Eroded crater remnants.
Tamsen Hopkinson, Trevelyan Clay, Adam John Cullen and Merryn Lloyd at Conners Conners Gallery

By Ry Haskings

Eroded crater remnants can be found throughout the world. They blend into the surrounding landscape over time with partially collapsed rims while continually exposed to the weather events. Originally they were impact craters caused by the collisions from outer space entities with earth's surface. This exhibition brings together 4 artists that centre their thinking primarily through material interests. Further on, their interests sit with personal, formal, political and processual relationships to materials, as surfaces and forms are pushed, stretched, scattered, projected and received.

From sand heated into liquid, then cooled into glass.
There are impact craters on planets throughout the solar system and beyond. Additionally, water ice has been discovered in the permanently shadowed craters on the moon's poles. This offers up a range of new possibilities for scientific investigation. In 2020 the SOFIA (Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy) moon exploration discovered that there is the equivalent of a 355ml bottle of water in each cubic meter spread across the lunar surface. In Tamsen Hopkinson's work bottles were used to measure the amount of sand to be squashed between windscreen sun shields under a slab of glass. Sand she had collected from a beach in New Zealand sat alongside sand from a beach in Victoria. The significance of the materials used in this work offers up much to consider in regards to the position, layers and visibility of various elements.

Dust and grit caught by masking tape that had been stuck around the edge of a door.
To ascertain the presence of water, one lunar mission sent a projectile to slam into a crater on the moon to kick up a giant plume of debris. A spacecraft would then fly through the plume, collect that material and identify what it was made of. A movement of projection and reception played out in a strategically coordinated manoeuvre where it is difficult for the research to be undertaken directly on the moon's surface. Alongside this exhibition was a performance by Trevelyan Clay. A leaf blower was powered to blow into a microphone on the stage out to an audience of vacuum cleaners set out in a grid formation. The vacuums were actively inhaling the leaf blower's performance. Perhaps this was a solution for the nature of expression and reception in 2020's socially restricted moment. His works located in the gallery for this exhibition were residual elements from a series of recent paintings he had made. The masking tape that he used around the studio for the initial paintings were now repurposed and stuck in different formations to various blank canvases to pedestal the debris from the previous series. These residual elements identified a working process and the activity of further discovery.

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Impact craters have been confused as crypto-volcanic or crypto-explosion structures in many instances only as far back as the early 20th century. The geologist Eugene Shoemaker was one of the first to contest the identification of these structures. He contested the finding that these structures resulted from volcanic effects under the surface of earth and instead ascertained that they were the impressions from an outer-space object's hypervelocity impact. Shoemaker had studied these impacts extensively. In one particular situation, Barringer's Crater, it was originally determined to be an impact crater by the geologist Daniel Barringer and then later in the early part of the 20th century another geologist GK Gilbert identified it as a crypto-volcanic structure caused by movement under the surface of the earth. At this point shoemaker investigated it again and he determined it actually was an impact crater caused by and object from outer space and it now retains the name Barringer's Crater.

Heat

Considering these particular impacts on earth alongside the impact made on materials in art can open up discourse regarding the agency of materials. Can we ascertain something more about the material's bubbling internal activity in artworks or conversely about the impact and impression left by an external entity on inanimate materials? And what can be further understood about the agency of external entity impacts? The heat that impacts the wax material in Adam John Cullen's work; originally to mould the work into its organised form is later employed to deform it as well. If we consider the work in this way and in regards to malleability and vulnerability of materials from impacts, how might this read when we adjust the scale of our perspective to consider our own universal existence in the face of impacts from the hypervelocity of outer-space entities? If it is only scale related to impacts that effects the intensity of an engagement with this idea, maybe flexible perspectives in regards to scale can prompt further discovery.

Laid out, pushed, covered and dabbed

We are somewhat protected by Jupiter in regards to the gravitational field that pushes and pulls comets away from earth. It was also Shoemaker who calculated and witnessed the impact of the Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 with Jupiter in 1994, which is an example of this. The comet broke up into several fragments when it collided with Jupiter and was witnessed by Shoemaker and David Levy as it left small scarring marks on the planet's surface. Fine textures are key to painting strategies and the final outcome of Merryn Lloyd's works. These textures can both hold and resist paint pigments to be visually apparent on a micro scale. A complex, detailed and finely textured field of tones and paint create a surface that can be observed and studied. Each new object supporting painting consists of different compositions at different scales where a variety of crusts allow for new possibilities and uses. Impacts in these works are broken up with a working process that strategically layers alongside serendipitously landed compositions.

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Only a few years after the impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Friday, 18 July 1997, the Shoemakers had been in Australia for about two weeks on an annual trip to search for eroded impact craters in the outback when Eugene Shoemaker was killed instantly in a two-car head on accident on an unpaved road in the Tanami Desert 500kms northwest of Alice Springs. His wife, suffered hip and chest injuries in the crash but was in a stable condition at hospital and no one was seriously injured in the other car. Only Eugene's searching was ended by the full impact of the collision. It was one of Eugene's biggest disappointments that he was never able to physically make it to the moon in his life. Although he had all the qualifications required for an astronaut, health difficulties prevented him from the experience. A colleague, Carolyn Porco, made the creative suggestion after he had passed to scatter his ashes on the moon. Not long after this a Luna Prospector mission was primarily tasked with finding more concrete evidence of water on the moon. It was during this expedition that Shoemaker's ashes were projected out on to the moon. "He is the very first human inhabitant of Earth to be laid to rest on another celestial body," said Carolyn Porco.