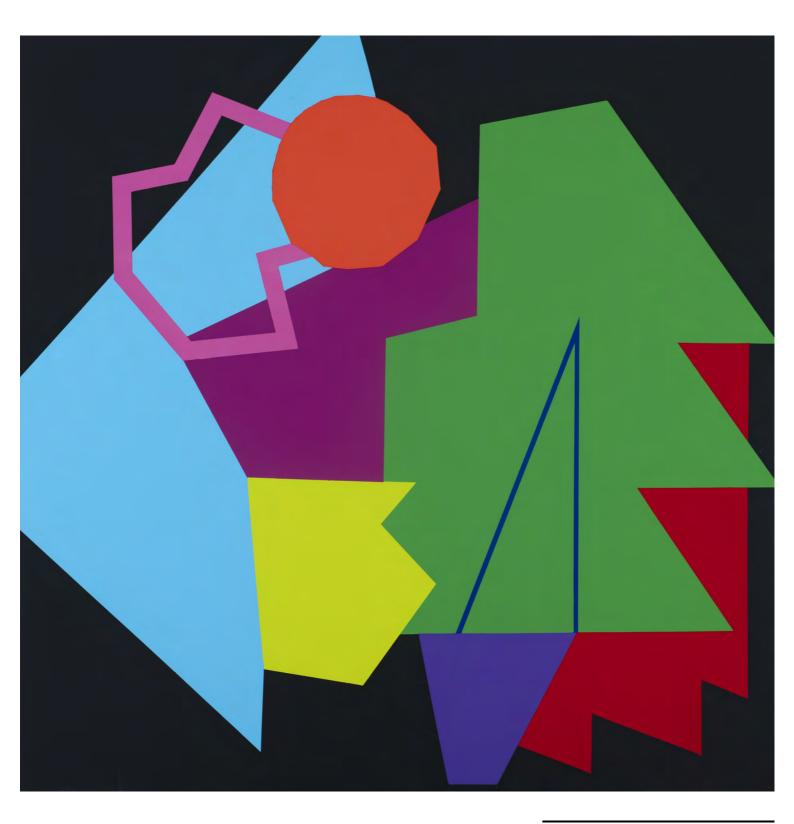
EMMA COULTER
collage cutout, 2023
102 x 102 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER
perfect paradox, 2023
102 x 102 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER shape shift, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER still life, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



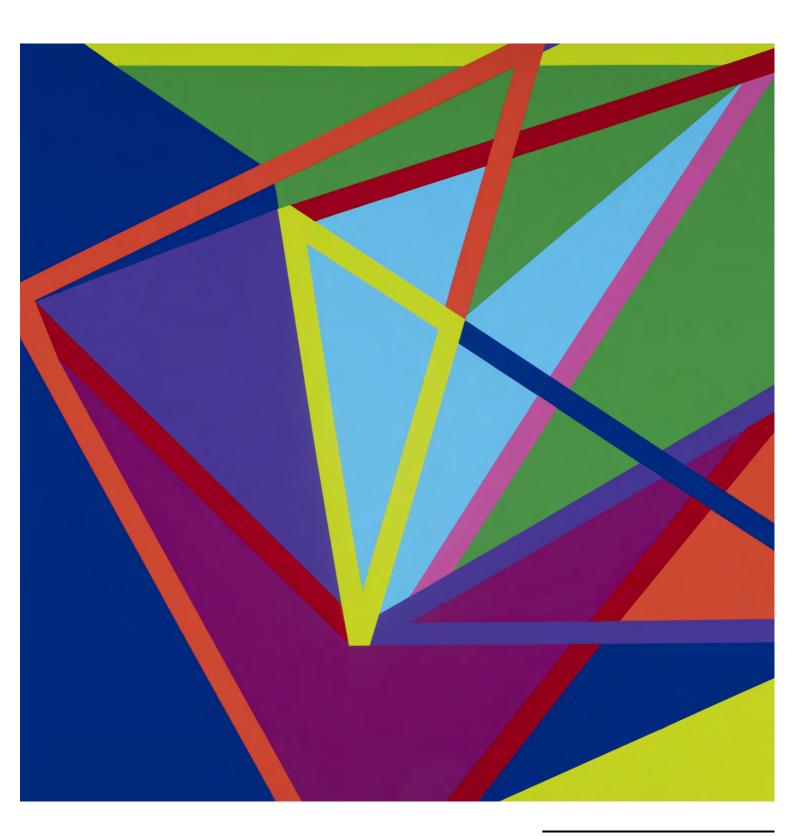
EMMA COULTER melodrama, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



