

Complexities

Essay by Bernadette Klavins

Capturing human expression is central to Thomas Readett's figurative practice. Rendered in oil paints and aerosol, his sensitive portraits depict psychological spaces as he draws out the inner life of his subjects. Beyond sharing a single narrative, *Complexities* positions self-portraiture as a vehicle for connection, and emphasises self-expression as vital to building resilience, meaning and connection in times of uncertainty, grief or overwhelming flux. Readett's broader advocacy for mental health awareness is unified with his creative practice, as his work seeks to foster connection and healing.

Inspired by the Rubik's cube as an iconic symbol of a puzzle or 'thinking game', Readett expands his painting practice beyond the two-dimensional. Marking a shift in his practice, *Complexities* sees an increasingly intuitive and process-based way of making - a body of work that began with no fixed outcome. Across Readett's dynamic practice that fluidly shifts between public art and studio-based painting, his portraits are consistently large scale, monochromatic and dream-like, where hyper-focused figures fall away into hazy, tonal environments. *Complexities* gives form to grey areas - between states of waking and dreaming, masking and revealing, experiencing and processing.

In lieu of coloured stickers, the surfaces of Readett's cube hosts a number of scrambled, monochromatic self-portraits. Expressions twist and collide across the cube's faces - gentle downcast eyes are married with a grin with bared teeth, while doubled vision of alarmed eyes are undercut by a mouth in gentle repose. These unfixed, hybrid expressions capture a conveyer belt of psychological states. Curiously, these self-portraits are simultaneously personal and neutral for Readett, as he is more interested in how his image might act as a surrogate for viewers to then project and overlay their personal experiences upon. These portraits are a relational space to cultivate empathy, and validate the complex emotional experiences that we grapple with as humans.

Readett spends his down-time captivated by horror-tinged video games that create emotionally fuelled, existential and often ethical situations for players to navigate. These gaming aesthetics have now seeped into Readett's visual language. Mimicking the way a digital image is composed of many pixels, each section of painting acts as a building

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block of a greater picture. Panels are showered across the gallery walls – each revealing a section of illuminated bone, a dark hollow or a gleaming row of teeth. These pieces come together to form the image of a skull - a fragmented memento mori. This veiled motif quietly speaks to the mortal expressions upon the cube, as Readett reckons with the fluxes between life and death, our hidden and exposed selves, connection and disconnection, indifference and empathy.

Bernadette Klavins is a South Australian artist, writer, and arts worker. Working within the field of sculpture, Klavins draws upon the transformative and poetic potential of materials and processes, and explores their relationship to deep time.

Thomas Readett is a Ngarrindjeri man and established artist from Adelaide, South Australia. He is currently working as Tarnanthi Education Officer at the Art Gallery of South Australia part-time alongside his art practice. Thomas has been a drawer his entire life ever since he was a child, wanting to further his career as a professional artist he enrolled into Adelaide Central School of Art in 2011, and it was then he began painting. This is now his main practice among others. Thomas graduated his study at Adelaide Central School of Art completing his Associate Degree and Bachelor of Visual Arts Degree (BVA) in 2015.

Thomas Readett, *Complexities*

May 21- June 25, 2021

List of works

1-20	<i>Untitled</i> , 2021 Acrylic & oil paint on board	\$150 each
21	<i>Complexities</i> , 2021 Acrylic & oil paint, and wood	\$9000

For sales enquiries please contact Thomas Readett
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The Mill acknowledges that the land on which we meet and work is the traditional lands of the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their Country. We also acknowledge the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.

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