

DAVID
THOMAS—
COLOURING
IMPERMANENCE

Project Rooms 1 & 2

28 July—
23 September



David Thomas: Colouring Impermanence highlights the value of painting and the process of empathetic observation to contemporary creative practice.

Implicit to David Thomas' understanding of empathy is his sensitivity to touch. 'Painting offers an opportunity to reflect on the complexity of our responses: emotional and conceptual; imaginative and tactile; via image and materiality in time. In the act of painting you feel ... thought, touch and emotion are connected,' Thomas explains.

Works drawn from over four decades are presented together for the first time at Design Hub. The exhibition is intended as an exploration of the core values inherent within Thomas' practice, including colour, duration and time.

The exhibition brings together two interconnected yet distinctive spaces. Project Room 1 is a contemplative and experiential space, housing a series of works from Thomas' archive, as well as new works created in response to Design Hub. Purpose-made, large-scale monochrome paintings operate as surface and offer illusionary depth, folding together real and pictorial space, as well as time – the viewer sees themselves viewing.

Thomas uses colour in the form of the monochrome, which he places in relation to other things, creating an interval, a pause and a place of emptiness to stop and reflect. As he explains: 'The monochrome is a tool for considering how we look, feel and construct our experience of the world.'

The Movement of Colour, Timelines (2011), a 'mobile monochrome' series, is housed between the two Project Rooms. The work brings Thomas' playful sense of humour together with a deep contemplation of mortality, transience and our passage through what he describes as the 'wonder of the everyday world'.

Project Room 2 is conceived as a studio-like environment, where works – from early figurative drawings through to contemporary paintings – are presented alongside works by peers and collaborative projects, such as those with international collective, Concrete Post.

A series of drawings are presented in folios, inviting interaction and close observation. Collected within a loose chronology from the 70s to the present

day, the folios bring together drawings from Thomas' transition period between figuration and abstraction – 'the blur' as he refers to it – as well as early explorations into colour, time and duration through photopaintings and composites. Interacting intimately with these works by turning each page of the folios, and even handling works, provides a rich insight into Thomas' processes for making and thinking through his art, for teaching his students, and for working collaboratively with others.

The exhibition culminates with a large-scale and immersive installation entitled *Impermanences* – works made on thin paper with opaque media. The emphasis on touch and its duration creates an unstable surface that is subject to the conditions of change, challenging 'value' in painting. We see the moment of the brush meeting the surface and a slow awareness of the duration of contact.

Design Hub is hosting a 'micro-course' during the exhibition, examining the importance of teaching to Thomas' practice. Through eight lessons, participants will experiment with drawing, painting and photography, participating in tutorials and group discussions with Thomas, his peers and collaborators. Each lesson unpacks the ideas explored in Thomas' work and his approach to helping students develop their own creative practice.

Thomas explores ideas that are deeply human. Implicit in his understanding of empathy is his sensitivity to touch and 'the felt'. While poetics underpins the language, Thomas' argument for attentive looking has renewed currency in the face of our increasingly pressured, augmented and shared contemporary lives. *David Thomas: Colouring Impermanence* challenges us to pause, look attentively and to reconsider the world around us with empathy.

Fleur Watson
Kate Rhodes
Curators, Design Hub



While in many respects a reflection on David Thomas' practice across 40 years, *David Thomas: Colouring Impermanence* cannot be described as a chronological project, primarily because its main subject is the experience of time itself, activated through attentive looking. As Thomas suggests: 'The works enable the audience to understand the movement of meaning over time and to contemplate the transitory unstable nature of being and perceiving. It celebrates states of becoming, not fixity.'

