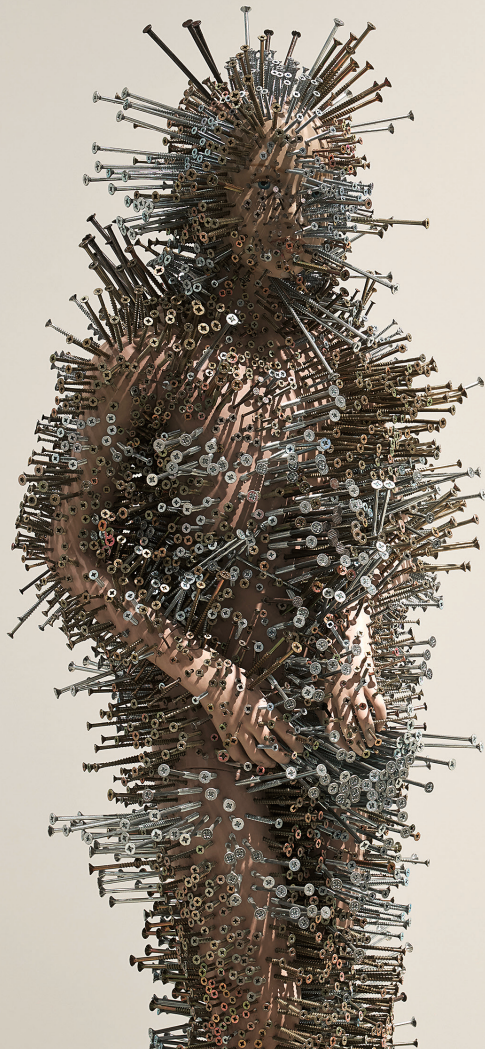
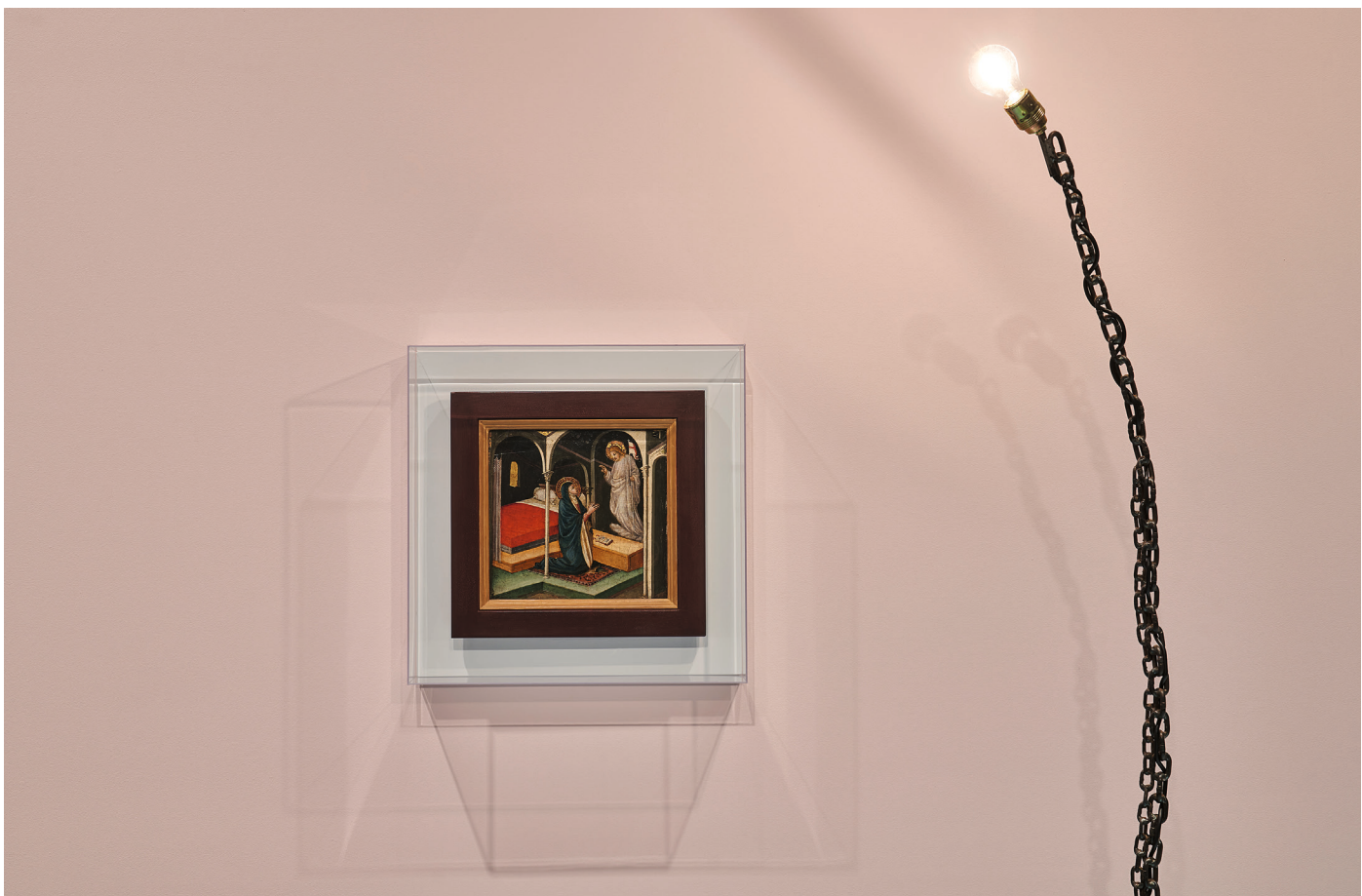




