

## RACHEL COAD

Rachel came to Perth Galleries in 2005 following a disastrous experience with the first gallery she exhibited with, resulting in legal proceedings in which she was rightfully victorious. My first impression of her was a diminutive figure with lovely big eyes, seemingly so quiet, hesitant and almost shy. Although I was aware of her work I hadn't actually viewed it in person. The first time I saw it I couldn't reconcile this small person in front of me with such huge, strong works... there was nothing timid about them, they were 'in your face', strong bold colours, big figures... commanding attention. They weren't hesitant or tentative and nor was the artist, these works were slightly abstract and performance based. From this time until her first solo show with me, *Clusters* in 2007, I was privileged to watch her work mature and strengthen. It had taken on a new purpose and Rachel was in charge of this new direction.

*Clusters* was a powerful introduction of the artist and her works to an art 'savvy' audience at Perth Galleries.

Her next exhibition was in London at Gallery 27 in 2009. The exhibition was of faces... very large faces, of seven young expat Australians that she met during a six-week stay in London. The large-scale works were accompanied by quotes and the stories of the seven Australians talking of their lives while travelling and living overseas. The paintings merge with the stories and as David Bromfield so eloquently said, "this is indeed portraiture, the full presence of a person in an unending flow of dialogue."

In 2010 Rachel was one of nine applicants selected out of dozens to attend the prestigious Studio Escalier in Paris for their Winter at the Louvre Drawing Program, this experience resulted in more measured drawing of her subjects and ultimately reinforced her work even further.

*Legacy* her next solo show with me was also in 2010. There was an added sophistication to these works as well as a greater sense of mystery... who were these people, where did they come from, how was the character in their faces formed? This was a wonderful and well-received exhibition.

*Scramble* was Perth Galleries last exhibition of Rachel's work, held in 2012 just before the gallery closed, and it was a high note to end on... who could forget the massive six metre long Harrier Jet viewed through the three windows of the façade of the gallery. It was like a machine out of place contained in a viewing case. Quite fantastic!

Rachel continues to implant herself and her passion in her work... at times hauntingly beautiful, ethereal, yet also gutsy and strong... the artist and her work... inseparable.

Norah Ohrt  
Andalucia, Spain. May 2016

## RACHEL COAD

born 1971, Western Australia

### EDUCATION

2010 Studio Escalier, Paris, Winter at the Louvre drawing program  
2009 Propel Youth Arts Mentor  
1994-03 Illustrator and designer, The West Australian Newspaper  
5-year Residency at Customs House, Fremantle  
1989-91 Diploma in Art and Design, WA Met. School of Art and Design

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 *RETROspective*, Holmes à Court Gallery at Vasse Felix, Margaret River  
2015 *District*, Gallerysmith, VIC  
2014 *Juncture*, Gallerysmith, VIC  
2012 *Scramble*, Perth Galleries, WA  
*Frontier*, Gallerysmith, VIC  
2011 *New Work*, ROA Gallery, London  
2010 *New Paintings*, Gunyulgup Galleries, WA  
*Legacy*, Perth Galleries, WA  
2009 *Pack*, Gallery 27, London  
2008 Gunyulgup Galleries, WA  
2007 *Clusters*, Perth Galleries, WA  
2006 *Narrative*, Gunyulgup Galleries, WA  
2005 King St, Perth, WA  
2004 Murray St, Perth, WA

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS (including ART PRIZES & AWARDS)

2016 Shirley Hannan National Portrait Award - finalist  
2015 Doug Moran Prize - semi-finalist  
Black Swan Prize for Portraiture - finalist  
Bankwest Art Prize - finalist