Thomas' career has long been influenced by European and Asian contemplative spaces, from the Romanesque/Gothic and Islamic architecture and art of London, Paris and Spain, to the art of Japan, Korea and China. While the connections in his work with western artists, such as Gerhard Richter, Blinky Palermo, Callum Innes and David Batchelor are clear, his work also reflects a deep interest in the Korean monochrome painting movement, Dansaekhwa (in particular Lee Ufan), as well as the Japanese Gutai and Mono-ha movements. Formative experiences for Thomas included travelling to Indonesia to hear Gamelan music, which triggered an awareness of the nature of 'change', as well as an early visit to the British Museum, where the 'spirit-resonance' *Chi-Yun* of Chinese Sung painting developed an understanding of work that was 'alive' outside of history and fashion. Flux and vitality, the perception of being and becoming in time, became the drivers of his ongoing practice.

Early star paintings provide a point of intersection between these various cultural references, pointing to a foundational sense of philosophical wonder. If the stars allow us to describe time by moving in cycles, *Colouring Impermanence* similarly allows us to explore the subtle variations and gradual evolutions of Thomas' sustained enquiry, through constellations of drawings and works on paper that the viewer can align into form themselves. The exhibition as a whole allows us to share his journey, documenting past assemblies, but also constructing new.

Life drawings produced at art school, and following his first visit to Paris, introduced the complex idea of the blur. As Thomas comments, the blur 'reconciles illusionary space behind the picture plane and the actual gesture on the surface'. While emphasising surface and materiality, it is also an image that shifts between the abstract and the perceptual. Drawing on Pierre Bonnard and David Hockney to revisit traditional *vanitas* motifs, as well as contemporary moments of revolution and protest, works such as the soft, intimate charcoal drawings of the late 70s to early 80s introduce us to an awareness of time as both subject and medium. These observational, overtly handmade works became more involved in the act of seeing, finding curves at the edges of perception, as well as celebrating the process of slowly accumulating visual information.

A major shift occurred in the early 90s with the series, *Contemplating a Lemon*. Wryly wanting to 'sell someone a lemon', these works gradually perform an annihilation of subject through observation, introducing colour as a key concern. The oval form references Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, at the same time as the Japanese symbols of *enso* (meaning circle) and *ichi* (meaning one), which translates as endless energy. The luminous fruit, central to the frame, is transformed through an intensification of the contrast between yellow and black and a hardening of rounded edges, followed by their intermixing in vivid greens and an increasing geometry. Like the concept of *enso*, the lemon undergoes a 'forming/dissolving and endless change', burning both into and out of the heavy cartridge papers to become a near freestanding image/object.

Thomas explored colour, colour codes and their perceptual/spatial outcomes extensively from the mid-90s. Works such as *Untitled: Light and Dust* (1994) introduced colour fields in spatial orientations, here as a reflective gloss surface on the ground, exploring new relationships between image/colour and ground/site. Through a reductive approach, simplifying operations to their



most economic expression, colour was used as a bridge between painting and the world through recognition that a monochrome always exists in relation to its context. As a consequence, a true monochrome is impossible, instead it is a tool for considering how we look, feel and construct our experience of the world.

The latter-90s saw the emergence of photo-paintings, in context of his investigation of composite works and extended periods spent in London and Paris. Often manifesting as high-gloss surfaces that reflected the space in which the work was situated, these composites also demonstrated a curatorial approach, combining languages, as well as temporalities in sequences of adjacencies. The reflected content and overlaid images brought together art history, found objects and the present moment. Photographic elements, most often as the ground for a painted work, also invoked memory, while an increasing simplification of the painted form encouraged a slowness of looking in order to recover meaning. This expansion from perceiving to also remembering required more thought on the part of the viewer, while clues as to the often-humorous underpinning narratives were suggested in the word-play of titles.

Dogs of London (2011) is one such series. Dramatic camera angles and foreshortening disrupt the frame, creating dynamic images punctured by instances of high colour (such as a dog's ball), with arcs further accentuating movement. The corollary to this series, the ongoing *Taking a Line for a Walk* (2011), functions as a 'mobile monochrome'. These works marry the contemplative with humour, generating a quizzical examination of the operations of art in life.

