

NATASHA MATILA-SMITH

(born 1984, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand)
lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand

If I die, please delete my Soundcloud 2019

single channel digital video with sound, 07:37 mins

Courtesy the artist

Blending parody, humour and melancholy, *If I die, please delete my Soundcloud* 2019 is uniquely installed for viewing on a laptop while lying in domestic bed. Natasha Matila-Smith is a Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hine, Samoan and Pākehā woman and her contemporary art practice often employs confessional text to explore personal experiences of loneliness, and how they relate to larger socio-political structures.

If I die, please delete my Soundcloud articulates the struggles of an unidentifiable protagonist grappling with self-doubt while ‘bed rotting’—a term popularised by Gen Z to describe retreating into bed as a response to modern malaise. The installation evokes feelings of claustrophobia and disembodiment to consider how ‘bed rotting’ provides an escape from loneliness, while also perpetuating it.

POLLY BORLAND

(born 1959, Naarm/Melboure)

lives and works between Los Angeles, USA
and Naarm/Melbourne, Australia

BOD 2023

aluminium

213.4 x 148.9 x 94.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf

Straddling the alien and familiar, Polly Borland's *BOD 2023* has been informed by the artist's unique process of layering and observing materials draped over the body. From process to form, this larger-than-life figure, obscured beneath an accumulated mass, becomes a visceral metaphor for how emotions such as grief, anxiety and exhaustion are carried in the body.

Presented in dialogue with *If I die, please delete my Soundcloud* 2019 by Natasha Matila-Smith, *BOD* reads as a figure that has dissolved so fully into their bedding that body and bed have become one. Within this context, *BOD* becomes a physical manifestation of loneliness and longing, whereby the body is rendered unfamiliar by the very things meant to soothe it.

POLLY BORLAND

(born 1959, Naarm/Melboure)

lives and works between Los Angeles, USA
and Naarm/Melbourne, Australia

left to right:

Froggy 2025

Cloudy Rosa marble with polished finish

61.0 x 20.6 x 12.5 cm

Courtesy the artist and MECCA Collection, Naarm/Melbourne

Slit 2025

painted cast aluminium

61.0 x 22.0 x 18.3 cm

Courtesy the artist and MECCA Collection, Naarm/Melbourne

Toothy 2025

pigmented cast resin with polished finish

61.0 x 19.9 x 17.3 cm

Courtesy the artist and MECCA Collection, Naarm/Melbourne

BOD (Bubbles) 2023

cast aluminium with automotive paint, matte finish

62.0 x 30.0 x 16.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and MECCA Collection, Naarm/Melbourne

Bunny (resin) 2025

pigmented cast resin with polished finish

62.0 x 28.0 x 16.0 cm

Private collection, QLD

Polly Borland is known for her unmistakable and idiosyncratic visual language across both photography and sculpture. This suite of small-scale sculptures reconfigures the human form through distortion and play, probing the relationship between transformation and identity. Each figure culminates as an abstract yet bodily form—some have even been sliced through or punctured, implicating their context within them—suggestive of the contortive dance between the mind, the body and the environment that continuously shapes our emotional lives.

LUCY LIU

(born 1968, New York, USA)

lives and works in New York, USA

En Cachette 2008

acrylic on canvas

177.8 x 210.8 cm

Courtesy the artist

Multihyphenate Lucy Liu describes her decades-long contemporary art practice as like 'looking for your birthplace within yourself'. The youngest of three children raised in New York, Liu is second generation Chinese American diaspora. She uses her interdisciplinary practice to transform memories into metaphors, here turning to painting as a way to explore the sociocultural systems that shape ones identity.

A core memory for Liu is walking in on her mother as a young girl while she was changing, and the way she covered herself despite being dressed. For Liu, the gesture of opening or closing a kimono has become a recurrent symbol of the push and pull between our private and public selves. *En Cachette* 2008 (translating from French to 'Secretly') employs this symbolism alongside aspects of shunga—the Japanese tradition of erotic art—to explore the intimate relationship between emotion, desire and concealment.

