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## FOREWORD

Newcastle Art Gallery is proud to present *Memory & Symbol*, an exhibition featuring works of art by highly respected Australian multimedia artist Marion Borgelt. With a prodigious career spanning over 40 years, Borgelt's distinctive and highly attuned practice encompasses installation, painting and sculpture.

*Memory & Symbol* focuses on works of art from the mid-nineties to the present that reflect the artist's acute sense of detail and precision in the handling and application of diverse materials. Borgelt's practice is embedded in the abstract, exploring the thematic elements of memory, symbology and the ever-present duality of light and dark. Engaging a wide range of materials including beeswax, canvas, felt, pigment, wood and stone, the works of art reflect an artist whose attention to detail and precision is second to none.

Newcastle Art Gallery has collected Borgelt's works of art since the 1980s and this exhibition provides yet another opportunity to develop a project that showcases a prominent artist from the collection. Drawn from the Gallery's holdings for inclusion is the seminal triptych *Weaving the Labyrinth: Design I, Design II, Design III* 1997–99 and the two high key paintings *Strobe series No. 3* and *Strobe series No. 4* 2007.

Marion Borgelt is represented in public and private collections nationally and internationally. Our sincere thanks go to the artist, Dominik Mersch Gallery and Artbank for their enthusiasm and generosity in supporting the Gallery's vision for this impressive exhibition.

**Lauretta Morton**  
Manager  
Newcastle Art Gallery



**COVER IMAGE DETAILS** (clockwise from top left)  
Marion Borgelt  
*Liquid Light Butterfly No. 17* (detail) 2014  
acrylic, canvas, timber, pins  
145.0cm diameter x 5.8cm depth  
Artist collection

Marion Borgelt  
*Lunar Tango No. 1* (detail) 2015  
oil on canvas with MDF & polyurethane end frames  
120.0 x 120.0cm  
Artist collection

Marion Borgelt  
*Lunar Swell No. 3* (detail) 2015  
Dutch gold leaf, hoop pine ply, MDF, polyurethane  
35.0 x 184.0 x 16.0cm  
Artist collection

Marion Borgelt  
*Strobe series No. 4* (detail) 2007  
oil on canvas  
196.5 x 152.0cm  
Gift of the artist through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2010  
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

### INNER PAGES

1. Marion Borgelt  
*Weaving the Labyrinth: Design I, Design II, Design III* 1997–99  
pigment and oil on jute  
195.0 x 114.0cm each panel  
Gift of the artist through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2002  
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

2. Marion Borgelt  
*Icons and Emblems Series: Silent Sound No. II* 1995  
pigment on jute  
210.0 x 170.0cm  
Artist collection

3. Marion Borgelt  
*Bloodlight Series Star No. II, III, IV, V* (side view) 2000  
oil, pigment, jute, timber  
34.0 x 34.0 x 11.0cm each panel  
Artist collection

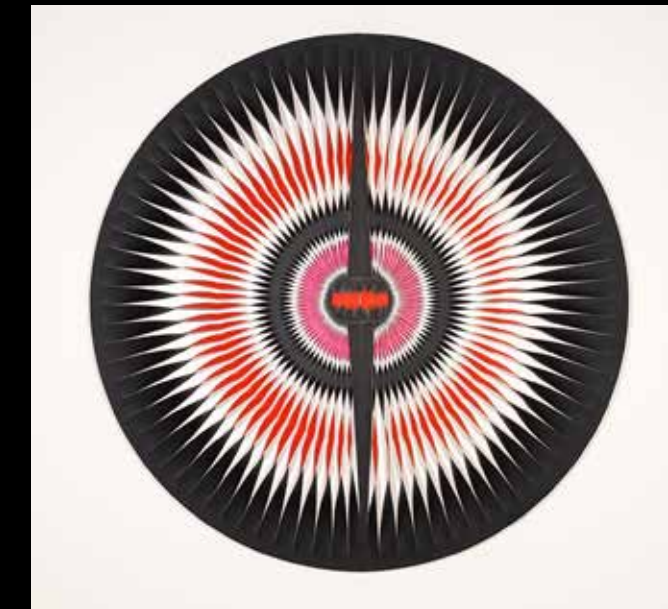
4. Marion Borgelt  
*Tsukimi Slice Sequence B* 2008–9  
laminated Radiata pine, duck eggshell, perspex display  
60.0 x 42.0 x 300.0cm  
Artist collection