From 2000 onwards, variations on the composite monochromes expanded into a wide-ranging investigation into 'composite realities', again often incorporating reflective surfaces. Thomas says: 'The composite enables things different in kind to co-exist (language/style/form/colour/image/touch / medium/material) in singular works, allowing multilayered, even paradoxical, experiences and content to be reconciled.'

The mirror-like surfaces of these paintings operate as surface, as well as illusionary depth, folding together real and pictorial space and time. The viewer sees themselves viewing. The monochrome creates an interval in the visual field, bringing colour into the world as an extrapolation, rather than the end point of painting. These composites also acknowledge non-objective art and the complexity of contemporary perceptual/conceptual painting, demonstrating Thomas' close engagement with contemporary Australian artists, John Nixon and Paul Boston, as well as international figures, Christoph Dahlhausen (Germany) and John Beech (US).

Time, image, colour and their 'perpetual flowing' (as described by French philosopher, Henri Bergson) are considered explicitly in the most recent body of work, collectively titled *Impermanences*. These consist of what the artist describes as 'gestural, thin monochrome washes across photography': sustained, nuanced brushstrokes that leave a field of colour over black and white photographic imagery. As with his previous series, *When two directions become all directions* (2013), Thomas nearly covers the entire image but leaves entry and exit points, spaces to breathe, at corners or on the perimeter. As with Chinese landscape painting, the presence of the mark, but more so the space of the non-mark, becomes charged, an absence loaded with intensity. Pigment becomes a further field of activity, creating colour as energy, qualified by hue and saturation.

The flow of these works, made on thin paper with opaque media, speaks intensely of the human. Delicate, subtle and gentle, the overriding language of these matte surfaces is of touch. We experience the moment of brush meeting plane, the duration of their contact, a slowing awareness. This softly unfolding moment plays over again for the viewer; we witness the mark-making as a parallel time to that of the underlying image, which also speaks of another moment – a snapshot, taken first from the world and then borrowed



from memory (after French philosopher, linguist and critic, Roland Barthes). Thomas' found imagery is imbued with a sense of acutely felt, lived experience, frequently including personal narratives from trips overseas or family events.

An emphasis on touch and its duration defines the *Impermanences* series. For all its simplicity, it is hard to not read the works as compassionate, empathic, even tender. In *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Digital Ecology* (2011), Dutch architect and artist, Lars Spuybroek, discusses these concerns in terms of the German concept of *einführung*. Literally meaning 'into-feeling', it is usually translated as 'empathy', but is also interchangeable with 'sympathy'. German philosopher, Theodor Lipps, develops the concept in relation to aesthetic experience, suggesting that we engage with an unstable world of objects that only become coherent through empathy. To make sense of the world, we have to bring it 'into feeling'.

For artists, Spuybroek argues, 'to feel sympathy, we need to see form and being formed simultaneously: we need to see-feel form and force at the same time.' The sensual articulation of media, such as the wetness of a painted mark, reveals this sympathy, allowing us to feel. Thomas' gestures have in their economy and restraint, space for sympathy to be present: the viewer enters into a state of see-feeling, or perhaps more accurately, is reminded of their own capacity to empathise with the world around them.

In this regard, painting returns to a rationale articulated by John Ruskin in the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843). This argued that works such as those by J. M. W. Turner surpassed the straightforward representation of nature by finding ways to evoke a more profound understanding of it. Rather than description, art communicated through feeling (based on an understanding of sensation as being achieved through acute observation rather than expression). A passionate Romantic, Ruskin elevated emotion to the level of the intellect, by describing a rigorous approach to the 'truths' of our perceptions. Similarly, Thomas understands empathy as a vocabulary. Poetics provide a language, as well as an argument for specific values – of the human, the felt, sympathy.

