



BRODIE ELLIS

>HEAVY LAUNCH

**LIN
DEN** NEW
ART

IMAGE > [Front cover] Brodie Ellis, *Fallen Falcon Heavy* [installation view], 2019, pine, clay, hessian, paper.
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

"Brodie Ellis was born in 1979 on the night that Skylab came crashing back to Earth, spreading fragments of state-of-the-art space junk across Western Australia and the Indian Ocean ... a fitting welcome to an artist whose work questions the pursuit of progress at the expense of our environment."¹

Brodie Ellis responds eloquently to the most pressing concerns of our time with a practice that is underpinned by extensive research into technological development, natural habitats and the sites where destructive activities, such as mining, are taking place. Her work is driven by an ongoing investigation into the motivations behind technological progress and the ethics of how our planet's limited natural resources are being used.

BRODIE ELLIS

>HEAVY LAUNCH

Ellis built her first space craft in her studio at Gertrude Contemporary in 2008. The work that followed, presented at ACCA, the Sydney Biennale and most recently at MARS

Gallery, all addresses our relationship with nature and technology and the exploitative and damaging practices undertaken by some of the wealthiest companies across the world. Her practice is guided by her love of science and discovery, which has also led her to study technological innovations such as the Hubble telescope, the International Space Station, NASA's rocket Juno and the robotic spacecraft Cassini. Ellis supports space travel and discovery if it is conducted in an ethical manner with a careful use of resources.

The compelling and disarming thing about Ellis' work is that its immediate affect is one of wonder and awe. Whether it is a series of mining detonations, as in *The Crystal World* [2016], or the rare cloud formations of *Noosphere* [2009], Ellis' work evokes a sense of amazement at the sheer beauty and power of both natural and man-made phenomena.

Heavy Launch presents a large sculptural installation, based on the design of the *Falcon Heavy*, the world's most powerful operational rocket, created by SpaceX to one day take people to the Moon and Mars. On the SpaceX website, its founder Elon Musk has written, "You want to wake up in the morning and think the future is going to be great - and that's what being a spacefaring civilization is all about. It's

¹ Doughty, J. 'Cool Hunter Predictions: Brodie Ellis', *Australian Art Collector Magazine*, Issue 47, March 2009



IMAGE > Brodie Ellis, *Heavy Launch* [installation view], 2019.
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



IMAGE > Brodie Ellis, *Heavy Launch* [installation view], 2019.
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about believing in the future and thinking that the future will be better than the past. And I can't think of anything more exciting than going out there and being among the stars."²

His statement is full of optimism, which contrasts sharply with Ellis' representation of his rocket. Covered in clay, the vessel is earth-bound, literally encrusted with the matter that it sought to escape. Like a relic, exhumed, a monument to a future that may not be witnessed by anyone. A failed escape has taken place and all that is left is a crumbling shell of the technology envisaged to save us. There is an atmosphere of anxiety and apocalyptic desolation, an eerie whiteness, a dry, pristine sterility; an absence of life. The natural materials that Ellis has used to manually construct this rocket will deteriorate over the course of the exhibition, which further conveys the frailty of the idea that we can colonise other planets in order to overcome the problems we have created on Earth. Ellis describes this work as "a ritual disempowering of the commercial image of space travel".³

Fallen Falcon Heavy is accompanied by a video that shows slowed down footage of rocket launches. The footage has been sourced online and was originally produced by NASA. Ellis has altered the footage to near abstraction. Furthermore, the rockets point sideways, moving right to left across the screen instead of upwards into the sky. Again, Ellis subverts the idea that these launches can only be seen as positive and progressive.

This in no way detracts from the beauty and magnificence of the launch events themselves. The film heightens their vivid burning, their power, the sheer brilliance of the possibility of space travel. It has a hypnotic, transcendent quality. The close shots of the film exclude most of the original footage, leaving only a small window into the explosive tumult. This in itself is agitating and it suggests that there is a limited understanding of the viability of SpaceX's maxim of "making life multiplanetary".⁴

Ellis' second video, *Contact and Witness*, documents the mating displays of cuttlefish. Ellis captured this footage over a number of days filming at Point Lowly in South Australia. The film shows how the cuttlefish are able to signal and communicate by fluorescing and generating intricate variations in the colour and pattern of their skin. They are also able to camouflage themselves perfectly into

² Musk, E, www.spacex.com/mars, accessed: 27.08.19.

³ Ellis, B. from an interview with Juliette Hanson, 5.8.19.

⁴ www.spacex.com/mars accessed: 27.08.19.

their surroundings. The cuttlefish's means of protecting themselves is completely self-sufficient. Their intelligence manifests in their ability to reflect their environment.

We know relatively little about cuttlefish and hence *Contact and Witness* provides a beautiful example of how much we can still learn about life on our own planet. This work sits in line with a stream of current ecocritical thinking that suggests "recognition of the lives of animals in conjunction with our own animality is indispensable to the creation of ecological sensibilities and ethical orientations that are adequate to the demands of the Anthropocene."⁵ Acknowledging and better understanding our vulnerability could be the first step towards environmental sustainability.