5. Marion Borgelt  
*Liquid Light Butterfly No. 17* 2014  
acrylic, canvas, timber, pins  
145.0cm diameter x 5.8cm depth  
Artist collection

6. Marion Borgelt  
*Strobe series No. 4* 2007  
oil on canvas  
196.5 x 152.0cm  
Gift of the artist through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2010  
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

### BACK COVER

Marion Borgelt  
*Lunar Swell No. 3* 2015  
Dutch gold leaf, hoop pine ply, MDF, polyurethane  
35.0 x 184.0 x 16.0cm  
Artist collection



978-0-9943466-5-0

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Published for the exhibition

*MARION BORGELT Memory & Symbol*

20 August – 23 October 2016



This organisation is supported by the NSW Government through Arts NSW

**NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY**  
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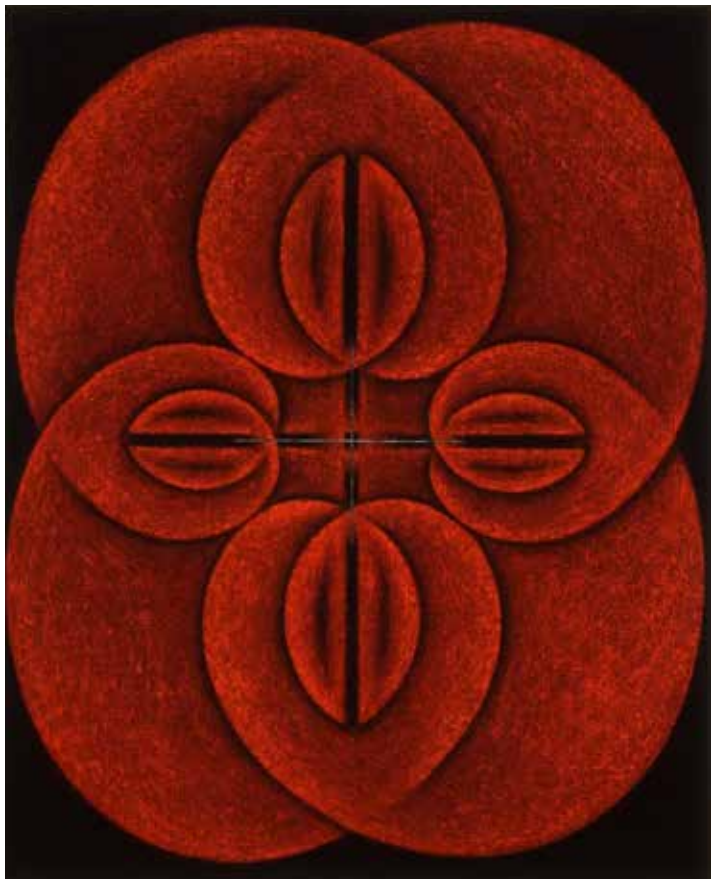
# MARION BORGELT

## MEMORY & SYMBOL

### 20 August – 23 October 2016

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY





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## MEMORY & SYMBOL

As humans have sought meaning in art through the ages, the latent power of the symbol is an eternal source of discussion for artists alike. Sydney based artist Marion Borgelt's distinct oeuvre is imbued with symbology and visceral tactility, bound with threads of the organic and man-made.

