

trouble


[About](#) [Latest Issue](#) [Issues](#) [Listings](#) [Articles](#) [潮波 Trouble](#) [Contact](#)

To search type and hit enter...

Featured Articles

Creatures Great & Small



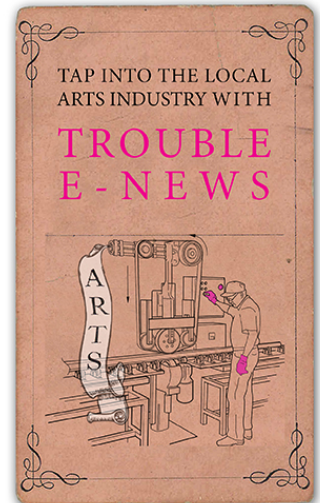
Animal Kingdom

Inga Walton

As part of the annual the 'House of Ideas' series at The Johnston Collection, *Animal Kingdom* (until 19 September, 2017), positions the work of seven contemporary artists alongside those pieces of a similar theme drawn from the current holdings. "The series makes us think about the Collection's current relevancy and how we can provide context and meaning with the intervention of new works. We desire that the exhibition will take us to new places based on old worlds, while challenging assumptions about what exhibition-houses can do", says Director Louis Le Vaillant.

Fittingly, *Animal Kingdom* was inspired by a new acquisition, purchased with funds donated by the late Nina Stanton, former Director of The Johnston Collection (2000-08). A set of Derby porcelain *Figures (Four Quarters of the Globe)* (c.1780), depict children as idealised personifications of Africa, America, Asia and Europe, accompanied by their respective mascots: a lion, an alligator, a camel, and a bull. Discovering new ways of interpreting the over 1,400 objects that currently comprise the collection, and uncovering new modes of engagement, is one of the curatorial challenges Le Vaillant most enjoys. "How could we, through historical objects, traditional and contemporary works by artists, seek out, bring together and talk about representations of and relationships we have with animals which have continued to inspire and inform us over time. Then we went about discovering a whole animal kingdom within the four walls of The Johnston Collection", he explains. The exhibition, co-curated by Dorothy Morgan (who selected the embroiderers), brings together the work of Kate Rohde, Troy Emery, Julia deVille, Vipoo Srivilasa, Alison Cole, Lesley Uren, OAM, and Yvonne Walton, (no relation).

SPONSORED BY



Featured Articles

The Fashion Force

June 10, 2019 | troublemag



by Inga Walton

Krystyna Campbell-Pretty's passion for fashion has endowed the National Gallery of Victoria with a substantial number of exceptional couture and *prêt-à-porter* ensembles, accessories, sketches and studio drawings, photography, fashion journals and supporting textual material over the last ...

[Read More](#)[Deep Trouble](#) [Featured Articles](#)

Deep Trouble's War on The Chaser's War on the 2019 Election Result

June 10, 2019 | troublemag



Derby Porcelain Factory (est. c.1748-1848) (after models by Johann Gottlieb Ehder (1716-50) & Johann Friedrich Eberlein (1695-1749), after the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory), 'Figures (Four Quarters of the Globe)' (c.1780), porcelain, Africa: 16 x 7 x 7 cm, America: 16 x 7 x 7 cm, Asia: 16 x 7 x 8.5 cm, Europe: 16 x 7 x 7 cm. The Johnston Collection (Purchased with Funds from the Nina Stanton 18th Century Porcelain Bequest).

William Robert Johnston (1911-86) was an antique dealer, art collector and aesthete who ran his principal business, Kent Antiques, in High Street, Armadale from 1971 until his death. He acquired the double-fronted, two storey East Melbourne property Cadzow (1860), designed by John M. McIntosh, in 1952. Johnston remodelled it to create the appearance of a late eighteenth century Georgian-style townhouse, renamed it *Fairhall*, and rented it out. In 1972, Johnston undertook further renovations prior to occupying the property, including the transportation of various features from his Carlton house Casa d'España that was being demolished. Johnston left the property and its contents to the people of Victoria as "a place of historical and educational interest", as he put it. An independent charitable Trust was established in 1986 to preserve and develop this unique collection, expressive of one man's personal taste, his knowledge and appreciation of fine objects, and commitment to the concept of gracious living.

