



BECOMING MATTER

Susan Buchanan
Simon Crosbie
Vittoria Di Stefano
Mark Edgoose
Heather Hesterman
Clare Humphries
Lindy McSwan
Michaela Pegum
Simon Perry
Robyn Phelan
Xinyi Qu
Steven Rendall
Antonia Sellbach
Benjamin Sheppard
Kylie Stillman
Fleur Summers
Sarah Tomasetti
Michael Trudgeon
Ingrid Tseng

22 - 30 July 2026
Opening celebration
Thursday 23 July 5 - 7pm

SITE EIGHT Gallery
RMIT Building 2, Level 2, Room 8

Material Assembly (MatA)

Heather Hesterman
Adaptive Garden
2026
Plants, glass, LED grow light, timber-stained bench top and steel legs.

My projects aim to grow human-plant relations through creative encounters. The title acknowledges the late Australian eco-philosopher, Val Plumwood and frames gardening as a practice of attention, action, and negotiation with the natural environment in which it is embedded. Gardening involves brutal decisions—cutting, sawing, and separating plant matter—where not all vegetal beings are seen as equal. Adaptive Garden speculates on how language and culture are shaped through past and ongoing colonial actions, and highlights material growth and decay.

Simon Crosbie
Mother with stillborn child
2026
Mixed media

How do I talk about the sister I never had?

Michael Trudgeon, Xinyi Qu
Lost in Making
2026
Aluminium tube, stainless cable, photographic paper, ink, PLA [plastic]

Lost in Making is a 1:5 scale prototype of an exhibition installation system. It is a woven metal structure to support a set of quotations about the cultural and intellectual role of making. We become the matter we make. In the process of making we lose ourselves to find ourselves.

Clare Humphries
Umbral Passage
2026
Wood, candle smoke

In *Umbral Passage* I have explored the way an image is revealed through, and constituted by, matter. The work began by reimagining the act of “smoking the plate”, where candle smoke is passed across a waxed copper matrix before drawing and etching the surface. This is usually a fugitive phase, where the blackened wax holds marks on their way to becoming something else; a temporary skin doomed to be wiped away. Here the carbon deposit is elevated into a primary material of the picture itself. Soot settles across the gouged timber, blackening its incisions and planes before being wiped, and removed, uncovering the topography below. Rather than sitting on the surface, the picture takes place through the material itself. The resulting sequence reveals the moon in motion, using soot to embody the lunar umbra forged against the sun’s heat. While the matrix remains unprinted, the potential for cuts, ridges and wood grain to hold an image is revealed.

Mark Edgoose & Simon Perry
Relay/Intervention
2026
Aluminium track, magnet, steel, iron oxide, mixed media

Robyn Phelan
River Bodies - elemental encounters between clay, fire, air and water
2026
Hand formed terracotta clay, terra sigillata, blackware firing, hand carved Wandoo dowel, post-firing ash wall drawing, digital video and sound

Working with the exhibition directive of *Becoming Matter*, I have assembled material in the form of ceramic, wood, ash, sound, and moving image to conceptualise and embody my experience of summer bushfires and swimming in nature.

Evolving from my doctoral studies, *River Bodies - elemental encounters between clay, fire, air and water* exemplifies research into ancient surface treatments, slow burn and once-firing methods, pursuing an approach and return to ceramic practice that is both carbon responsible in its firing and carbon explicit in its material outcome.

Ingrid Tseng
Time Machine: transformer and blueprint no.8
2026
Stainless steel, titanium, brass, collected gears, rubber/ paper, ink, graphite

Kylie Stillman
Dew Process
2025
Polyethylene tarpaulin sheet and stainless steel webbing grommets

Steven Rendall & Sony & Western Digital
Theory of Television (Narcissus & maybe Echo)
2026
Televisions, media player, cables

Televisions
AUKUS on the news
Submarines in magenta and viridian
Mel Bochner’s Theory of Painting (1969)

Michaela Pegum
Studies for ‘An Orchid Dreams...’
2026
Silica, washi paper, organza, pigment, bioresin
These are material tests and experiments for a body of work in development.

An orchid dreams they are a woman, who dreams she is becoming the ocean with skin like radiolaria, who dream they are a statue of a small rare bird, who dreams they are a cloud of perfume...

This body of work in development explores transfigurations of form that follow imaginative and material threads of continuity between animal, plant, object, and our perceptions of animate and in-animate. By tracing silica as a compositional component of the bodies of plants, the bones of animals, the exo-skeletons of marine organisms, and cultural objects such as glass ornaments, these sculptural pieces suggest an expanded locus of subjectivity, and a shared universal body, as they materialise a flow of becoming across and between forms of life and objects of the imagination.

Lindy McSwan
Women’s Work: A Labour of Love
2025
Mild steel

Women’s Work: A Labour of Love reflects on the historic Jobs for Women Campaign, which began in 1980 when a group of women, who were refused employment at the BHP Port Kembla Steelworks, united to demand equal opportunity to work. At the time, women in the Wollongong region had few employment options beyond the underpaid and exploitative textile and clothing industry.

