

**Troy
Emery**
catalogue of new works

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Essay by Juliette Hanson

Troy Emery > Unraveling

Troy Emery's extraordinary new body of work manifests an expanded formal language that profoundly captures the complex psychological tumult of recent times. With a highly attuned sense of both the serious and the absurd, Emery has deftly and sensitively traversed an emotional and conceptual terrain that is in equal measure poignant and uplifting.

In response to the dramatic social and cultural shifts of the pandemic, Emery initially cocooned himself at home. He then embarked on a period of intense productivity through which he has broken the mould of previous work, and emerged as a new creature himself. He has said that, "If art has a language then I'm trying to expand my vocabulary"¹, and the titles of the works alone signify this broadening of scope. Based on an array of literary and media-based factoids, they are integral to the reading of the works, especially in the format of the document, which, in a sign of the times, is how this body of work will be first released.

Despite this, the work is, as always, materially driven. The idiosyncratic mystery of what lies beneath Emery's tassels still remains; the forms are still faceless, with features hidden beneath the lux veneer of lurid colour and texture. However, the visual uniformity of Emery's previous work, with its repeated layering of tassels and smooth draped exteriors, is now combined with textural contrasts and explosive extrusions.

Whilst signaling a new formal freedom and an exciting sense of experimentation in Emery's practice, these works move beyond the glamorous aesthetic appeal of earlier work and into a more conceptually driven realm that allows for imperfection and contradiction. The idea of unraveling distinctly characterises many of these new works. Like the unraveling of a story, or a problem, Emery's loosening of form encourages revelation, as we are made aware of the difference between the surface and what lies beneath. These creatures show us more of

themselves than before, and there are repeated references to layers being revealed, for example in the work titled *However, further observations of Venus in the space age show a very hellish environment*, where thickly fluffed legs emerge from a body of silky darkness. Once seemingly hidden parts are now breaking through the surface.

In pieces such as *Gordian knot* and *One of the most terrifying prospects here on Earth is that of our planet being struck by a large, massive, fast-moving asteroid or comet*, rope hangs like spilled entrails. The use of rope, which is a new material for Emery, is loaded with symbolism. It carries the timely associations with constraint and constriction, but here such bindings have become undone. In a move towards new discovery, it is as though Emery's fine tassels have been placed under a microscope. This is highly symbolic of the shift in Emery's focus from an intimate exploration of psychological experiences² to more macro, universal concerns.

The textural surface of the works *Bears generally live solitary lives, but can be found together during mating season*, *Soft Feelings* and *Small Tropical Stinger* have been described by the artist as looking like "Martian landscapes"³. Their undulating layers are at once otherworldly and yet also somewhat meaty in appearance. Emery has created a provocative contrast between the natural and the unnatural, the living and the inanimate, the interior and the exterior. These dichotomies can also be found in the work titled *If we lined up all the neurons in our body it would be around 965 km long*. This work has an immediate sense of physical mass, yet the title refers to tiny internal mechanisms, and an expanded external view of these mysterious and usually hidden portals of thought and response.

The work titled *In about 5.5 billion years the Sun will run out of hydrogen*, is a key piece in the series and it reflects Emery's repeated return to the outer

¹ Emery, T. In conversation with Juliette Hanson, 13.8.21.

² As seen in Emery's solo exhibition *Sonder*, which was presented at Linden New Art from February to May 2021.

³ In conversation with Juliette Hanson, 17.8.21.

cosmos in this body of work. The internal structure of the piece is covered with a uniform binding of rope, which is overlaid with a shocking explosion of wild and unruly loops that partially conceal the structure beneath. Many of us can relate to the contrast between keeping things together in an ordered fashion and letting everything spiral into chaos. The line between control and freedom is an issue of increasing concern in current times.

Our personal disintegrations are represented by the red specks in the rope, which also look like exploding atoms, flying apart. Emery sees this work as having departed from the acceptable form of a sculpture. Its form seems unplanned and maybe the result of an error in technique or process. In Emery's words, things have gone "belly up"⁴. The title however offers a reprieve from singular, personal crises with an extreme reminder of the vastness of existence and the comparative irrelevance of our personal trials.

