

NICOLE NEWMAN

GENAIVISHEH SHTIKLECH (TRICKY PIECES)



Linden New Art is delighted to be working in collaboration with the *National Trust of Australia (Victoria)* to present this exhibition by Melbourne based mid-career artist Nicole Newman at Tasma Terrace.

As a home for new art we are open to bold ideas, to different ways of experiencing and seeing the world and oneself. We believe this role is an important part of contemporary art and we aim to foster a curious audience that is open to engaging with art, ideas and approaches to the world.

Whilst our St Kilda home is undergoing a major renovation, Linden has had the unique opportunity to develop a range of collaborative relationships beyond our normal St Kilda home. We look forward to fostering these new relationships and identifying opportunities well into the future to bring new audiences to contemporary art.

INTRODUCTION

Linden's own building has a strong connection to Jewish culture and heritage. The grand home surrounded by a lush garden estate was established by a successful Jewish émigré Mortiz Michaelis for his family in the mid 1800s. Michaelis was born in Germany in 1820 where his father was a Talmudical scholar¹ and he was one of the founders of the St Kilda Jewish congregation. It seems fitting that we now reconnect with an artist who explores her own secular experience of her cultural background.

Many people have assisted Linden in the presentation of this exhibition and we thank in particular:

- > Martin Green and the team from the *National Trust of Australia (Victoria)* for their enthusiasm for this project
- > Norman Rosenblatt for originally introducing Linden to the intriguing work of Nicole Newman
- > Roger McIlroy, art dealer and auctioneer, for officially opening the exhibition
- > Nicole Newman for creating a body of work that is like its Yiddish inflections, both intriguing and sometimes elusive.

Melinda Martin
Director
January 2018

¹*Moritz Michaelis Obituary*. Source > <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/michaelis-moritz-4194>

COVER IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 5*, 2015, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 1*, 2014, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.

Nicole Newman's most recent body of work exemplifies the artist's capacity to embrace a new medium so adeptly and with such commitment that a masterful level of technique is gained relatively quickly and with a deceptive level of ease. Tenacious and energetic, this artist has consistently aimed to master new techniques and use different materials in her practice, primarily, as she describes it, to stave off boredom.

In the 1970s and 1980s Newman was making large scale plywood and vacuum-formed plastic sculptures, based in furniture and set design. Following this, Newman focused on paper tole works, intricately folded paper-based pieces that were presented in frames¹. Newman has also worked with digital print-making and in 2014 she began to learn silver-

smithing. *Genaivisheh Shtiklech (Tricky Pieces)* presents a series of exquisite sculptures made in Perspex, silver and resin, which represent a culmination and

GENAIVISHEH SHTIKLECH

refinement of the artist's broad skill-range.

The works appear as a series of vitrines, engraved with Yiddish phrases as well as illustrations of insects, cutlery and flora. They contain re-purposed and sculpted silverware along with resin casts of the artist's fingers. The work fuses strange and unexpected symbolic elements, which evoke a distinctively psychological viewing experience. Each component has been chosen for its power to inspire a multiplicity of meaning. The works encourage a reconsideration of our preconditioned responses to particular objects and imagery, and the engraved Yiddish phrases provide an engagement with the human condition that is rich in metaphor and dark in humour.

The Yiddish language is an important part of the artist's practice, personal history and cultural background. Since 1999, all of Newman's solo exhibitions have born Yiddish titles. For Newman, Yiddish holds a sense of nostalgia as it was the language that was spoken in her family home as she was growing up, and the artist has explained that using this language is a reference to her own history without being too personal². Yiddish itself is a complex and richly formulated language, involving regional and historical variations in phrasing and meaning. A blend of Hebrew and German, Yiddish is wonderfully evocative, metaphoric and onomatopoeic, forged and founded in the religious and cultural context of Judaism. Newman's works are intentionally imbued with the nuances of the language, relating to interpretation and double meanings.

