

Lane Cormick

Smoking will never die but you will

30.05 – 24.08.2025

Lane Cormick has been an influential and generous presence in Melbourne's contemporary art community for over 20 years. Since graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1999, Cormick has developed a diverse and conceptually rigorous practice that resists easy categorisation. Working across drawing, collage, experimental photography, sculpture, performance, and collaborative projects, his work is driven by an ongoing exploration of technique and skill, the pursuit and pitfalls of ambition, and the cultural dynamics of fame, celebrity, and failure.

Smoking will never die but you will, Cormicj's first major survey and the inaugural presentation in Linden New Art's mid-career artist series, offers an opportunity to engage with the breadth and depth of his practice. It presents key works from the past two decades alongside reimagined projects, creating a dynamic conversation between past and present. Rather than a conventional retrospective, the exhibition is structured as a living studio of ideas; where completed works, remnants of past performances, and experiments sit alongside fresh interpretations and conceptual continuations.

Cormicj's practice is deeply rooted in process and interaction. His daily life, informal conversations, random encounters, and long-term

collaborations are all central to how his work emerges and evolves. This exhibition reflects that spirit of openness, unpredictability, and dialogue; an approach that has made him not only a respected artist but also a generous collaborator and mentor to peers and emerging artists alike.

Smoking will never die but you will marks a pivotal point in Cormicj's career. It invites viewers to trace the recurring ideas, shifting forms, and conceptual detours that shape his distinctive body of work. It also celebrates his profound impact on, and contribution to, local and national audiences, and cultural communities.

Early drawings, collages and videos

Graduating from the Drawing program at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1999, Lane Cormicj developed a practice that rethinks what drawing can be. Encouraged to move beyond the confines of traditional technique, Cormicj began exploring drawing as a conceptual and performative act - where the gesture of mark making held as much weight as the image itself.

This selection of early works reveals the experimental foundation of his practice. While rooted in familiar materials, such as pencil, pen, and

gouache, Cormicj pushes the boundaries of the medium, incorporating the use of spirit transfers, spray paint and layered surfaces in many of his drawings.

Early works, such as *Vanilla Sigartje* (2002) reveal his interest in the performative and the testing of skill. A hand-drawn pencil line becomes the anchor for a laborious painted black field, where the artist attempts to preserve a narrow margin around the original mark. Elsewhere, torn pages from magazines are faithfully copied and then collaged on a black acrylic ground where fragments of barely visible text linger beneath.

Music, an enduring influence in Cormicj's practice, first surfaces in these early works. The Eugene series

references Pink Floyd's 1969 song *Careful with That Axe, Eugene*. A version constructed with red dots, is a play on the large Elvis sign which formed the background to the singer's iconic 1968 Comeback Special concert. *HIPGANGSTAWANNABE* (2002) lifts lyrics from Tool's track *Ænema*. Paired with a Roy Lichtenstein brush mark, it indicates the many references which would come to inform many of Cormick's future works: music, art history, film and the everyday.

Performing but not performance

Maybe we could go for a walk and take them to my studio? I was thinking we could give them a shopping list and get them to buy some art materials for us?

Lane Cormicj in conversation with Michelle Mantsio. *To Note: Notation Across Disciplines* (Melbourne: Perimeter Editions, 2015).

Throughout his career, Lane Cormicj has consistently created live performative events. While seemingly framed within the historical context of performance art, his works challenge and often uproot this tradition. They are intimately linked with a moment in time, that can only exist in their original form once. They are not developed to be re-presented, but if they are, they become new, reshaped by new conversations, interests,

people and environments. They exist at the intersection of performance, instruction, and collaboration.

Rather than presenting art as a fixed or authored outcome, Cormicj creates open-ended situations that unfold through the actions of others. His performances are often delivered by people from outside the art world, individuals he meets in everyday contexts, who are invited to enact his ideas with minimal instruction. Central to this process is a mutual exchange of agency. Cormicj relinquishes control of the final outcome, while those who deliver the work assume responsibility for how it takes shape. This collaboration is grounded in ethical consideration: performers are not exploited financially, physically, or intellectually, and their interpretations

are valued as integral to the work. In doing so, Cormicj repositions the role of the artist: not as a sole creator, but as a facilitator of experience and encounter.