The most recent work in the series, titled *The temperatures, pressures, and materials that characterise this planet are most likely too extreme and volatile for organisms to adapt to (late jacaranda bloom)* represents somewhat of an end point, or the final result, of Emery's experimentation. The work has been described by Emery as having a grunge aesthetic⁵, a term that sits in complete contrast to his earlier work, which is luxurious, polished and precise. This piece manifests an almost complete unraveling. Only the paws can be seen, bound tightly beneath the chaos. One intact paw reaches forward, perhaps as a gesture of hope, encouraging us to just keep putting one foot in front of the other from within all of the mess and disarray.

Emery has recently been inspired by online curator talks from the British Museum showcasing ancient Roman and Egyptian artefacts. This is not surprising in light of Emery's respect for craftsmanship and his ongoing exploration of the cult idea of Art, framed within post-modernity. Emery

aims to open up the elitist notion of what art can be to include architecture, fashion and other practices classified as craft. He explores these boundaries with humour, reverence and nuanced attention to the meanings placed on materials and presentation.

Daniel Poole, a renowned Melbourne-based furniture designer, has been invited to create a bespoke plinth for the work titled "*The main theory is that cats are, like, picky eaters. Once they find a food that they like, they'll stick with it,*" said Garcia. The plinth is pristine, with a translucent pink stain that allows the natural pattern of the birch to show through. The attention given to this aspect of display is a deliberate reference to neo-classical sculpture and the traditional methods used to present work that falls unquestionably into a 'high art' category. Emery relishes the contrast of this with the mass produced, polyester tassels that have a comparatively low-brow status.

In a display of true formal and material mastery, Emery's new works embody the recent zeitgeist, characterised primarily by uncertainty and rapid change, whilst also providing comfort and calm. As a story unravels, we get to know more, meaning that unraveling can lead to a better understanding, or provide a clearer view of something's constituent parts. It can also mean loosening, coming apart, or transforming into an unplanned or unwanted form.

These works embody a matrix of interwoven and layered ideas from cosmological events, art, science, psychology and materiality. They blur the boundaries between the micro and the macro and address the persistent question of how to reconcile personal traumas with global concerns. In solitude and isolation, it is easy to slip into a state of deep introspection. These works remind us to consider our predicament within a far greater time frame and with the perspective that only great distance can bring. Emery says he has been "walking in the sunshine recently" and ultimately hopes that his work will evoke "kindness and happiness"⁶.

⁴ In conversation with Juliette Hanson, 17.8.21.

⁵ In conversation with Juliette Hanson, 17.8.21.

⁶ In conversation with Juliette Hanson, 17.8.21.



Please note this catalogue is shown as a record only.
 Prices and availability of works are subject to change without notice.
 Correct at time of publishing.

*One of the most terrifying
prospects here on Earth
is that of our planet being struck
by a large, massive, fast-moving
asteroid or comet*

2021

cotton rope, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins, steel rods,
(pink stain timber base
by Daniel Poole)
68 x 100 x 34 cm
\$7800



"The main theory is that cats are, like, picky eaters. Once they find a food that they like, they'll stick with it," said Garcia

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins,

steel rods,

(pink stain timber

base by Daniel Poole)

79 x 92 x 30 cm

\$7800



Troublemaker

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

36 x 110 x 90 cm

\$7800





Cowboy's companion

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane, adhesive,

screws, pins

48 x 57 x 45 cm

\$5750



Soft feelings

2021

polyester,
polyurethane, adhesive,
screws, pins

43 x 41 x 24 cm

\$5350

*Bears generally live
solitary lives, but can be
found together during
mating season*

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

34 x 63 x 51 cm

\$6200



*And, as far as we
know, there are no
living beings on Mars*

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane,
adhesive, timber,
screws, pins

49 x 50 x 29 cm

\$5750



*In reality, we do not have
enough evidence to
conclusively determine
which, if any, of these
theories, is accurate*

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane,
adhesive, timber,
screws, pins