There are certain recurring themes in the sayings that Newman has selected to engrave onto her works; knives, bugs, food (fish, honey, vinegar), the effects of wealth, wisdom and vanity. The phrases are essentially about human nature, life and death, what we value and how we live. *Untitled 3*, 2014, for example, contains a warning against vanity, *Der*

¹Paper tole is a 14th century French craft technique using many copies of the same print, then cutting, shaping and layering the pieces.

²From an interview with the artist 17.08.17



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 3*, 2014, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.

spigel nart keinem nicht op nor der miessen (the mirror doesn't fool anyone except the ugly). Newman also works with a repetitive iconography that has continued through her many media-based transitions. Flowers that bloom into fingers, ornate cutlery, lobsters and insects have always appeared in varying forms. The continued return to these highly symbolic elements has been instinctive and intuitive for Newman, who selects such features primarily for their structural beauty or decorative appeal. Historically-based ornamentation, from Victorian engraving to the ostentation of colonial design, holds a particular attraction for Newman, whose work is an ode to the past in more ways than one.

Newman has also been inspired by the European historical custom of collecting and displaying 'objects of virtue'. This was a practice that came to prominence in the fifteenth century in Renaissance Italy within wealthy and powerful families. It sprung from the notion that a person's belongings transmit something about their personal history, status, and character. To own beautiful, masterfully crafted objects that depicted images of virtuous acts or religious iconography, was a statement about the owner's own high moral conduct and rightful status as a member of the elite. Even here we find a double meaning, which is highly relevant to Newman's practice, in that a 'virtue' is a good moral characteristic, and 'virtuosity', can also refer to the superior skill of an artist.

Furthermore, in Renaissance Italy, objects of virtue were often made to look like ancient artifacts, from the time of Aristotle or Cicero who laid the foundations for what constituted virtuous behaviour and values. The skill and accuracy by which such replication was achieved was an important part of the process, as it is for Newman. Objects of virtue were frequently presented in ornate boxes, or under glass domes, which added to the sense that they were precious and important. Newman's Perspex boxes are a further nod to this tradition.



The boxes have a dual function, as a protective shell for the delicate sculptures, and a robust support for the equally delicate engravings. The duality of revealing and concealing is one of the most compelling qualities of Newman's new series of work. The boxes, though an integral part of the work, provide an elaborate method of presenting the forms inside. A box draws attention to its contents and emphasises its value and importance. At the same time, boxes separate their contents, intentionally preventing viewers from getting too close. Interestingly, both beetles and lobsters, creatures that appear repeatedly in the works, are also symbols of protection, due to their hard outer-shells. These creatures appear like specimens within the boxes, which again relates to the opposing notions of presentation and preservation.

The containment of Newman's sculptures also emphasises the sense of each

³Syson, L. and Thornton, D., *Objects of Virtue Art in Renaissance Italy*, The British Museum Press, 2001

IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 15*, 2015, silver, resin and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.

work being a tautological conundrum; capsules of ideas that refer endlessly back to each other. Any attempt to pin a definitive meaning to the combination of flora, fauna, household items, temporally disparate design features and Yiddish phrases is an exercise in futility. Each element is so rich in meaning as to evade any specific resonance or assertion. Consequently, the works are 'tricky', but herein lies their appeal. Whose internal experience is not set in both the past and the future, and whose mind doesn't contain a multitude of overlapping symbolic imagery? Likewise, Newman acknowledges that her work is guided by her own cultural heritage and psychological experiences, which both offer a largely subconscious direction to her process of making.

Despite the intellectual challenge offered by these works, it is in the physical making that Newman finds the most joy. The work *Untitled 15*, 2015, carries the phrase *Es git mir a groisser fargenigen* (it gives me great pleasure), which in Yiddish, is usually a phrase said with sarcasm. The work includes a resin cast of the artist's own hand, offering a flower made of re-purposed silverware. Is this a reference to the artist's ambivalence with the process of offering her work to the world, is it a pleasure or a struggle? Creativity is certainly a driving force in the artist's life, and if our work, or our output is tantamount to our life then perhaps we need to be mindful that it is 'our pleasure'. Such are the musings that these works inspire.