The works in this gallery, the entry foyer and adjacent hallway, bring together projects that have been performed by others. They are not the original performances or documentation of them, but rather the remnants of what was left: objects, drawings, video footage, and most importantly the ideas that informed the works. Installed around a central floor-based pentagram, the design which was a key element of the 2014 performance *Kalasaki Rose* at the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, they reveal connections across time and Cormicj's visual sensibility

and language. They articulate a sense of his thought and making process, the ideas and interests which informs his practice, and the importance of the everyday in the thinking and shaping of his work.

Collaboration as a performative act

Lane Cormicj has long been recognised as “the artist around town”, a constant presence in Melbourne’s cultural life. Whether at an exhibition opening, drinks at a pub or an impromptu meeting in the street,

he is always up for a conversation about art, music, or relaying a story about what happened to him just five minutes ago. These dialogues often lead to Cormicj collaborating with other artists on joint exhibitions or singular worjs.

This gallery and the front stairwell present collaborative worjs that have emerged from Cormicj's ongoing exchanges with fellow artists. Unlike the instructional performances seen in the previous gallery, these are created through shared conversations and exploration, where the outcome and voice is shared.

Some of the worjs are new responses to past worj, a result of new and ongoing conversations between Cormicj and his collaborators. *Lucina*

Lane Cormick (2025), for example, reinterprets Cormicj's earlier *Miles Davis Love* (2002) after conversations with artist Lucina Lane. *Union of Bad Luck* (2025) revisits the phrase, originally spray-painted by Cormicj during the 2008 performance *Unearthing the Hawke*; this version painted by the artist Dan Price. A wall work by Stephen Bram continues the visual dialogue with Cormicj begun in their 2019 exhibition *Untitled* at Caves, Melbourne.

These works represent Cormicj's broad engagement with his artistic peers. They are shaped by evolving relationships, shared concerns, and a curiosity and openness to both work with and learn from others.

Fame, glamour and a test of skill

Sergio Tacchini, the iconic Italian luxury sportswear brand, has been a recurring presence in Cormicj's work for over a decade. Founded in the late 1960s by professional tennis player Sergio Tacchini, the brand gained prominence through its sleek, stylish tennis-wear and its association with sporting legends including Gabriela Sabatini, Vitas Gerulaitis, Goran Ivanišević, and Formula One driver Ayrton Senna.

For Cormicj, Sergio Tacchini represents more than just sportswear. The brand becomes a symbol of

aspiration, glamour, and upward mobility - a visual shorthand for fame and success. There is a mystique, too, in the figure of Sergio himself: a possible athlete who transformed his identity through branding and style.

The works presented here include black-and-white prints on acetate featuring figures dressed in Sergio Tacchini apparel, among them the tennis stars mentioned and an anonymous figure on public transport. Each image is marjied with daubs of paint applied by thumb, a gesture that suggests spontaneity but is, in fact, deliberately composed. These gestures are mirrored across panels, forming diptychs in which each marj is carefully replicated, reflecting the artist's ongoing interest in precision,

repetition, and the tension between control and imperfection.

In more recent works, such as the eight-panel *George* (2022) and *With Style 1 & 2* (2019), Cormicj evolves this approach. In the latter, a cropped colour image of a Sergio Tacchini fragrance becomes the ground for a new kind of intervention: small circular punch-outs are removed, flipped, and re-affixed to the surface, then painstakingly mimicked in a companion piece.

Like much of Cormicj's practice, these works invite us to consider notions of fame, glamour and aspiration. At the same time, they test the limits of the artist's own skill and endurance, embracing the risk of failure as part of the creative process.