The Johnston Collection formally opened to the public on 19 November, 1990, and has cemented its place as one of Australia's house museum treasures. The exhibition year is divided into three distinct periods and themes. The annual 'Christmas at The Johnston Collection' (November-February) engages creatives from around Victoria who work to produce pieces based on Johnston's life and collection. 'William Johnston and his Collection' (March-June) invites a guest arranger who works only with the permanent collection. 'The House of Ideas' (July-October) asks a guest curator(s) to work within *Fairhall* who may bring in other items, or introduce new ways of working with, or viewing, the permanent collection. More recently, The Johnston Collection has been acknowledged for the quality of its exhibitions: winner of the Museums Australia (Victoria) Awards for Small Museums (2014) in recognition of the house tour David McAllister Rearranges Mr. Johnston's Collection, and winner of the 'Temporary or Travelling Exhibition Level 1' category (2016) at the Museum and Galleries National Awards (MAGNA) for Feathering The Nest: Richard Nylon Meets William Johnston (2015).

In the downstairs Green Drawing Room, Kate Rohde's *Rave Cave Dining Table* (2015) is covered with fifteen of her signature multi-hued resin bowls, vases and urns (2013-15). Originally designed for the invitational Rigg Design Prize (formerly the Cicely & Colin Rigg Contemporary Design Award) at the National Gallery of Victoria (2015-16), the dining suite comes with two matching chairs. These are positioned in front of a riotous 'feature wall' of *Animal Drop* (2016) digitally printed wallpaper, surrounding an *Icing Mirror* (2015), which acts as a visual counterpoint to the ornate gilded mirrors opposite. The mirror produces a slightly warped reflection, made all the more disconcerting by the central placement of the lurid *Mutant Kitten Vase* (2015), thus completing the retina-searing spectacle. "I'd call my practice hyperactive, like an acid trip without the drugs. I'm compelled and repulsed in equal measure by the fantastical environments I make", agrees Rohde. "My work is so excessive, with all the bling and mirrors; it's shiny, loud, colourful and unashamedly decorative".



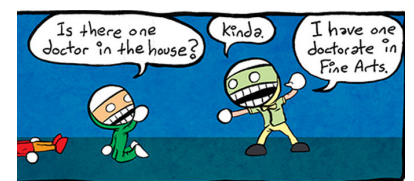
In this **SPECIAL EPISODE** of **Deep Trouble** we interview **Charles Firth of the Chaser**. He offers an analysis of the state of play for the major parties in 2019, why the Labour Party lost the 'unlosable' election, as well as ...

[Read More](#)

[Comics Face](#) [Featured Articles](#)

IVE

June 6, 2019 | troublemag



Ive Sorocuk – Comics Face Supreme

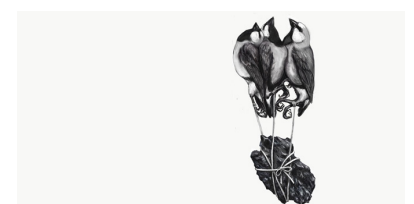
Trouble met Ive Sorocuk at the same comic con called Supanova in 2008 where they met Mandy Ord. We were immediately attracted to his weird sense of humour, his superheroes, *The Diggables*, and ...

[Read More](#)

[Featured Articles](#) [Greenwish](#)

Bob's Convoy

June 6, 2019 | troublemag



by Ben Laycock

PART ONE : The Long Road to the Far North

We set off from Castlemaine on a glorious afternoon: three enthusiastic, intrepid activists on a journey into the heart of darkness. We are not alone. Bob ...

[Read More](#)

[Featured Articles](#) [Salon](#)

SALON April-May 2019

April 27, 2019 | troublemag



The Green Drawing Room, installation by Kate Rohde, 'English glass chandelier' (c.1820), (The Johnston Collection). 'Hair Chandelier' (2017) detail, resin, acrylic hair, site specific, dimensions variable. 'Rave Cave Dining Table' (2015), resin, mixed media, (excluding vases) 90 x 250 x 130 cm. 'Rave Cave Dining Chair' (2015) detail, resin, mixed media, 140 x 50 x 50 cm. (Photo: Inga Walton).

