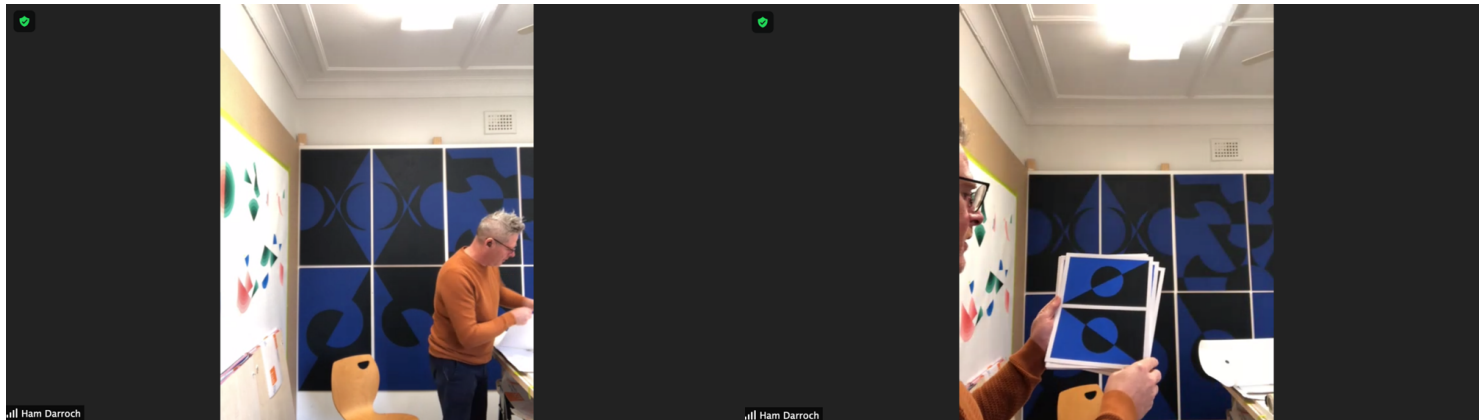


On Paintings, Objects and Process –
Ham Darroch in conversation with Bianca Winataputri