List of Works

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Smoking will never die but you will

2010 / 2025

Performance / installation

Smoking will never die but you will was first presented in 2010 and is the only work in this exhibition to be reperformed (*during the exhibition opening*). In this performance, a group of smokers stands with their hands coated in lime green house paint. The work stages a moment of temptation and consequence; they are free to act, but lighting a cigarette means smearing paint across their own faces.

Smoking will never die but you will reflects Cormick's interest in failure, the absurd, and the *empowering of others to complete the work*. By inviting participants to complete the piece through action, the artist opens the work to risk, spontaneity, and shared authorship.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Kalasaki Rose

2014

Performance / installation

Kalasaki Rose was first presented at the Australia Centre of Contemporary Art in 2014. Printed orbs and a large pentagram, referencing the cover of a Pharaoh Overlord album, marked the walls and floor of the gallery. At the centre stood a tethered eagle, perched on a plinth. Three men, each invited by Cormick, slowly circled the eagle, filming it from shifting angles, their footage streamed live within the space.

This intense performance explores the discipline of the trained body, both human and animal. It raises questions around spectatorship and authorship: Are we watching the eagle, the cameramen, or the mediated image they create? Who performs, and who controls what is seen? What is the role of the artist?

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Janis

2013

Performance / installation

Janis was first presented at TCB Art Inc in 2013. Low-fi silkscreen prints of soul singer Lee Moses lined the walls, setting the stage for the central performance: a live projection of Nina Simone's iconic 1976 Montreux Jazz Festival concert cast onto the stomach of a model who moved slowly through the gallery space.

The projection, operated by Cormick, depended entirely on the model's body and motion to exist, an interplay that made her both canvas and performer.

This work, like *Kalasaki Rose*, engages with questions of spectatorship and authorship. It invites viewers into an unsettling visual loop, shifting attention between the operator, the model, and the projected image, and blurring the lines between artist, medium, and muse.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Only One Way Out of Here

2007

Performance / installation

Only One Way Out of Here, originally presented at Neon Parc, Melbourne, continues Cormick's engagement with the themes of skill, status, and artistic labour. Drawing from a formative personal narrative, the work reflects on a childhood fixation with a group of local bikers—young men in leather jackets who exuded danger, freedom, and a kind of aspirational cool.

To realise the work, Cormick taught himself to ride a motorbike, equating this with the process of acquiring and honing artistic technique. On the exhibition's opening day, Cormick offered visitors five-dollar motorbike rides around the city block, a "dinj," as colloquially phrased, announced on a crudely spray-painted plywood sign.

This transaction, raw and unpolished, exposed the mechanics of exchange in both the art world and everyday life. Who pays? Who performs? What is risked, learned, or sold? In conflating rebellion with service, and thrill with economy, the artist staged a live negotiation between identity, aspiration, and value. The performance existed only until it was shut down, its impermanence echoing Cormick's aspiration of being both cool and an outlaw.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Cook Beale Mustard Swan

2008

Performance / installation

Cook Beale Mustard Swan was a closed performance and staged occupation, visible only through the upstairs windows of Neon Parc, Melbourne. Inside, eight balaclava-clad men, including Cormick, inhabited the locked gallery, enacting a chaotic, and at times antagonistic protest. From above, they peered down at the gathering crowd, scrawling spontaneous messages in black ink and pressing them to the windows or tossing them, along with the occasional abuse, into the street. These fragments hovered between demand, poetic broadcast, and absurd theatre.

Two large hand-painted banners bearing the Yamaha motorbike symbol hung from the windows, directly referencing *Only One Way Out of Here*, Cormick's earlier motorbike performance at the same site. This recursive gesture is characteristic of Cormick's practice: past works are not endpoints, but fertile ground for new ideas to emerge.

The title *Cook Beale Mustard Swan* operates like a cryptic poem or code. It references an occupation, an instrument, a condiment, and a bird. Also, an explorer, a Memphis street, a Cluedo suspect, and an Australian politician. And more obliquely, the surnames of New Zealand cricketers. This playful ambiguity is deliberate;

the title, like the work itself, defies fixed meaning and encourages layered interpretation.

