

CONNECT-ED



NIGHTLADDER

Angela Gardner | Gwenn Tasker | John Doyle
Lisa Pullen | Maren Götzmann

BRISBANE INSTITUTE OF ART

13 - 24 OCTOBER 2017

For a little while he gazed, looking about him, lost in the fascination which strange water was for him. It was a little life-fern, known only to the bush arnians and the wild cattle. The notes of their coming and going were plain on the fern around him. Large wallaby, native bear, kangaroo and blue-jays' quick eye took their tracks in the dirt, and the prints of many small birds whose names were not within the scope of his knowledge. Even as he stood there, quite still, no small brown ducks of the variety known to bushmen as fivers, whistled out of the sky and alighted on the water. They saw him, and two red-ringing ripples marked where they had been. They did not come to the surface again within his vision, although he waited; but he knew that from somewhere among the reeds opposite they were watching him with bright and cunning eyes. A movement in the timber a furlong distant drew his attention. A mob of six rams stalked across the bush like figures in a stately dance.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

1. Maren Götzmann

*Standlinien -
The Scrubbers 1*
2017
Watercolour
on book page
12 x 18 cm

2. Lisa Pullen

*Traversing the
female*
2014
Watercolour
29.7 x 42 cm

3. Gwenn Tasker

Top of the Gully
2017
Acrylic on board
18 x 29 cm

4. Angela Gardner

*Maenad,
Manifesto*
2017
Altered book,
15 sheets boxed,
ink on paper
26 x 23 cm

5. John Doyle

*The Plains 1
(rider and
horizon)*
2017
Charcoal and ink
29 x 42 cm

ART AND ART

Ecological thinking and debate often distinguish between *Nature* and *nature* to separate two distinct applications of the term. Lower case *nature* is used to describe everything around us that is non-human while capitalized *Nature* stands for a broader use of the term to include humans and human culture within it.^{1,2}

This little essay wants to suggest that following the example of ecological debate might also lead us to reflect in a similar way on the term *art* to contextualize this exhibition. Today constantly growing crowds file into our state galleries for blockbuster exhibitions and highly recognized artists achieve record prices for their works. Ever more sophisticated audience development ploys and marketing campaigns create a continuously expanding *art* market. But is it *art* or *Art* we are talking about here? How inclusive is this lower case *art* market and how reflective is it in fact of upper case *Art*?

I believe that looking at collectives such as *NightLadder* might provide an answer. *NightLadder* was formed five years ago by members John Doyle, Angela Gardner, Maren Götzmann, Lisa Pullen, and Gwenn Tasker. They regularly meet every week to work on joint as well as their own projects. Yet their names will hardly raise an eyebrow amongst the audience cueing up for the blockbuster show around the corner. Despite this lack of broad public attention, the five artists can look back upon many years of profound practice.

Joachim Froese

Dr Joachim Froese is an art photographer working in Brisbane and Berlin. He is a sessional lecturer and tutor for photography at the Queensland College of Art (QCA), Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

It then comes at no surprise that their second group exhibition once again features works on paper that are accomplished, engaging and sincere.

Doyle presents drawings that are reflections on the small farming community of Talbingo where his family has lived for generations. Gardner, an accomplished poet, continues to integrate text into her images to comment on social issues and debates. Götzmann's concerns evolve around a visual definition of standpoints which she establishes in her drawings and photographs. Pullen's exquisite mixed techniques on paper expand on the tradition of the still life to draw on personal memory and cultural references. Tasker, an experienced print maker, explores a more graphic style through collages in which strange figures emerge from pages out of notebooks.

None of the presented artists is a 'star' in the *art* world but they all are a vital part of a more inclusive *Art* ecology. However, this ecology is under threat to become a monoculture if we blindly follow the domineering trends of a hyped up *art* market. *NightLadder's* artists maintain a critical distance to this market that is ruled by fewer and fewer players with more and more power. Instead of chasing fashionable trends they make *Art* that provides us with thoughtful reflections and a sense of beauty without which all or our lives would be poorer.

1 VOGEL, S. M. 2011. Why 'Nature' Has No Place In Environmental Philosophy. In: KAEBNICK, G. E. (ed.) *The Ideal of Nature: Debates about Biotechnology and the Environment*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

2 SOPER, K. 1995. *What is Nature?*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.