

Retrotopia | 2022

Retrotopia, the culmination of **Laura MITCHELL'S** PhD research, aims to hold a mirror to rampant capitalism through mashup: the juxtaposition and merging of disparate elements. Figurative is spliced with abstract, oil paint sequenced with contemporary and retro-media, and street with studio techniques in this exploration of consumerism as religion past present and future.

For sale enquiries, please contact the artist directly via lcmitche@our.ecu.edu.au or
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Gallery25

Opening Event: 18 May 5pm - 7pm

To be officially opened at 5.45pm by Associate Professor **Lyndall ADAMS**
and Dr **Paul UHLMANN**

Exhibition dates: 19 May - 21 Jul 2022

ACDC Floor Talk: 11 May 2022 12.30 - 1.30pm

Gallery opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 4pm

Building 10, 2 Bradford St, Mount Lawley

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Artist Statement

Retrotopia explores the direct effects of capitalism, on the small sole proprietor—Deli owners and subsistence farmers are discarded, and their personal and societal value undermined as the capitalist impulse moved into overdrive during the Global Financial Crisis and the current COVID-19 era. These works, consisting of paintings and retro-media, aim to reveal how nostalgia, through mass-media advertising, propagates the belief that desire-driven hyper-consumerism can disguise our current dystopia. Fremantle based artist Mitchell, who was born and raised in Appalachia USA, knows first-hand how 'big' industry Capitalism exploits, and abandons whole sections of society, leaving those least able to adapt to endure in poverty and austerity. Mitchell posits consumerism as being the New Religion through mashup methods which juxtapose and merge disparate elements: figurative is spliced with abstract, street and studio techniques are dubbed with vintage and current visual technologies.

The title for this exhibition, *Retrotopia*, adopts philosopher Zygmunt Bauman's concept to explore how nostalgia, through mass-media advertising, drives our desire to consume by conflating factual with fictional elements. Nostalgia can manipulate past memories into alternate realities, and, just as in the case of the Greek sirens, lure us through the promise of pleasure into self-destructive tendencies. The use of selective memory beguiles us into believing that contemporary dilemmas would resolve if only we could recreate the fantasy of a utopic past in the present.

This disparate pairing of outmoded and current technologies embodies Bauman's transformation from solid modernity to liquid modernity: the flourishing solid modernity, a society of producers (roughly mid-20th century), transforming into and replaced by liquid modernity, a society of post-internet consumers.

Simultaneous fascination with and repulsion by rampant capitalism is reflected in the artworks through mash-up. In Mitchell's images, Deli owners and subsistence farmers are overdubbed by Megastores and post-internet capitalism, evaporating into the economic austerity of our COVID-19 era.

The works embody the artist's active engagement with existing retrosapes and creation of new mythologies in order to critique her own future anxieties, and her own desire to alleviate all discomfort through nostalgic escapism. Ultimately however, Mitchell invites the viewer to ponder their own personal and socio-political solutions in navigating liquid life, frenzied progress, marketing strategies and nostalgia epidemics.

Artist Bio

Laura Mitchell, hailing from Appalachia and anchored in Fremantle, is a contemporary artist and musician whose practice traverses these two locales. Her current practice-led PhD at

Edith Cowan University (ECU), WA investigates use of digital music mashup methods in oil painting with imagery referred to as retrosapes, a tool used in nostalgia marketing. Theoretical frameworks are synthesised from art critic-historian Hal Foster's theories on the impact of mass production-consumption cycles on art and artists and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman's sociological theories of retrotopia and the survival of solid modern producers in today's consumer-dominated liquid modernity. She holds an MFA in Visual Arts and Design from Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia, USA. Mitchell's works have been internationally exhibited and collected. As a member of A.I.R. Gallery in NYC, she completed a Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries-WA (DLGSC) supported dual artist residency in 2017, which was followed by a residency at the Fremantle Arts Centre, WA. This 2017 double residency resulted in another DLGSC supported inaugural exhibition and co-founding of Destabilising Walls artists collective. After a 2019 solo exhibition at ECU Galleries Spectrum Project Space (SPS), Mitchell was one of three artist-researchers to nationally receive a Postgraduate Travel Bursary to present at ACUADS 2019 conference at RMIT University and Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Victoria.