Thomas' practice includes his teachings, numerous collaborative projects, curation and the foundation of significant international collectives, such as Concrete Post. He has a long history of collaboration with figures in Australia and overseas, from early projects with Andy Thomson and New Zealand-based Chris Heaphy, to more recent projects with Christoph Dahlhausen (Germany) and Beth Harland (UK), as well as Ian Woo (Singapore). In these modes, we find his most directly 'political' activity, through the formation of social entities and his engagement with the wider field of discourse. Like Joseph Beuys, Thomas' role as an educator has been deliberate, using the academy as another 'colour' field upon which to explore change through the iteration of ideas. Internationally acclaimed for his work in postgraduate studies, his impact as a thinker and instigator of thought extends far into the world through his influence on generations of students in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, the UK and Hong Kong.

However, the core of his practice, whether as a painter, collaborator, thinker or educator, is consistently informed by ongoing and enduring values, which Thomas describes as an 'ethics of practice'. These are driven by the fundamental question any artist must ask themselves: why decide to make a work? The humanity of Thomas' practice here becomes essential: without an engagement with the joy and tragedy of being alive – the delight of touch, the power of emotion, the wonder of sensation, at the same time as critique of our perceptions, our shared responsibility for politics, respectful discourse – what work is meaningful? Thomas focuses not on expressing the self, but the expression of the self's concerns; how fragments of intensely felt time establish moments of being that construct a bigger reality, a made sense of place, 'under a giant sky'.



Fleur Watson: The process of making *Colouring Impermanence* has unfolded over time – mostly through many long conversations in this studio and working closely with this model to generate and test ideas through its representation in space, as well as through the collection of the works themselves. How different has this process been to your usual way of working?

David Thomas: Developing this exhibition has been a really interesting challenge for me in terms of trying to bring together ideas and feelings about transience and complexity in a simple, direct and recoverable way. Working with the model was really helpful, as it enabled an ongoing process of play and conversation that has driven our thinking. The exhibition brings together 40 years of practice so it is, by its nature, very complex. The fundamental notions of transience and impermanence that I address, and how art deals with the act of being, are also complex, so when you then translate these into an exhibition experience it is important to have the right touch. One of the things that's happened throughout this process has been an opening up of ideas. Things have become less pedantic, as they have evolved to be more specific. As we unpacked the 'felt experience' within the work, it affected how the show was curated and designed. The development became organic and yet, concurrently, very detailed, responding to the way we've been thinking through the process of making and that's something that has not always been the case in other museum exhibitions that I've been involved with.

FW: I've found this process very rewarding and also, at times, challenging. Design Hub is not an art gallery or museum, so our intent is not to exhibit a survey exhibition and situate the work within the context of art history and art practice in Melbourne. Instead, we've been talking about how we spatialise the collective ideas behind the work and materialise the notion of 'empathetic observation' as a driver for creative practice and research. Every time we do an exhibition at Design Hub, we're interested in testing new ways to mediate and perform the making of creative ideas to create space for an active engagement with our audience. Here, we've embedded the collaborative process between curator, artist and designer from the very conceptual beginning. That happened very naturally in this case and I think working here in the studio with the model has been integral to this 'conversational' curatorial process.

Stuart Geddes: One of the things that I've really enjoyed is seeing how similar this process has been to making the book that we previously worked on together, which was also completely rooted in conversation. I think books are really good at being able to grapple with complexity, partly because of how you can pace things in quite gentle ways that just usher along the ideas. In making a book and an exhibition of this scale (not in terms of physical scale, but in terms of the amount of ideas that are trying to be unpacked), I'm



interested in structural and gestural ways of understanding and unpacking ideas, and this has really informed the way we approached this exhibition.

DT: The idea of time is really important for the development of the show, because there are very subtle things within the show that require time. There's a contemplative quality to much of the work and the exhibition as a whole. I want it to enable people to spend time and to be careful in the way they look. This idea of care is something that is embodied in both the making of the show and also within the work itself. This idea of slow looking, of careful looking, of attentive looking, manifested through attentive construction, is what has required time. And that is what this show privileges – this marriage of time and care.