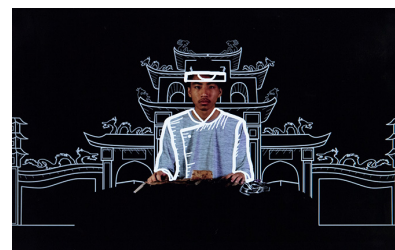
Animal Kingdom marks a return to The Johnston Collection for Rohde who was a guest artist for Romance Was Born (fashion designers Luke Sales and Anna Plunkett) when they interpreted the collection with *The Bride, the Ship and the Wardrobe* (2012). "That was the first time I'd ever been to Fairhall and it was great having a behind-the-scenes look at it. I actually took numerous pictures of items in the collection that had zoomorphic and anthropomorphic qualities, which formed part of the inspiration for many of the vessels now on show... so things have come full circle really. I've visited almost every show since then [and] I'm always amazed at how transformed the house is with each interpretation... It makes people realise they can incorporate contemporary works alongside historical or more conservative collections", she observes.

Rohde enjoys the dynamic interplay of ideas collaborations with existing collections such as this can bring to her practice. "I have worked within the house museum context on several occasions before; the first time in 2010, I integrated numerous small works into an existing *wunderkammer* that was part of the University of Tokyo. I find it really exciting to work in this context as you can respond really directly, and bounce off the existing architecture and objects. Having created many immersive, whole room style installations in the past, it takes a lot of the pressure off creating a non 'white cube' style presentation of artworks, which I try to avoid as much as possible really in my work", she stresses. "The main challenge is often the house museum is a National Trust [property] or protected space, so things have to sit lightly and not damage the structure. The good part of The Johnston Collection is its rationale that you are allowed to interact with the space more so than in many other cases, it's meant to be a dynamic and changing house museum".

The truly delirious and vibrant display contrasts forcibly with the pale carpet, muted marble plinths, statuary, and ornamental urns of the interior, dominated by an imposing *Mahogany Breakfront Bookcase* (c.1765). "Louis had a very clear vision of what he was looking for in my work, [as it] spoke to the existing baroque and rococo decorative arts and furniture items in the collection. In terms of pieces from the existing collection I did have a right of refusal if I didn't like anything they chose", Rohde comments. "But really I was more interested in seeing the response of Louis and the volunteers who rustled up all the works to go into the room, as it was always intended as a conversation between works old and new, and I felt I put my pieces in there to start the discussion and they answered with theirs – or vice versa perhaps!"

A obvious example of this concerns the *English glass chandelier* (c.1820) above her table, which Rohde has dressed in a resin and acrylic *Hair Chandelier* (2017), reminiscent of a wig. "My hairy addition to the chandelier was actually a random act of fate, I'd never intended to do anything with it, but the ring of acrylic hair was stored in the same case as the *Icing Mirror*, so it had inadvertently been transported to *Fairhall*", she recounts. "Since it was there and it fit perfectly over the existing chandelier, and within the context of the show it seemed crazy not to use it. So really a happy accident that I think worked out great!" Le Vaillant is equally pleased by the outcome, "I wanted to see these works of Kate's within the context of The Johnston Collection, so that visitors could think about how makers continually look back on and 'reflect' the past".

William Johnston had an abiding fondness for animals: when he lived in Brighton he had a small dog called 'Chou-Chou'. Prior to his occupancy of *Fairhall*, Johnston had acquired the 800-acre property and stud *Chandpara* at Tylden in the Macedon Ranges, country Victoria. There, Johnston and his colleague and companion Ahmed Moussa Abo el Maaty, discovered



APRIL/MAY 2019 COVER: Richard NGUYEN, *All mixed up* (detail)
2018, digital video, duration 1:57 min. Canning Vale College. *Pulse Perspectives*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Cultural Centre, Perth (WA), 6 April – 22 July 2019 – artgallery.wa.gov.au

Yvette COPPERSMITH, ...

[Read More](#)

[Featured Articles](#)

Getting Personal with Vince Jones

April 27, 2019 | [troublemag](#)



interview by Steve Proposch

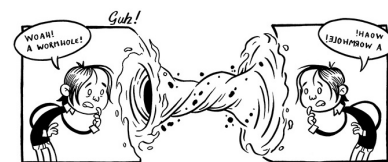
Vince Jones remembers playing in the Wollongong under 10s soccer team. "I was born in Paisley, just outside of Glasgow. My dad ran out of steam for Scotland at the time. He wanted to go somewhere ...

