

# Possible Worlds

Rhett D'Costa  
Robin Kingston

April 18 - May 11, 2007  
Opening April 17, 5pm

Switchback Gallery  
Monash University  
Gippsland Campus, Northways Rd  
Churchill, 3842, Australia



## It doesn't matter where they come from...

Rhett D'Costa's drawings are about the idea and act of drawing itself. They invite abstraction.

A simple geometry of forms derived from early astronomical calculations and often linked to the sacred, presides over the order that deploys itself in space and time, marking proportion and rhythm, duration and distance... Circle, square and triangle making the world to our measure. D'Costa's abstraction lies in the process of the setting up of such structures to suggest beginnings that go astray.

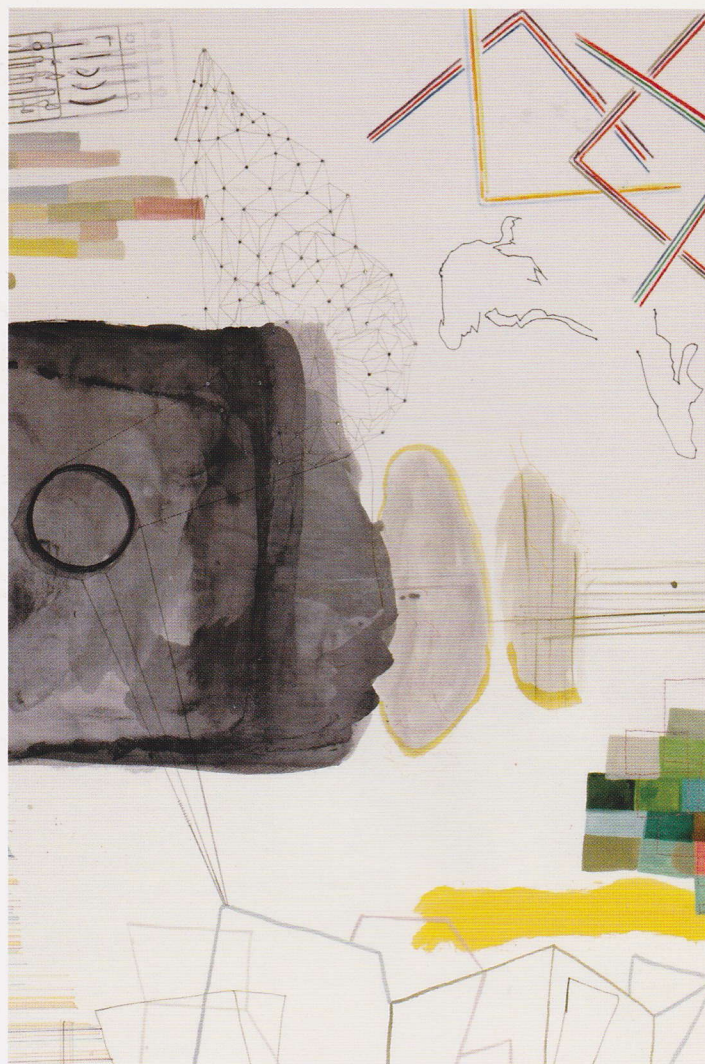
A collector of materials used to measure and project - the French curve, protractor, ruler, compass and triangle, and even an Indian ruler angled for an inside pants leg measurement - D'Costa is interested in systems and in their obsolescence.

His system of generating images has a slow and deliberate, graphic beginning. A processional architecture of carefully drawn grids initiate pattern. Their precision and skew is noticeable against the paper's edge. Yet these infinite progressions are never fully formed. They quickly become entanglements, explorations, elaborations and correspondences as D'Costa disavows the kind of formalism (or mysticism) that requires a balanced composition and paring down. In these works, one thing is no more or less imperfect than another. There is no hierarchy of line, no ideal measure of proportion or balance and compositional elements fit in a way that they just will. The poetics of free play rather than judgement influence their making.