LUCY LIU

(born 1968, New York, USA)

lives and works in New York, USA

centre to right:

Moi et Les Autres 2008

acrylic on canvas

177.8 x 218.4 cm

Courtesy the artist

Je suis. Envois-moi. 2008

acrylic on canvas

177.8 x 186.7 cm

Courtesy the artist

First exhibited in Paris France, *Je suis. Envois-moi.* (translating from French to 'I am. Send me. '), *Moi et Les Autres* (translating to 'Me and The Others'), and *En Cachette* (translating to 'Secretly') are from the artist's 2006–2008 *Shunga* series. Popular during Japan's Edo period (1600–1868), shunga is a form of Japanese erotic art, best known through *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Liu was first drawn to shunga for its overt expression of sexuality, a contrast to the veil of secrecy around sex and the body that she recalls growing up. Unlike the delicate details found in historical shunga, Liu's paintings of the private inner lives of fictional characters are large, gestural and expressive. Across subject and style, Liu destabilises the line between what is hidden and what is shared.

GIDEON APPAH

(born 1987, Accra, Ghana)

lives and works in Accra, Ghana

Beyond the Shadows:Gideon Appah Poetic Vision 2025

two channel video with sound

06:12 mins

Courtesy the artist and Gallery 1957

In *Beyond the shadows:Gideon Appah Poetic Vision 2025*, surfers move fluidly along the West African coastline, embodying a unique understanding of solitude not as something lacking, but as a conscious act of reflection and self-determination. Their quiet discipline in waiting for waves symbolises surrender to forces beyond human control, echoing the Akan saying, 'to human is difficult'.

Gideon Appah captures the labour of inhabiting one's body without performance, positioning the ocean as a liminal space for emotional calibration. Here, at the threshold of the land and sea, nature becomes a silent companion. Much like those who go for long, solitary hikes in the wild, the figures in Appah's work show that one can be physically alone yet still occupy a state of connection. Loneliness is transformed with nature at the threshold, inviting reflection on what it means to truly belong, first to oneself.

GIDEON APPAH

(born 1987, Accra, Ghana)

lives and works in Accra, Ghana

Boy with a bird 2023

acrylic and oil on canvas

200.0 x 150.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and Pace Gallery

Born in Accra, the capital of Ghana, Gideon Appah's painting practice often draws upon childhood memory, West African landscapes, and the textures of everyday life. Appah's paintings are informed by the Fauvist movement (c. 1905–1908), intentionally inviting subjective and emotion-forward readings of his work through his handling of colour and motifs. Moving fluidly between the personal and the symbolic; the dreamlike and the familiar, *Boy with a bird* 2023 depicts a solitary figure intently gazing at his hands with a parrot perched atop his head. In this ambiguous space between the objective and subjective, the central figure is highlighted as dually alone and not, for nature is their companion.

CALLUM MCGRATH

(born 1995, Meanjin/Brisbane)

lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

What's after this? 2026

two channel video with sound, haze, box truss

24:00 mins

Sound by Jac Meddings (AKA House Mum)

Created on Wurundjeri Country, Naarm/Melbourne

Courtesy the artist

Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

What's after this? 2026 is Callum McGrath's third and final work in a series exploring dance and counterculture scenes. Featuring an original soundscape by Jac Meddings, the two-channel video installation places the viewer within a living, breathing environment that feels both collective and subjective. By highlighting forms of mediation that dually connect and individualise—including technology, the senses and emotion—*What's after this?* highlights that there are always layers of translation, inviting the viewer to feel the pull of collective experience while remaining conscious of their own separateness.

The channel showing the animation journeys through a club environment, stopping by iconic artworks celebrated for their nuanced depictions of club culture. Featuring Mark Leckey's *Fiorucci made me hardcore* 1999 and Jeremy Shaw's *Phase shifting index* 2020, among others, McGrath highlights the legacy of dance culture and the artwork that celebrates it. Splicing together the artist's personal footage from nights out, collected over three years, the other channel evokes genuine atmosphere while canonising a specific contemporary zeitgeist with cameos from local and international creatives including Eartheater, Chuleo Club, Who Cares? and House Mum (AKA Jac Meddings).