[Read More](#)

[Comics Face](#) [Featured Articles](#)

Happy Birthday Comics

April 6, 2019 | [troublemag](#)



Trouble turned 15 in April 2019, and for our birthday issue we wanted to thank by way of featuring some of our past comic contributors, who have been a highlight for us throughout the years. Many of these beautiful and ...

[Read More](#)

[Featured Articles](#)

a stray cat surviving on whatever she could catch. Despite some initial hostility, of which Johnston bore the brunt, the cat became part of the household. Moussa, whom Johnston met in Egypt, called the grey and white cat 'Mona' after a cat he had in Cairo. Although 'Mona' didn't make it to *Fairhall*, a pair of William Kent Pottery *Figures (Seated Cat On Cushion)* (c.1890), originally at *Chandpara*, act as a mnemonic for her. These can be seen in The Kitchen as part of an extensive display of figurines and objects dubbed 'Staffordshire Stories', in reference to the famous pottery manufacturers based at Stoke-on-Trent. Fine porcelain and ceramic works can be found throughout *Fairhall*, reflecting Johnston's passion for the medium. When he was around eight years-old, Johnston's maternal grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs, presented him with a Minton *Teacup* (c.1812-15) that remains in the collection today, and is regarded as one of its most treasured pieces.



The Blue Room, installation by Vipoo Srivilasa, (on centre table) 'Collective Sea Life' (2016), 43 items, porcelain & mixed media (dimensions variable). (on back table) (left) 'Hare: Deity of Abundance' (2016), porcelain, glazed, Swarovski crystals, gold lustre, mixed media, 40 x 20 x 20 cm. (right) 'Deity of Creativity & Friendship' (2016), multi-coloured layers of glazed ceramic, enamel paint, 58 x 24 x 24 cm. (windowsill table) Happy Ride III: Deity of Journey & Leadership (2016), cobalt pigment on porcelain, gold lustre, 18 x 20 x 36 cm. (on wall) Unknown (in the manner of Abraham Storck, 1635-1710), A Naval Battle Depicting Ships Carrying the Dutch and English Flags (c.1670), oil on panel, 61 x 86 cm, (Foundation Collection, The Johnston Collection).
Photo: Adam Luttick.

One of the most highly regarded and accomplished ceramicists working in Australia today, Vipoo Srivilasa was an appropriate choice to bring a touch of the exotic and escapist to the project. "Vipoo was also a good fit for The Blue Room as he conceptually followed the previous installation of 'blue and white' porcelain that had been in the immediate past exhibition [Being Modern: William Johnston – His Residence & Collection], as well as the personal political aspect he brings to his object making", Le Vaillant remarks. The maritime theme expressed by the prominent painting A Naval Battle Depicting Ships Carrying the Dutch and English Flags (c.1670), is echoed by Srivilasa's *Collective Sea Life* (2016). This installation of over forty intricate and embellished sculptural works is displayed on a low Walnut marquetry table, "I liked the contrast of low value discarded objects sitting next to a high value antique!", Srivilasa quips.

Over by the window on a demi lune table (c.1730-50) sits *Happy Ride III: Deity of Journey & Leadership* (2016), riding a giant fish. Surveying Srivilasa's frolicking painted Deity, is *Figure (Neptune)* (c.1800), another porcelain offering from Derby, depicting the Roman god standing atop a rococo base encrusted with coral, shells and seaweed, accompanied by a dolphin. (The figure may have been inspired by the figure group Neptune et Amphitrite from the *Buffet d'Eau* fountain at Grand Trianon, Château de Versailles). Srivilasa's other two works, *Jobs and Zuckerberg: Deity of Creativity and Friendship* and *Hare: Deity of Abundance* (both 2016), complement the fine Dehua porcelain (blanc-de-Chine) figures of an Egret, a sage, and the Goddess Guanyin in the cabinet opposite.