SG: I think the idea of the 'composite' is something I've interpreted as providing a strong sense of collaboration, which has always run through my practice. It ties into the idea of the *exhibition prosthetic*, with reference to Joseph Grigely,¹ in the sense of thinking about things that aren't the work itself, but sit with the work and – by association – become a prosthetic part of the work. This can happen in an overt way or it can happen in a light and collaborative way. The lightness of touch in this exhibition, along with the *Book of Titles*, has been instructive for projects I'm working on now.

FW: Even within a creative practice context, research is often approached from an intellectual distance. Academic leaders such as Professor Leon van Schaik reject this kind of forced intellectual frame in the pursuit of a responsive and reflective practice-based research model. Yet, this idea of attentive looking and reflective observation still seems radical within our current political framework, which still encourages universities to measure research in terms of quantifiable 'impact'. At the same time, a reflective approach seems culturally in tune with movements that we see in architecture and design, particularly in the work of younger practices, towards a less authored hand and a more collaborative, porous and socially responsive approach. How do you view this?

DT: I think there are two aspects to it. One is the context of making art – art always engages with the felt, as well as the known, and I think research should too. If you look at any of the great researchers, no matter what field they're in, they always talk about the intuitive in relationship to the known and knowledge. I think we need to consciously amplify the research culture of our universities, the value of poetics and the practice of art. At present, they don't sit comfortably in the current Australian postgraduate system of research. The role of art within the university is important, because it helps to reveal not only the imaginative space we operate in, but how we construct ethics and values. How and what our individual consciousness perceives and encounters in reality. Art to me operates a type of felt visual philosophy, not simply as an illustration of social issues. We need to be careful that

1. Grigely, J., 2009. *Exhibition Prosthetics*, Berlin, Sternberg Press; London, Bedford Press

research in universities does not privilege the socially useful over the need to understand what it is to be human.

FW: Do you feel like the idea of slow and ‘attentive looking’ has a renewed currency in the face of our increasingly digital, augmented and shared contemporary lives – how do you challenge that through this show?

DT: I think this is addressed through attempting to unpack how painting functions. This is really one of the fundamental reasons for the exhibition. Digital media is no longer new in that sense, although there remains a populist notion that it is. Contemporaneity is not simply about the medium, it’s about the content and how the medium enables the content to be recovered. The radicality of painting is its stillness in the contemporary world, often as an object on the wall, in a way. Its very stillness enables the viewer to move closer or further away and to become aware of their movement. In doing so, revealing how ideas and perceptions change and reflect on our own movement of consciousness and understanding. The contemporary condition doesn’t mean we have to have an endless bombardment of fast imagery – slow imagery is more democratic. Slow imagery enables us to become aware of our own movement and our own construction of meaning and how that shifts over the duration of experiencing a work. Understanding this awareness through painting is one of the radical challenges of this exhibition.

FW: Let’s discuss the collaborative work of the international artist collective, Concrete Post. How has that project informed the way that you teach and practice?

DT: Concrete Post is a collective of changing people. It was generated out of collaborations with postgraduate students, colleagues from other disciplines, international artists from Germany, America, Taiwan and Singapore, among others. Concrete Post explores painting, photography and object-making in various formats and exhibitions in Australia and overseas. It is informed by – yet is different from – Concrete Art. It combines diverse images with an exploration of materiality and structure. By forming international networks, it explores similarities and differences of interpretation of ideas between individual artists from different places. What are the similarities and differences between working in Asia to working here? Concrete Post brings together that diversity in specific exhibitions, so that through the work itself you can understand or experience this complexity and difference. Different exhibitions have explored themes including photography, installation, colour and abstraction.