2013 Holmes à Court Gallery, *The Art of Sound*, with the National Film and Sound Archive, WA  
Bankwest Art Prize - finalist and winner of People's Choice Award  
Albany Art Prize, - finalist  
2012 Gallerysmith, *Threehundredandthirty*, VIC  
Perth Galleries, WA  
2011 ROA Gallery, London  
Artitude open category - winner 2010  
Wagner Art Gallery, NSW  
Melbourne Art Fair, Perth Galleries  
2010 Holmes à Court Gallery, *Ten*, WA  
2007 Customs House open studio, WA  
*Mine Own Executioner*, Mundaring Arts Centre, WA  
Metro 5 Art Award - finalist Vic  
Perth Galleries, WA  
Metro 5 Art Award - finalist  
2004 Cromwell Art Prize - finalist  
2003 Australian Journalism Association - Print graphics prize  
Katanning Art Prize - Highly commended  
Walkley Award - nominated for 'artwork'  
1997

### COLLECTIONS

Janet Holmes à Court Collection  
Cromwell Collection  
Santa Maria College Collection  
Private collections: Australia, Holland, Hong Kong, Singapore, USA, UK and Japan

### Acknowledgements - Thanks to the following for their contribution to this project

Janet Holmes à Court  
Paul and Zara Holmes à Court  
Rachel Coad  
Sharon Tassicker  
Elsie Metcalf  
Marita Smith, Gallerysmith. Rachel Coad is represented by Gallerysmith, Melbourne  
Norah Ohrt (Former Perth Galleries and former Bonhams Representative of WA)  
Clare McFarlane  
Megan Schlipalius  
Peter Usher  
Andrew and Lorraine Coad  
John and Gloria McMahon  
Chris Ryder  
Stephen Nicholls Photography  
Vasse Felix Staff

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Cover image: *Tornado GR4*, 2012, oil on linen, 164 x 386 cm



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Gallery Hours: 10am to 5pm, 7 days a week



GALLERYSMITH

RACHEL COAD  
**RETRO**spective

29 May - 18 September 2016

## RACHEL COAD AND THE ART OF ELEVATED EMOTION

On a shelf in my small library are two leather-bound volumes of Englishman John Ruskin's seminal works, *Modern Painters I* and *Modern Painters II*. These small and elegantly bound books, complete with gold leaf embossing and gilt-edged pages, were an exciting second-hand bookstore discovery in the late 1980s for a student of art history. At night in my university college room, I would sometimes curl up on my bed, with the insufficient glow from a bedlamp perched over my shoulder, and take in the formally composed yet conversational tone of the revered art critic of the 19th century. Though written largely as a treatise on the landscape genre, and in particular as a validation of the contemporary works of JMW Turner, the chapter titles within *Modern Painters* refer to the underlying principles of modern painting; Ideas of Power, Ideas of Imitation, Ideas of Truth, Ideas of Beauty.

When I think of Rachel Coad's paintings, my thoughts turn to the modern paintings to which Ruskin refers – Turner's treacherous seas, his mighty storms, his luminous sunsets - power, truth and beauty. Coad's works possess these qualities too, albeit in an entirely different way. Their strength and vitality transport me to another place, another time. While contemporary painting nowadays often has an entirely different agenda, the long traditions of oil on canvas and its historical obligation to capture the essence of life in one image is still relevant for many artists, Coad among them.

Coming from the east coast, my initial encounter with the work of Rachel Coad was relatively recent. In 2010, amid a cacophony of competing artworks that were exhibited at the Royal Exhibition Building as part of Melbourne Art Fair, Coad's work captured my attention. Four head portraits, generously scaled and sepia toned, were exhibited by Norah Ohrt from Perth Galleries. Each painting was a striking depiction of a boy on the cusp of adolescence. The faces were filled with subtle tensions; youthful yet wise, unadulterated yet tainted, innocent yet worldly. To describe these works as ethereal, beautiful or compelling may seem ingenuous in the highly-intellectualised art critique of the 21st century, but ethereal, beautiful and compelling is precisely what they were.

Long after the art fair had been packed down and the memory of the event receded, Coad's images remained firmly in the front of my mind. They pulsed back and forth, beckoning my attention.

To me, that resonance is a clear marker of good art. I knew instinctively that if Rachel Coad's paintings made me feel this way, others were likely to have a similar reaction, so I contacted the artist and we commenced a professional relationship in 2012.

