

KINGS Artist Run acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate. We offer our respect to Elders both past and present and extend this offer to all First Nations people.

KINGS

Jana Papantoniou
RETROGRADE

MARCH / APRIL
14.03.24-13.04.24

Artist Run

Established in 2003, KINGS Artist-Run provides a location for contemporary art practice, supporting distinctive experimental projects by artists at all stages of their careers.

Open 12-5pm Thursday,
Friday, Saturday, Sunday
69 Capel Street,
West Melbourne VIC 3003

GALLERY ONE

Jana Papantoniou RETROGRADE

Retrograde speaks to a process of making by which the image is fashioned out of its own erasure. Examining the conceptual underpinnings of subtractive processes, such as those brought forth by the monotype, this exhibition hinges upon the viscerality of negative image spaces, and the fragmentation of pictorial forms broken and pieced together backwards. Such fragmentation becomes the structure for unstructuring the image, existing as a framework for deconstructing both subject matter and artwork.

These works coalesce to form a dialogue between the static and dynamic by challenging notions of completeness. Here, erasure becomes additive where the process of eliminating one work becomes the very thing that ignites the next. *Retrograde* questions the afterlife of an artwork by asking what happens after it has been printed or ‘finished’? How can it live on?

List of works:

GALLERY ONE

Left to right from entrance:

Jana Papantoniou, *Studies in transience*, (series), 2023, monotypes with cleaning fluid on cotton rag papers, dimensions variable.

Jana Papantoniou, *Two Figures Interwoven*, 2023, monotype on Somerset, 2.25 x 1.48m.

JANA PAPANTONIOU is a legally blind artist based in Naarm/Melbourne. Papantoniou utilises drawing and printmaking to challenge preconceived notions of sightedness through the perspective of non-normative vision. Realising her work through a firmly pictorial lens, Papantoniou’s practice challenges assumptions conflating blindness with non-visual experience. Exclusively working within black and white, her practice is captivated by extremes of brightness and shadow, and the intensity as the two collide. With an ongoing fascination for the oscillation between figuration and abstraction, Papantoniou encourages a visual overwhelm anchored by something deeply human.

Transcorporeality in Retrograde

- ‘There is an elemental and alchemical language of materials and processes ... in their relationship with one another, they set up a potential for transformation / fire transforms matter into spirit, ash is residue, it has potential for life again’. – Janet Laurence¹

Embodiment and abstraction collide in Jana Papantoniou’s *Retrograde*. Papantoniou’s work explores what it means to create visual work through a perspective which decentralises the ocular. Taking on a corporeal practice, Papantoniou throws her body into the work. The remaining traces of hand, brush and printing materials emerge to form a total picture. The act of creation itself becomes the creation.

We tend to think of the body as separate from the environment around us. Challenging this theory allows our bodies to become part of the world, integrated and surrounded. Stacey Alaimo’s theory of transcorporeality posits a space where the human body is ‘enmeshed’ into the physical material world.² In this sense, transcorporeality signals the body as ‘substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments’.³ In these various print works, the traces of Papantoniou’s body, scratched surfaces and evaporated methylated spirits – by-products of cleaning the monotype press – become embedded and embodied in the work. The line between medium and image is blurred, and thus a ‘transcorporeal’ experience of printmaking materialises.

The use of the body as medium and mode has its roots in multiple art traditions. From the physicality of Japanese post-war movement 具体 (*gutai*), which sees the body used as tool, to French artist Orlan, whose use of plastic surgery transforms the human body into living sculpture, corporeality hooks us into the physical experience of artworks. The print itself, can also be a deeply physically challenging and involved medium. Despite the use of printmaking instruments, many prints retain deeply gestural elements.

Monotype in particular, is a labourious and intensive printmaking technique. Unlike other print making techniques, which centre around the creation and replication of identical prints, monotypes create a unique and irreplacable image. These monotypes are deeply rich and individual images, thus retaining their ‘aura’ despite forming out of a mechanical process.⁴ As Robert Verghoot argues, ‘reproductions, like original works [can have] their own character, their own aura’.⁵ It is within this embodied and transcorporeal printmaking technique that aura is enhanced and intensified.

Through the involved printmaking process, more is created than just the final print. Left behind are remnants, waste and an extensive archive of sketches, drafts and versions. Within these by-products, lies a product in itself. Papantoniou re-activates the archive and re-energises the remnants. In exhibiting both large scale monotypes and the images that arise as a consequence of these prints, the archive becomes ‘non-static’. The body as medium and the by-product as product all converge, rendering the artist and viewer as transcorporeal subject/objects.

Ava Cadee is a writer and poet based on Ngannawal and Ngambri land (so-called Canberra). Her words can be found in *ArtsHub*, *Cordite* and *Voiceworks* amongst others.

¹ Janet Laurence, *Frames of Reference: Aspects of Feminism and Art*, artist statement, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Pier 4/5, Sydney, 1991).

² Stacey Alaimo, Interview by Julia Kuznetski, December 20, 2019, transcript, Tallinn University, Estonia.

³ Stacey Alaimo, “States of suspension: Trans-corporeality at sea”, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 19 no. 3 (year), 476-493.

⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969)

⁵ R. Verhoogt, *Art in Reproduction: Nineteenth-Century Prints after Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Jozef Israëls and Ary Scheffer*, trans. Michèle Hendricks (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2007).