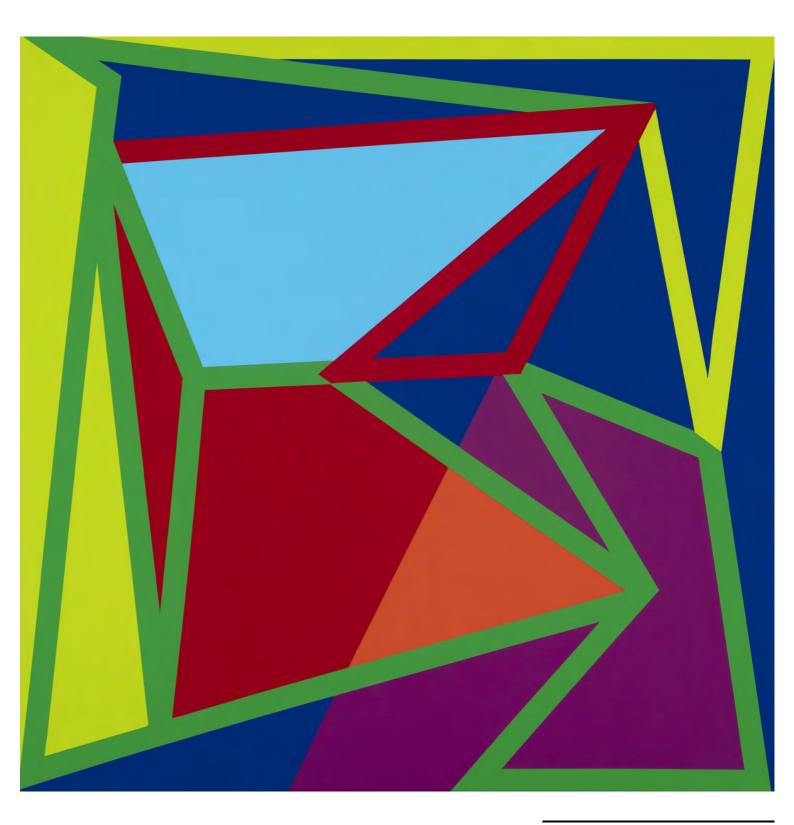
EMMA COULTER topographies, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



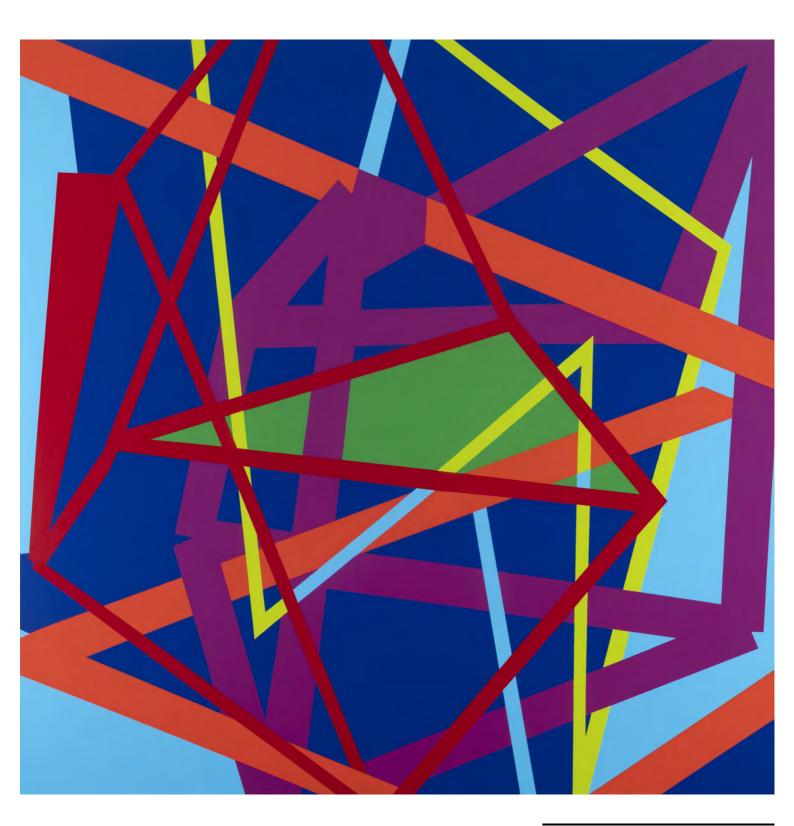
EMMA COULTER rebellious forms, 2023 102 x 102 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