50 x 51 x 32 cm

\$5750



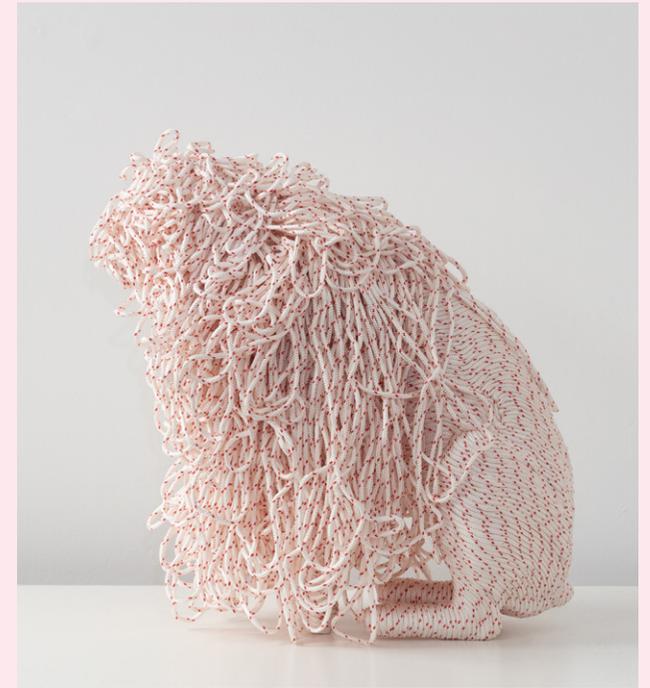
*In about 5.5 billion
years the Sun will run
out of hydrogen*

2021

nylon, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

51 x 54 x 34 cm

\$5750



*If we lined up all the
neurons in our body it
would be around 965
km long*

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

50 x 52 x 48 cm

\$5750



Pink corded creature

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane, adhesive,
screws, pins

45 x 54 x 34 cm

\$5350





A Unilever spokesperson released a statement at the time to the Daily Mail, saying: "We recently made a slight change to the formulation of our Paddle Pop products which means that these products, as well as being a source of calcium, are also a source of fibre and meet a Health Star Rating of 3.5

2021
polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins
50 x 59 x 45 cm
\$5750

Gordian knot

2021

cotton rope,

polyurethane,

adhesive, screws, pins

31 x 88 x 60 cm

\$6200



*However, further
observations of Venus
in the Space Age show a
very hellish environment*

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

51 x 50 x 43 cm

\$5750



Small tropical stinger

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

20 x 42 x 32 cm

\$4000



*Green backed
blue footed bull*
2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins,
staples
84 x 102 x 63 cm
\$8500



*Take the medicine at the
same time each day, with
or without food*

2021

cotton rope,
polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

53 x 47 x 30 cm

\$5750





*Hybrid tea roses did not
become popular until the
beginning of the 20th
century*

2021

polyester, polyurethane,
adhesive, screws, pins

49 x 59 x 34 cm

\$6200

*The temperatures,
pressures, and materials
that characterise this
planet are most likely too
extreme and volatile for
organisms to adapt to
(late jacaranda bloom)*

2021

nylon, polyurethane,
adhesive, timber,
screws, pins

45 x 74 x 28 cm

\$6200



About the artist

Troy Emery currently resides in Melbourne. He studied sculpture at the University of Tasmania, and completed a Masters of Fine Arts at The University of Sydney in 2009. Emery has developed a figurative sculptural practice focused on textiles since graduating. His practice also incorporates painting and drawing.

His artwork examines the discourse surrounding how the history of our relationship with animals is underpinned by our ability to give meaning to them and use them in allegory and metaphor. He is interested in the boundaries between fine art, museums, natural history, craft, and the domestic space, seeing the animal form as crossing between each of these.

Emery's work is held in private and public collections, including National Gallery of Victoria, Artbank, City of Townsville, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Deakin University Art Museum, Deloitte Australia, Macquarie University Art Gallery, and Maitland Regional Art Gallery.



Troy Emery 1981

- 2009 Masters of Visual Art in Sculpture, Performance and Installation, University of Sydney.
- 2005 Bachelor of Fine Art (honours) in Sculpture, University of Tasmania.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 Sonder, Linden New Art, Melbourne.
- 2020 Lost Treasures, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney.
- 2019 After the Goldrush, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat. Time Travelers, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney. Night Reacher, Westfield Commission, Westfield Bondi Junction, Sydney.
- 2018 Wildlife, presented by Dark MoFo & Clarence City Council, The Barn, Hobart. Night Vision, CRAFT Victoria, Melbourne. Hermes Art Window Project, Hermes Elizabeth st store, Sydney.
- 2017 Withdrawn, MARS Gallery, Melbourne. Missionaries, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney.
- 2014 Troy Emery: into the wild, Perc Tucker Gallery, Townsville. From Far Away, CRAFT Victoria gallery, Melbourne. Hermes Art Window Project, Hermes Elizabeth st store, Sydney. Hermes Art Window Project, Hermes Collins st store, Melbourne. Paradise, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney. Making Friends, Gould Galleries, Melbourne.
- 2013 Making Friends, Gould Galleries, Melbourne.
- 2012 Gould Galleries at Melbourne Art Fair 2012, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne. Wild Things, Ipswich Regional Art Gallery, Ipswich.
- 2011 Dangerous Company: New Sculpture by Troy Emery, Kings ARI, Melbourne. Wildthings, MetroArts Gallery, Brisbane. Menagerie, Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney.

