

PARTNERSHIP

# The Ideal Home

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HOME IS A place of security, intimacy, love and family, a haven from the world. We invest ourselves in our homes — in their location, architecture, furnishing and decoration — but home is also a site of financial burden, fracture, loss and danger, and increasingly for some, a home is simply unattainable.

Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of the Lewers Bequest, has partnered with MAAS to present *The Ideal Home*. This exhibition focuses on the evolution and experiences of the home in the past century. Depression-era innovation and 'make-do' postwar technological advancement is contrasted with modern design, mass production and affluence using objects such as furnishings, decorative design and appliances.

Situated on a hectare of gardens adjacent to the Nepean River in Emu Plains, Penrith Regional Gallery was once the home of modernist artists Margo and Gerald Lewers. Here they created a domestic garden compound, where they argued about art and ideas. It remains a place of ideas and debate, and its domestic spaces and gardens invite exploration. It is the ideal setting for an exhibition that examines the warmth and intimacy of home, alongside its dark interiority.

In this exhibition, MAAS and the Gallery have offered six commissions to established and early career artists, including Catherine O'Donnell, eX de Medici, Cope ST Collective, Blake Griffiths, Richard Goodwin and Victoria Garcia. The artists were asked to respond to the contemporary challenges that complicate our relationship to home, including family and domestic violence, gender and intimacy, homelessness, housing affordability, sustainability, migration and loss.

The work of Blue Mountains artist Catherine O'Donnell is a series of six large-scale 'tape' drawings applied directly to the walls. These works provide homage to the brutalist architecture of the Sirius Building in Sydney's Rocks area, but also a commentary on the loss of public housing and neighbourhood communities in the inner city.

Digital print by Tahlia Dwyer 2018, created in a workshop with artist Khaled Sabsabi. Courtesy of the artist and Caroline Chisolm College.

(Top) Eliza Gosse, *Our Home in the Gum Trees*, gouache on paper, 2018. Courtesy of the artist (Bottom) Installation of *A rug for re-organising value (of waste & self)*, by Blake Griffiths, 2018. Courtesy of the artist



*The Ominous Domestic*, a two-room installation by Canberra artist eX de Medici, is an explosive interplay of gender relationships and violence involving watercolour, tapestry and sculpture. *The Seat of Love and Hate* incorporates duelling pistols amidst bloodied flowers and a trailing crown-of-thorns plant (see opposite).

Colin Kinchela and Mathew Cooper of First Nation performance troupe Cope ST Collective have produced a digital work that considers how black, queer masculinity shapes the experience of home and its intimate relationships.

Resembling a Depression-era patchwork quilt (wagga rug) Blake Griffiths's work (see below) considers the need for connection and shelter. It is woven from the packaging excess of everything he consumed over six months (plastics, paper, tin and wrapping).

Richard Goodwin has installed a temporary dwelling called *Neutral Habitation* in the garden. Constructed with salvaged materials, including a boat and tarpaulins, this work asks the questions 'What and where is home? How much do we really need to live?'

Victoria Garcia's marquee *Earthling Tent*, brings many of the themes explored in the exhibition into sharp relief. She situates planet Earth as our one true home and caring for it the great challenge of our age.

Artist Khaled Sabsabi worked with local students and visual art teachers to explore urban growth in Penrith, and the impact of change on the area through photographic and digital media. The resulting works explore eclectic views of suburban streets in the Penrith area (see previous page).

Eliza Gosse produced a series of gouache paintings depicting Sydney modernist houses, which remind us of the astonishing design heritage in the suburbs.

Karla Dickens' work *Bound*, recently acquired by MAAS, uses appliqué and embroidery upon six straitjackets to detail the confining experience of gendered domesticity, motherhood, appearance, financial control and male violence.

By situating contemporary artworks alongside museum artefacts and examples of classic design, audiences are provided with new ways of apprehending social history, and the use, application and impact of design, manufacture and technology.

*The Ideal Home* is the second exhibition partnership between the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, and Penrith Regional Gallery. Visitors can see the exhibition at Penrith until 24 March 2019 and the companion exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum until 29 May 2019. For details of programs and events see [maas.museum](http://maas.museum) and [www.penrithregionalgallery.org](http://www.penrithregionalgallery.org) ■

PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA ROSENBLUM

PHOTO BY ROB LITTLE RLDI



Detail of *The Seat of Love and Hate*, an embroidered sofa by artist eX de Medici, 2017-18. MAAS Collection