
SYDNEY ARTIST LARA MERRETT TO CREATE 'PAINT ME IN' FOR THE MCA'S 2018 BELLA ROOM COMMISSION

Museum of
Contemporary
Art Australia



[Sydney, 05 April 2018] The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) announces Sydney-based artist Lara Merrett as this year's commissioned artist to create a new artwork for the 2018 Bella Room. Situated inside the MCA's National Centre for Creative Learning (NCCL), the artwork will be unveiled on May 23.

Studio portrait of **Lara Merrett**, 2018 Museum of Contemporary Art Australia Bella Room Commission, photograph: Carine Thevenau.

Each year, a contemporary Australian artist is invited to create a multi-sensory, interactive and immersive artwork to inspire people with disability or access requirements to connect with contemporary art. The Bella Room Commission is a key component of the MCA's Bella Program for children, young people and adults with access requirements; and offers an artist the opportunity to develop a new artwork in consultation with MCA Artist Educators, staff and Bella Program participants.

In the seventh iteration of the commission, painter Lara Merrett will create an installation, *Paint me in*, features three brightly coloured canvases suspended and looped from the roof of the Bella Room. These moveable paintings can change their physical configuration, promoting play, creation and discovery, and visitors will be encouraged to climb into the canvas and lie down inside the hanging paintings. Accompanying the artwork will be lengths of painted canvas that Bella participants will be invited to use to make soft sculptures, wearables or cut up, participating in their own art-making experience.

For several years, Merrett has worked with drop sheets in place of traditional canvases, freeing her from conventional approaches to painting and enabling experimentation with form and colour on a larger scale. Most recently, she has displayed the drop sheets as large installations of hanging, folded and crumpled piles of canvas at Sydney Contemporary in *This is not a love song* (2017) and Artspace in *Time after time (a compendium of gestures)* (2017). *Paint me in* expands on her painting practice, exploring the physical interaction between painting and the 'viewer' as well as the blurred lines between soft sculpture and painting.

MCA Director, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE, said: "The Bella Room Commission is fundamental to the MCA's commitment to access and inclusion – which is deeply embedded within the fabric of our building, inside and out. Each year, our multi-sensory Bella Room Commission encourages thousands of Bella participants of all ages to engage with contemporary art through visual, tactile and auditory activities."

After spending time with Bella participants developing her commission, Lara Merrett commented: "This unique opportunity given to me by the MCA has allowed me to investigate new ways of connecting with painting – as a refuge, sanctuary and nurturing place – and inviting the viewer to interact with the artwork through touch and movement."

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About the Bella program

The Bella program was established in 1992 through the generosity of MCA patrons, Dr Edward Jackson AM and Mrs Cynthia Jackson AM, and the Jackson family, in memory of their late daughter and sister Belinda. Today the Bella Program provides individually tailored and engaging programs to increase confidence, self-esteem and achievement for children and young people with disability and access requirements aged between 5-18 years, whilst the Bella Plus Program has been developed for adults. Once a month, the Bella Plus Connect Program invites adults, their families and support providers to explore contemporary art in a fun and participant-led creative environment.

Previous Bella Room Commissions included artworks by Kate Beynon, *Room of Lucky Charms* (2017); Kathy Temin, *The Koala Room* (2016); David Capra, *Teena's Bathtime* (2015); Barbara Cleveland (formerly Brown Council), *Performance Art* (2014); Hiromi Tango, *Dance* (2013); and Emily Floyd, *The Garden* (2012).

For more information, visit mca.com.au/bella

Images are accessible from [Dropbox here](#).

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