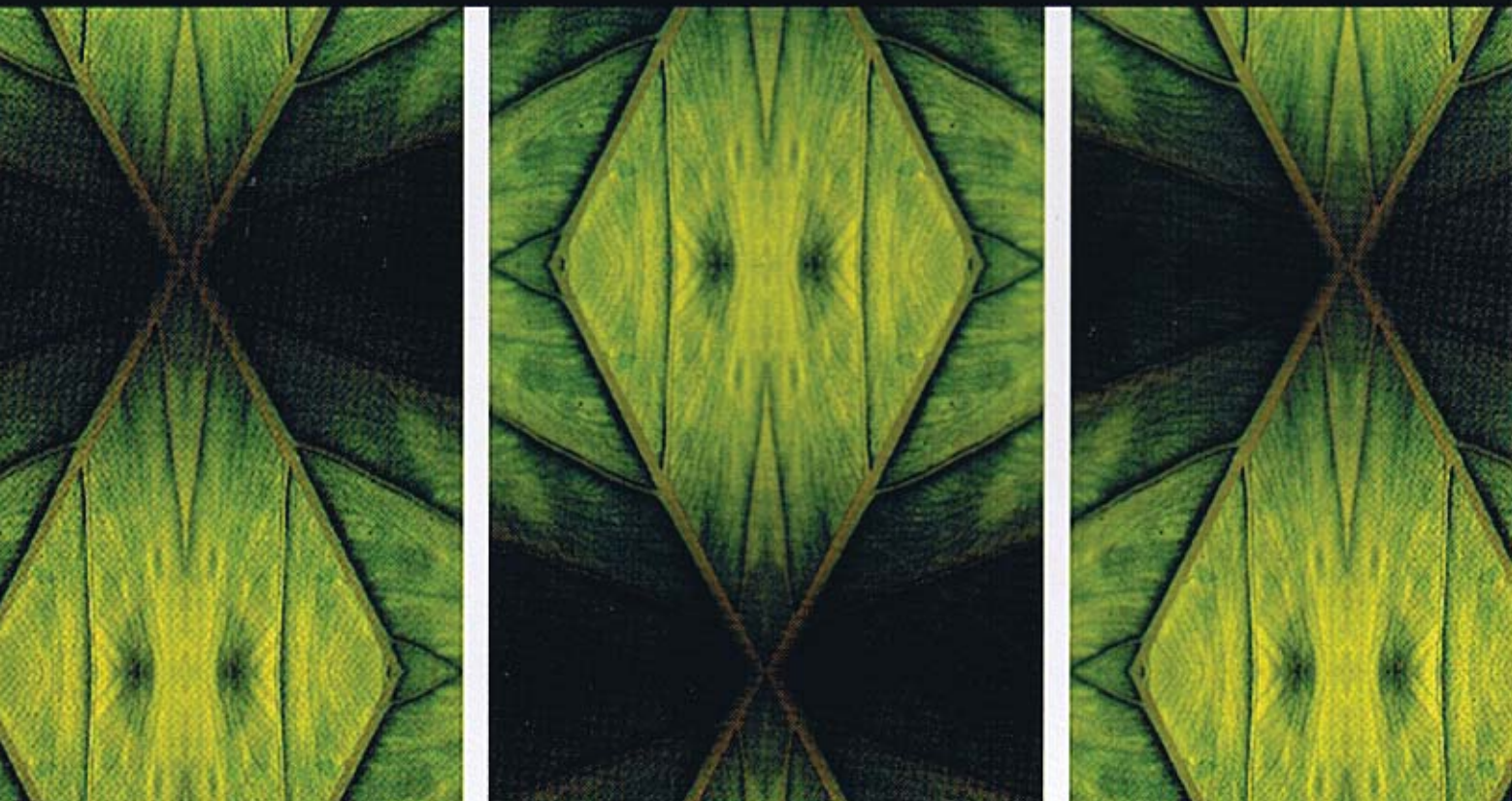




pacific edge

contemporary art from coastal queensland







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The idea of a lifestyle 'seachange' took hold across Australia over recent decades, and coastal Queensland became the destination of choice for many who made the move. 'Seachange' promises a major life-change, and is thus an ideal, and perhaps even an illusion. Artists in this exhibition look within and beyond illusions about a coastal way of life, and reflect upon aspects that are more deeply felt, deeply known, or deeply remembered. In many of the artworks there is an effort to seek the essential rhythms and patterns of life that particularise Nature's conditioning of the local environment. Along with these are artworks that look to the social cycles of coastal areas and issues of identity and history that are not ideal – in fact, far from ideal. Across the exhibition there is a strong sense of tension between the surface of life, and what lies beyond, or what was always there. Sometimes the 'beyond' is a beautiful gesture towards understanding and appreciating the essence of our surroundings, and in other instances the 'beyond' is more of a reality check – an incision into the veneer of paradise.

Artists working in coastal areas of Queensland represent one of the most diverse cross-sections of Australian art anywhere in the country, and this exhibition takes advantage of this diversity as its perspective of the Pacific Edge. This diversity is thematic with artists drawing on issues such as the environmental well-being of coastal regions, the impact of demographic changes and tourism, and the unique kinds of cultural heritage that characterise these regional areas. There is also a strong impetus toward synthesis in the exhibition, with artists drawing analogies between different dimensions of experience. Ashley Holmes' 'nouveau romantic' experimental

films fuse themes concerned with natural environments, conservation and reconciliation into abstract, fragmented narratives that tell dis-articulated stories. Holly Grech's macro-photographic observations of coastal flora identify patterns that reach beyond the detail and suggest the essence of natural order itself. Fiona Foley's imagery incorporates a complex message about cultural detritus and the impact it has on people and places. Indeed, all of the artists in the exhibition demonstrate a compelling interest in how a place is a human construct, and how it is framed and tamed by the desires and activities of its inhabitants.

Diversity is also reflected in the breadth of media and techniques that contemporary artists draw upon to engage audiences of today. Traditional media of drawing and painting are brought into dialogue with the new era of interactive technologies and electronic installations. The different modes of visual expression find common ground in the thematic similarities between these 'coastal' artists. Such so-called 'regional' art incorporates internationally recognised contemporary artists such as with the print-work by Cape York's Lockhart River artists, Australia's leading youth movement in Indigenous Art, and the unique 'surf paintings' series by the Gold Coast's Scott Redford. This diversity suggests that it is clearly not the 'artist in the regions' that is significant in this exhibition, so much as 'the regions in the artist'.

