

JAMES
DRINKWATER



PETER
GARDINER



BRETT
MCMAHON



DAMIEN MINTON: The idea of this exhibition started when I was reading the book by New York based musician David Byrne, well known for his role in the band Talking Heads.

Early in the book, *How Music Works*, Byrne articulates how the environment musicians find themselves in helps shape and refine their creative output. They are responding and reacting not only to the social and cultural moment, but also the physical spaces that are available to them at the time.

In the early days Talking Heads performed at the now infamous New York club, CBGB. It was a small bar ... "there was little reverberation in those spaces and they weren't that big ... so the groove could be strong and up front. The details of one's music would be heard, and given the size of the place, intimate gestures and expressions would be seen and appreciated as well, at least from the waist up".

With that in mind it is interesting to transpose the same principle to the physical spaces artists currently engage with in order to create and nurture their practice. Not so much the space they perform in—galleries—but the space where they are working, the studio. The space where they are productive, converting a creative notion into a tangible form.

Everyone is fascinated with an artist studio, the romantic notion of a pool of creative unbridled expression. Yet the hard yards of creation, destruction and resolution are determined in these spaces.

This exhibition *WORKING: NEWCASTLE* presents three new bodies of work by three contemporary artists who are WORKING in Newcastle.

IMAGE INSIDE LEFT : **James Drinkwater** *Study of Memory 6* 2012, mixed media assemblage, 43 x 40 cm

IMAGE INSIDE CENTRE : **Peter Gardiner** portrait plates 2013, candle soot and oil on ceramic, various sizes

IMAGE INSIDE RIGHT : **Brett McMahon** *Colony* 2011-2013, oil and enamel on paper, 154 x 103 cm

PORTRAITS OF THE ARTISTS by **SIMONE DARCY**

IMAGE FRONT COVER : **Brett McMahon** *Pod 1* 2013, oil and enamel on linen, 58 cm diameter

SIMONE DARCY is a photomedia artist and casual lecturer at the University of Newcastle. Her portrait of well-known Newcastle-based artists Ahn Wells and the late Peter Speight (Ahn & Pete, The Bus Stop Project) was selected for exhibition in the National Portrait Prize 2013 at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra. Darcy's work varies from reportage to constructed tableau.



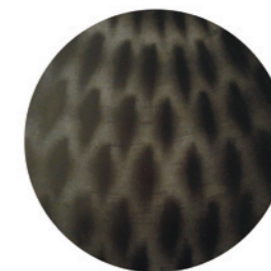
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OPEN Wednesdays – Fridays 10am – 5pm, Saturdays 12 – 4pm or by appointment

WORKING: NEWCASTLE

James Drinkwater | Peter Gardiner | Brett McMahon



with a photo essay of the artists by
Simone Darcy
exhibition curated by
Damien Minton

The University Gallery 3 – 20 July 2013

JAMES DRINKWATER:

[My studio is] a new space for me in an old glass factory in the West End of Newcastle. It's a monumental but run down Art Deco building and I'm in this great big Mezzanine/loft at the back of the property. It's a big dusty old space with high ceilings, untreated hardwood floors and big barn doors that open down onto a lane. I had to clean out all these relics and family heirlooms which took a few days and then a few more to move my junk in. All that junk, hardwood, glass and dust is just glorious.



I've moved around quite a lot in the last few years which has meant that I have worked in many different spaces and each space has definitely informed that body of work. When I am between studios I make site specific work. The aesthetic and scale of the space I'm in now means I can be quite ambitious while smaller spaces in the past have required a more sensitive approach and controlled orientation. I even like the idea of having not having a studio as such and simply use a city as your space and respond to that energy and space, you know, like a major installation.

Serendipity always seems to play its part. I met my current landlord in the cafe that I make coffee at... we now have a kind of patron/artist deal where I pay for the space with artwork. You must be inventive.

Newcastle is such a tramp, I love it. It has this fantastic gritty and tough side with this die hard little scene. I find it so appealing to live and work here. I spent quite a bit of time between Leipzig and Berlin and found it to be so aligned with the Newcastle and Sydney thing. You know Berlin is this big super fabulous art city but in reality, slightly further east in Leipzig is where I found a far more authentic and strong scene. It's easy in Sydney, like Berlin, to get caught up in all that art world crap, it's expensive and everybody is screwing everybody to get somewhere... [artists] should just be in their studio focussing on making meaningful work. It's always been those regional cities where great art and movements have come out of. It makes perfect sense to be here.

PETER GARDINER: I live with my studio. It's attached to my house. In the house I live with my family. A family man, in every sense of the word. It's a domestic scene unremarkable from countless others in Newcastle. It's an important part of who I am. It's about love and life. Ten yards away, in my studio, I am a different Peter, I am the other Peter. I can change from one to the other with ease. It's an important part of who I am.



BRETT McMAHON: My current studio in Newcastle is a space that I have leased for the past 5 years. In Sydney, I had some great spaces in old rag trade buildings in Surry Hills, but they all required me to mediate my activity in regards to noise, process, scale of work.

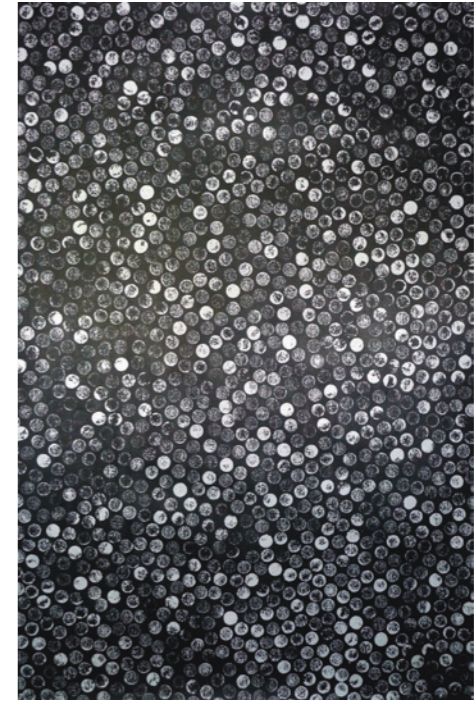
The current space is located in an industrial estate so there is the freedom to work whenever I need, run equipment, make noise and mess.

It is also surrounded by other businesses, and their activities are useful for supplying materials and expertise or for subject matter.

I grew up in Newcastle with my father, uncles and grandfathers' all working in industry, so my thoughts and emotions related to making things are connected to that environment. I feel most comfortable positioning my activity in an industrial area.

The space also gives me the scope to work on whatever scale I need and to have several projects or processes going on at the same time.

Paintings can be pinned to the flat concrete walls to be painted, sprayed, scraped and sanded while paper works can be worked on in a separate area. Things that need to dry and stay clean can be moved and not stop work on other pieces.



The orchestration of the overall look of a show has always been important to me so to have the space to see how pieces work together (or don't) is really helpful.

Newcastle works well at the moment – a town of industry near to a major commercial city. Gives you the best of both and keeps you at arms length from the distractions of the city and the machinations of the art scene.

Presently, Newcastle provides me with the subject matter to feed my work and the time and space to think and feel. Other projects and places will become important in the future and the requirements of my studio practise will play a big part in where they take place and how successful the resulting work will be.