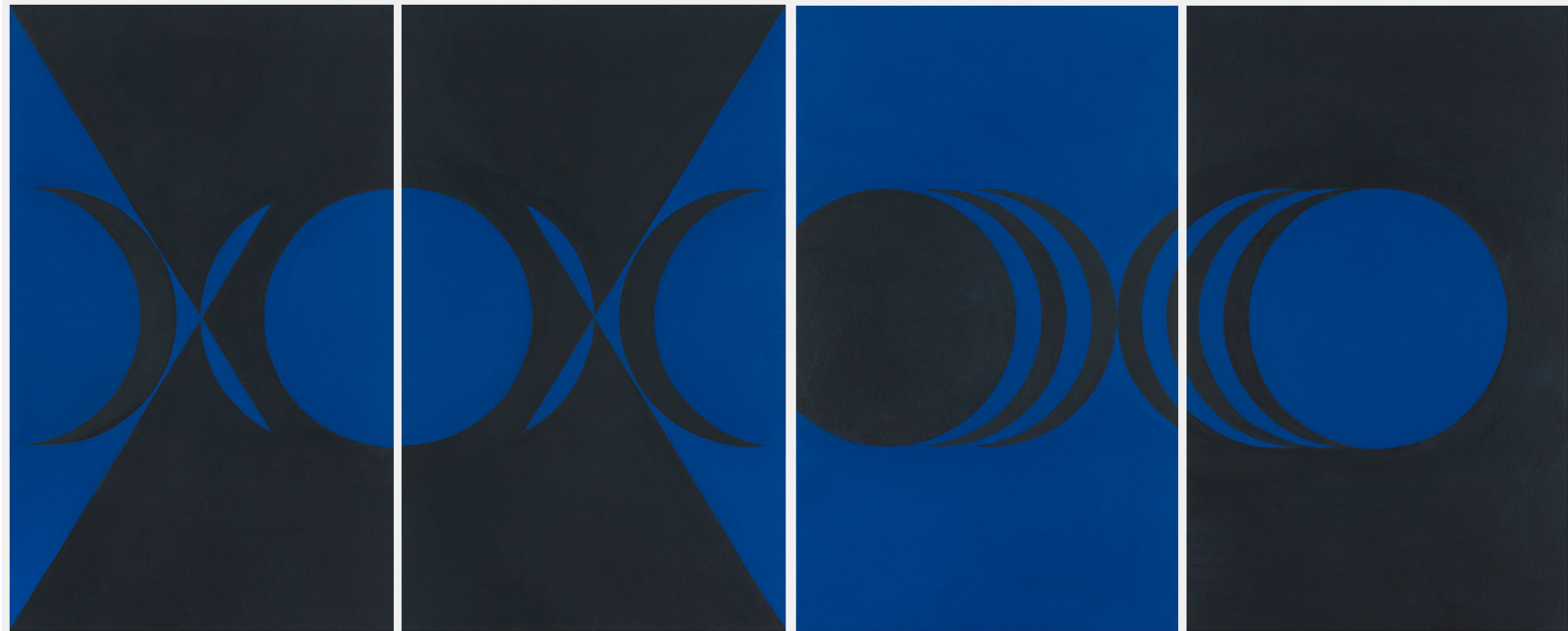


Bianca Winataputri: Great to see you in the studio! Could you share more about your works for the upcoming exhibition at Five Walls gallery? What's that series of works behind you?

Ham Darroch: So this series of work is titled *I see red* (2020) and I will install 12 pairs of panels in Melbourne for the exhibition. There's a nine-meter wall in the gallery and it will make a nice field of colour where hopefully the effects caused by the mix of colours will begin to happen. In these paintings, a blue and a very dark green both begin as a red. You can pick up a faint bit of red on the edges which flares up and because of this mix there is a kind of flux that happens. Originally the series was influenced by Goethe's colour studies where he [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe] immerses colours into darker fields of colour, some of them are black through to a gradient of light green and I think it's fascinating what happens spatially.

When I saw those studies in Stuttgart and in Berlin, they stayed with me and I began to make work around that kind of

interruption of colour. So holding that colour harmony in my mind I began to mix this blue and green both beginning as a red. That's where this kind of energy happens with these paintings. The blue and green are obviously very subdued and yet the red will vibrate, then a kind of visual expansion happens.



I see red 2020 detail acrylic on birch

Bianca Winataputri: You work with both objects and paintings. Could you describe your approach to these practices? How do they differ or intersect? I've also noted that you spoke about tensions in your practice and use of materials, could you also share more about this?



Ham Darroch: Yeah, there's always a tension within my work between the object and the painting. For me the object is approached in a different way, it doesn't have the kind of pressure of a painting. I'm not painting on objects to reduce the value of the painting or composition. I expect that if I paint on an object the interest in the work would grow out of whether it's about the colour or a historical question, or something from memory. Some of the objects that I painted on, they have a harmony of colours, that for me, are about memory. Objects are an extension of the figure, I'm not a figurative painter, but I don't mind painting on objects that I'm familiar with. On that front, I think it's a way into the works. Also, there is another thing, which I'm only beginning to understand, my wall paintings of course, are built around my body and my scale. So they're actually linked to the figure in a similar way to the objects. I can't make them without my proportion. It becomes a building up of an image and then a dance between shapes within the composition. With the objects, we know them, some of them are discarded. So the tension is, are they on the edge of being lost? Are they rubbish? Are they deliberately altered to tell a story? All these things sound out another concept. There's no narrative, there's no recording. So that's quite a curious process.

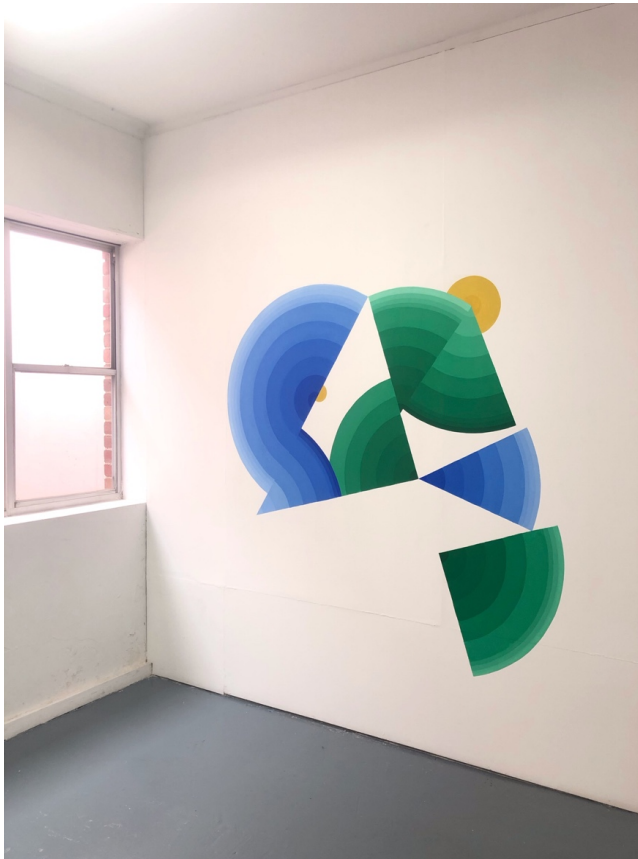
Happy Hour, 2020 acrylic on billiard lampshade