Still on the ground floor, two 'fake taxidermy' sculptural works by Troy Emery, *Golden Dragon* (2016) and *Bird Catcher* (2017), sit inscrutably on marble tabletops in The White Room. Emery's works investigate the aesthetics of craft associated with natural history by using high-density taxidermy foam bodies to create ambiguous creatures in a kaleidoscopic zoo. "A fake pelt is stretched over an animal mould and glass eyes are inserted. The result is a fake animal, an artwork masquerading as a lesson in natural history. I see myself as following a process that mimics taxidermy, therefore I see the result as a kind of mimicry", he reflects. "My work is anti-craft. Not in the sense of being against craft, but 'anti-' as in 'anti-hero'. It uses craft materials and has a craft aesthetic but I'm avoiding any tradition of technique other than that of making 3D sculptural objects. I'm interested in the use of animals in spiritual practices, and animals as decorative objects. The idea of the animal as the bearer of human concerns acts as an allegory as interchangeable with the classically transcendent properties of art".

The Prophet from Lebanon

March 13, 2019 | troublemag



Kahlil Gibran: The Garden of the Prophet, until 17 March, 2019

Immigration Museum, Melbourne

by Inga Walton

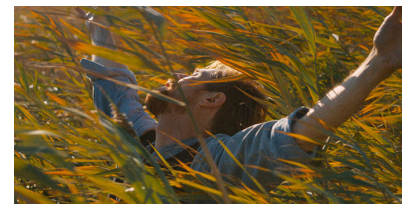
One of my dearest dreams is this – somewhere, a body of work, say fifty or seventy-five pictures will be hung together in ...

[Read More](#)

[Deep Trouble](#) [Featured Articles](#)

Julian Schnabel: At Eternity's Gate

March 13, 2019 | troublemag



A DEEP TROUBLE INTERVIEW

with Dr Mark Halloran

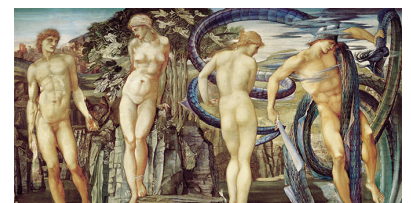
Can a movie speak to the intense swirl of feeling and aliveness that goes into painting? It was the seeming impossibility of this task which beckoned to Julian Schnabel as he created ...

[Read More](#)

[Featured Articles](#)

Love & Desire

February 11, 2019 | troublemag



Pre-Raphaelite Masterpieces from the Tate

NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA

Until 28 April 2019

Love & Desire explores the themes of love, desire, romance, betrayal, faith, nature, science, religion, society, rebellion, the

femme fatale and the celebrity of the 'rock-star' artists ...

[Read More](#)

Popular

Recent



Melburnin' November 2013

99287 Views



Brethren in Sincerity: The Pre-Raphaelites

75708 Views

Dressing the Movies Part One by Inga Walton

75146 Views



David Bowie: The Man Who Fell to Melbourne

74752 Views



Genius & Ambition: The Alternative Royal Tour

68944 Views



Greetings From Hindustan

65496 Views



The White Room. installation by Troy Emery, (on table) 'Bird Catcher' (2017), polyurethane mannequin, rayon fringing, glue, pins, 39 x 54 x 56 cm. 'Torchère (in the form of a winged Sphinx)' (c.1910-20), wood, paint, gilded, 121 x 39 x 33 cm. (on wall) Unknown (circle of Henri Gascar, 1635-1701), 'Untitled (Portrait of a Girl and Dove)' (19th Century), oil on canvas, 58 x 45.5 cm. (The Johnston Collection). Photo: Adam Luttick.

Emery's fantasy animals and strange critters, with their pompom skins and fringed fur, prowl the corridors of the absurd within the wider menagerie of his imagination. "Toys and fantasy are a huge influence on me. I was the kid with fifteen stuffed toys on his bed. I'm also a fan of the Nintendo franchise Pokémon. It's all about ridiculous animals. Japan has a great way of combining cute and sinister in its visual culture. It's why I'm a big fan of the artist Takashi Murakami. Imagining other worlds full of strange creatures is something we do naturally when we are children. I sometimes think I'm just making myself the toys I never had as a kid", he muses. "I use materials associated with children's craft, fashion, and Christmas ornaments. They are 'awkwardly decorative' but when applied to the animal forms the animal shifts from one species to another. With a new pelt, they transform into something new. These animals perhaps do exist somewhere, that they are taxidermy from some kind of parallel universe or fantasy landscape".