Untitled 11, 2015, carries the phrase *A sach mentshen zehen, nor vainik fun zai farshtaien* (Many people see, but only a few understand), which is a particularly apt description of Newman's enigmatic new work. As a comment on the nature of human knowledge, this phrase points to the limitations of what vision can bestow. Newman's works give priority to the cerebral, to imagination and to creativity in further knowing oneself and in understanding the world around us.

Juliette Hanson
Curator
January 2018

I have always had a fascination with historical ornamentation. In the 1960s & 1970s, Pop art informed my sculpture, but even then, there was always an element of history in my work.

My sculpture practice may have taken some twists and turns in the use of media (from vacuum forming to plywood and perspex, digital printmaking and paper tole, and finally silver-smithing), but the iconography has always remained.

Initially, my sculptures were life-sized, but in latter years they became progressively smaller, until we reach these pieces.

ARTIST STATEMENT

These latest sculptures are a nod to '*objects of virtue*' - small precious items in decorative boxes.

There is a twist here in that they appear, at first glance, to be typical representations of objects,

but on further inspection there are oddities; strange combinations and text (Yiddish sayings) which sometimes bear no relation to the object, but can be viewed as an integral element of the design.

Nicole Newman
2018



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 4*, 2014, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.



LIN
DEN NEW
ART

NICOLE NEWMAN

GENAIVISHEH SHTIKLECH (TRICKY PIECES)
UNTIL > 09.03.18



IMAGE > *Genaivisheh Shtiklech (Tricky Pieces)* at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Tasma Terrace, Melbourne [installation view].
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 13* [installation view], 2015, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 10* [installation view], 2015, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.





IMAGE > Genaivisheh Shtiklech (*Tricky Pieces*) at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Tasma Terrace, Melbourne [installation view].
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 12* [installation view], 2015, silver, resin and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist.
Photograph > Theresa Harrison.



IMAGE > [L-R] Nicole Newman, *Untitled 7*, 2015, silver and Perspex, *Untitled 16*, 2015, silver and Perspex, [installation view].
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.

Nicole Newman is a French born, Melbourne based artist who has completed studies at the Victorian College of the Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute.

Newman has exhibited extensively in Australia including solo exhibitions *Vitz* at Gallery 101; *Kitsch to Yiddish: 1998-2001* at Essoign Club, Owen Dixon Chambers, Melbourne; and *Tsigeshtikevet* at the Jewish Museum of Australia.

Her work has also featured in group exhibitions such as *Works on Paper*, Jewish Museum of Australia; *Dame Edna Regrets She is Unable to Attend: Humour and Satire in contemporary sculpture*, Heide Museum of Art touring exhibition; and *Bad Mothers*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney.

ARTIST BIO

Her work is represented in the collections of Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, National Gallery of Australia, Emanuel Hirsh Private Collection, Avant, State Bank Centre, Adelaide and numerous private collections.