Written by Dr Sally Butler

Lecturer in Art History, University of Queensland

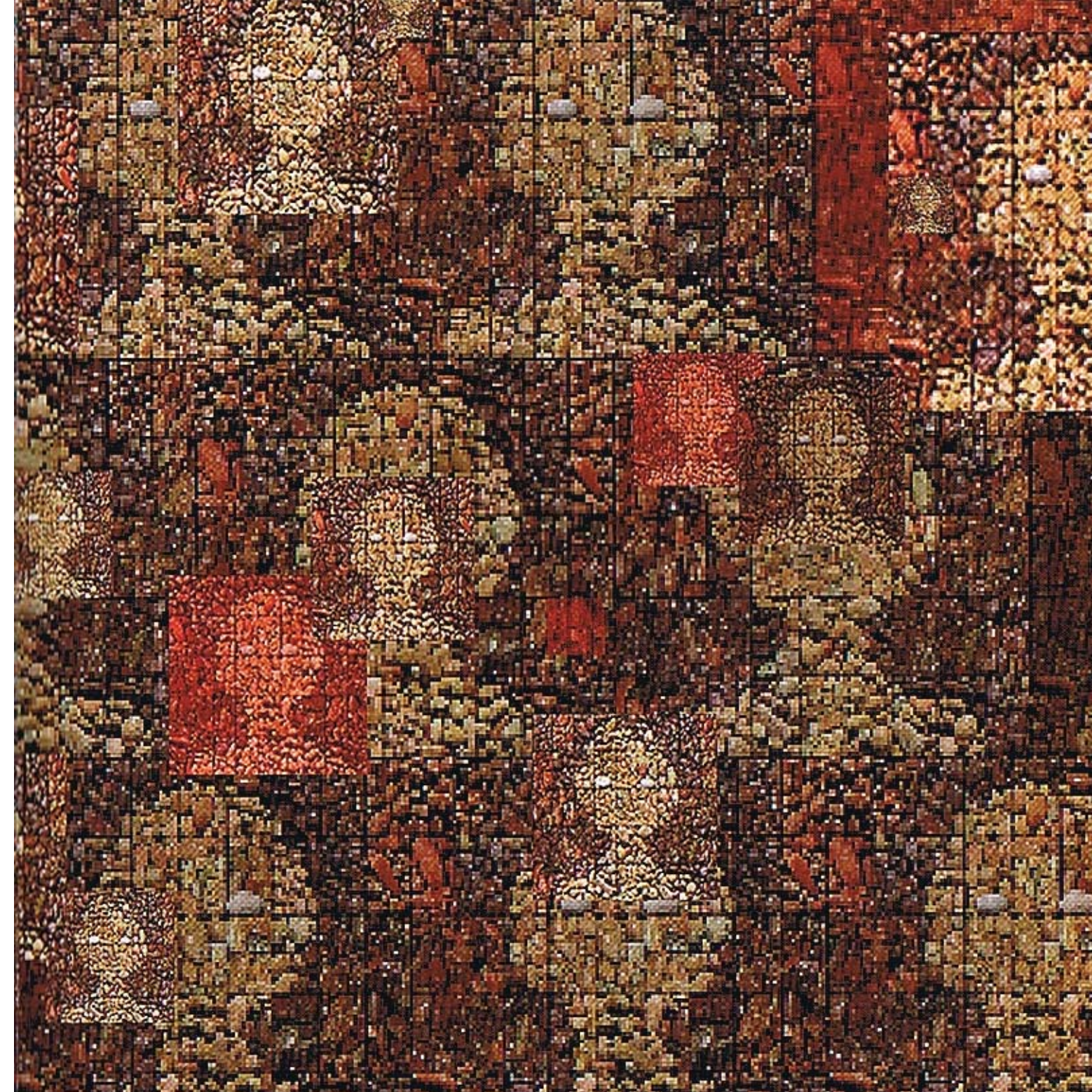
Cover: Holly Grech *Virtually woven (Alocasia I)* 2006, detail, duraflex print (3 sheets) 200.0 x 170.0 cm (overall), edition 1/5. Courtesy of the artist, Yeppoon.

Left: Fiona Foley *Signpost I* 2006, giclee print, ed. 15, 100.0 x 100.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane.

Right: Ashley Holmes *Inverse blink* 2005, detail, interactive multimedia installation (still from *In-between the primordial and the latter*). Courtesy of the artist, Mackay.

Over: Rosella Namok *Kaapay and Kuyan: old couple* 2002, colour etching, AP 49.0 x 39.0 cm.

Donated by Geoff and Fran Barker, Lockhart River 1996 2001, through the Federal Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2006, Mackay City Council Collection, Artspace Mackay.



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List of Artists:

BONEMAP

Sammy CLARMONT

James ESSELI

Fiona FOLEY

Holly GRECH

Samantha HOBSON

Silas HOBSON

Ashley HOLMES

Jan HYNES

Meryn JONES

Ed KOUMANS

Susanne McLEAN

Rosella NAMOK

Fiona OMEENYO

Gregory OMEENYO

Scott REDFORD

Pamela Mei-Leng SEE

Glen SKIEN

Geoffrey WARRADOO

Rick and Leonie WOOD

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Thurgood, Pam Brooks, Andrew Baker Art Dealer,
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