Taxidermy, even within the museum context, is contentious today with its rather loaded historical associations. Perceived as an affectation of white colonialism and Empire, the devastating impact of 'trophy' hunting has rendered various species now either extinct or endangered, abetted by the resurgence of cashed-up 'sporting' shooters. The visual cliché of the mounted face-on-the-wall, or skinned and lying impotently on the floor, in grand homes is in contrast to the fondness we profess for other domestic animals. "Taxidermy animals are like artworks. They are sculptures, crafted objects, with abstracted meanings, framed and exhibited. The pathos comes from acknowledging that these decorative objects, whether decorating a hunting lodge or a museum diorama, were once living things", Emery contends. "In *Why Look At Animals?* [2009] John Berger writes about the curious position that pets occupy in our lives. He suggests that pets decorate domestic spaces the same way as pot plants do. In painting, animals have often been deployed to fill in space. Think of the dog in [Diego Rodríguez de Silva y] Velázquez's great portrait of the Spanish royal family [*Las Meninas*, 1656]. Pets, while family members, also become prestige commodities. They entertain a precarious relationship with décor".

Domestic animals who wreak havoc on expensive carpets and furniture, shred curtains, tangle blinds, flood bathrooms, chew and steal clothing, and leave breakages in their wake are the subject of innumerable anecdotes. Nonetheless, we find them immortalised in paintings and photographs, and represented by countless pottery figurines, such as The Johnston Collection's recent acquisition *Model of a Pug Dog* (c.1900). Bereft owners seeking to preserve their treasured pet have often commissioned funerary monuments, or resorted to taxidermy in order to cushion the emotional blow. Artworks featuring animals have a kind of benign and universal appeal, and yet, some viewers are repulsed when that work becomes somehow transgressive. "People always think there is a real animal inside my work. As soon as I mention the word taxidermy to some people they screw their nose up in disgust. They think I have killed some poor fox, had it stuffed, then covered it in pompoms!", Emery admits.

This is an assumption Julia deVillie has become quite familiar with in the process of exhibiting her startling and provocative animal sculptures. Upstairs in The Yellow Room fourteen of her renowned taxidermy works are presented in glass cases on the central dining table. A vegan, animal rights advocate, and trained taxidermist who only works with ethically sourced subjects (stillborn, donated or found dead), deVillie endows these otherwise 'disposable' creatures with a glittering and privileged afterlife. Embellished with precious stones and the focus of a narrative that was never theirs, she envisages for them a new life where they are venerated and 'treasured', not discarded, abused, or eaten. DeVillie's emotive work both disturbs and attracts because it addresses the often contradictory impulses we have towards

animals. How do we classify their worth or sentience, and how do we rationalise our inconsistent attitudes towards one species versus another?



The Yellow Room, installation by Julia deVille. Photo: Inga Walton.

Widespread public disgust over Australia's ongoing live export trade and abuses committed in destination-country abattoirs; endangered species being killed for 'traditional' Asian medicines; the trade in exotic wildlife; orang-utans under threat in Sumatra due to Palm Oil plantations; international revulsion at the Yulin dog meat festival in China; international whaling; cosmetic and pharmaceutical testing on live animal subjects; and national debates about duck hunting season, greyhound and jumps racing are just some of the issues regularly featured in the media. DeVille asks us to ponder where we, as individuals and as a society, draw the line between animal 'cruelty' and what is, for want of a better analogy, merely 'lunch'. Throughout the Yellow Room can be found examples of fine furniture incorporating materials that would now be rather frowned upon: an *Occasional table* (c.1850) inlaid with ivory, a Bookstand (c.1850) made with porcupine quills, a Polar bear skin rug, and six taxidermied tropical birds within an array of foliage (c.1880).

A small selection of anthropomorphic silver items from deVille's extensive fine jewellery practice are included in a vitrine, also containing four watercolour on ivory portrait miniatures from The Johnston Collection. These are turned to the reverse to display an arrangement of human 'hairwork', typical of commemorative and mourning jewellery, and which transformed the jewel into something akin to a miniature reliquary. The commissioning of such personal and specific artworks was limited to the wealthy, and incorporating the hair of the sitter denotes the object's status as a precious or heirloom item. The socially prescribed use of 'human parts' within this highly ritualised and sentimental format is contrasted with the widespread use of animals for food, clothing, decorative items, and furniture components.