SG: There’s an idea that emerged through the process of making the exhibition around the value of making things. The value of making things in art is one thing and the value of making things in design is something else. Within my practice – and for others within our immediate creative

community – there’s a kind of hand-making or small-scale manufacturing within a design context that also sits on the borders of other creative practices. I think in a way there is something that happens through making this show in this particular space that opens up that dialogue – one that connects with the idea of the composites. That generosity of action and working together in the making of things is where I think this show is going to be a really informative one for design communities.

FW: It’s a very important idea, particularly in design where the public perception is still so embedded within the idea of design as a service, rather than as cultural practice. It’s a position that Melbourne architects, such as Peter Corrigan, embodied through his long commitment to teaching, publishing and exhibiting, as well as designing buildings. At the end of the process, there may be a building, object, book, an artwork, but within the making there is a cultural contribution that moves beyond the limitation of the artefact. David, how do you respond to this idea of ‘value’?

DT: I think it was in Seamus Heaney’s Noble Prize for Literature speech where he discusses how the poet is the hunter and collector of values. Poetry is one of the few activities in the world where values can be explored. I’ve been very affected by that and claim the same space for art. It was a very important speech, because of its reflection on the role of the poetic in the face of the brutality of the political context of Northern Ireland. Art can engender an openness and tolerance to the complexity of the world and help us to reflect on our shared humanity on our human condition. That we not only exist amid time but how we live within it. This exhibition has that kind of openness and tolerance. Importantly, I hope it also has a sense of playfulness and humour in considering life, loss and love within a changing world. *Colouring Impermanence* is not simply about self-expression, it’s about presenting ideas that are useful for us to engage with at this time in the 21st century. We have limited time – what are we going to do with it? Are we going to slow down, take time and experience time fully or just let it speed by? I think this is a very important value to offer people.



As part of *David Thomas: Colouring Impermanence* we present a ‘micro-course’ that draws on Professor David Thomas’ teaching practice. Participants in the free series of eight lessons (one for each week of the show) will undertake activities as if enrolled in David’s classes. The micro-course provides an introduction to the way David works, how and why the exhibition at Design Hub has been created and how David teaches creative practice. Each lesson explores ideas such as attentive and ‘empathetic’ looking, timing, materiality, pictorial space, art history and theory. The lessons involve looking, drawing, photography, conversation, reflection and review. David will host the majority of the classes and, at times, draw on his community of artist, educator and curator peers, as well as past and present students.

Each lesson is self-contained; participants can take part in one or multiple lessons. All events take place in Project Rooms 1 & 2, Level 2.

All events are free but places are limited so booking is essential. Bookings at rmitdesignhub.eventbrite.com.au

✕ Lesson 1.
On looking in a changing world:
drawing and attentive looking
Wednesday 2 August, 10–11.30am

In this first lesson of the micro-course we are introduced to the concept of attentive looking and we ask: what does it mean to sit and closely analyse an image or an object or even our environment over time? And how can we do it productively? David asks participants to engage with the complexities of drawing by analysing one of the works on display and the exhibition space itself. Through the analysis of looking, we grow our understanding of what it is we are seeing.

✕ Lesson 2.
Analysing a work: on
empathetic looking
Wednesday 9 August, 11am–12.30pm

Lesson two tightens our grasp on the tool of visual analysis and considers the idea of ‘empathetic looking’. This method is applicable to any work of art. In this lesson, we analyse a work by Wurundjeri elder, William Barak, unpacking issues of both form and history. In looking closely at one of Barak’s works we consider how the artist communicates and how we can participate in respectful observation and response.

✕ Lesson 3.
Pictorial timing and humour
Wednesday 16 August, 2.30–4pm

Timing is the focus of lesson three. We look at how creative practitioners can both conceal and reveal information when they make works, so that details unfold over time. David takes his cues for this lesson from comedy. Monty Python, Spike Milligan, Jacques Tati and Pierre Bonnard are particularly useful for thinking about the value of timing in their tackling of humour and its complexities. Participants will be asked to go on a short walk and explore these ideas through photography.