At its core, this work exemplifies Cormicj's conceptual methodology. His practice draws from personal memory, popular culture, sport, and language to construct unstable but compelling intersections. Accumulative and recursive, his performances blur boundaries between reference and invention, past and present, clarity and chaos.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Real Bos(e)

2010 / 2025

Farmers Union iced coffee milk, freezer, plinth,
glass bottles

Real Bos(e) began with a chance conversation between Cormick and a hardware store salesperson, during a period when the artist was exploring casting as a process. While drinking a Farmer's Union iced coffee, Cormick was humorously misinformed that South Australian cars came fitted with square cup holders, designed to accommodate milk cartons. This absurd but evocative detail became the catalyst for the work.

Rather than casting in traditional materials like bronze, Cormick froze milk in high-grade silicone moulds, turning a disposable beverage into a transient sculpture. The work subverts conventional notions of permanence and value in art, questioning what is considered worthy of preservation or preciousness.

This piece also marks one of the earliest appearances of the eagle motif in Cormick's practice, an image that would return with greater prominence in his 2014 performance *Kalasaki Rose*. Here, the eagle isn't enshrined in metal but made meltable, consumable, and reproducible: a version of the work exists bottled and signed by the artist, available in liquid form.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

MBARZALONA

2015

Performance / installation

In *MBARZALONA*, one of Cormick's instructional performance works, a lone figure sits in the centre of the gallery with a guitar and a pair of headphones, attempting to play along to music by Danish psych-rock band Causa Sui. In front of her, a video is projected onto a sheet of gold glass. Both the guitarist and the person in the video are characters in a constructed scene—yet they are not actors, but real people from the artist's life.

Unlike traditional performance art of the mid-20th century, Cormick avoids trained performers. His works are carried out by friends and collaborators, grounding each piece in a sense of immediacy and familiarity. This personal casting imbues the performance with authenticity, vulnerability, and unpredictability.

The music playing through the performer's headphones remains unheard by the audience. Instead, we hear only the strumming of the guitar—hesitant, off-rhythm, unsure. It's unclear whether the performer is succeeding or failing. This ambiguity is central to the work, offering a loose metaphor for Cormick's broader practice: outcomes are never fixed, and possibility lies as much in missteps as in mastery.

Lane Cormick / Lucina Lane

Melbourne, born 1975

Melbourne, born 1991

Lucina Lane Cormick after Miles Davis Love

2025

acrylic paint

Lucina Lane Cormick is the outcome of an extended dialogue between two artists, evolving over many years through casual conversations, shared reflections, and mutual curiosity. The title, like *Cook Beale Mustard Swan*, plays with language, this time stacjing the names of the collaborators to create a new, singular identity. It echoes an earlier work, *Miles Davis Love*, which fused the names of jazz legend Miles Davis and American golfer Davis Love to explore unexpected connections and cultural layering.

Although the physical painting was executed solely by Cormick, the project is firmly rooted in collaboration. The shared conceptual ground, discussions around the original worj, the desire to worj together, and the nature of authorship, shapes the piece as much as any brushstroke.

As with other worjs in this exhibition, *Lucina Lane Cormick* challenges conventional definitions of collaboration. It suggests that artistic partnership can be as much about exchange and conversation as it is about co-production. In this way, the work embodies a quiet yet radical model of shared authorship; fluid, dialogic, and grounded in long-term engagement.

Lane Cormick / Dan Price

Melbourne, born 1975

Melbourne, born 1978

Union of bad luck

2008 / 2025

acrylic paint

*Union of Bad Luck is a new collaboration between Cormicj and friend and fellow artist Dan Price. While the two have experimented with shared drawings and worjs on paper for years, this project marks a new moment in their collaborative process; an invitation by Cormicj to reimagine a phrase first used in his 2008 performance *Unearthing the Hawke*.*

Originally spray-painted and raw, the phrase now appears rendered in a meticulous gothic font, evocative of old signage and historical craft. Painted by Price, the worj is both a test of precision and a reflection of deep familiarity; an acknowledgment of Price's understanding of Cormicj's practice.