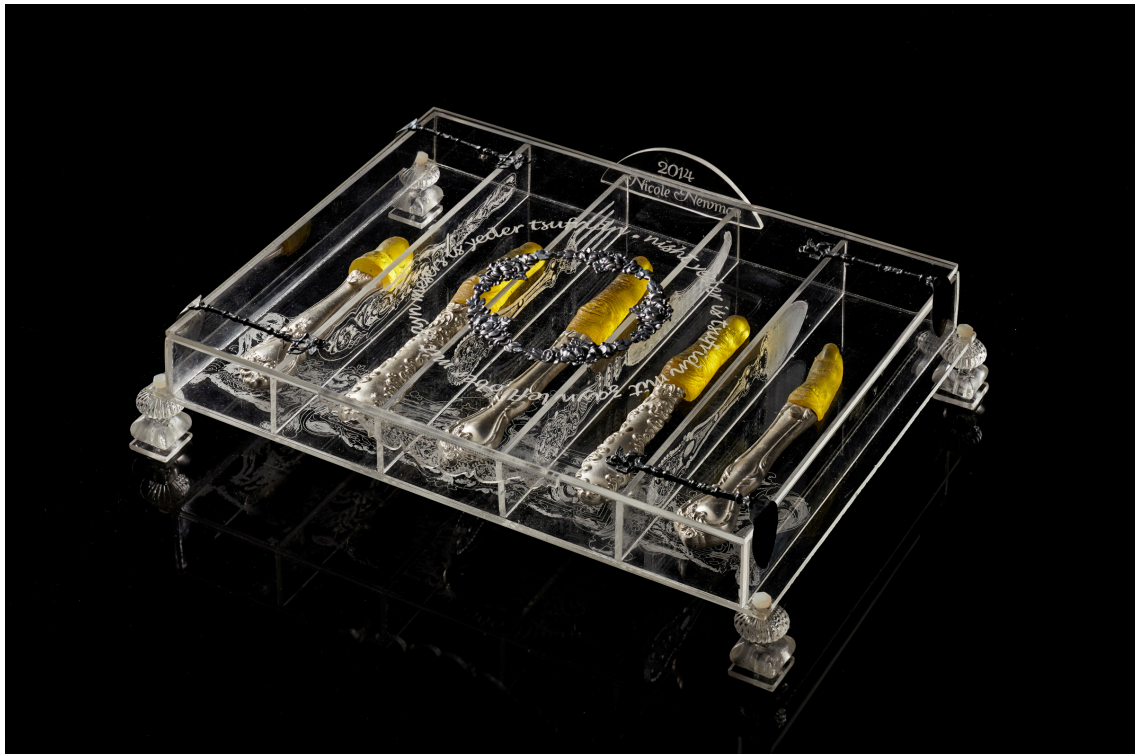


IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 8*, 2015, silver, resin and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.

Untitled 1, 2014

Silver and Perspex, 8 x 22 x 31cm

Untitled 2, 2014

Silver and Perspex, 8 x 32 x 14.5 cm

Untitled 3, 2014

Silver and Perspex, 8.5 x 21 x 35.5 cm

Untitled 4, 2014

Silver and Perspex, 23 x 30.5 x 7.5 cm

Untitled 5, 2015

Silver and Perspex, 34.5 x 24.5 x 15 cm

Untitled 6, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 31.5 x 25.5 x 21 cm

Untitled 7, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 27.5 x 19 x 16.5 cm

Untitled 8, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 8 x 31x 22.5 cm

Untitled 9, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 8.5 x 21 x 32 cm

Untitled 10, 2015

Silver and Perspex, 18 x 15 x 28 cm

Untitled 11, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 33 x 31x 6 cm

Untitled 12, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 40 x 16.5 x 13 cm

Untitled 13, 2015

Silver and Perspex, 10 x 31.5 x 23.5 cm

Untitled 14, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 27.5 x 26 x 9 cm

LIST OF WORKS

Untitled 15, 2015

Silver, resin and Perspex, 42 x 13 x 14 cm

Untitled 16, 2015

Silver and Perspex, 9.5 x 23 x 43 cm

All measurements are depth x height x width.

MEET THE ARTIST: NICOLE NEWMAN

01.03.18 > 6PM to 7PM

01.03.18 > 7PM to 8PM

06.03.18 > 12.30PM to 1.30PM

COST > FREE, bookings preferred

VENUE > National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Tasma Terrace

BOOK ONLINE > bit.ly/2Be6lyB

EVENTS

Join artist **Nicole Newman** to hear how her cultural heritage has informed aspects of her exquisite small-scale sculptures in the exhibition *Genaivisheh Shtiklech (Tricky Pieces)*.

CRAFTERNOON FOR KIDS: TRICKY CRITTERS

03.03.18 > 10.30AM to 12PM

COST > \$15 PER KID

VENUE > Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre

BOOK ONLINE > bit.ly/2BnL59F

In this fun drawing workshop for kids, artist **Justin Hinder** will lead kids to slow down and focus on the intricate forms of bugs & small animals. Magnifying glass in hand, kids will then get to draw and colour their tricky critter.