UNPREDICTABLE IN ITS PREDICTABLE UNPREDICTABILITY

REVIEW KIM GUTHRIE

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While maintaining homes in Berlin and Athens, the Arndt family reside at beautiful Cape Schanck on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, where Sydney-based architecture firm CHROFI designed *The Artbarn* to house part of their private art collection. *The ARNDT Collection: From One World to Another* at the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) is a major exhibition from this extensive private collection.



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On first impression, the ARNDT Collection is a Lewis Carroll *mischmasch* of international twentieth century big name European trophy artists sprinkled with known Australian artists. There are some edgy stunners presented and challenging gambles on yet unheralded (to me) African and Asian artists. There's a fantastic sculpture by the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, *Nail-Antigone*, 2013 and another by Polish artist Alicja Kwade, *Be-Hide-else*, 2017, a Zen like questioning of reality, in the era of post-truth and AI.

Rachael Vance, director and curator of programming of the ARNDT Collection, in consultation with SAM curators had the luxury of selecting works from this seriously impressive collection and in particular I adored the odd-man-out inclusion of a modest fifteenth century Gothic tempera on panel painting *Christ Appearing to his Mother*, c.1427, by Lippo d'Andrea. There are several completely baffling Joseph Beuys pieces. I honestly don't think anyone understands these works but that's Beuys point of difference. He's a myth maker, and who doesn't love a dense and impenetrable mystery? It's intoxicating.

It's amusing that this post-Duchampian is the star of the show, the artist who made the incomprehensible a thing. Suddenly it makes

sense; it's wealthy people with an art obsession and enough disposable income and courage to buy whatever they want. Matthias Arndt and Tiffany Wood are the kind of people we artists value, dream about, and crave attention from. I'm a bit of a collector myself. I collect different volumes of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by the unsurpassed master of the incomprehensible made comprehensible, the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll). So, I get it.

There's a work included by another of the great European rule breakers, Sigmar Polke, a student of Beuys' that ironically didn't ever seem to stay still and never fell for the usual artworld con of a consistent style. Polke didn't limit himself to one medium or the same thing produced repeatedly in various configurations. He was always about the truth of "creativity."

There are a few of Picasso's ceramic works too. What art nut wouldn't want something by this guy, except maybe Hannah Gadsby?!