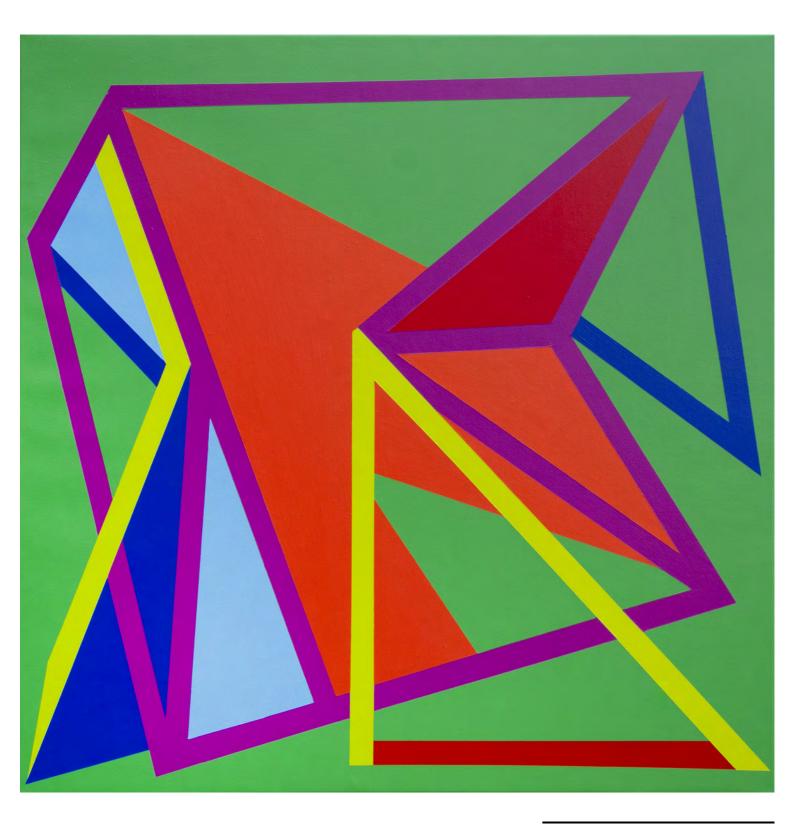
EMMA COULTER
parallax, 2023
81.5 x 81.5 cm
synthetic polymer paint on linen



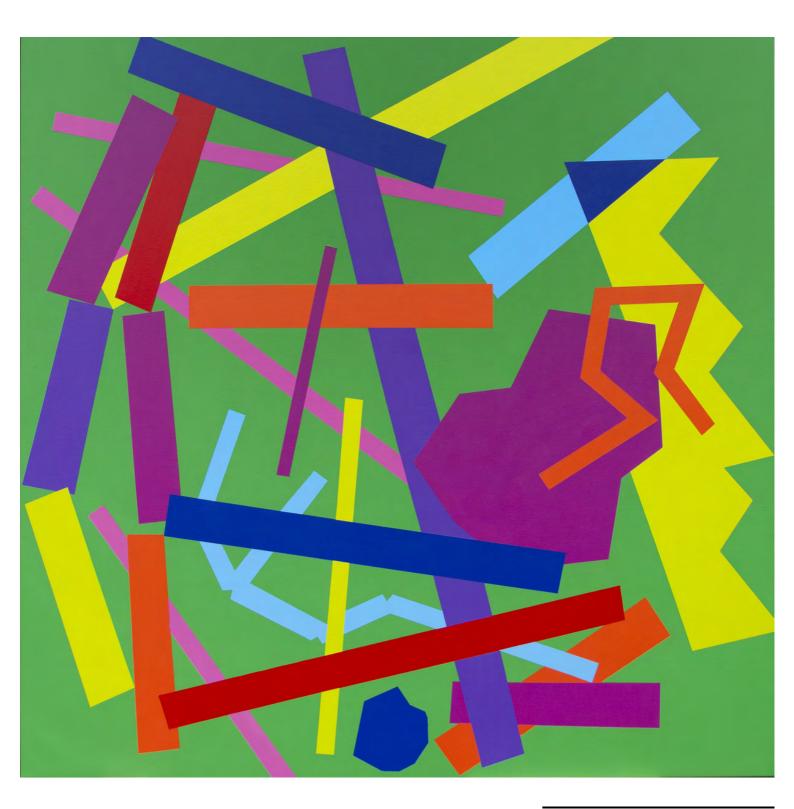
EMMA COULTER balancing act, 2023 81.5 x 81.5 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER interstitial space, 2023 153 x 153 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER line drawing for sculpture, 2023 81.5 x 81.5 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER all the elements, 2023 153 x 153 cm synthetic polymer paint on linen