Contact:

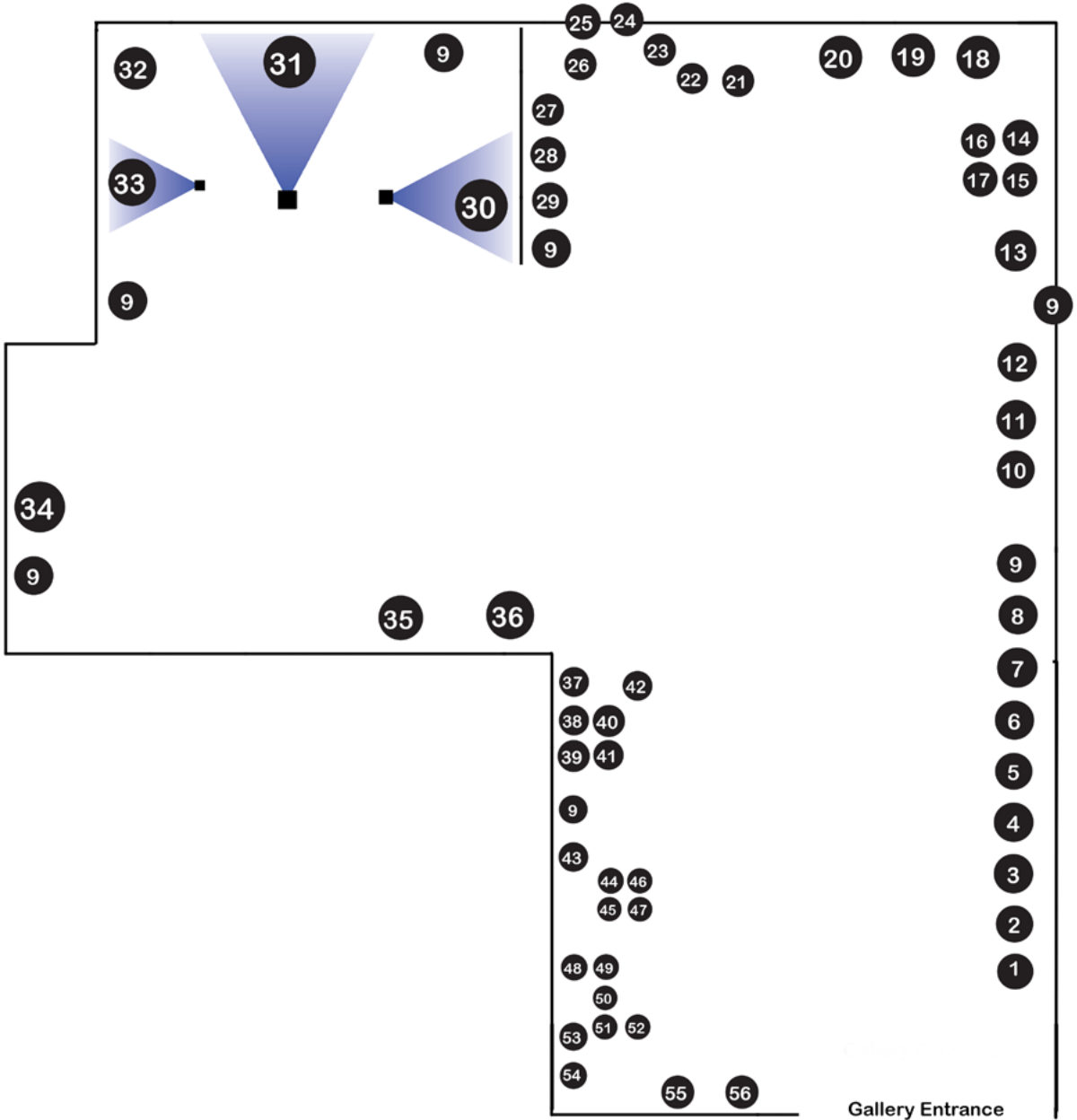
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Gallery map



- 1 **Chevette Red Monochrome**, 2022, Aerosol and oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 2 **Macbeth's – gloaming**, 2019, Oil and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 3 **Melody Inn 1: Abandoned**, 2020, Resin-based enamel aerosol, oil and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 4 **Signless Signage 1**, Aluminium, 300 x 300mm, POA
- 5 **Melody Inn 2: Still Furnished, Now Abandoned**, 2019, Oil, cold wax and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 6 **Hilton Deli Ghost Signage 1 (WA)**, 2019, Oil and mixed media on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 7 **Dirt Farmer Naturalistic, Inverse and Pixelated**, 2020, Animation: stop-frame using mobile, wooden frame, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 8 **Dirt Farmer, Worming Tobacco – The Heat of Nostalgia**, 2020, Resin-based enamel aerosol, oil and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 9 **Black Friday Shopper**, 2019, multiple aluminium composite silhouettes dispersed throughout the gallery, Dimensions variable. POA
- 10 **South Fremantle Laundrette – Going Fast**, 2019, Oil, cold wax and collage and resin-based aerosol on canvas, 300 x 300 mm, POA
- 11 **Church of Economic Growth (Zed's Fish Shop, Closed, Beaconsfield, WA)**, 2022, Oil, graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 12 **The Father, the Son, the Holy Shop: U R Blessed Car Care (Lynchburg, VA, USA)**, 2019, Oil and graphite on 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 13 **99 Cent Store Spliced**, 2022, Oil, resin-based aerosol, interference pigment, paint marker, graphite, aquarelles on 3 canvases and aluminium, 1220 x 2480 mm. POA
- 14 **Monochrome Full Blue**, 2022, Resin-based aerosol and varnish on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 15 **Biker Church-Thrift Store (Foreclosed grocery store in Lynchburg, VA, 2008 during U.S. housing crisis)**, 2019, Oil, graphite and cold wax on canvas, 300 mm x 300 mm. POA