I love the Gilbert & George too, a wonderful couple marketing themselves as living artworks since the 1960s when they borrowed the great Piero Manzoni's idea of declaring something or someone a work of art by signing it. Gilbert & George cut out the middle-

man and presented themselves as the work. *Union Dance*, 2008, is a picture of themselves emblazoned with Union Jacks on almost every surface and poking their Union Jack-tongues out in true punk tradition at what seems to be an unabashed fuck you to their homeland of the United Kingdom. I secretly hope it's a nod to Jamie Reid and his wonderful graphics for the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK* single.

Complemented by Australian paintings, a couple aren't well-informed inclusions to the collection. I don't like paintings or painters just because they happen to be popular. Charles Bukowski said, "If it's that popular there must be something wrong with it." Del Kathryn Barton's is illustrative, and the artist's blatant borrowing of Western Desert dot painting as a tacked-on design element is cultural appropriation at its worst, just ask Richard Bell. All style over substance, taste-

01 L-R: Thomas Hirschhorn, *Nail-Antigone*, 2013, mannequin, wood, resin, screws, pallet. Thomas Hirschhorn *Untitled (Ingeborg Bachmann 1948/49)*, 1998, collage made of wood, plastic foil marker, ballpoint, photo, elements of card, tape. Installation view of *The ARNDT Collection: From One World to Another*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2023, photographed by Leon Schoots

02 L-R: Lippo d'Andrea, *Christ Appearing to his Mother*, c. 1427, tempera on panel, gold ground. Franz West, *Privat Lampe des Künstlers II (The artist's private lamp II)*, 1989 welded metal, electric system, and bulb, Installation view of *The ARNDT Collection: From One World to Another*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2023, photographed by Leon Schoots

03 Ben Quilty, *Cronulla no.2*, 2021, oil on linen. Installation view of *The ARNDT Collection: From One World to Another*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2023, photographed by Leon Schoots



Collecting anything is a brave commitment.
Collecting art is on another level completely

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ful empty surface. I guess it means something except it looks like an overwrought acid trip hallucination.

Another popular Aussie painter, Ben Quilty, is only marginally better. His early paintings were unpretentious trowelled on facsimiles of budgies and Toranas. It's classic macho Australian kitsch flexing for the viewer. Se-

lected as an official war artist in 2011, he travelled to the stupid colonial strife happening in Afghanistan where he got caught up in the myth of soldier as hero. He made some good portrait paintings but something else was going on and he appeared deeply affected by the experience and started to believe he was a saviour instead of a simple maker of pictures. Championing condemned heroin smugglers in Indonesia as a cause célèbre, Quilty's work is at best naïve and at worst delusional. Maybe it was all the attention his paintings were bringing him, but he lost his way. The artwork in this exhibition is from what I facetiously call his "Francis Bacon period." Bacon is not the kind of painter anyone should trifle with and Quilty is no Bacon. His work is all angst, tame violence, and ham-fisted with Picasso-like features and none of the baffling delicacy of Bacon.

Mercifully Gareth Sansom's work is in this show. The guy can really paint, his work unpredictable in its predictable unpredict-

ability. Sansom has cultivated a very odd, sometimes charming and at others nasty persona, redeemed by the work. An array of tropes always inhabits Sansom's work, shuffled and pushed way over the edge only to be rehabilitated into a conglomeration of baffling synergy.

Collecting anything is a brave commitment. Collecting art is on another level completely; it's personal and subject to the whims of fashion. Being informed, confident, and loving is paramount. ■

EXHIBITION

The Arndt Collection: From One World To Another
11 November 2023 - 10 March 2024
Shepparton Art Museum, VIC

04 L-R: Alica Kwade, *Be-Hide-else*, 2017, stone, iron, mirror. Gilbert & George, *Union Dance*, 2008, hand-coloured photographs. Installation view of The ARNDT Collection: *From One World to Another*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2023, photographed by Leon Schoots

05 L-R: Pablo Picasso, *Yan Pitcher*, 1952, ceramic and glaze. Pablo Picasso, *Femme (Woman)*, 1955, partially glazed ceramic pitcher. Installation view of The ARNDT Collection: *From One World to Another*, Shepparton Art Museum, 2023, photographed by Leon Schoots

Images courtesy of the artists and Shepparton Art Museum, VIC