



Nimbostratus

30 September - 16 December 2023

Bundoora Homestead Art Centre

Aleshanee Faery, Larissa MacFarlane,
Penny Pollard, Woz, Joanna Kiriazis, Nicole
Tsourlenes, Jane Tomlinson, Dinithi De Alwis
Samarawickrama & Leeann Preddy.

Nimbostratus clouds often form along warm weather fronts. The low, grey cloud is usually near-uniform in appearance, producing steady rain with the absence of lightening or thunder. Neither filigree and delicate nor chaotic and threatening, the cloud formations signal favourable weather for making things grow. It's an apt metaphor in the case of this exhibition.

The artists featured have been meeting and working at Nimbus studio housed in Bundoora Homestead, including the Mess Gallery, and accessible studios. The Nimbus program is facilitated by Arts Access Victoria—an organisation dedicated to providing opportunities and support for Deaf and Disabled Victorian creatives. While Nimbostratus boasts a diverse range of artists with distinct interests and political concerns, there are identifiable themes that unite them. Portraiture is one recurrent theme, often reflecting the collaborative, interlinked ways of seeing and perceiving that emerge from working together, even when focused on one's own practice. Nicole Tsourlenes clearly captures a joyous interaction between the photographer and smiling subject in her series *Julia 2023*. Similarly playful is *Fina 2023*, a figurative portrait by Woz (Warren Loorham). Depicting Nimbus facilitator Fina Po, the painting is based on a photograph taken by Tsourlenes, who is a founding member of Nimbus as well as an artist. A kind of psychological architecture appears to be at work: Po's dress is patterned with bricks echoing the background, perhaps a reflection on how people can seem built into the spaces they occupy and communities they foster.

Processes of making, and explorations of the possibilities of mediums, preoccupy many of the exhibited artists. An experimental extension of her skills as a sculptor and printmaker, Aleshanee Faery has created a series of subtle but affective paper-based works. After weaving small-scale sculptures with *lomandra longifolia* (basket grass), Faery created impressions on thick paper by running them through a printing press. The result is a delicate abstract form reliant on light and shadow—a kind of expanded drawing. This play with process resounds too in Joanna Kiriazis's paintings of abstract forms. Kiriazis, in a series of twelve works, reflects on the process as one that commonly involves uncertainty and doubt in the beginning, but—through faith in process—reveals playful and uplifting results.

Engaged in foraging for ochre and experimentation with tones and paint-making, Jane Tomlinson has created a series of abstract paintings that reveal the grain of the canvas, another layer of medium-based play. Tomlinson explains the paintings as a consideration of the layers of growth she has found in healing from trauma, though she encourages viewers to discover their own interpretations of the abstract forms and reflect on their individual relationship with the earth. In a similarly exploratory project, Dinithi Samarawickrama's series *Love of a Swan in the Garden 2023* examines storytelling and tradition, recontextualizing traditional illustration found in ancient Sri Lankan ruins and Buddhist architecture in their work filtered through their own memory and stylistic predilections in a post-humanist context.

Icons and symbols that circulate in contemporary culture are also questioned in Nimbostratus. Larissa MacFarlane's *Philately as a strategy for embracing life (and Autistic Identity) 2023* is a humorous and impactful series that incorporates found objects for political ends, using postage stamps and slogans to disassemble and examine iconic representation and national narratives. With comparable wit and impact, Penny Pollard's practice uses small-scale sculpture to explore the Deaf experience. *What? 2023* is a collated set of dangling ear impressions with the word "what" repeated throughout—a humorous kind of concrete poetry.

Both Fiona Taylor's and Leeann Preddy's work responds to Australian nature and iconography. Preddy, who takes inspiration from images found in Australian photography and art history books, depicts Australian landscapes and trees, although her works are imbued also with personal experience. Preddy's *The Old Gum Tree 2023*, a painting of a stalwart gum tree, has a dreamlike quality while simultaneously boasting the specificity of a well-trained eye for detail. Taylor's animated cockatoo *Cockadoododo 2023* brings an iconic Australian native bird to life. In perpetual flight, it might be a kind of mascot for the exhibition, embodying the studio's impetus for playfulness in motion, and in making and moving through ideas and spaces.

One of the main spaces facilitating the program behind Nimbostratus was Nebula, an innovation of Arts Access Victoria.

A particularly apposite gesture in the fraught climate of our post-Covid moment, tainted by the rising cost of living and a rental crisis, Nebula is a portable arts space, adapting to the artist's needs. The spirit of generative thinking and innovation behind Nebula harmonises with the projects that have spurred from the program. Despite the diversity of medium and method, there are striking aesthetic and conceptual confluences, evident in the shared interest in experimentation, re-evaluation and re-making, and the playfulness and wit that echoes throughout the exhibition. It is a testament to what can be achieved with access to the community and the resources that make art possible.

Essay by Tara Heffernan, a blind Australian art historian.



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Image on cover: Jo Kiriazis *Flag 2* 2023. Acrylic on paper. Courtesy the artist.