Bianca Winataputri: That's very interesting that both the objects and painting have this very personal and bodily approach to their making. I also loved your point about stories that objects carry and memories of place. How do you select the objects? What's involved in this process?

Ham Darroch: The object is very important and I have a certain radar for them. For example with ***Happy Hour*** (2020) when I saw that lampshade, it reminded me of a first visit to a Sydney pub with the noise and the rumble of all the people.

There was always pool tables, a billiard room or snooker room. So I got this billiard lampshade, which has all the remnants of its past life, and the painting that I put on it was about this kind of geometric chaos. The colours are intensely charged, but that's what it was for me a kind of object loaded with a memory of place.

Bianca Winataputri: Would you consider your work with objects and painting as a fluid practice or process? Even with paintings you have wall paintings and paintings on paper or canvas. How would you describe your engagement with these changing materials and results?



Ham Darroch: Yes its fluid and I've noticed that some of the objects become motifs that can be used to make bigger paintings. So the saw-blade motif paintings (Mantis series), that's where the object breaks out and becomes a painterly tool. The saw blades are very much charged with colour which has its own dynamic but the action or history of an object maintains its essential knowledge. Alternatively the gradient wall paintings can become works on paper or canvas. For me the wall painting is when they're spatially at their peak at the moment. They are about me inhabiting the composition because I'm building it as I go. So I can reference Paolo Uccello or Pollock, or other artists through that discussion and think about it as I'm making it. But then ultimately, it has to come back to my proportions.

Harvest 2021 wall painting 3x3m wall

Bianca Winataputri: That's so fascinating because painting I guess can be considered as quite a solitude, individual process, but in your practice you're never really alone as you're making these works.

Ham Darroch: Yeah, I think if I'm making a space, a pictorial space, I want that to open up as deeply as I can make it so it makes sense for me to then use a perspectival or proportion tool for people to conceptually go into that space. And also there is a performative element to those paintings. Most of the paintings that I've made, people could talk to me while I'm creating the work. I'm happy to have conversations. While painting Measure 2.2015 at the Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, there were around 30,000 people who walked by, and I had people coming along and asking me questions.

Bianca Winataputri: There can be quite a lot of pressure when making wall paintings with a live audience. How would you approach or handle mistakes, if you would even call them that? Say if the dimensions or colours don't go as planned, how do you manage that or negotiate that space even?

Ham Darroch: This process of making becomes a sort of contemplative space. And then I just trust myself. In my mind when I've drawn up the painting, I'm kind of putting in a scaffolding where I know where the eye should go and then I just have to follow through and trust myself with the process. Within this process I still find things, mistakes become discoveries. For instance in Counter Attack I started to put these sort of small blue and yellow circles adjacent to larger forms. If you stood in front of that, it made a kind of green field there. There's also long lines you can follow in the painting. So I began to find these elements within the painting.

Bianca Winataputri: There is this sense of continuity in your practice. As you mentioned, sometimes you noticed shapes or forms reappearing from one work to another or informing one another. Could you describe this ongoing aspect of your practice? Or has it always been changing from one work to the next?

The Conversation 2014 casein on bell weight and brush with twine and pulley.

Ham Darroch: It's certainly not changing in that way. If you were to look back at my work I think that the overarching theme is about time. Whether it's a slow burn, when you're looking at a work and then a colour resonates, or there's an immediacy to the work say with a rustic object, it's got the remnants of abstract art or modernist art in it. It takes time to process that stuff.

Bianca Winataputri: Yeah, that's right. It's interesting to reflect on objects and time and their permanence in the world. And just to link time back again to your practice, it's also about putting time into the process and experimenting with form, space and materials.

Ham Darroch: Yes, I experiment a lot. I make studies and remix the colours, these ***I see red*** panels first exist as studies in gouache. Some of them worked and some of them didn't.

Bianca Winataputri: These studies would make an excellent display! I also admired that there is this kind of commitment in your practice and almost surrender to the process and time it takes for works to develop.

Counter Attack 2020 wall painting 4.5 x 12m