Heavy Launch challenges the hubris of building rockets to escape a depleted planet. Everything used to make SpaceX's *Falcon Heavy* comes from nature. In reality, we only have natural resources at our disposal, and it is important to question the positioning of technology as separate to, above or beyond nature. Technology can be wonderful, but is it the best thing that we can achieve? Is it taking us in the right direction? Ellis' work provides a space for our anthropocentric reevaluation to begin.

JULIETTE HANSON
Curator
September 2019

⁵ Deyo, B., "Tragedy, Ecophobia, and Animality in the Anthropocene", in Eds. Bladow, K. and Ladino, J., *Affective Ecocriticism Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018, p.197.
The Anthropocene is the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

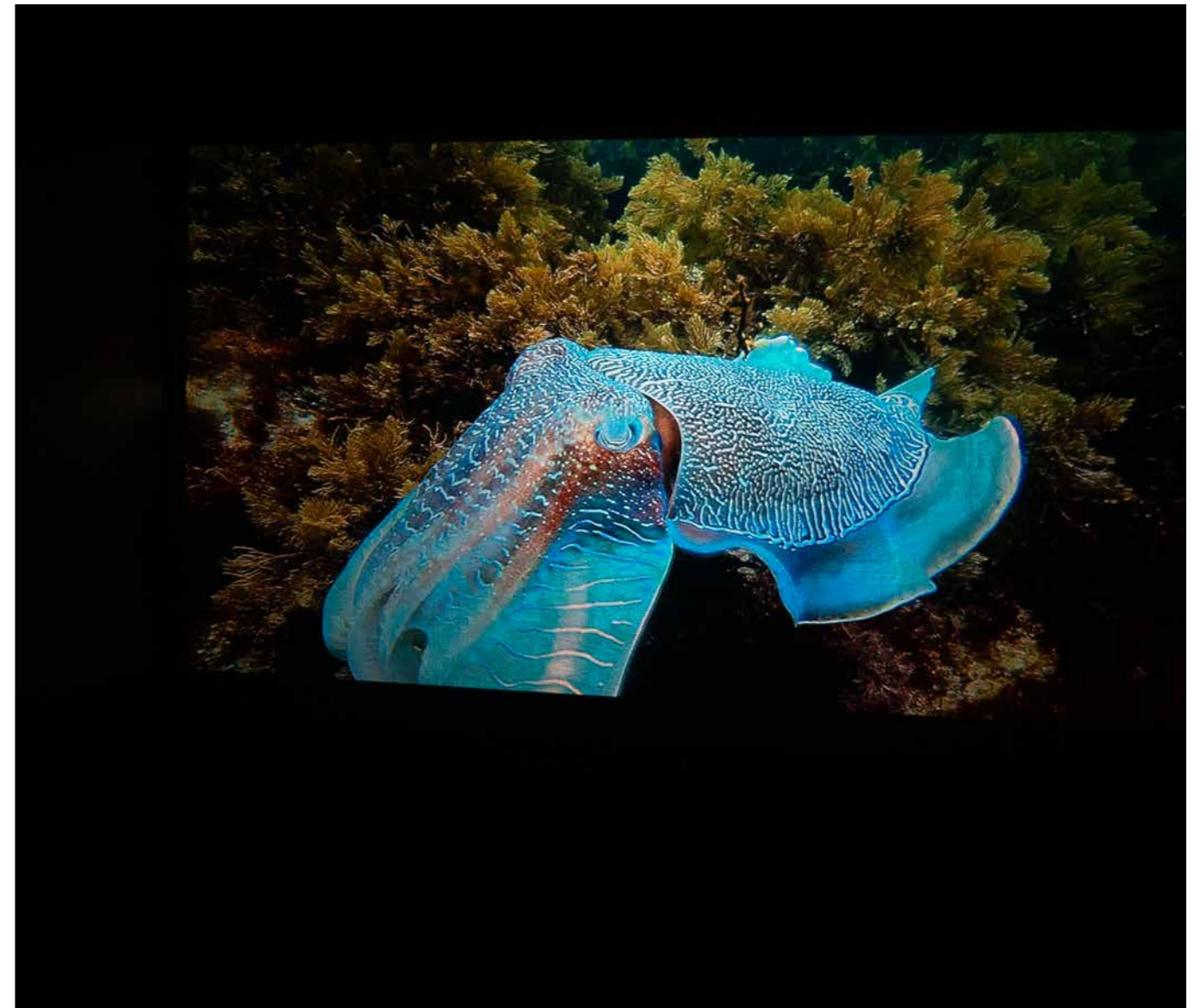


IMAGE > Brodie Ellis, *Contact and Witness* [installation view], 2019, single channel SD video with stereo sound duration: 00:11:11. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

Originally from Lismore, Brodie Ellis lives and works in Castlemaine Victoria. Ellis holds a BFA in Painting from the VCA and studied Sculpture and Photography at the Canberra School of Art. Ellis' practice is concerned with the exploitation and destruction of nature, and questions the use of technology to overcome or dominate the environment.