Borgelt's lexicon is a plethora of materials, symbols and motifs that speak a secret code: a literal and metaphorical portal to another world and consciousness. They evoke primordial notions of human evolution from the cellular level to the expansion of the universe into the realms of cosmology.

Borgelt's works of art are illusive and hypnotic through the play on refraction, light, pattern and the optical. Via an almost cosmological collision of particles on canvas or in sculptural form – Borgelt's works draw the viewer into the frame.

*Memory & Symbol* announces Borgelt's return to Newcastle Art Gallery since her last major exhibition *Hourglass* 2003. Following her survey exhibition in 2010 at the Drill Hall Gallery Canberra, *Memory & Symbol* draws on three key thematic areas that appear in Borgelt's art practice.

Beginning with the mid-nineties through to recent works, the exhibition traces Borgelt's investigation of and conversations with symbolism and language, materiality, visual optics and

**“NATURE IS A TEMPLE,  
WHERE FROM LIVING  
PILLARS, CONFUSED WORDS  
ARE SOMETIMES ALLOWED  
TO ESCAPE; HERE MAN  
PASSES, THROUGH FORESTS  
OF SYMBOLS, WHICH  
WATCH HIM WITH LOOKS OF  
RECOGNITION.”<sup>1</sup>**

Charles Baudelaire,  
French poet and critic, 1821–67

time. This period from 1993 marks the progression in time and practice when Borgelt was nearing the close of her formative eight year studio tenure in Paris.

The symbology of Borgelt's 1996 works of art *Quadrant Lore* and *Icons and Emblems*, draw upon ancient motifs, recalling Celtic mark making and a visual lexicon pre-dating written language. This notion of the artist effectively 'mining history' through symbolic activity is an important aspect of Borgelt's practice in the, "...*capacity to evoke ancient memory and remind us of buried histories and that which has been forgotten.*"<sup>2</sup>

Borgelt's works of art evoke a distinctly volatile and primal response – heightened by the alluring nature of the materials used. They are tactile, sensual and corporeal – full of lifeblood and turgidity. The metaphorically loaded use of red is also a powerful element of Borgelt's works of art from this period of the 1990s. Through red and russet tones, they evoke blood, energy, life and bodily limits. The evocatively named *Bloodlight Series Star No. II, III, IV, V* 2000 are four seemingly innocuous square boxed works, protruding suggestive female body shapes. Their fabrication from organic materials such as oil, pigment, jute and timber heightens the allure of this highly corporeal and sensuous grid work. One has to ask – how can painting *become and be* so sensuous?



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The sphere and the rhythmic circularity of life – be they lunar, female cycles or seasons – is a constant metaphor in Borgelt's works of art. This allegorical suggestion of time and space, the power of the void and hemispheres manifest in a series of floor and wall sculpture works. These 'lunar' transitions are embodied in the exhibited works, the floor sculpture *Tsukimi Variation: No. 1* 2007–8, comprised of marble spheres and red ironbark plinths, *Tsukimi Slice: Sequence B* 2008–9 with duck eggshell and Radiata pine and the wall installation *Candescent Moon Linear: No. 1* 2012, made from timber, polyurethane and Dutch gold leaf.



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Borgelt's diligent selection of materials oscillates between the organic (beeswax, jute, wood, clay, marble, duck eggshell) to the inorganic (synthetic paint and stainless steel). Such rigour in choice and application of materials underpins an artist whose practice reflects the allegory and symbology of two-halves combining to make a whole in both a practical and literal sense.