EMMA COULTER concentric fold, 2021 - 2023 50 x 50 x 50 cm enamel paint on steel



EMMA COULTER multichromatic inversion, 2023 40 x 40 x 60 cm enamel paint on steel



EMMA COULTER concentric slip, 2023 50 x 58 x 75 cm enamel paint on steel



EMMA COULTER warped sequence, 2023 50 x 50 x 50 cm enamel paint on steel



double tuck, 2023 40 x 50 x 35 cm enamel on steel

# JAMES MAKIN GALLERY

# **EMMA COULTER**

b. 1978, Northern Ireland, UK

Lives and works Victoria, Australia.

### **EDUCATION**

2015	Master of Contemporary Art, (first class honours), Victorian College of Arts			
2000	Bachelor of Built Environment, (with distinction), Queensland University of			
	Technology			
1998	Bachelor of Visual Art, Queensland University of Technology			
PUBLIC	CART + MUSEUM COMMISSIONS			
2023	spatial deconstruction #28 (the grid), Melbourne, The Eighth, Domain			
	Precinct(under fabrication)			
2022	let them feel the light, Coffs Harbour Cultural Centre, Yarilla Place, NSW			
	(under fabrication)			
2022	spatial deconstruction #28 (the grid), Gallery in the Sky, The Eighth, CREMA			
	constructions, South Melbourne			
2022	spatial deconstruction #27 (cutout), Burt Healy Pavilion, Malvern East,			
	Melbourne			
2021	spatial deconstruction #26 (window intervention), QUT ART MUSEUM			
2021	spatial deconstruction #25 (perceptual vortex), Footscray Community Arts			
	Centre, Footscray, Melbourne			
2021	spatial deconstruction #23 (resilience), City Square, Melbourne for the Metro			
	Tunnel creative program			
2020	spatial deconstruction #24 (wrapper), Richmond Town Hall, Melbourne			
2020	spatial deconstruction #22 (rainbow shelter), Burnett Lane, Brisbane			
2020	William Jolly Bridge projection, multichromatic synaesthesia, Brisbane			
2019	spatial deconstruction #21 (portals), Dome Gallery, Museum of Brisbane,			
	Brisbane			
2018	spatial deconstruction #19 (inversion), Latrobe Art Institute, Bendigo			
2016	spatial deconstruction #15 (gemstone with fireplace), LINDEN New Art, Melbourne			

# SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS + INSTALLATIONS

2023	infinite systems, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, (forthcoming)		
2019-20 portals, dome gallery, Museum of Brisbane			
2018	composites, THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne		
2018	doppel symmetrie, ADHOC, Bochum, Germany		
2017	trace patterns, PALMER, Sydney		
2015	chrominance, Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne		
2015	chromo-spatial, CHASM, Brooklyn, New York		
2014	deconstructed painting, VCA gallery, Southbank		
2014	threshold, five walls projects, Footscray, Melbourne		
2013	transposition, pieces of eight, Melbourne		
2011	viscerality, Kunstraum Tapir, Friedrichshain, Berlin, Germany		
2011	shedding skin, forty five downstairs, Melbourne, Victoria		
2009	memory space, Jacob Hoerner, Melbourne, Victoria		
2007	twofold, Jacob Hoerner, Melbourne, Victoria		
2006	Emma Coulter works, Clayton Utz, Riparian Plaza, Brisbane, Queensland		
2005	unseen, Fox Galleries, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland		

# SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023	The art of the metrotunnel, Domain House, Melbourne, Victoria
2023	Summer New, James Makin Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria
2022	Women in Abstraction, ANZ gallery, Melbourne, Victoria
2021-22	2 Thinking into being, Alumni Triennial, QUT Art Museum, Brisbane, Qld
2021	Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Gallery, Redleaf, Sydney
2021	Sunshine Coast Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast, Qld
2021	Footscray Art Prize, Footscray Community Arts Centre
2021	Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize, Bayside Gallery, Brighton, Melbourne
2020	Sunshine Coast Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Sunshine Coast, Qld
2020	FIVE TEN TWENTY TWENTY, five walls, Footscray
2019	NEW WOMAN, Centenary Exhibition, Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane
2019	Nillumbik Contemporary Art Prize, Montsalvat, Melbourne
2018	SUPPORT STRUCTURE, Latrobe Art Institute, Bendigo

2018	Deakin Contemporary Small Sculpture Award, Deakin University Art Gallery,				
	Burwood				
2018	WAVE, BSA project space, Byron School of Art, Mullumbimby				
2017	9X5NOW, ART150 Historical Exhibition, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, VCA,				
	Melbourne				
2016	Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Council Chambers, Sydney				
2016	Linden Art Prize, Linden New Art, St Kilda, Melbourne				
2015	VCA Masters exhibition, Victorian College of the Arts, St Kilda Rd				
2015	colour imperative, Rubicon ARI, North Melbourne, Victoria				
2014	marvel, the VCA Windsor Prize Finalists, Hotel Windsor, Melbourne				
2013	the hills are alive, Paradise Hills Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria				
2013	artmonth emerging artists finalists exhibition, Depot two, Sydney, New South Wales				
2012	from paradise, James Makin Gallery, Collingwood, Melbourne, Victoria				
2011	the space between, Neukölln, Berlin, Germany				

# OTHER SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATIONS + COMMISSIONS

2014

2022	spectrum warp #3, painting commission for Metro Tunnel Collection				
2019	spatial deconstruction #20 (barn intervention), Montsalvat, Melbourne				
2018	insitu painting #01, (composites), THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne				
2018	spatial deconstruction #18, (doppel symmetrie), adhocraum, Bochum, Germany				
2018	spatial deconstruction #17, (wave), BSA project space, Byron Bay				
2017	spatial deconstruction #16, (truncated geometry), PALMER, Sydney				
2015	spatial deconstruction #13 and #14, (hood and spectrum), 'beyond painting', VCA				
2015	spatial deconstruction #12, (warped apex), Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne				
2015	spatial deconstruction #11, (prismatic), CHASM, Brooklyn, New York				
2014	spatial deconstruction #10, (collision), Five Walls Projects, Footscray,				
	Melbourne				
2014	spatial deconstruction #09, (marvel intervention), Hotel Windsor, Melbourne				
2014	spatial deconstruction #08, (the alter), 17 Wills st, Art Deco Building,				
	Melbourne CBD				
2014	spatial deconstruction #07, (rainbow), VCA open day, VCA, Melbourne				

spatial deconstruction #06 (equilateral), VCA Gallery, Melbourne

2014	spatial deconstruction #05, (cube), Black Hole, VCA, Melbourne
2014	spatial deconstruction #04, (vortex), VCA project space, VCA, Melbourne
2014	spatial deconstruction #03, (window), VCA studio, VCA, Melbourne
2014	spatial deconstruction #02, (pendant), Bracks corridor, VCA, Melbourne
2014	spatial deconstruction #01, (prism), the Cage, VCA, Melbourne
2014	private painting commission, Artesian Investments
2013	installation, pieces of eight facade, Russell Place, Melbourne
2013	private painting commission, domestic space
2012	private painting commission, domestic space

