



Juan Ford, *Ghostbusted Gum*, 2011, oil on linen, 107.0 x 92.0 cm. The Local Collection. Image courtesy of the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne.

Review

The Medium Is the Message

[by Harriet Kate Morgan](#) | Posted 06 May 2014

Curated by Michael Brennan, *The Medium Is the Message* effectively reinstates the living medium of painting, yet again contesting the never-ending doubt and long-rumoured

possibility that the ancient approach is in fact dead. In the exhibition's showcase of heavyweight realist painters Amanda Marburg, Chris Bond, Eolo Paul Bottaro, Juan Ford, Sam Leach and Victoria Reichelt, carefully selected works engage with the idea of re-presenting and reframing everyday objects and scenes, rethinking the abstract canon along with realism and the hyperreal.

This places the artists at a contemporary apex, charged with redefining painting's trajectory, while contextualising it within the histor(ies) they obsess over and continuing to declare the medium's existence and enduring relevance.

The featured artists all use realism as a mode of production, albeit some more humourously than others. Including works by Leach, Marburg, Bottaro and Ford, Brennan strikes a much-needed balance between humour and serious contemplation in the gallery's main room. Given LUMA's spatial constraints, it should also be noted how much, curatorially, he succinctly achieves.

Where Marburg's signature depiction of manipulated plasticine facetiously contemporises the idea of realism, it also counteracts Leach's beautiful, heavy and purposefully fastidious, purposefully antiquated wall of historically reflective high-realism; Ford's hyperreal display of nature and Bottaro's caricaturally photorealistic scene unfolding outside the National Gallery of Victoria were also thrown in to relief by Marburg's work.

What immediately stands out, apart from the labour involved in each work, is Brennan's emphasis on layered meanings and the almost overwhelming amount of thought devoted to the curatorial placement of the works. Such thoughts are primarily prompted by Reichelt's photorealistic paintings of shelves filed with art books that, back in the entrance room, greet the viewer. Containing household commonalities such as past Melbourne Art Fair catalogues and Phaidon's ever-popular coffee-table tome *The Art Book*, Reichelt's paintings imitate the everyday, reflecting the idiom of research and the forever self-reflexive history of painting.

Where Reichelt's books open the exhibition, Chris Bond's close it. Deliberately separated from the other works in the main gallery, his strong and quietly formal works wittily reference the archetypal great male artist, epitomised here by Jackson Pollock, to classify and demonstrate the position painting is in today. Named for a vigorous and vibrant pigment the master was apt to use, Bond's *Phthalo Blue*, 2012, is an almost indiscernible recreation of a ubiquitous monograph on the abstract expressionist. Bond's simulacrum inversely mirrors and defies Pollock's own definition of the medium itself and the idea that painting is in fact not dead but forever forming, developing and reflecting: "New needs need new techniques. And the modern artists have found new ways and new means of making their statements... the modern painter cannot express this age, the airplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture."

[The Medium Is the Message](#)

Amanda Marburg, Chris Bond, Eolo Paul Bottaro, Juan Ford, Sam Leach and Victoria Reichelt.

Curated by Michael Brennan.

[La Trobe University Museum of Art | LUMA](#)

30 April – 27 June



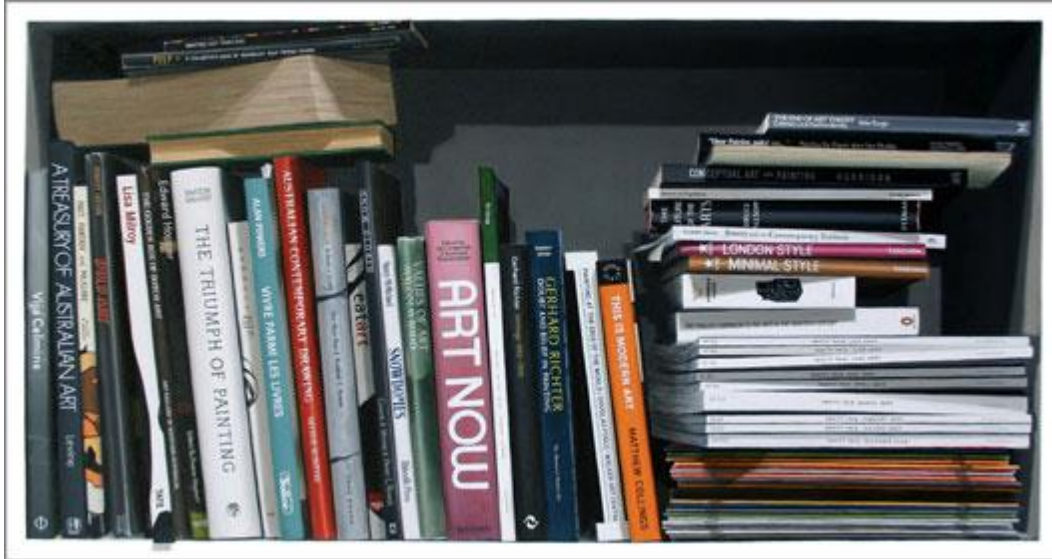
Amanda Marburg, *17*, 2013, oil on linen, 100.0 x 80.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne



Eolo Paul Bottaro, *Pactolus*, 2011; oil, egg tempera and gold leaf on linen; 212.0 x 347.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne.



Sam Leach, *Happy Beast on Peregrine*, 2012, oil on wood, 80.0 x 80.0 cm. Private Collection. Image courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf.



Victoria Reichelt, *Formless*, 2008, oil on canvas, 44.0 x 83.0 cm. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne.



Chris Bond, *Phthalo Blue*, 2012; oil on linen, canvas, card and MDF; 21.6 x 14.9 x 1.9 cm. La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2013. Image courtesy of the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

- See more at: <http://artguide.com.au/articles-page/show/the-medium-is-the-message-2/#sthash.fzh8KO3o.dpuf>