✕ Lesson 4.
Constructing an exhibition
Wednesday 23 August, 10–11.30am

Lesson four looks at the fundamentals of exhibition making and peels back the layers of how and why we present work, and how creative works should inform their situating within the context of an exhibition. In this lesson we look at how to hang works, the effect of frames, lighting, graphics and how these procedures create readings and communicate with audiences through exhibition making and design.

✕ Lesson 5.
Colour as experience. Colour as code
Wednesday 30 August, 11am–12.30pm

Lesson five highlights David’s interest in learning through doing. In this class we discuss colour as a cultural code and as an experience through mixing paint. In mixing paint, we can become conscious of the properties of colour, materiality and light.

✕ Lesson 6.
Painting as/and expanded practice
Wednesday 6 September, 6–7.30pm

Lesson six is a curatorial round-table event with curators who have worked with David, and we use his approach to practice as a leaping-off point. In this class we host a conversation about expanded practice and how the boundaries around the disciplines of art, architecture and design are useful to one another.

Participants: Professor David Cross, Head of Art and Performance, Deakin University; Suzie Attiwill, Associate Professor, Interior Design and Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching, RMIT Architecture and Design; Lesley Harding, Curator, Heide Museum of Modern Art; Dr Fleur Watson, Curator, RMIT Design Hub; Kate Rhodes, Curator, RMIT Design Hub (Chair).

✕ Lesson 7.
A group tutorial: reflecting on
composite realities
Wednesday 13 September, 10–11.30am

This lesson returns us to the idea of time in a creative work: the ‘slow’ time of painting, the ‘quick’ time of photography and the ‘real’ time of reflection. When we become more aware of ourselves in relation to a work in front of us, we become aware of the movement of meaning over the time of our engagement with a work of art. In this group tutorial – a common fixture of art and design schools – we analyse the content and structure of three works by David with the artist present. Group Tutorial led by: Dr Laresa Kosloff, Senior Lecturer, MFA Program, School of Art, RMIT University

✕ Lesson 8.
On teaching art and design
Wednesday 20 September, 4–5.30pm

In lesson eight we look closely at the practice of teaching itself. This final lesson takes the form of a conversation around teaching creativity and creative thinking – how do we do it, is it possible? We also tackle the concept of teaching creatively. We will cover issues including cultural sensitivity in education, the difference between rigorous teaching and entertainment, and the function of humour.

Participants are from RMIT University: Soumitri Varadarajan, Associate Professor, Industrial Design; Professor Julian Goddard, Head of the School of Art; Andrew Tetzlaff, Coordinator, RMIT:ART:INTERSECT; David Forrest, Professor, School of Art; Dr Michael Spooner, Lecturer, RMIT Architecture & Urban Design; Laurene Vaughan, Professor of Design, School of Media and Communication; Phoebe Whitman, Lecturer in Interior Design, School of Architecture and Design; Kate Rhodes and Dr Fleur Watson, Curators, RMIT Design Hub (Chairs).



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

David Thomas was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1951, arriving in Australia in 1958. Thomas studied art and education at the University of Melbourne, graduating in the 1970s. After travelling widely in Asia and living in Europe, he returned to Australia and had his first solo exhibition in 1981. He holds a Master of Arts by Research in Fine Arts and a PhD from RMIT University. Since 1992, he has taught in the School of Art at RMIT University, where he is Professor of Fine Art.

He has received grants from the Australia Council for the Arts, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Arts Victoria, and he has undertaken residencies at The Cité International des Arts, Paris, France; Two Rooms Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand; the Centre for Drawing, Wimbledon College of Arts, University of the Arts London, UK; and the Porthmeor Studios, St Ives, UK.