Since she dedicated herself to the studio full-time, Coad's practice has steadily matured. Figuration offers a vehicle for her to delve

into existentialism, and the engagement of viewer to subject is key to the success of her work. Colour, a tool used by most artists to communicate emotion, is reduced to tonal shifts in Coad's paintings to eliminate distraction and retain the focus squarely on her subject. This approach, though intuitive for the artist, is risky, as it creates a conducive environment for closer scrutiny of the work. Coad confronts this challenge by producing subjective works with emotionally driven narratives.

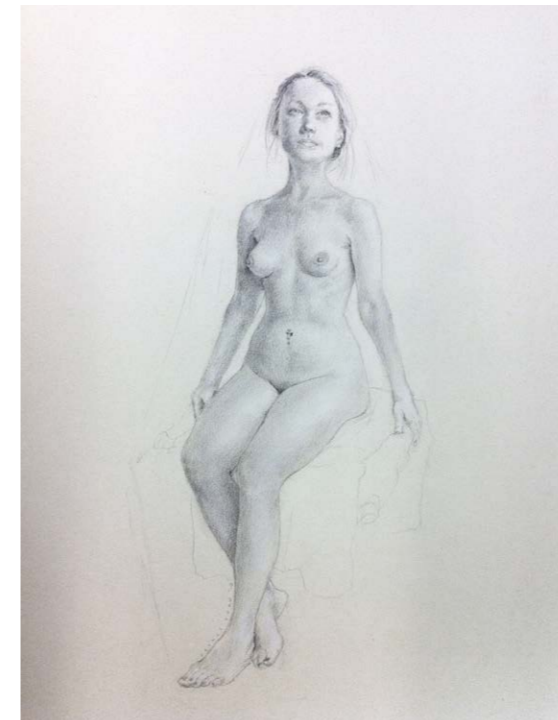
Coad has produced three solo exhibitions in the six years that I have worked with her. The first, *Frontier*, depicted a series of female figure studies in various states of poise and activity (one of which is included in this exhibition). Her sitter, a local Fremantle girl, undertook a number of instructed actions to enable Coad to fully understand the dynamism of movement and gesture when human physiology is pushed to the limit. The collection of finished works read like a series of super 8 frames around the gallery walls where each work flowed onto the next and referred back to the last. These dynamic figurative works were juxtaposed with two monumental paintings of fighter jets (also exhibited here), satisfying the artist's long held desire to paint objects which embody masculine power and domination while drawing attention to the gender inequity that permeates contemporary society.

Coad's subsequent series, *Juncture*, directed its attention away from gestural movement to focus on facial expression. These works examined transient expressions unintentionally conveyed during intense conversation, resulting in rich and sensitive works. Her most recent exhibition, *District*, unpacked some of the nostalgia spawned from old photographs. For this series, Coad painted a series of larger-than-life full portraits of figures which she isolated from group snapshots taken in the wheat belt of Western Australia in the 1950s. One painting in particular, with the obtuse title *Opening of the Water Fountain*, depicts a middle-aged man wearing a collared shirt, tie and knitted vest under a trenchcoat and fedora. This work elicited a strong emotional response from several gallery visitors who remembered their own fathers and grandfathers presenting themselves in this way. By far my favourite body of work to date, *District* firmly connects with ideas of power, imitation, truth, and beauty in painting. In Ruskin's words "Let then every picture be painted with the earnest intention of impressing on the spectator some elevated emotion..." Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, (third edition), 1900, Volume I, Part II, page 450.

**Marita Smith**  
Director, Gallerysmith, Melbourne



George (detail), 2015, oil on linen, 185 x 154 cm



Lucy III, Studio Escalier, Winter at the Louvre, 2010, pencil on paper, 70 x 53 cm



Images from Rachel Coad's studio

## RACHEL COAD – LIST OF WORKS

*Conversation*, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 101 x 178 cm. Private Collection.

*Megan*, 2005, oil on linen, 54 x 76 cm. Private Collection.

*Mixture II*, 2007, oil on linen, 101 x 183 cm. Janet Holmes à Court Collection.

*Notting Hill Carnival (Lucy)*, 2009, oil, paper and pencil on canvas, 195 x 280 cm. Private Collection.

