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# The Rubies – a 40th Anniversary exhibition by ANU School of Art & Design alumni

**Kerry-Anne Cousins**[SHARE](#)[TWEET](#)[LESS](#)

*The Rubies* – a 40th Anniversary exhibition by Alumni Janice Vitkovsky, Camille Serisier, Kate Murphy, Helen Shelly, Taloi Havini, Janet Fieldhouse, Daniel Edwards, Stuart Bailey, Derek O'Connor, Kelly Thompson, Chelsea Lemon, Oliver Smith, Donald Fortescue, Kon Kudo, Niklavs Rubenis and Lauren Simeoni. ANU School of Art & Design Gallery. Until September 9.

*The Rubies* exhibition is part of the 40th anniversary celebrations for the ANU School of Art & Design (formerly The Canberra School of Art) and highlights the important role that patronage can play in an artist's career.

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Daniel Edwards' felt patchwork quilt *Empire* can be seen in *The Rubies* exhibition.

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The 16 artists in *The Rubies* were recipients of an Emerging Artists Support Scheme award (EASS) when they graduated. They were chosen from EASS awardees from the past 28 years the award has been in place. The exhibition includes video and photography, ceramics, glass, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, prints, woodwork and painting from across the disciplines taught at the School of Art Workshops.

I was initially bemused by Camille Serisier's beguiling video *Ladies of OZ*, 2016 with its mixture of almost childlike cartoons, scenery and props made of paper and a human actor. However, I was soon drawn into the thrilling world of the adventures of famous Australian women narrated in a girlish voice that was reminiscent of a *Girl's Own Annual* story. A deceptively artful work.

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Oliver Smith, Reef Cutlery, in *The Rubies* at ANU School of Art & Design Gallery. Photo: John Lee

Kelly Thompson's handwoven jacquard weave textiles *Home Depot*, 2012 and *Fox News Protester*, 2012 are impressive. The artist transforms mundane ephemeral objects such as supermarket dockets and lists of stock exchange numbers into woven material forms. They provide a political commentary (reinforced by political slogans) on the codification of consumerism that has developed its own language (hence the supermarket docket). These works using the format of newsprint and sales dockets represent the artist's interest in using her weaving practice to critique social and political concerns as well as demonstrating her continuing exploration of text, language and symbol.

Janet Fieldhouse is currently artist-in-residence at the Watson Art Centre and her work is in its latest ceramic exhibition. Her wall sculptures and pottery evoke a sense of the social and religious traditions of her Torres Straits Islander heritage. The works are not reproductions of cultural artefacts but are thoughtful and sensitive evocations of a sense of place, culture and heritage in a contemporary context.

Daniel Edwards' work *Empire* is a  
startling brightly coloured

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...ing, elegantly woven, geometrically designed felt patchwork quilt. The strong design and choice of colours remind me of similar quilts seen in the Pacific Islands that are exemplars of missionary influence over local ethnic artistic practices. It is a significant work that I have continued to think about as it is a powerful statement that allows a wide spectrum of viewer's responses.



Chelsea Lemon, Casuarina Seed Pod, 2016 in The Rubies at ANU School of Art & Design Gallery Photo: Supplied



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The set of photographs by Kon Kudo *Oh No Zombies 1-4* relate to the *Typology* series. They are the result of a staged event where people were asked to spend 20 minutes to collect valued objects from their homes and take them to a place to be photographed. These are photographs of seemingly ordinary people where a student, a young girl, a hiker and an older couple are paired with matching photographs of the contents of the bags they are carrying. Have a close look at the contents of these bags – some items seem obvious reflecting the lifestyle of their owner but among each group are inexplicable objects like a knife, unopened bundles and even a chook – do these objects explain the human who carries them? What is the meaning of the other objects in their bags? The viewer is left without the means to make this unknowable mystery knowable.

All the works selected by curator Toni Bailey have a certain degree of gravitas as significant statements pertaining to each artist's professional art practice. There was little in the way of information about the artists and no catalogue when I viewed the exhibition. The high quality of work on display and



Janet Fieldhouse Mark and Memory 6, 2014 in The Rubies at ANU School of Art & Design Gallery

its originality caused me to follow up on the career of each of the artists in the exhibition. I imagine other viewers did likewise. I found viewing this impressive line-up of alumni an intense and very rewarding experience.

RUBIES at ANU School of Art & Design Gallery.  
Photo: Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson  
Gallery, Melbourne

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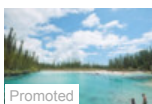
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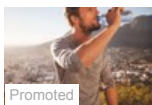
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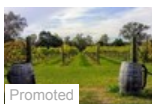
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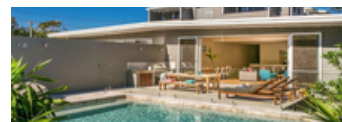
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