# AWARDS/ PRIZES/ RESIDENCIES

2022	RECIPIENT, Creative Victoria, sustaining creative workers grant
2021	WINNER, Footscray Art Prize (mural category)
2021	finalist, Sunshine Coast Art prize
2021	finalist, Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize
2021	finalist, Bayside Acquisitive Award
2020	finalist, Sunshine Coast Art prize
2019	finalist, Nillumbik Contemporary Art Prize
2018	RECIPIENT, Ian Potter Cultural Trust Grant
2018	finalist, Deakin Contemporary Small Sculpture Award
2016	WINNER, Linden Art Prize, Linden New Art
2016	WINNER, Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize Viewer's Choice Award
2015	RECIPIENT, Fiona Myer Award for excellence, VCA, University of Melbourne
2015	RECIPIENT, NAVA Australian Artists Grant
2014	RECIPIENT, Jim Marks Postgraduate Scholarship, VCA, University of Melbourne
2014	RECIPIENT, faculty grant, VCA, University of Melbourne
2014	finalist, the Windsor Prize, VCA, Hotel Windsor
2013	finalist, NAB artist award (artmonth Sydney)
2011	Residency, takt kunstprojektstraum residency, Friedrichshain, Berlin, Germany
2000	RECIPIENT, Deans Award for Excellence – Faculty of Built Environment +
	Engineering
2000	RECIPIENT, QUT Head of School Award (School of Architecture)

RECIPIENT, QUT Head of School Award (School of Architecture)

1999

#### COLLECTIONS

**QUT Art Museum** 

Metro Tunnel Cross Yarra Collection

Footscray Community Centre

Artesian Capital Management

Spruson and Ferguson Patent Attorney Lawyers

Citybank Corporate

Private Collections Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Germany, Singapore

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY/ PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Linden New Art, Public Art Forum, Feb, 11, 2022

Haynes, Rachael, 'Emma Coulter, spatial deconstructions', QUT Thinking into being Catalogue, QUT Art Museum, 2021

Emma-Kate Wilson, Exploring Public Art through the Practice of Emma Coulter, Mutual Art, July 14, 2021

Jessica Ankomah, Footscray Art Prize | Artist in Focus: Emma Coulter, June 22, 2021

Gina Fairley, 'On gender, pay and public art', Visual ArtsHub, March 22 2021

Brown, Phil, Women Rule at the Museum of Brisbane, Courier Mail, Sept 13, 2019

lan Potter Cultural Trust Grant Interview with Emma Coulter, The Coronet #11, Sept 2019

Museum of Brisbane Online Interview, Artist Profile:Emma Coulter, Sept 03, 2019

Holt, Jack, Exhibition Celebrates Brisbane Female Artists, The Source, Sept 12, 2019

Sheridan Hart, A new look at the women who shaped Brisbane's art scene, artguide Australia, Sept 10, 2019

Art Forum, guest speaker, marketing on a shoe string budget, Linden New Art, May 2019

Wilson, Emma-Kate, 'Emma Coulter', Ocula, January, 2019

Blouin art info, Emma Coulter's Composites, October, 2018

Art Collector, Emma Coulter: Composites, online, October, 2018

Jane Llewllyn, '50 Things Collectors Need to Know 2017', Art Collector, #79 Jan 2017, p150-1

Brent Hallard, 'All things possible: Emma Coulter', Visual Discrepancies, Painters Table Magazine, Feb 22 2017

Joel Meares, 'Visual Art: trace patterns', Spectrum, Sydney Morning Herald, February 18 2017

Elle Murrell, 'Trace Patterns', The Design Files, February 16, 2017

Meet the artists: Linden Art Prize, Public talk, Linden New Art, April 17 2016

Artbites: Linden Art Prize 2016, videography, April, 2016

Gina Fairley, 'Women are the winners', Visual Artshub, November 09 2016

Maura Edmond, 'Emma Coulter, Chrominance', Primer, May 2015

Alex McCulloch, 'chrominance', Interview, The Arts show, May 05 2015

Freya Herring, 'Art News: Best in shows: Space Invader', Vogue Living, May/June 2015

Tess Ritchie, 'Top Ten forces and faces 2015, Emma Coulter', DQ Magazine, Issue 57, 2015

Alex McCulloch, 'threshold', Interview, The Arts show, September 15 2014

Tess Ritchie, 'Site specific art: Emma Coulter', Habitus living, July 28 2014

Lisa Omagari, 'Emma Coulter', Artsfrontline, The Brag, August 14 2013

Penny Modra, 'Shedding Skin', Melbourne M Magazine, The Age, April 29 2011

#### **VIDEOGRAPHY**

CREMA x EMMA COULTER, artist announcement and interview

Behind the scenes of the METRO TUNNEL Creative Program, Interview with Emma Coulter

Footscray Art Prize - Winner Interview,

Linden Art Prize 2016, Artist Interview