- 16 **No Name Deli Superseded** (Spearwood, WA), 2019, Aerosol, oil and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 17 **1971 Camaro Blue Monochrome**, 2022, Resin-based aerosol and varnish on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 18 **Abandoned Feedstore, Appamattox, VA, USA**, 2022, Oil, aerosol and interference pigment on 4 canvases, 1220 x 2285 mm. POA
- 19 **99 Cent Store Fractured**, 2022, Oil, interference pigment, paint marker, graphite, aquarelles and on 2 canvases, 1220 x 1625 mm. POA
- 20 **Dirt Farmer Worming Tobacco: The Storm of Progress**, 2022, Oil and oil pencils on canvas, 1220 x 900 mm. POA
- 21 **Monochrome Virginia Red Clay**, 2022, Resin-based aerosol, oil and varnish on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 22 **Retro Barcode Aqua**, 2019, Resin-based aerosol and oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 23 **Shopper Glitch Positive** (Westfield Mall, Booragoon, WA), 2019, Aerosol and varnish on canvas. 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 24 **Shopper Glitch Negative** (Westfield Mall, Booragoon, WA), 2019, Aerosol and varnish on canvas. 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 25 **1-2-3 Shopping Spree**, 2019, mixed media and cold wax on canvas. 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 26 **Black Friday Roller Doors**, 2021, Oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 27 **Marmion Deli 2008 R.I.P.** (East Fremantle, WA), 2019, Oilstick, oil and mixed media on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 28 **Monochrome Seafoam Pleather**, 2022, Resin-based aerosol and varnish on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 29 **Peter's Ice Cream**, 2019, Oil and aerosol on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 30 **Back 40**, 2020, 35mm slide projection, 1970s Kodak Carousel, Dimensions variable. POA
- 31 **Rich Image: Deli-Glitch**, 2019, High resolution projection, Dimensions variable. POA¹

- 32 **Signless Signage 2**, Aluminium, 1330 x 1220mm, POA
- 33 **Poor Image: Deli Ad-Glitch** (Homage to Gary Pumfrey and Carol Rudyard, works held in ECU Art Collection), 2020, Low resolution on mini budget projector, Dimensions variable. POA²
- 34 **Shopacalypse Now**, 2019, Oil and archival ink on canvas, 570mm x 998mm. POA
- 35 **Central Ave. Deli, Course of Empire**, 2019, Oil, archival ink and interference pigment on canvas, 570 x 1000mm. POA
- 36 **Melody Inn 3: What Killed It?**, Oil and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 37 **Retro Magenta Hex Code #BB5086**, 2021, aerosol on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 38 **Make Australia Great 3** (Hilton Lunch Bar, WA), 2019, Oil and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 39 **Make Australia Great 4** (Hilton Lunch Bar, WA), 2019, Oil and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 40 **Pressed Tin Glitch**, 2020, aerosol and oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 41 **Retro Stacie Has a Lend**, 2019, Oil and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 42 **Black Friday Red Guy**, 2019, Aerosol and oil on canvas, 300 x 300mm. POA
- 43 **Fremantle Council Proposal: Sell Freo Ports**, 2019-22, Oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 44 **Signless Signage 3**, 2022, aluminium, 300 x 300mm. POA
- 45 **Black Friday Abstract**, 2019, Oil and aerosol on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 46 **Retro Barcode Lime**, 2019, Resin-based aerosol and oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 47 **Fremantle Council Proposal: Boat Parking Lot on South Beach**, 2019-22, Oil, whitening and pearlescent pigment powder on canvas. 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 48 **Macbeth's – glare**, 2019, Oil and graphite on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA
- 49 **Shut Up and Dance With Me**, 2019, Oil, mixed media and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

50

Can She Inspire Confidence AND Make Good Mac & Cheese?, 2019, Oil and mixed media on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

51

Clive Palmer Make Australia Great 1 (Hilton Lunch Bar, WA), 2019–22, Oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

52

The Father, the Son (Sold), 2019 Oil, mixed media and cold wax on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

53

Make Australia Great 2 (Hilton Lunch Bar, WA), 2019–22, Oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

54

Hilton Deli Clive Palmer Billboard, 2022, Oil, graphite and mixed media on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA

55

Theodor W. Adorno meets Zygmunt Bauman in the shopping mall, 2019, Oil, archival ink and interference pigment on canvas. 300 x 300 mm. POA

56

Hilton Deli Ghost Signage 2 (WA), 2019, Oilstick and oil on canvas, 300 x 300 mm. POA