Co-curator Dorothy Morgan has been involved with The Johnston Collection for nearly fifteen years, having previously curated temporary exhibitions, lectured, and written for The Johnston Collection publications. "The Collection has worked with members of The Embroiderers Guild (Victoria) since at least 2003, and we wanted to see key makers who are integral to their community included in our exhibitions in another context. Dorothy was integral in selecting embroiderers, who are leading exemplars of their skill, to be included in *Animal Kingdom*", Le Vaillant relates. "In order to present as wide an overview of the animal kingdom as possible,

and to create a conversation with objects in the collection, I wanted to include insects, birds and mythological beasts, all of which are represented on objects in the collection, and some of which are shown in the relevant rooms in *Fairhall* along with the contemporary pieces from our artists”, Morgan notes. “Once that decision was made these three textile artists – Alison Cole, Lesley Uren, and Yvonne Walton – were chosen because their work includes exploration of the inspiration they have taken from these creatures. Our aim is to create stories and a dialogue between Collection objects and our visitors to think anew about issues they might otherwise take for granted”.

In The Study Yvonne Walton's nine insect brooches and a *Samurai Beetle* (2007) necklace join her silk paper plate *Picnic* (2004), which bears a strong resemblance to several Chelsea porcelain decorated plates painted in the Hans Sloane botanical style in the Collection.

“Walton's work in particular relates to that of deVillie in that creatures are ‘captured’ under glass. All of the works in the exhibition ‘capture’ animals, real or imagined, for the purposes of man”, says Morgan. “Thus they all make a contribution to the human/animal conversation this exhibition aims to explore. The fact that we have chosen some smaller, more ‘discreet’ work than that of say Kate Rohde, is quite deliberate as one of the experiences we want our visitors to have is that of examining objects in detail – seeing the small picture as well as the big one”.

The Sitting Room contains the fine gold and silver metal thread work of Lesley Uren, a founding member of The Embroiderers Guild (Victoria), and something of a national treasure in her field. Her winged creatures including birds, butterflies and phoenix, are often inspired by ancient civilisations and mythology. “As part of the mantra of The Johnston Collection that old is new, new is old, we are keen to explore not just making techniques undreamt of in the 18th and 19th centuries (such as Kate Rohde's cast resin) but also contemporary interpretations of old techniques – in this case stumpwork and metal thread embroidery which are centuries old”, Morgan asserts.



Alison Cole, 'Dragon-Fly' (2009), goldwork, 7 x 14 x 14 cm.

In The Bedroom we find the work of author and embroidery authority Alison Cole who has twice participated in the annual 'Christmas at The Johnston Collection', and whose work was later acquired for the permanent collection. When The Embroiderers Guild decorated *Fairhall* (2003) a six-figure *Adoration of the Magi* group (now in The Johnston Collection) had new costumes made for it. Lesley Uren dressed the 'Gold Magi', and Cole the 'Green Magi', “I took inspiration from the Green Chandelier in The Yellow Room upstairs for the jacket and the foliate designs on the plates downstairs for the caftan”. She has lectured on stumpwork embroidery at The Johnston Collection (2010), and created a three-dimensional bouquet of flowers for the exhibition *Taking Tea With English Bodies: A Social History of Tea and the Development of English Ceramics* (2005). “It is wonderful to work within the house museum environment, there is so much to be inspired by and it is lovely to be able to tie the items into their program. It doesn't take long to find something gorgeous to be inspired by and work in with it”, Cole enthuses.

Four panels depicting mythological creatures, a unicorn, Welsh red dragon, gryphon and a cockatrice (2009-10) are joined by a delicate three-dimensional goldwork sculpture *Dragon-Fly* (2009). “I don't specify how any of the things that I embroider should be installed, I leave that completely up to whomever is doing the arranging of the rooms. I like that my work complements the existing pieces in the house without dominating”, Cole states. “Embroidery is very much at home in a non-gallery environment like *Fairhall*. By it's very nature, embroidery is domestic and historically has been in people's homes either as decorative art

or as embellishment for clothing. From the working class to royalty, it is something that most people can identify with”.