At its core, Union of Bad Luck speaks to trust and the shifting dynamics of authorship. In handing over the visual realisation to Price, Cormicj embraces uncertainty and collaboration as creative strategies. The result is a worj that balances technical skill with conceptual history, where the union is not only in the phrase, but in the act of shared making.

Lane Cormick / Raafat Ishak

Melbourne, born 1975

Cairo, born 1967. Arrived Australia 1982

Dean Barry

2022

vinyl print, Yves Saint Laurent Vassili Chelsea boots (Lambskin, elastic, glue, thread, rubber, pair, size 44)

Dean Barry exemplifies Cormick's diverse and evolving approach to collaboration. Developed through extended dialogue with artist Raafat Ishak, the project echoes the artist's other collaborative ventures in this exhibition—with Stephen Bram, Lucina Lane, and Dan Price—where conversation, memory, and mutual influence drive the creative process.

The work began as a series of exchanged drawings where each contributed something new. After several attempts and conversations about their progress, Cormick delivered a pair of Yves Saint Laurent Vassili Chelsea boots to Ishak, simply stating: "This is the work!" This act was prompted by shared stories from their youth—tales of feeling special when receiving a pair of expensive Nike sneakers or Sergio Tacchini tracksuits—symbols of working-class aspiration and a desire for style that was often out of reach.

At its centre, Dean Barry features a large digital portrait blending two figures: Dean, a friend of Cormick and amateur jockey, and Barry Round, the legendary South Melbourne footballer admired by Ishak during his first

encounters with Australian rules football. The result is a layered portrait, not of two individuals, but of the histories, conversations, and cultural intersections between the artists themselves.

The work also foregrounds one of the less acknowledged materials in contemporary art: money. For Cormicj, purchasing luxury boots is conceptually aligned with spending the same amount on framing or materials. Whether worn or displayed, the boots become part of his practice—collapsing the boundaries between object, artwork, and daily life.

Dean Barry is not only a collaborative portrait, but a meditation on value—emotional, cultural, and material—and how it circulates within both art and friendship.

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

With Style 1

2019

Colour photocopy, spray adhesive

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

With Style 2

2019

Colour photocopy, stamp pad ink

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

GI 1

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

VG

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

827

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate (diptych)

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

GS 3

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Double GS

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

GS 2

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

George

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate
(4 x diptychs)

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Smoking will never die but you will

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Eugene

2001

ink and acrylic on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2006

collage, texta, acrylic paint and ink on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2006

collage, texta, acrylic paint and ink on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2006

collage, texta, acrylic paint and ink on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Vanilla Sigartje

2002

acrylic paint and pencil on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2000

gouache on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

HIPGANGSTAWANNABE

2002

gouache on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

VIVA

2002

acrylic paint and spray on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

I'm Gonna Buy Me a Horse

2000

video

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Mary 1

2018

ply, pine, acrylic paint, plaster, plastic bags

Stephen Bram / Torquil Todd / Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1961

Melbourne, born 1962

Melbourne, born 1975

**The vanishing point initiates it and is
its destination; its engine and product.
It constitutes the work and is its
supplement and remainder**

1976 and 2025

acrylic paint on board, acrylic paint

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2025

Virgin Mary statues, Sergio Tacchini jacket, Sergio
Tacchini necklaces

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2022

Pencil on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Lavendar Chips

2002

acrylic paint and spray on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Silver Panther

2002

acrylic paint, pencil and spray on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

David

2000

acrylic paint and pencil on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

Untitled

2002

acrylic paint and spray on paper

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

AS

2018

photocopy and enamel paint on acetate

Lane Cormick

Melbourne, born 1975

4/4

2022

photocopy, acrylic paint, video and gold coins