*Lucy I, Studio Escalier, Winter at the Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 70 x 53 cm. Private Collection.

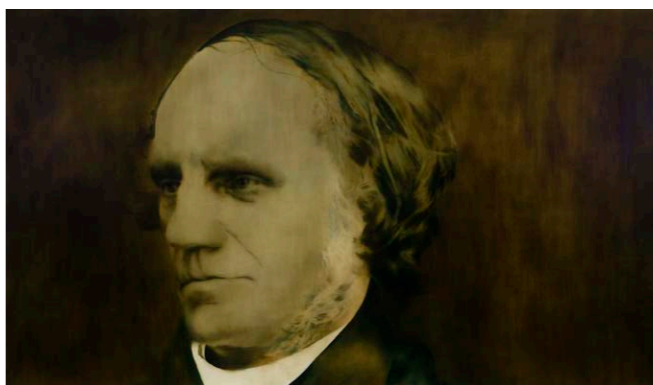
*Lucy II, Studio Escalier, Winter at the Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 70 x 53 cm. Private Collection.

*Lucy III, Studio Escalier, Winter at the Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 70 x 53 cm. Private Collection.

*Working study I (of Caffieri sculpture) The Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 45 x 54 cm. Private Collection.

*Working study II (of Coustou sculpture) The Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 45 x 54 cm. Private Collection.

*Lucy portrait, Studio Escalier, Winter at the Louvre*, 2010, pencil on paper, 65 x 52 cm. Private Collection.



Untitled, 2010, oil on linen, 120 x 213 cm

*Untitled*, 2010, oil on linen, 120 x 213 cm. Private Collection.

*Untitled VII*, 2010, oil on linen, 167 x 167 cm. Private Collection.

*Untitled II*, 2010, oil on linen, 122 x 122 cm. Private Collection.

*Tornado GR4*, 2012, oil on linen, 164 x 386 cm.

*Harrier Jump Jet*, 2012, oil on linen, 164 x 392 cm. Private Collection.

*Frontier*, 2012, oil on linen, 101 x 183 cm. Janet Holmes à Court Collection.

*George*, 2015, oil on linen, 185 x 154 cm.

*Grace*, 2015, oil on linen, 230 x 140 cm.

*Section*, 2015, oil on linen, 202 x 160 cm.

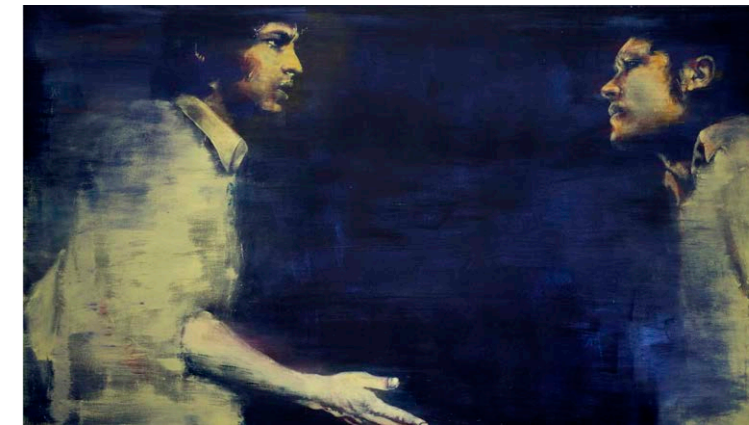
*Place*, 2015, oil on linen, 187 x 175 cm.

*Pingaring, 1952*, 2015, oil on linen, 275 x 156 cm.

*Opening of the Water Fountain*, 2015, oil on linen, 215 x 150 cm.

*Janet Holmes à Court*, 2015, oil and pencil on linen, 200 x 285cm. Janet Holmes à Court Collection.

*Bind*, 2016, oil on linen, 175 x 230 cm.



Conversation, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 101 x 178 cm



Notting Hill Carnival (Lucy), 2009, oil, paper and pencil on canvas, 195 x 280 cm



Frontier, 2012, oil on linen, 101 x 183 cm