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KELLY YU (Writer and Director)
(born 2001, Lund, Sweden)
lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Connor Williams (Producer)
Po Wei Su (Producer)
Gus Bendinelli (Cinematographer)
Annie Becker (Production Designer)
Brianna Murphy (Costume Designer)
Joseph Barton (Editor)
Alex Mansour (Original Score Composer)
Kai Scheer (Sound Design)
Fifth Atrium (Animation)
Dennis Dun (Lead actor)
Ava Capri (Lead Actor)

Endling 2024

short film
15:00 mins
Courtesy Kelly Yu

The speculative-fiction and comedy-forward short film *Endling* 2024, follows the story of 'Pao Pao', the last goldfish on earth who is tended to by a lone, devoted caretaker. 'Endlings', also known as 'terminarchs', are animals who are the last of their species, and Kelly Yu explores this subject by blending genres, and embracing absurd and satirical devices to delve into broader themes of isolation and companionship.

Endling stylistically draws upon the documentary genre and is here presented as a cozy home-viewing-screened on a vintage television and accompanied by a classic Chesterfield couch with a fish tank containing a single, wide-eyed goldfish nearby. This installation parodies the passive ways we consume media, inviting reflection on not only the fate of the goldfish but also the extent of humanity's vulnerability and values.

The film was made possible with the support of Indeed, Hillman Grad Productions, and 271 Films.

PATRICK POUND

(born 1962, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand)
lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

The museum of loneliness 2026

mixed media: found objects, photographs and ephemera
site specific installation

Created on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Boonwurrung Country
and Bunurong Country

Courtesy the artist, STATION, Naarm/Melbourne, and
Darren Knight Gallery, Gadigal/Sydney

Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

Tending toward accumulation and stillness, Patrick Pound's practice asks questions such as; *When a 'thing' is removed from its original context, what meanings stay with it?* and *What do our collections of 'stuff' say about us?* By way of answers, the work suggests loneliness is not a singular experience or feeling, but something fragmented and contradictory, yet familiar.

A compulsive collector, Pound's practice draws on his ever-growing archive of objects—or, rather, 'things'—left behind. Gathering and carefully arranging photographs and found objects into evocative configurations, he makes visible the passages of time, distance and memory that shape our lives.

The museum of loneliness 2026 is a site-specific commission that contemplates how loneliness moves through objects. For the artist, loneliness is not found in a dramatic absence, but in the quiet persistence of ordinary things: present, unremarkable, yet fundamental to reconciling our inner and outer worlds. As Pound describes, *'The museum of loneliness is full of the tragicomic bric-a-brac of life and loneliness. From ceramics to sheet music, it captures en masse the sweet melancholy of remnant things'*.

NICK MULLALY
(born 1996, Naarm/Melbourne)
lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

left to right:
Sircuit 2026
oil on canvas
138.0 x 163.0 cm

Miscellania 2026
oil on canvas
138.0 x 163.0 cm

The Peel 2026
oil on canvas
138.0 x 163.0 cm

All works created on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Naarm/Melbourne
Courtesy the artist
Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

The Peel, Sircuit, and Miscellania are three iconic Melbourne clubs where painter, Nick Mullaly has found solidarity on the dance floor. While clubs are at times critiqued for enabling hedonism, Mullaly's celebratory works explore how these gathering spaces can alleviate loneliness and shame, particularly in a world where there is not total acceptance and equality for LGBTIQA+ communities.

Mullaly's luminous depictions from within and outside the clubs, elevates these gathering spaces to an almost spiritual realm. By flattening pictorial depth and using windows and frames to divide the picture plane, Mullaly suspends both his figures and the viewer's perspective between spaces—poetically together yet apart, poised on a threshold of transformation. These sensibilities highlight the role of these spaces in enabling thriving expressions of culture, community, and inclusive value systems.