DRAWING MASTERCLASS: WAYS OF SEEING

14.04.18 > 10.30AM to 1.30PM

COST > \$66 PER PERSON

VENUE > Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre

BOOK ONLINE > bit.ly/2o8WJkb

Taking inspiration from Nicole Newman's 'Tricky Pieces', artist **Erika Grofton** from The Art Room will lead you to use the language of drawing as a way to not only see, but to also understand personal objects that are precious to you.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 10*, 2015, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 1*, 2014, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.



IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 11*, 2015, silver and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Matthew Stanton.

Join in the conversation & stay up-to-date!

Like & follow us on social media:

 @LindenNewArt

 @linden_new_art

 @LindenNewArt

Subscribe to our e-newsletter at lindenarts.org

FOLLOW US

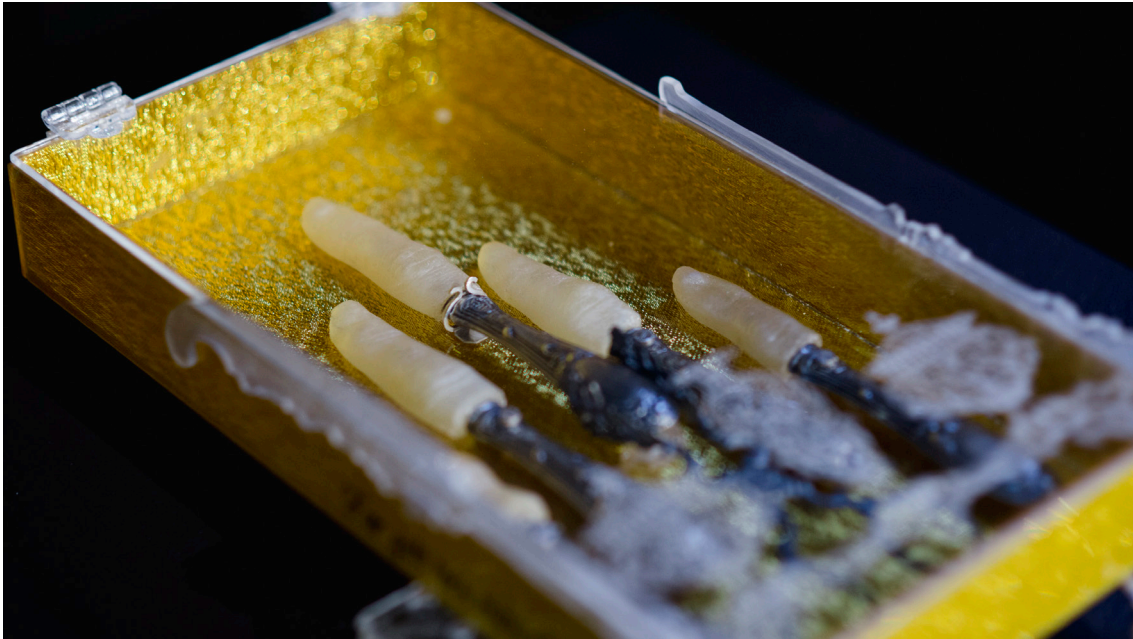


IMAGE > Nicole Newman, *Untitled 9* [installation view], 2015, silver, resin and Perspex. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph > Theresa Harrison.

DIRECTOR: MELINDA MARTIN
CURATOR: JULIETTE HANSON
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER: LYN JOHNSON
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING COORDINATOR: TOM PENDER
EVENTS COORDINATOR: JASMIN McNEILL
GALLERY ADMINISTRATORS: MADELINE FERME, SIYING ZHOU



AT THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)
TASMA TERRACE, 6 PARLIAMENT PLACE, EAST MELBOURNE 3002
www.lindenarts.org > gallery@lindenarts.org > PHONE 03 9534 0099



CREATIVE VICTORIA



PUNT
ROAD
YARRA VALLEY

