

Art in Law XVIII

Lawyers Love and Live in Abstraction

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Faculty of Law, University of Otago
Curated by Marion Wassenaar

From the very beginning of their studies to their lives in practice and beyond, lawyers are taught to embrace the hypothetical. When they look at a statute or case, they are considering the impact of the law in a hypothetical fact scenario. And while a particular set of facts will ultimately crystallise that impact, no less important is the idea of the rule or maxim in the abstract. Legal reasoning forces us to divorce the text from context and parse for meaning in manner sometimes quite untethered from reality. Academic lawyers go one step further, sometimes questioning the process of legal reasoning itself and whether true abstraction is even possible. Like an artist, legal academics can spend their life in abstraction; an abyss of “what ifs”. Like the artist, they find contentment in that abstraction, and deeper meaning in the process. Art, like law, embraces the abstract, and lawyers, like artists, consume and are consumed by that abstraction.

Marcelo Rodriguez Ferrere

The works in this exhibition explore a continuum of abstraction, either in juxtaposition with subtly perceptible elements or purely abstract. There is a focus on other visual qualities relating to process such as colour, form, texture, scale and materiality. The origins of abstract art trace back to 19th century Impressionism and Expressionism to experiment with the idea that painting can capture emotion and subjectivity. With abstract art, there is a detachment from visual observations toward a pursuit for the non-objective and non-representational. In essence, the vitality of abstraction invites curiosity and allows our imagination to run free.

Patricia Bennett

Sacred Connections 7, 2020, acrylic on canvas

Sacred Connections 9, 2020, acrylic on aluminium

Trisha is interested in issues of transition in both her psychotherapy and art practice. In this series, ‘*Sacred connections*’, she has focused her explorations on the liminal space, between life and death.

Michael Greaves

Eight painters you should know, 2020, oil and aerosol on linen

Flush, 2020, oil and aerosol on linen

Salt and fat, 2020, oil and aerosol on linen

Painting as a manifestation swerves away from the object itself, a document of it, and of the contextual relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Painting for me, as I find it, is like working through a collection of memories or parts of things, to arrive at a threshold moment, as if remembering these suddenly and with surprising context. In that, the act of making a work, then is like a process of trying to get closer to the thing, becoming more a force and quality of the medium, of a challenge of resemblance and association with its ‘stuff’. (Michael Greaves, 2021).

Miranda Joseph

Sakura, 2020, acrylic on canvas

Sakura I, 2020, acrylic on canvas

Pine, 2018, screen print

Anchored in the contemporary, urban environment, the *Sakura* paintings allude to the interactions between the species itself, the human and the spaces they inhabit. While the works evoke a sense of familiarity, colour, gesture and the play of light probe an inquiry into abstraction.

Alexandra Kennedy

Yellowcake, 2019, oil on canvas

Untitled (urban void 013), 2019, oil on canvas

Colour is used as material and as matter to describe a hyperobject – a fragment or ‘part object’- that forms part of a continuous field potentially extending beyond the frame of the canvas.

Thomas Lord and Blair Thomson

Twins, 2011 – 2020, mixed media on canvas

Twins is the result of a collaboration, eight years in the making and completed a week before the March 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. Utilising the immediate studio surroundings and incorporating rain, seawater, soil, tree bark and other found objects, the work’s intention is to consider the false dichotomy between humans and nature.