D'Costa shifts the systemic logic of intersecting structures to create new articulations of shape. Irregular geometrical gestalts, like a deluge of energies, propose a totality that is potential, conjectural and manifold. Somewhat dissembled; reticent diamond grids become rampant and subtle arching circles splay to embrace or bolster splat forms of liquid colour, gold leaf and lava-like flows of sequins. Loosely pixilated striations of hypercolour texta fray into sound. The circle, no longer silent, appears dripped and sewn; coiled in space; triangulated into colour. There is a tension between order and chaos, between the ruled and hand drawn line. Things fall apart and coalesce as new meanings are created somewhere between the organic, schematic and accidental. Like dissonance in music, this noise or interference or slippage is where communication occurs.

There are aesthetic references to the tradition of abstraction - to the serial order of Johns' target-mandala, Pollock's expressionist drip, Lichtenstein's brush stroke; the private utopias of the Suprematists; Mondrian's sparse geometries and the colours of Malevich - and to the terrain of esoteric, occult, magical, architectural, cartographic and astrological drawing. Engaging different kinds of knowledge - not wanting to know things until the time is right, as if to know something in an intellectual way would somehow block or prohibit other kinds of exploration and knowing - D'Costa's cosmologies inhabit the relation between intuition and conscious thought. They embrace the serendipity of everyday experience as that which appears random but sits in a system of parameters.

D'Costa's mark making is like concrete poetry. With it we lose the image and move into something felt, beautiful, tactile. There is a hovering and a plenitude. An implosion of matter into particles. Fluids become discrete, forms netted. We are presented with slow and fast drawing - with the embedded, slowly stitched line, the sutra, that allows a sorting and distilling of experience. The paper becomes an airy void housing orbiting satellites and faceted origami architectures. Elements creep from the edges like sideways skylines of rainbow pyramids and cranes. We encounter microscopic and aerial views, telescoped through time and read the different registers of phenomena, constellation, and cosmology as one. We sense the weight of ink and sequins; the way the paper responds to pigment, as some colours seep and become translucent, and others - especially the dark ones - tend to sit on the surface. A palpable drip of paint is iterated as a shadowed



Rhett D'Costa, *It Snows Only Once In Our Dreams* (detail), 2006

76.5 x 56.5 cm

Chinese Ink, Japanese Watercolour, Acrylic Polymer, Graphite, Pencil, Cotton Thread, Texta, Marker, Swarovski Crystals on Stonehenge Paper

Back cover (left to right, top to bottom):

Rhett D'Costa, *Beautiful Numbers* (detail), 2006

76.5 x 56.5 cm

Japanese Watercolour, Graphite, Polycotton Thread, Acrylic Baubles, Swarovski Crystals on Stonehenge Paper

Rhett D'Costa, *"We Come Spinning Out Of Nothingness, Scattering Stars Like Dust" - Rumi*

(detail), 2006

76.5 x 56.5 cm

Chinese Ink, Japanese Watercolor, Graphite, Polycotton Thread, Texta Marker, Swarovski Crystals on Stonehenge Paper

Rhett D'Costa, *The Melancholic Solitude of Giant Squid* (detail), 2007

76.5 x 56.5 cm

Japanese Watercolour, Pencil, Polycotton Thread Cotton Thread, Texta Marker, Swarovski Crystals on Stonehenge Paper

Rhett D'Costa, *A Garden Plan* (detail), 2006

76.5 x 56.5 cm

Chinese Ink, Japanese Watercolour, Acrylic Polymer, Graphite, Pencil on Stonehenge Paper

stain confounding accident and order. A Dadaist scatter of fluffy acrylic baubles floats across the surface like grains of pollen. Crystalline 'bling' marks perfect points in a physical, shifting, astral ground.

These momentary, nomadic geometries of errant number and gesture posit a world of vast intangible and amorphous ideas. A world in which we realize what we perceive is limited. A plurality of possible spaces in our world of compressed time, they conjure an esoteric memory of ancient and imagined worlds... The sense of ideas refracting across space, without maps, as an abstract thing becomes a living being.

Martina Copley, March 2007

Rhett D'Costa is represented by Gallery 101, Melbourne, Australia.