NICK MULLALY
(born 1996, Naarm/Melbourne)
lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

clockwise, from top left:

Toss 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

Second wind 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

Payment 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

Peering 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

Key apparition 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

Microphone 2026

oil on canvas
36.0 x 46.5 cm

All works created on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Naarm/Melbourne
Courtesy the artist
Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

In the wake of a breakup and the isolation of COVID-19 lockdowns, Nick Mullaly found community and connection in the Melbourne club scene. In developing this new commission, the artist reflected on memories when he began resisting a routine of staying home to instead venture out to venues such as The Peel, Sircuit, and Miscellania with friends or alone. In the face of the unknown, the safety of queer clubs restored his confidence and sense of hope, affirming the value in freedom of expression, and taking a chance on the unknown and new connections. True to his experience, this series of intimately scaled paintings do not dwell on the peak of the party, rather the potential of quieter, unexpected moments.

SETH BROWN

(born 1988 Chico, CA, USA)

lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Frank 2024

mixed media: Footy Frank hotdog, mobile device, AI-generated imagery, mustard bottle, hobby motor

15.2 x 20.3 x 30.5 cm (approx.)

Courtesy the artist

At once whimsical and tragic, Seth Brown's *Frank* 2024 humorously parodies our behaviour online. Presenting the viewer with a hot dog sausage that scrolls on an iPhone, endlessly searching for its perfect piece of bread, Brown points to the promise of fulfilment perpetually offered—but never quite delivered—by the digital world at our fingertips.

Frank anthropomorphises an automaton to highlight the absurdity of contemporary life. Brown wryly describes the cyclical actions represented in the work; 'The feed replenishes itself; the motion persists. Nothing responds'.

Caught in a futile, Sisyphean quest for connection, *Frank* embodies the paradox of our digital age, where the tools meant to connect us often deepen feelings of isolation. Here, loneliness is linked to a sense of failure and fear, shaped by what may, or may not, come.

MELISSA NGUYEN

(born 2000, Tandanya/Adelaide)

lives and works in Naarm/Melbourne

A letter to my mother; A letter to your mother 2026

rabbit skin glue on canvas

3 diptychs, 250.0 x 175.0 cm each

Created on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country, Naarm/Melbourne

Courtesy the artist

Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

Sourcing found family photographs from public archives, Melissa Nguyen intuitively selects scenes of intimacy, leisure, and joy, and through painting conflates these images with memories inherited from her parents. Nguyen is Vietnamese Australian diaspora and her new commission, *A letter to my mother; A letter to your mother 2026* deftly moves between personal and universal experiences of displacement, memory and belonging.

Nguyen is compelled by the absence of family photographs of her mother's life before she came to Australia. The only image she has of her mother from that time is from the 1970s when she was between twelve and fourteen years old in Indonesia at the Galang Island Refugee Camp after fleeing Vietnam. Painting with rabbit-skin glue on canvas, Nguyen's three diptychs convey faint images of lost or nearly lost memories. The painted impressions seem to ask the viewer to spend time with them, revealing themselves gradually, as a visual analogy for the embodied process of intergenerational knowledge sharing.

KAYLA MATTES

(born 1989, Los Angeles County, USA)

lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Lonely Planet 2025–2026

handwoven cotton, wool (hand-dyed), mohair, faux fur, silk,
acrylic, polyester, beads

130.0 x 655.0 cm (approx.)

Courtesy the artist

Supported in part by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts
Emergency Grant

Commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art,
Naarm/Melbourne, 2026

Kayla Mattes' new commission *Lonely Planet 2025–2026* invites the viewer to read the great document of our contemporary moment—the internet. The nearly seven-metre tapestry unfolds like a horizontal tablet of contemporary hieroglyphs that the artist describes as 'a timeline or visual scroll, leading the viewer through congested scenes of digital interactions: ghosted conversations, infinite scrolling, curated personas, and the dopamine loops of likes, shares, and notifications'.

By weaving screen culture into thread, Mattes juxtaposes the handmade with mass media, capturing the tensions between the playful and the tragic, the novel and the enduring, and the shifting nature of meaning itself.

Each section of *Lonely Planet* is densely layered with symbols from a shared online language, blending human feelings with internet culture. Tarot cards like the Hermit and the Five of Cups, symbols of loss and regret, coexist with comical symbols, such as a scale of 'Hangryness' and an upside-down American flag gif. Notable 2026 references include Punch the Monkey, lovingly rendered with tufted hair, and the nihilistic penguin meme, which came to be known on the internet as 'But why?'