Such is the depth of William Johnston’s collection, and so populated with animal references, that *Animal Kingdom* runs the gamut in taste and style from kitsch porcelain figure groups, to winged Sphinx *Torchères*, rampant dragons, ‘Canova’ lions, and feathered flocks of all descriptions. “The artists (and their work) all speak to each other, from room to room and floor to floor. A narrative evolved that allowed this to happen that was liberating, fun and complex all at the same time. They shared their created objects and stories, and we could create some good connections and conversations between them all. They are all magnificent in what they do, and propose, in their work”, Le Vaillant surmises. “There are some wondrous connections between people and animals, our shared empathy and ethics, our fear and love of beasts, mythical and symbolic (and real) creatures. By proposing and opposing them there seems that there is no end of zoomorphism and anthropomorphism that can create pretext for excursions in style and meaning in all the contributor’s works – as well as the platform that the Collection’s items have to offer their ideas and skills”.

Our relationship to the animal world is as fundamental as it is constantly evolving, dysfunctional, co-dependent and unequal. As we humans continue to assert our dominant position at the pinnacle of the food chain, the way we treat animals is characterised by ambivalence, fear, conflict, obsession, curiosity, affection, unease, abuse, and fascination. Animals can provoke emotions as diverse and varied as they are. That considered, there is much to contemplate and to linger over and as you chase your tail around *Fairhall*.



France, Unknown (in the manner of Emile Gallé, 1846-1904), 'Model of a Pug Dog' (c.1900), Faïence (glazed), applied transfer flower decoration, 31.5 x 23 x 12.5 cm. The Johnston Collection (Gift of an Anonymous Donor, 2017).

The Johnston Collection can be visited only by appointment: www.johnstoncollection.org | Troy Emery’s new exhibition *Withdrawn* (13-29 July, 2017) is at MARS Gallery, 7 James Street, Windsor, Victoria, 3181: www.marsgallery.com.au He is represented by: Martin Browne Contemporary (NSW): www.martinbrownecontemporary.com Artist site: www.troyemery.net | Julia de Ville is represented by: Sophie Gannon Gallery (Vic): sophiegannongallery.com.au Jan Murphy Gallery (QLD): www.janmurphygallery.com.au Artist site: juliadeville.com | Kate Rohde is represented by: This Is No Fantasy + Dianne Tanzer (Vic): thisisnofantasy.com Pieces Of Eight Gallery (Vic): www.piecesofeight.com.au Artist site:

www.katerohde.com | Vipoo Srivilasa is represented by: Scott Livesey Galleries (Vic): www.scottliveseygalleries.com Edwina Corlette Gallery (QLD): edwinacorlette.com Adrian Sassoon (UK): www.adriansassoon.com Subhashok The Arts Centre (Thailand): <https://m.facebook.com/sacbangkok> Srivilasa also exhibits with: Ferrin Contemporary (USA): ferrincontemporary.com Artist site: vipoo.com | Alison Cole: www.alisoncoleembroidery.com.au

Inga Walton is a writer and arts consultant based in Melbourne who contributes to numerous Australian and international publications. She has submitted copy, of an increasingly verbose nature, to Trouble since 2008. She is under the impression that readers are not morons with a short attention span, and would like to know lots of things.

TAGS [ceramics](#) [Fairhall](#) [house museum](#) [Inga Walton](#) [julia deville](#) [Kate Rhodes](#) [Louis Le Vaillant](#)
[museum](#) [The Johnston Collection](#) [Troy Emery](#) [Vipoo Srivilasa](#)

PREVIOUS STORY
Two Singles to Gifu

NEXT STORY
Barry Dickens : Last Words

Related Posts

SALON July 2015
July 5, 2015 | [troublemag](#)

Once More Down the Rabbit Hole
September 9, 2018 | [troublemag](#)



trouble

trouble is grass roots arts publishing at its best. trouble is made by artists for artists, and is dedicated to reflecting the best of the contemporary Australian art scene and the creatives who make it.

[Privacy Policy and Disclaimer](#)

ANCA Anthony S Cameron art Art
Gallery of South Australia Art Gallery of
Western Australia Australia Bendigo
Art Gallery Ben Laycock books
Castlemaine comedy comics Comics
Face Courtney Symes Festival Film
Fremantle Arts Centre Geelong Gallery
indigenous Inga Walton
interview Ive Sorocuk Jim
Kempner Klare Lanson Madness of
Art Monash Gallery of Art music Naima
Morelli National Gallery of Victoria Neil
Boyack NGV painting performance
photography Phuket poetry
printmaking prize Salon sculpture social
work Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery The
Madness of Art travel
Videos