Photographs by Julie Millowick





Robin Kingston, **Untitled**, March 2005  
29.5 x 19.5 cm, irregular dimensions  
Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper

Cover:  
Robin Kingston, **Untitled - Nagy 1** (detail), January/February 2007  
76.5 x 56.5 cm  
Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper

### It doesn't matter where they come from...

Robin Kingston's paintings are like drawings. They share the characteristics usually associated with drawing - a modesty of means, directness, creative speculation, and the unfinishedness of the fragment. They are thick, thin, somber and joyous, formal, analytical, playful and contemplative.

Working with humble materials, the given formats of grid and line and the 'filled-in' arabesque, Kingston builds a fluid visual vocabulary; reusing strategies and recombining a limited palette of colour and gesture.

Recurring structures of linear pattern and distinct shapes relate the substantial to the immaterial and invisible. Everything about the process of making, all the acts that accumulate and are forgotten, is imbedded in what the work becomes. In the relation between drawing as touch and drawing as intellectual concept, mark making is integral. It conveys the hand and eye of the artist. In it we trace the line from hand to mind - the thinking in the work.

Kingston allows the material to do what it wants. Drawn lines remain distinct, but do not always have hard and straight edges. Sometimes the pigment sits on top. It may be shiny or matt. Fluid painted lines and shapes have weight and density. Washes of colour, still viscous, blend

and melt into one another and seep into an absorbent ground. Different concentrations and tensions create potent, understated material differences. Blank spaces delineate form and inhere. Lines scratch and grab, whisper and glow as we become aware of the sensuous and immediate response of hand to surface. Chance is incorporated as 'samplings' that occur when swatches coincidentally fall together. Changes in interval bring different perspectival effects - literal and illusory - that induce a sense of one's own material boundaries shifted.

A combination of the hand drawn and ruled line shifts our reading of intent and grants the work an integrity or selfhood. The artist's value of labour, understatement and nuance sustains a kind of human presence in the projection of pattern as matrix. Playing with a metal rule and the strain and stress of line, Kingston's projects proceed with attentiveness and contemplation. 'The working process is itself part of the painting'\* and the sensitivity of decision making is regarded as an active way of thinking. Performative rather than programmatic, these works are not reductive. Their energy is drawn from a different paradigm of abstraction - from the continual process of transcription and invention that occurs in the studio.

For one year, Kingston stopped painting oil on linen to work directly on the wall of her studio. That wall was already so marked that it would have been near impossible to whiten, so she added elements, considering the new relationships formed by these additions over time.

These intimate abstractions are about a language that comes from something quite specific yet unexplained. A continuum of intersections, images and after images, frequencies and traces of events, they have a strange, intentional and awkward grace. Filled with quiet vigour and contradiction, there is dialogue between spontaneity and restraint, rigour and nonchalance. The works hold together, they mean something, yet there is a sense of not quite knowing in which we are unsure of the object. We wonder what they mean to the artist in the making.

Kingston describes her process as a kind of 'nudging' to the end of the work which is then to be read or 'unpicked' by the viewer. A kind of journey from a place of not-knowing; a beginning without an idea of the end. Moving in a particular direction and allowing herself to be moved, Kingston has created a way of working that is almost infinitely elastic and open-ended, in which one idea leads to another and still another in intuitive leaps from suggestions inherent in the work. Not model or equivalence or concept, these works are a form of abstraction which combines a process oriented art with the flux of intuitive decision making.

Looking forward and back - to the history of abstraction, especially in the American vein; to the artist's early memories of pattern and colour; and to the unfolding of the drawing - Kingston creates a simple gestalt with a specific temporal sense. In these works we find an endlessly elusive stable point of view; a suspended rapport; a remembering and forgetting; a moving from 'nothingness' to 'fullness'; a ravelling and going back. Contingent and relational, they are about movement, change, confluence and inventiveness within the limits of a given practice.

The works become instances - impermanent, remembered, conjured, untranslatable instances. They have a contemplative 'drawing' power. We can get lost in them, just like in memory. The 'whole' is an unheroic, loose, fluid, geometry that is unstable, fugitive; a complex materiality that comes from thinking about creativity in a conscious way. In the tenuous and delicate emerging and receding, there is the pleasure of emptiness and the pleasure of form. A space to draw from, a space of possibility.

Martina Copley, March 2007

\* The artist, *On the Wall*, exhibition catalogue, RMIT, Melbourne, 2006.