Thomas has exhibited in Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Taiwan, China, Singapore, the US and Europe, at venues including the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia; Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, Australia; Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Australia; Kunsthalle Dominikanerkirche, Osnabrück, Germany; Australian Embassy, Paris, France; Talbot Rice Gallery, the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK; and Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.

His work is represented in public collections, including the National Gallery of Victoria; National Gallery of Australia; Art Bank; Trinity College, the University of Melbourne; RMIT University; Heide Museum of Modern Art; Cripps Collection (Australia and UK); Chartwell Collection; Auckland Art Gallery; University of Canterbury; Lim Lip Art Museum; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Theodor F. Leifeld Stiftung; and in private collections in Australia, US, France, Germany, NZ, Singapore and the UK.

He has curated numerous exhibitions and has written on eastern and western art in relation to time and the monochrome.

David Thomas is represented by Tristian Koenig, Melbourne, Australia and Minus Space, New York City, US.

davidthomasartist.com.au



RECENT EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE:

2017

- Call of the Avant-Garde: Constructivism and Australian Art*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
- Westfarbe*, Museum Gelsenkirchen, Germany
- Deep Surface*, 5 Walls, Melbourne

2016

- David Thomas: Impermanences*, Minus Space, New York, US
- When a Still Painting Shows Us That We Are Moving*, Tristian Koenig, Melbourne
- Gongju International Art Festival (GIAF)*, Lim Lip Museum, Gong Ju, South Korea
- Impermanent Durations: on painting and time*, Beth Harland, David Thomas and Ian Woo, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore and Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, Melbourne
- Concrete Post 3*, Raum 2810, Bonn, Germany



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr Fleur Watson and Stuart Geddes for their enthusiastic support, patient and collaborative approach to this project.

The Design Hub team for their professionalism, humour and support.

Professor Kit Wise for his writings and encouragement.

My past and present artistic colleagues, collaborators, gallerists, curators, collectors and writers who have supported and challenged me. For the artists who have given permission to include their works in this exhibition.

Professor Julian Goddard, my academic colleagues and students in the School of Art, RMIT University, Melbourne and elsewhere in the world.

Thank you to my dear family and friends, past and present, long may we dance the dance together and ... oh yes ... to the various animals that have crossed my path. All have helped me feel the terrible and joyous wonder of it all.

David Thomas



DAVID THOMAS: COLOURING IMPERMANENCE

Curation and design: Fleur Watson, Stuart Geddes and David Thomas
Photography by Tobias Titz



RMIT DESIGN HUB TEAM

Curators: Kate Rhodes, Fleur Watson
Creative producer: Nella Themelios
Technical production coordinator: Erik North
Technical assistant: Timothy McLeod,
Sam Fagan, Gavin Bell
Exhibition assistants: Chloë Powell,
Layla Cluer



RMIT DESIGN HUB

RMIT Design Hub is a progressive educational environment. It houses a community of architects, designers, curators and students for collaborative, interdisciplinary design research and education within a purpose-built, 10-storey building that also includes RMIT University's School of Architecture and Design and the RMIT Design Archives. The Project Rooms at Design Hub exhibit creative, practice-led research and are open to everyone. Exhibitions at Design Hub visualise, perform and share research ideas and make new research connections.

× LOCATION

Corner Victoria and Swanston Streets,
Carlton, 3053
hello.designhub@rmit.edu.au
designhub.rmit.edu.au

× OPENING HOURS

Tuesday–Friday, 10am–5pm
Saturday, 12–5pm
Closed Sunday, Monday and Public Holidays
Admission is free

× RMIT DESIGN ARCHIVES

By appointment. The RMIT Design Archives is located on the western side of the forecourt. Contact the Archives to make an appointment to view the collection:
rmitdesignarchives@rmit.edu.au

× DISCLAIMER

RMIT University has made every effort to trace copyright holders and provide correct crediting and acknowledgements in consultation with the providers of the exhibition.