Borgelt's works are also visual optics traversing the themes of movement, change and metamorphosis. The power of the optical illusion, pattern and abstraction were key tenets of Optical art of the late 1950s and 60s. While Borgelt's works of art are not *Op art* per se, they are optical in their visual



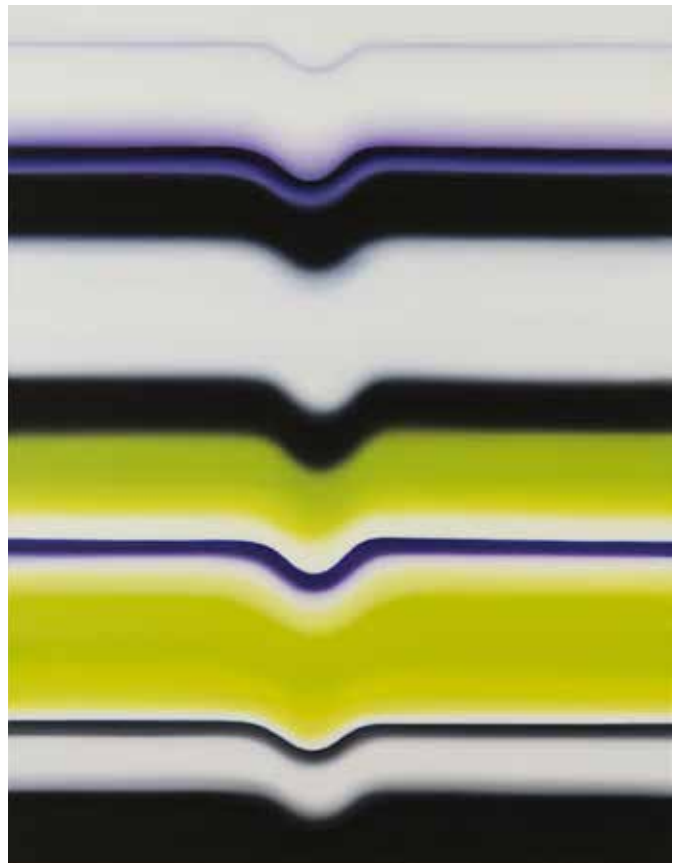
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richness through their interplay of texture, light and colour. Demonstrated through works of art such as Newcastle Art Gallery's *Strobe series No. 3 and No. 4* 2007, there is visual hypnosis achieved through repetition and pattern with metaphors that surround these works that are fluid and deliberately non-specific.

Similarly, Borgelt's 2013 *Liquid Light* series present as amorphous body-forms, or 'circadian rhythms', reminiscent of electrical impulses or cardiograms. The tactility of these works of art is heightened in the physical 'slashing' into canvas to create patterns as metaphorical incisions into the 'body' of the canvas while subtly referencing works of art by Italian abstractionist Lucio Fontana of the late 1950s.

The portal is a *leitmotif* of Borgelt's work – alluding to the corporeal and the suggestion of transportation to another state and time. Temporality is another enduring element of Borgelt's practice and an allegory on the transitional state of human existence. The optical element of the *Strobe* and later *Persian Strobe* series interrupts the viewer's sense of time and space, through the strategic application of paint and use of colour. These works are also an exploration by the artist into a new palette with the use of explosive colours such as lime green, yellow and hot pink.

The notions of stasis and change – of evolution, from past, present to future to the cycle of reinvention and repetition – are key points of interest. Borgelt's works



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of art, through their very nature and materiality are allegorical representations of the human – almost as a nod to the maxim, 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. They evolve and modify as works of art, but are undeniably 'Borgeltian' in their precision, tightness of materiality, colour and texture.

Borgelt's works of art brim with conscious and unconscious references to symbology and nature. *Memory & Symbol* is an exhibition that pays homage to one of Australia's most evocative and enduring contemporary artists.

Marion Borgelt is represented by:  
Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney NSW  
Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne VIC  
Turner Galleries, Perth WA

**Sarah Johnson**  
Curator, Newcastle Art Gallery  
July 2016

1. Charles Baudelaire, cited in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p55

2. Marion Borgelt, Paris c1996

3. H.H Arnason, *A History of Modern Art – painting, sculpture, architecture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1972, p618

4. Golli Dorflies, 'Lucio Fontana and his Influence' in *Abstract Art since 1945*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1970, pp138–141