BRODIE ELLIS

In 2008, Ellis was a Gertrude Studios artist with Gertrude Contemporary. In 2009, she was included in NEW09 at ACCA, and was featured in the 17th Biennale of Sydney in 2010. Ellis has also shown her work in public and commercial spaces across Australia and internationally, including McClelland Gallery, Monash University Museum of Art, Gertrude Contemporary, Domain House, George Paton Gallery and Care of Gallery, Milan. Ellis' work is held in the collection of the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart.



IMAGE > Brodie Ellis working in the studio. Image courtesy of the artist.



IMAGE LEFT > Brodie Ellis, *Fallen Falcon Heavy* [installation view], 2019, pine, clay, hessian, paper. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

BRODIE ELLIS

Heavy Launch, 2019

Single channel SD video with stereo sound

Duration: 00:05:55

\$3,500

Edition 1/3

LIST OF WORKS

Fallen Falcon Heavy, 2019

pine, clay, hessian, paper

62 x 147 x 720cm

\$22,000

Or, cast in bronze: POA

MaxQ-1, 2019

bronze and oil

80 x 30 x 15cm

\$3,900

Edition 1/3

MaxQ-2, 2019

bronze and oil

80.5 x 20 x 15cm

\$3,900

Edition 1/3

MaxQ-3, 2019

bronze, oil and brass

42 x 23 x 23cm

\$4,750

edition 1/1

Contact and Witness, 2019

single channel SD video with stereo sound

duration: 00:11:11

\$3,500

Edition 1/3

All prices are inclusive of GST.



IMAGE > Brodie Ellis, *MaxQ-3* [installation view], 2019, bronze, oil and brass, 42 x 23 x 23cm.
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

ARTIST SPEAKEASY

> EXHIBITION PROPOSAL WRITING

21.09.19 > 2PM-3PM > \$11

Join Linden Director **Melinda Martin** in this professional development workshop for artists to learn how to write effective exhibitions proposals. Presented as part of the **Melbourne Fringe Festival**.

EVENTS

ON HOLIDAYS AT LINDEN

> FUTURISTIC INVENTIONS

21.09.19 - 06.10.19 > FREE, DROP-IN

Inventor Thomas Edison said, "To have a great idea, have a lot of them!" What great idea do you have waiting to happen? This school holiday, we invite kids to drop-in to the gallery to design their own futuristic inventions. Nothing is too crazy nor too impossible!

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS > GIRL GEEKS VS FOOTY FANATICS > 26.09.19 > 6PM-7.30PM > \$25

Kick off the Grand Final long weekend with some sophisticated, cultured chit chat. Just kidding, let's head to the pub. Have a drink with us and decide: Geeks and footy - strange bedfellows or best buds?

CRAFTERNOON FOR KIDS > WHEN I GROW UP

05.10.19 > 12PM-1.30PM > \$15

Join artist **Justin Hinder** for kids art activity! Think about all the wonders the future holds inspired by **Linden New Art** current exhibitions. Look 10 years into the future, 100 years and 1000 years. What do you think the future will look like when you go up?

* Please note > We apologise for any inconvenience, the Linden Workshop is not wheelchair accessible.

MEET THE ARTIST > BRODIE ELLIS

20.10.19 > 2PM-3PM > FREE

Hear from the artist **Brodie Ellis** about her solo exhibition *Heavy Launch*, which includes a 7.2m sculpture based on the design of SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket. Ellis' work questions the ethics of space travel, technological development and the use of our planet's limited natural resources.

CRAFTERNOON FOR ADULTS

> WRITING THE END OF THE WORLD*

26.10.19 > 1PM-3.30PM > \$6

Join novelist **Alice Robinson** to explore dystopian fiction. In this practical two-hour workshop looking at narrative structure, research, place and character development, Alice will guide participants to explore the logistics and poetics involved in creating dystopian futures on the page.

IN CONVERSATION > BRODIE ELLIS, SIMON FINN

& ALICIA KING > 27.10.19 > 2PM-3PM > FREE

Explore the idea of a dystopian future in conversation with exhibiting artists **Brodie Ellis**, **Simon Finn** and **Alicia King**. Discover how their practices engage with some of the most urgent environmental and technological issues of our time.

ARTIST SPEAKEASY > RESIDENCIES

07.11.19 > 6PM-7.30PM > \$11

Join **Linden New Art** and **BLINDSIDE** galleries to discuss artist residencies in conversation with artist **Sam Leach** and **Pippa Dickson**, Director, **Asialink Arts**. In this professional development workshop suitable for practicing artists, learn about the different opportunities available for residencies and how to choose the right one.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The artist would like to acknowledge Liquid Architecture and Forum of Sensory Motion for the residency undertaken at Point Lowly in South Australia that allowed her to make the work *Contact and Witness*. She would also like to thank Fundere Foundry for their invaluable expertise in assisting her to make the three *MaxQ* bronzes.

Brodie Ellis would like to thank her friends, family and partner Cameron Robbins for their ongoing support.

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