In this work, the fabric-like surface is created using an adaptation of a traditional Korean and Japanese metal inlay technique, sometimes referred to as cloth inlay. A finely sharpened steel chisel is rhythmically hammered into mild steel sheet. Each square centimetre bears more than forty chisel blows. This repetitive, physically demanding process became a way to reflect on the endurance of the Women of Steel, whose long hours of labour in clothing sweatshops was driven by the hope of securing higher-skilled, better-paid, and more secure employment.

Vittoria Di Stefano
Advanced Complex™
2026
IKEA bathroom cabinet, homemade skin care (wax, oil, kaolin clay)

Full lip. Gua sha. Lifted breasts. Thigh gap. Sharp clavicle. Bare skin. Glass skin. White skin. Clean girl aesthetic. Skinny girl aesthetic. Lift your chin. Blur your pores. Soften your jaw. Serums. Peptides. Cover your hands. They are the first to tell the truth about your age. Soft lighting. Facial symmetry. Stimulate your natural collagen. Rebuild facial volume. Sutures to lift the skin. Micro-incisions. Ultrasound. Laser resurfacing. Face masks. Ozempic. Chemical peel. I’m a cosmetic doctor and here is what you’re doing wrong. Lift. Tighten. Dissolve. Refill. Refresh. Enhance. Perfect. Age backwards. Start in your twenties. Reverse the damage. Retinol at night. Sleep with your head elevated. Posture is everything. Here’s ten women you should look like. Mini face lift. Rhinoplasty. Lunchtime procedure. Prevention is everything. I’m a plastic surgeon and I can tell you why. Are you dehydrated? Snatched jawline. Iced face. Barrier repair. Double cleanse. Russian lips. It’s worth every cent.*

*Selected text taken from ‘Beauty advice for the women we rape and kill’ by Natalie Kyriacou OAM, *Women’s Agenda*, 15 July 2026 <https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/beauty-advice-for-the-women-we-rape-and-kill/>

Susan Buchanan
Another flower
2026
Copper, silver solder, stainless steel, paper, text. Image: Rachel Ruysch, *Flowers in a Glass vase, with a Cricket in a Niche*, 1700, (detail)

Riffing on Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*, (1965), this work is another exploration in the re-presentation of the flower, ubiquitous in jewellery and art production more broadly.

Sarah Tomasetti
GeoHeart
2026
Fresco skins made up of slaked lime, pigment, encaustic wax, muslin, LED lights.

This work is part of a larger series responding to the geological affordances of the Latrobe Valley where a large brown coal deposit on the unceded lands of the Gurnaikurnai nation has powered the state of Victoria for over a century. Over the last 20 years a dedicated team from Melbourne University has discovered that the valley has ideal conditions for the generation of clean and economical geo-thermal power; a large hot aquifer close to the surface, with the brown coal above the most effective geological insulator from the heat - if we leave it in the ground.

GeoHeart aims to create a new eco-imaginary of the mysterious world below ground; it’s substances and sediments with deep time origins in life. New geo-thermal technologies create a closed loop that draws on the heat of the aquifer and returns the water to it without polluting either atmosphere. The underlit fresco skins draw on the geological process of the lime cycle which itself re-sequesters carbon as it cures, the cured lime then becoming translucent in response to encaustic wax.

Antonia Sellbach & Fleur Summers
Pedagogical Objects 1
2019-2026
Wood, bronze, egg cartons, cork board, pins, miscellaneous found objects, paint, beeswax

A spatial, object-based correspondence between Fleur Summers and Antonia Sellbach. These are old and new objects that we have constructed and collected over time. We ask: In what ways do objects bypass language and to what pedagogical end? What relationships can be formed through arrangement, and re-arrangement? What emergent, process-based themes might be revealed by working in abstract correspondence? During the exhibition the project will form and re-form across the surfaces of table and wall.

Ben Sheppard and subsequent collaborators
Scribble Me This... (Man standing right) into MAKE YOUR MARK...
2020-ongoing...
Pens on paper

Invitation to make your mark become matter... Benjamin Sheppard invites you to please take a pen and contribute to the drawing and sign below as collaborating participant to this evolving and unfinishable work.

Material Assembly (MatA) is a collective of artist-researchers based at RMIT University whose studio-led enquiries explore the interrelationships between making and meaning through material experimentation.

MatA cultivates a critical, sensory and speculative space for research, dialogue and collaboration across an expanded field of contemporary art and craft practice.

MatA Board Members
Mark Edgoose
Vittoria Di Stefano
Clare Humphries
Michaela Pegum
Simon Perry
Nicole Polentas
Steven Rendall
Sarah Tomasetti

Like to join us? Please scan below:



We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Ciaran Begley and the technical team in the development and installation of this exhibition.