- 2010 Wild Things / New Sculptures, Iain Dawson Gallery, Sydney.
- 2008 The Aesthetics of Natural History, Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2021 Artist + Weaver: New contemporary tapestries, Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne.
- 2020 New Era: Group Exhibition, Galerie Robertson Ares, Montreal. Inside, Craft Victoria, Melbourne. The Meaning of Things, Craft Victoria, Melbourne.
- 2019 A Boy's Own Story, The Johnston Collection, Melbourne. David Hicks Design, Art of Dining - Best of the best 2019, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. BRAGS 50 years - art of giving, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst.
- 2018 Wild, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Windsor. Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, Geelong Gallery, Geelong. The Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize, Gallery at Bayside Arts and Cultural Centre, Brighton. Autumn Exhibition Suite: tactile, Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest, Penrith. Neon Summer, Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie. David Hicks panic room, Rigg Design Prize 2018, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Flack Studio we've boundless planes to share, Rigg Design Prize 2018, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Curious & Curiouser, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst.
- 2017 Animal Kingdom, The Johnston Collection, Melbourne.
- 2016 Touch This, MARS Gallery for Yal Yal Estate, Melbourne. TROY EMERY | VIPOO SRIVILASA | RAMESH NITHIYENDRAN, Nicolas Projects, Melbourne. OFF GRID, Blindside Gallery, Melbourne.

- 2015 Fantastic worlds contemporary Australian Sculpture, Rockhampton Art Gallery, Rockhampton.
Fertile Ground - Exhibition of 2014 Artists in Residence, The Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne.
Glenfiddich artist in residence prize 2015 - finalists exhibition, Carriageworks, Sydney.
- 2014 CURTAIN CALL - THE ROUGH END OF THE PINEAPPLE, Blindside Gallery, Melbourne.
Seventh Skin, Hatch Contemporary Arts Space, Melbourne.
it is what it is: beyond the debate, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Windsor.
- 2013 Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Woollahra Council Chambers, Sydney.
It is what it is: beyond the debate, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Windsor.
- 2012 McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award, McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin.
That's Not How You Make Porridge, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Goulburn.
- 2011 Royal Bank of Scotland Emerging Artist Award, RBS Tower, Sydney.

Public Collections

National Gallery of Victoria.
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.
City of Townsville.
Deakin University Art Museum.
Macquarie University Art Gallery.
Artbank.
Goulburn Regional Art Gallery.
Deloitte Australia
Maitland Regional Art Gallery

Awards, Prizes, and Residencies

2021 Victorian Craft Awards – Finalist.
The Australian Tapestry Workshop Weaving Futures Grant 2020 – Recipient.
The Geelong Contemporary Art Prize 2018 - Finalist.
The Bayside Acquisitive Art Prize 2018 - Finalist.
Glenfiddich artist in residence prize 2015 - Finalist.
Fisher's Ghost Art Award 2014 – Finalist.
Australia Council for the Arts Tokyo residency 2014.
The Australian Tapestry Workshop artist in residence 2014.
Hill End artist in residence 2014, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.
The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize 2013 – Finalist.
Linden Postcard Show 2012 – postcard winner, work selected to be produced as promotional postcard.
McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award 2012 - Finalist.
Sandra Bardas Studio Grant 2012 – 2013 - Recipient.
Royal Bank of Scotland Contemporary Art Prize, Employees choice award.
FBI Radio Sydney Music, Art and Culture Awards 2010 – Nominated for best artist.

Acknowledgments

Troy Emery is represented by
Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney

Juliette Hanson is a curator and writer.
She is currently curator at Linden New Art, St Kilda

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(rear view)